

A Rebel With a Voice

by romeothewriter

Category: Pitch Perfect Genre: Drama, Romance Language: English Status: Completed Published: 2013-07-21 Updated: 2013-08-09 Packaged: 2013-10-29 15:51:52 Rating: M Chapters: 23 Words: 108,375 Publisher: www.fanfiction.net Story URL: <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/9515938/1/> Author URL: <http://www.fanfiction.net/u/4699668/romeothewriter> Summary: Beca Mitchell is the epitome of a rebel being the master of expulsion since second grade. Then her mom and stepdad pass, and she's to live with the father who had abandoned her long ago and his new family. She's sent to Barden High, and she expects to just play football as always and lay low. Yeah, she should've told that to the hyperactive redhead that turns everything on its head

1. Build Me Up to Tear Me Down

A/N: Welcome back awesome nerds! Here's the start of something new, something fresh. Let's take it to high school and a whole new approach to all you've ever known because you all know I am anything but orthodox and cliché if I can help it. Here we go. Disclaimer: I own nothing

Song: If You Could See Me Now-The Script

If you could see me now would you recognize me?

Would you pat me on the back or would you criticize me?

Would you follow every line on my tear-stained face

Put your hand on a heart that was cold

As the day you were taken away?

I know it's been a while but I can see you clear as day

Right now, I wish I could hear you say

I drink too much, and I smoke too much dutch

But if you can't see me now that shit's a must

You used to say I wont know a wind until it crossed me

Like I wont know real love 'til I've loved and I've lost it

So if you've lost a sister, someone's lost a mom

And if you've lost a dad then someone's lost a son

And they're all missing out, yeah I'm they're all missing out

So if you get a second to look down on me now

Mom, Dad I'm just missing you now

I still look for your face in the crowd

Oh if you could see me now

Would you stand in disgrace or take a bow

Oh if you could see me now

Everything had finally fallen into place. Sure, she had been kicked out of at least two schools a year from second grade on up to middle school, but she couldn't take the entirety of the blame. Everything had been great before second grade. She had never heard her parents fight or yell or scream or anything. They spent time with her, took her out to parks and the zoo. They were a happy family. Then, a week before she started second grade, her father had loaded up his jeep and just left with nothing more than a kiss on her forehead. He never came back. Her mother tried to make her understand. She tried to carry the load and be the best mother AND father possible for her little girl. Still, her daughter had no idea what to think. The one man she was sure would never leave her had done exactly that without reason or rhyme behind the action. Her mother would cry herself to sleep at night. The little brunette would hear her, but during the day, she had the brightest of smiles. She had to be strong for both of them, but her little girl wasn't as strong. She acted out, getting into multiple fights a week until the school just couldn't take it anymore. Atlanta only had so many schools to choose from, and it was a miracle that she was never held back. She was smart for sure, one of the smartest kids her age, but she would rather wreak havoc, and so it went until sixth grade.

In sixth grade, her mother met Darren Cale. Darren was a good man who loved both Leah and her daughter as if the child was his own. It took a year for Beca to warm up to her new stepfather, but when she did, she found he was a great guy. Therefore, she made it through seventh grade without error. She hadn't heard from her father since her ninth

birthday, but she didn't care. Darren did all of the things with her that a father was supposed to do, and she loved it. He taught her how to play sports like football and baseball, shoot a bow and arrow, play darts, and even mix music among other things. He went to every game, and he was the loudest in the stands. Yeah, he made Beca's life so much better, and she finished out seventh grade then eighth grade in the same school. Freshman year, Beca came out to her mother and stepfather when she got her first girlfriend. Her mother was a bit shocked but okay with it. You know what Darren said? "Yes! Now we can check out girls together, squirt!" Beca had laughed at his antics.

The memory came back to her now as she sat in front of her high school, well, old high school. How could they not understand why she was so upset though? Her mother and stepfather, the lights of her life, had just passed away in a car accident the week before then she had to stand alone with only her parents' coworkers and her three aunts, two of Darren's sisters and her mother's one, to watch her parents lowered into the ground. Her Aunt Michelle had flown in from Seattle the night it happened, and she had taken Beca in her arms for hours, but it was all she could do. Her Aunt Sarah was a traveler, and she had been on her way to London from Miami, but her phone rang right before she boarded, and she came down. Aunt Allison had come from North Carolina to be there for her sister's burial, for support of her niece. She had known all about Will Mitchell leaving his wife and daughter out of the blue one day, and she knew Beca had been through a lot. All three aunts had tried to take custody of the girl they had grown to love, but her father had not allowed it, and Beca hated him for it. He had only allowed her to stay with her Aunt Allison at the Cale home so that she could finish out her year at her old school. That almost worked.

It had been a clear April day. She had the talent show the night before. She was an aspiring DJ and music producer, and she had quite the voice as well. She was a very popular kid with her rebellious track record, her fantastic athletic ability, and her musical talents. Everyone in school had been looking forward to her performance of singing and mixing her own songs. Her girlfriend of eight months, Kelly, was going to be there. She had searched the crowd for her parents as she went up, but she didn't see them. Anxiety increased as she searched for them throughout the set. They were nowhere to be found. She was broken. She thought they had forgotten, but no. They never forgot. They were always there. It wasn't until after she stepped off stage that Mrs. Lane, her history teacher, had pulled her aside and told her of the accident. Her parents had been on their way, and they were running late. They took the highway, and a car didn't yield on the ramp. It hit them, throwing them into another lane where a semi crushed the car. Beca had freaked out, run off in a rage. She hadn't made it home however because when she saw the patrol car in her driveway, she took off again. She went to Kelly's house, but her girlfriend was afraid of her and her emotions. She didn't know how to deal with it despite being older, a junior. Beca had been even more hurt. Her aunts had finally arrived, and they found her walking down the road. They had taken her home and spent the night trying to help her cope. She refused to cry, to break down. That made it all too real. Instead, she masked it all.

The following Monday, after burying her parents, she had gone to school as if nothing had happened. Some kid made a general "your momma" joke during PE about *her* mother, although he wasn't aware of what had happened. Still, that did not stop Beca from beating the crap out of him almost beyond recognition until several teachers pulled her off. She was expelled immediately, Principal Evans not caring

why she was so upset though Mrs. Lane tried to explain. Now, she was waiting for the one person she had never expected to see again, and didn't want to, Will Mitchell.

Will pulled up in his brand new jeep. He had already retrieved all of Beca's belongings from the house with her aunt's help, and though Allison had tried to take her once again, he would not oblige. She knew it was his pride and reputation he was trying to protect. He ushered her into the front seat. The moment they drove away from the curb, he began a lecture about her behavior. Beca looked over at him as if he had sprouted two heads.

"You know what?" she said curtly, slapping her hands on her thighs. "Just drop me off with social services. There is no way I'm doing this."

"Beca, do not-"

"No, Will, you DO not. My mom and dad just died, and after eight years, you wanna come out of the blue and pretend to be a parent? You can do that with your new family, not me."

"Beca, I am still your father!"

"My father's dead. I don't know who the fuck you are."

Will's face was the deepest scarlet, and it looked as if he was about to burst. His knuckles were white around the steering wheel, but there was nothing that he could do or say at the moment. He knew that. He knew his daughter was right. He had abandoned her without a word. He deserved every bit of hatred she held for him, especially after losing the two parents who had wanted to stay, to see her grow.

An hour later, Beca was sitting in a foreign room in Will Mitchell's Barden, Georgia home surrounded by her stuff. She looked around feeling exhausted.

"You start school Monday," Will sighed. "Barden High School. If this doesn't work, Beca-I had to pull a lot of strings to get you in, and-"

"I didn't ask you to, Will," she said in a sarcastically playful tone. "If it doesn't work, ship me off to a boarding school or something. I'm game. We could even skip me tearing your school up if you would like."

"Beca, please. Just give it a shot."

"Oh, what? Like you gave being a dad a shot? Oh, sure, let me just do that. You deserve so much from me."

"Look, Beca, I know you're mad at me."

"That's...an understatement."

"I know that I don't deserve much from you, and I understand you lost the two most important people in your life, and I'm not up there in that category."

"See, that's where you got it twisted, Will. It wasn't about them being important to me. It was me being important to *them*."

"You are important to-"

"Don't-finish that sentence."

He sighed now. "I'm just asking you to please give this a chance, for your mom."

“Don’t bring her into it either. You couldn’t bring her into your reasoning for leaving. Don’t bring her in now.”

“Beca, you have to realize that this is how it has to be. I’ll stay out of your way if you just please give it a chance. There are eight weeks left in the school year. Just please.”

“I’ll see what I can do. Good night, Will.”

Beca spent her weekend setting up her room. That included her laptop, her DJ equipment, her guitar and a top-of-the-line microphone, all items that Darren had purchased for her for Christmas just a couple of months prior. Lastly, she hung up pictures of her and her parents. Will would bring dinner up to her, leaving it by the door. She had no desire to go downstairs and meet her stepmother Lauren or her stepsister Aubrey. She would rather save herself the trouble and skip straight to hating them. On Sunday night, Beca at last allowed herself to fully cope. She collapsed on the floor, a picture of her and her parents at the lake clutched in her pale fingers, and the sobs came in body-wrenching waves. She bit down on her lip, drawing blood so as to not alert the house of her breakdown. She quickly reached for her cell phone, but her Aunt Sarah didn’t answer, and her Aunt Michelle’s phone was off. She was a doctor in Seattle, so she worked crazy hours. She at last called her aunt Allison.

“Hey, grasshopper,” the older woman greeted, and Beca was immediately much calmer.

“Hey, Aunt Ally,” Beca sniffled.

“What’s going on, kiddo? Are you okay?”

“I-I don’t know. I just miss you is all. I miss you a lot, and Mom and Dad.”

"I miss you too. I know it's hard, Baby, it really is, but they love you so much, and they just want you to be strong. They'll always be with you."

"I hate it here, Aunt Ally. Will has been on my case since I first saw him, and he tried using Mom against me about school."

"Just give yourself some space, Baby. I promise that I will come see you soon. We have the summer. Maybe you can come see me, or I can rent a place out there."

"You would do that?"

"Yeah, I mean, why not? I work from home. It's not a big deal. I'll see what I can do though."

"Okay."

"Well, get some sleep, grasshopper, okay? You have school tomorrow. I love you."

"I love you too, and thanks, Aunt Allie."

"Anytime, Baby."

Monday morning rolled around much too quickly, and Beca was awakened by sharp wrapping on her bedroom door. She didn't make a move to get up at first, but the knocker persisted, and the knocks became louder. At last, the brunette pulled herself out of bed and pulled the door open. Before her stood a tall girl with honey blonde hair and piercing green eyes. She was slender and curvy, and her lips were pursed. Beca couldn't decide whether she looked angry or nauseous.

“Hey,” she said curtly, in a rushed tone. “Dad-”

“Will,” Beca automatically corrected her sleepily.

“-wanted me to give you a ride to school. He left already. I’m Aubrey. Um, I’m leaving in half an hour, so I’ll meet you downstairs.”

Beca gave her a mock salute before shutting the door again. She collapsed on her bed and fell back to sleep. She didn’t wake up again until noon when there was booming knock on her door. She jerked awake, sitting up. The door opened to reveal a very angry Will Mitchell.

“Beca, why didn’t you go to school this morning?” he questioned, red in the face.

“I was teaching myself,” she shrugged. “I was posing an important philosophical question. If I don’t actually go to school, will it still suck?”

“Rebeca Jade Mitchell-”

“Okay, let’s not go there, big guy.”

“I came home on my lunch break to deal with this. You have fifteen minutes to get ready, and if I have to drag you in your pajamas, you’re going with me.”

Beca huffed as he slammed the door and slid out of bed. She rummaged threw her closet, pulling on skinny navy blue jeans that matched her eyes, a black tanktop and a plaid grey and blue shirt. She applied her usual overdose of eyeliner, and ran a hand threw her hair repetitively until it looked presentable. She ran a brush through it anyway before pulling on her chunky earphones, grabbing her bag from behind the door, her phone and her iPod and trudged downstairs. Will was scarfing down a sandwich when she

appeared in the kitchen. He grabbed his keys and ushered her out of the house. The moment they were in the car, he began another rant, and she pulled on her earphones before plugging them into her iPod and blasting the music. She knew he was getting louder, but his voice was muffled enough that she could not understand any words he was saying. She kept her eyes out the window until they pulled up into the parking lot of a large stone building, “Barden High School, Home of the Rebels and Bellas” written across the building in a block font. She smirked. The title would be fitting. As she pulled her earphones off, Will handed her a class schedule and a map of the building.

“Your first class is math on the second floor with Mr. Gill,” he explained. “It’s lunchtime right now, so you can go to the cafeteria and eat. You have half an hour.”

She disregarded him and stepped out of the car. She could see students swamping the quad, a lush lawn in front of the school lined with trees. Will walked towards the administration entrance, shaking his head. She smirked. Getting him worked up was much too easy.

Aubrey looked up to see her stepfather trudging back towards the school. She looked over his shoulder to see a short, brunette girl with an overkill of eyeliner. She had a smirk etched on her features as she took a seat against one of the trees in the quad. Aubrey scoffed, her face contorting into irritation.

“What’s wrong, Bree?” a bubbly voice called to her, tearing her from her thoughts.

The blonde looked up at her best friend Chloe Beale, an overly enthusiastic and friendly redhead with bright blue

eyes that Aubrey had known since she was five. They were neighbors. Chloe lived across the street from the Mitchell residence.

“_That’s _my stepsister,” she huffed, jerking her head towards the brunette.

“Ooh, cute,” Stacie, a leggy, promiscuous brunette who Aubrey and Chloe had known since first grade, remarked as she took in the sight of the shorter brunette. “What’s her name?”

“Ugh, Stacie. Please. It’s-Beca.” Aubrey gagged on the name. “I was supposed to bring her this morning, and she just slammed a door in my face and refused to get up.”

“A real rebel, huh?”

“More like a nuisance. Dad says she’s been kicked out of like a million schools since elementary. Her mom and stepdad just died though, so now she lives with us.”

“Maybe you should be a bit more compassionate, Bree,” Chloe chided gently. “She just lost her parents, and from what I know, your dad’s never really mentioned another daughter, so she probably feels like he’s only doing this out of obligation.”

Damn Chloe and her logic. “I think I’ll pass.”

“Regardless of what you say, the girl is hot,” Stacie smirked.

“She’s like a pocket-sized toy!” Aubrey squealed, clenching her fists.

"Calm down, Bree," Chloe crooned. "You just have to get to know her."

"*You* don't even know her! How can you-"

"Bree. Stop it."

Before Aubrey could retort, Fat Amy appeared with Cynthia Rose, Ashley and Lily. They were four more parts to their tight-knit circle of friends, and they were all on the Bellas volleyball team and in glee club together. It was a good team for sure, but at the start of their current freshman year, Aubrey had succumbed to the pressure during the state championship. She had tossed cookies all over the court, and Lily had slipped going for the dig that would keep them in the final match. After Lily had created a-puke angel, Aubrey had stormed off the court embarrassed and enraged that she had ruined their chance at the school's first ever state championship. Bumper Allen and his gang of idiots on the football team and their own choir club (because they refused to sing with Aubrey's gang) had never let her live it down, and she was already preparing for the season to start in August.

"How are you flat butts doing?" Amy asked in her thick Australian accent.

"New girl," Stacie informed them. "Aubrey's delicious stepsister."

"I think I'm gonna be sick," Aubrey choked.

"Oh, hell," Amy sighed in exasperation. "Not again. Please take her to the laboratories."

"Oh, stop being a drama queen, Bree," Stacie warned. "I'm gonna go talk to her."

“What!” Aubrey squealed. “Stacie, no-”

Too late. Stacie’s long legs were already striding towards the lone brunette. Aubrey was surely going to be sick now. She turned and rushed for the bathroom, Chloe trailing behind her.

Beca rested her head against the trunk of the tree, zoning out to David Guetta’s “Titanium”. Her eyes fluttered open however when the sun was blocked from her line of sight. She looked up to find a very tall, very beautiful brunette with mile-long legs and a busty chest clad in a white button-up, hardly buttoned up, and tight leggings. Beca quirked an eyebrow, slowly lowering her headphones to her neck. The girl now sat down before her.

“Hi,” she greeted, holding her hand out. “I’m Stacie Conrad. You must be Beca Mitchell, Aubrey’s sister-”

“Stepsister,” Beca corrected, shaking Stacie’s hand tentatively.

“You’re Mr. Mitchell’s daughter, right? You look nothing like him.”

“Thank God.”

“I guess so because you are super cute.”

Beca’s eyebrows rose higher. “Cute?”

“Oh, sorry. The badass demeanor probably wouldn’t accept such a title. You are hot though.”

Beca tried to prevent the blush creeping up. “Thanks. You’re not so bad yourself.”

That's what Beca did. She ran her game, broke hearts and ran away. Kelly had been the only one to break through her walls, and look where that got her. The conclusion she had drawn prior to meeting Kelly about love being a fluke had been solidified once more.

"So, you're a freshman too then?" Stacie asked.

"Yup," she replied, popping the final letter.

"What were you listening to there?"

"David Guetta."

"Ooh, I like him. You have good taste. Maybe you should join our glee club."

Beca chuckled. "Lamest thing I've ever heard."

"Aw, come on. I'm sure you would love it."

"I don't even sing, so..."

"Well that's too bad. So what class do you have next?"

"Math."

"Ooh, with Mr. Gill?"

"Yeah-" Stacie suddenly grabbed her schedule.

"Oh, we have a lot of classes together. I'll introduce you to the gang because you have a lot of classes with them too."

"I don't think Blondie would approve."

"Who? Aubrey? Oh, don't worry about her. She's very apprehensive about change."

"I can see that. She hasn't taken that stick out of her ass. That would be a big change."

Stacie giggled. "That's for sure." The bell rang then. "Come on. Let's go. I'll walk you to class."

And Stacie did. Her and Beca made their way into the building, and Beca couldn't really complain having someone show her around when the building was so huge. She followed the taller girl up the stairs and into a small classroom where a man with salt and pepper hair and big brown eyes magnified by thick glasses stood behind a desk.

"Ah, Miss Mitchell," he said to Beca. "Your father advised me that you would be in today. It's very nice to meet you. I'm sure Miss Conrad can help you get set up. Here's your textbook."

He handed her a thick book, and she gave him a weak smile before Stacie led her to the back of the class where a dark-skinned girl with short red-streaked hair and a large blonde girl sat.

"Beca, this is Cynthia Rose and Fat Amy," Stacie introduced.

"Fat-Amy?" Beca repeated.

"Yeah, it's my official title," the Aussie said proudly. "So twig bitches like you don't do it behind my back."

"Of course. That's logical."

"What's up, girl," Cynthia Rose now greeted. "Call me CR. You're Aubrey's sister, right?"

"Stepsister."

"You don't nervous cookie toss like her, right?" Amy asked, concern adorning her features.

"Huh?"

"Aubrey tends to-projectile vomit when she's nervous," Stacie explained as they sat down. "She did it during the state championship game this year. We play volleyball."

Beca smirked. "That's cute. And no, I'm not in any way, shape or form like her."

"Do you play?"

"Oh, no. I played football at my old school."

"Really?" Stacie was now deeply intrigued. "What position?"

"Halfback."

"Oh, so you can run it in then?"

"Right." Beca had a feeling there was a double meaning there but shrugged it off.

"Well, our team is pretty good, but there are a bunch of idiots on it."

"Yeah, Aubrey and the quarterback have a real grudge against each other," CR explained. "Last year, during the annual flag football game where we play with the boys, he tackled her. Then she hit him in the face with the ball during the volleyball match."

"She's uptight, but she's got a spike, that one," Amy huffed, shaking her head.

Before the conversation could continue, the bell rang once more signaling the start of class. Beca just about dozed off the moment Mr. Gill opened his mouth. That was pretty much how the rest of her first half day of school went, but it became pretty interesting during her last class. She followed Stacie, Cynthia Rose Amy, Lily and several other girls she was introduced to into the gym for weight training, a class she had taken since seventh grade. It was a way to release stress. Her and Darren used to work out together on weekends, and he loved to watch her play football. She had been the only girl on Dawson High's team, and she had been amazing. She was small but quick, and she used both to her advantage.

They entered the weight room after changing, and Beca caught the sight of a girl that literally knocked the wind out of her. Her eyes bulged, and her jaw dropped. The girl had long, wavy red hair that framed the brightest blue eyes Beca had ever seen. She had toned legs and arms, and Beca could see her muscles only hindered by very short shorts and a tanktop. She had sun-kissed skin, and gorgeous would be an understatement. She had thought Stacie was beautiful, but this girl was something else.

"Chloe!" Stacie called to the redhead as they entered.

"Hey, Stacie," Chloe greeted in a high-pitched and animated voice, and Beca was convinced she was a cartoon straight out of a Disney movie.

"Chloe, this is Beca. Beca, this is Chloe Beale."

"Oh, yes, the one who has Aubrey worked up to blowing chunks," Chloe said, but she smiled and extended a hand, so Beca was sure she wasn't angry about it. "I'm your sister's best friend and your neighbor across the street."

“Stepsister,” Beca corrected for the nth time that day with a sigh, shaking the girl’s hand and trying not to react to the fact that the beautiful redhead lived so close.

“Right,” Chloe chuckled. “You have some really nice biceps.” Suddenly her hands were on Beca’s arm, and Beca tensed instantly though Chloe thought she was flexing. “Show off.” She smirked. “Do you play volleyball.”

“She’s a football player,” Stacie now answered like a proud girlfriend. “Halfback.”

“Ugh.”

“What?” Beca asked now.

Stacie smirked. “Chloe’s ex-boyfriend Tom is the school halfback. He isn’t that good, but there’s not many players to choose from. He’s slow, and not just on the field. He uses his boyish charms however to get girls and cheat on hot girlfriends.” Stacie winked at Chloe now.

“Thanks for trying to make it suck less,” Chloe replied with a sweet smile.

“Okay, ladies!” a booming voice came from behind them. “Upper body today. Start bench press with the bar as warm up. Get to your stations with your spotter.”

Stacie followed Cynthia Rose away then, and Chloe and Beca were left alone.

“Well, usually Mr. Brennan spots me,” she explained. “Aubrey has this class earlier in the day now so she can take Mock Trial this period, but she used to be my spotter. Therefore, do you wanna be my partner?”

“Do I have a choice?” Beca asked with a smirk, and Chloe beamed.

“I guess I can see why Aubrey’s so worked up now.”

“I haven’t said one word to that girl yet. Well, actually yeah, but just one so, whatever is up her ass has nothing to do with me.”

“Wow, then you must be talented because it’s definitely you.”

“I guess the charm radiates then.”

Chloe giggled. “Okay, come on, Mitchell.”

Chloe could not deny that Stacie had been right. Beca was quite attractive. In her tanktop and basketball shorts, she gave Chloe the full view of bulging biceps on her petite frame, toned calves and bursting back muscles. At one point, her shirt rode up a bit to reveal a toned and chiseled stomach that could make greek gods cry. She was surely a sight. She lifted a lot heavier than anyone else as well, and it was quite impressive. The smirk she donned for most of the time made Chloe’s heart skip a beat, and she could not believe it. If Aubrey were to see how fascinated she was right now, she would definitely puke all over the redhead. She couldn’t help it however. The mystery of Beca Mitchell was overly intriguing, and Chloe felt driven to find out more about the small brunette, even if she did have to do so discreetly behind Aubrey’s back.

2. Weekend With a Redhead

A/N: Well, with such a massive following already starting after that first chapter a bit ago, I decided that I should give the people what they want and

update! So how was that first chapter? Good? Are we liking it so far? Shall I continue on? It's a little hard to come off an epic military thriller back to high school and glee club lol but I love the idea, so I shall continue then. Let me know what you think or where we can improve. Thank you!

Song: I Knew You were Trouble-Taylor Swift

I knew you were trouble when you walked in

So shame on me now

Flew me to places I'd never been

'Til you put me down, oh

I knew you were trouble when you walked in

So shame on me now

Flew me to places I'd never been

Now I'm lying on the cold hard ground

Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble

Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble

Beca Mitchell was definitely trouble in every sense of the word. Chloe could not deny it. From the tattoos to the ear spikes, she was the epitome of trouble. She had been in Barden High for all of three weeks and already had quite the reputation around school. She ditched classes and picked fights. Aubrey told her that Mr. Mitchell nearly had an aneurism when Beca had come home, arms covered in

gauze with fresh ink beneath it. Beca had made the statement, and she had only smirked in her father's face when confronted. Sure, she had some money saved up from allowances, and she had more coming her way from her parents that they left for her, but she wouldn't touch it until she was eighteen. Therefore, spending money on the ink wasn't the problem. He grilled her, asking her over and over how she had done so without an adult present. She only shrugged and left him to boil over. Yeah, she was trouble.

During school, she was one to mouth off to teachers just when she felt like it. Some days, she was really quiet and reserved. Other days, she was just looking for any reason to open her mouth, but she could surely back up anything she said. The first time she met Bumper Allen, the school quarterback, he had tried to trip her in the hall. She had hopped over his foot without looking up from her iPod, swinging her own foot back and nailing him in the groin in the process. She didn't even slow down as he fell to his knees, but the entire hall froze in shock before falling into fits of laughter. Yes, Beca Mitchell was definitely trouble.

Yet, here was Chloe knocking at the Mitchell residence on Saturday morning although she knew that Aubrey was in Atlanta for her mock trial competition for the entire weekend. Beca was a trouble, but Chloe knew there was a reason. She had lost her parents, and she had lost her real father long ago, only getting him back due to obligation. She thought that Beca deserved a chance from someone, and she felt that this someone should in fact be her. She acted out for attention. She rebelled to get back at her father. There was some good to her though somewhere, and Chloe Beale, an avid lover of challenge, was set on finding it.

The door to the Mitchell residence opened after a few knocks to reveal a surprised Will.

“Hi, Will,” Chloe greeted in her bright and bubbly voice.

“Oh, hey, Chloe,” he returned with a smile. “Uh, Aubrey already left.”

“Yeah, I know. I’m-here to see Beca.”

His eyes widened. “Oh, really? So she’s making friends then.”

“Yeah, she just doesn’t know it yet.”

The man chuckled. “Always the charmer though, Chloe. She’s up in her room across from Aubrey’s. Go on up.”

“Okay, oh, and Will, can you please-not mention this to Aubrey? I have to sit her down and tell her these things. She’s not too happy about us being friends.”

He smiled warmly. “Secret’s safe with me.”

Chloe beamed once more before flitting up the stairs. She made her way to the door across from Aubrey’s, and she gently turned the knob. She peered in. Beca was sprawled across her bed, head hanging off the side, with her earphones still on and her laptop open to some sort of complex-looking program. Aubrey had said she did something with music in her room all the time, and if the turntables on the dresser were anything to go by, Chloe would guess a DJ. She smiled. It was cute. She took in the sight of Beca’s exposed arms, the ink still glossy against her pale skin. She hadn’t seen them out of gauze yet, so she inspected them closely before awakening the girl. Her eyes were drawn to the small grasshopper on her forearm, and

her face split into the largest grin as she subconsciously ran her fingers under her sleeve and over the small ladybug tattoo on her own wrist. Somewhat matching tattoos was always a good foundation of friendship.

So far, Beca and Chloe had only really talked in weight training and the creative writing class they had in the morning, and most of it was spent with Chloe trying to get her to join glee club. They had two other classes together, but Aubrey was always present, so Beca strayed away. Aubrey was already pretty irritated with how much Stacie pined over the small brunette, and Stacie had even offered her a seat at lunch with the group. She would usually sit beside Stacie and Cynthia Rose, and Aubrey would sit at the other end. Chloe, Amy and Lily as well as Ashley, Jessica and Denise would separate them, and Beca dealt with it. She would only really see Aubrey at home during dinner, which she had finally come down for a few times a week. She found that Aubrey was just like her mother, uptight and striving for perfection that was impossible to reach. Both women looked at Beca as if she were the plague, and Lauren loved to make snide comments about her body art. Yeah, they could kiss Beca's ass.

Chloe slid into the desk chair near the bed and rolled over to Beca, her head inches from the redhead's knees now. She snored loudly then, and Chloe bit back a giggle. She put a little more space between them, not wanting the DJ to bump her head when she no doubt freaked and jumped up. Chloe lightly tapped her forehead. Nothing. She did so again, but the brunette only stirred slightly, throwing an arm in Chloe's direction. Chloe poked her once more, calling her name softly, and she moved her head slightly, her earphones falling to the floor now. Chloe leaned down to retrieve him, but the shadow now cast across Beca's face woke her up, and her eyes popped open. All she saw was a

blur of fiery red as she jumped up, her head colliding with Chloe's, who fell out of the chair and onto the floor.

"Ow," the redhead hissed, rolling onto her back and rubbing her head.

"What the-Jesus, Chloe!" Beca shrieked, massaging her own head as she sat up. "What are you doing here? It's Saturday morning."

"Yeah, but I wanted to come hang out, you know, since Aubrey's gone."

"Real sly, Juliet."

Beca smirked now, finally looking up at Chloe, and immediately she was mesmerized by the shining blue orbs that haunted her dreams. Chloe looked beautiful in a long sleeve red shirt, buttons halfway up the center, and ripped blue jeans. Her hair was braided today, a long one that was slung over her shoulder, and she was stunning.

"You're staring," Chloe smirked.

"I was trying to decide whether Aubrey put you up to this to kill me or not," Beca recovered instantly. "Or you're here for another crack at your glee club speech."

"No, neither. I wanted to hang out."

"Ugh, and I'm sure Will had a nice laugh about this."

"Will? You don't call him-"

"Nope. He lost that privilege when he ran off after my seventh birthday and never came back to see me or check how I was. My dad's dead."

Chloe didn't even flinch at how blunt Beca was, and Beca had to admit, she was a bit disappointed. "I heard about that. I'm really sorry."

"I don't need your pity, Chloe." Beca realized how harsh it sounded when Chloe flinched, and she sighed heavily.

"Look, I'm sorry. It's-still a touchy subject for me, and I'm not much of a morning person either. I mean, they died, and Will wouldn't let me stay with my aunts even though they had been around more than him. I was dragged down here when I got kicked out of my last school, so I'm still coping."

Beca could not even believe herself at the moment. This wasn't her. She didn't do this. She didn't open up to pretty girls. She let them eat their heart out until they came too close then it was like she went into defense mode and retreated. Quickly. Her heart was still pained after Kelly had completely shut her down. The two girls had been inseparable for eight months, and Kelly was over at the Cale residence a lot eating family dinners and listening to music. She had led Beca to believe they were really in love, but the moment the brunette had needed the blonde the most, she had run. Beca chalked it up to karma, but that didn't ease the pain, and neither did opening up to a girl she had only met a few weeks ago.

"Wow, what is happening to me?" she muttered, her face in her hands.

Suddenly, there were hands atop her own, slowly removing them.

"I'm not going to pity you, Beca," Chloe assured her softly. "My dad passed away when I was six, and my mom never remarried. She just bought me everything I wanted and

threw herself into her work at the publishing company. I barely see her, so I'm usually here a lot. Now, I know that Aubrey hates change, and she won't give you a chance, but I want to. I know there's good in you. If there wasn't, you wouldn't be so broken over all of this."

Beca searched those ocean-blue eyes for any sign of deception or ulterior motive, and though she found none, she drew her walls back up quickly with a sigh.

"So what did you wanna do today?" she asked.

"Well, we can go to Penny's," Chloe suggested, aware that Beca was ducking.

"What's that?"

"It's a diner down the street. I love going there. They have the best burgers."

Beca smirked. "I think I should be the judge of that."

Once Beca had dressed and combed her hair, she retrieved Chloe from her room, and they walked downstairs. Will smiled warmly when the girls appeared in the living room.

"Where are you two headed?" he asked.

"Penny's," Chloe replied with a smile. "Bye, Will."

"Oh, Beca did you need money?" he asked.

"No, I'm good," Beca returned quickly. "Bye, Will."

He said nothing more, and the two girls headed out of the house and down the street towards the diner. Chloe wanted to ask more about Beca's relationship with her father, but

she didn't want the girl to run from her, so she decided on a more appealing topic.

"So..." she began, linking her arm with Beca's, which Beca tensed at, but Chloe ignored. "Aubrey says you do something with music. You said you don't sing, and I saw the turntables on your dresser, super cool by the way. Are you a DJ?"

"Trying to be," Beca replied curtly.

"Are you any good?"

Beca chuckled. "I wouldn't know. No one's ever said anything."

"They haven't?"

"Well, yeah. Probably because I never showed anyone. Well, I showed my dad, and he always really loved them, but I think it was a biased opinion."

"You mean you haven't shown anyone?"

"Nope." Beca knew what came next.

"Well, can I hear them sometime? Maybe?"

A smirk. "I'll see what I can do, Red."

Beca was suddenly jerked back as Chloe stopped in her tracks. When the brunette turned to ask her what the hell, she found Chloe with a megawatt smile on her face.

"What?" she asked, quirking an eyebrow.

"You called me Red," she replied in a high pitched voice as if she was trying not to squeal. Then she squealed anyway,

causing Beca to cringe. "Oh my gosh, we have nicknames!"

"Oh, God. No, we do not. I take it back."

"You are so cute!"

"I am not cute." Beca yanked her along now.

"You are completely adorable."

"Ugh, you are murdering my reputation."

"Don't worry. I won't tell a soul. You know, pet names are step two in best friendship."

She had to ask. "What's step one then? Stalking me and sneaking into my room?"

"Nope."

"Okay, then we skipped a step."

"No, we have-" She stopped again and pulled up her sleeve. "Matching bug tattoos!"

Beca inspected the small ladybug on her wrist then looked up with questioning eyes.

"You were so watching me sleep," Beca snorted.

"No!" Chloe instantly defended, linking their arms once more and walking off. "I was looking at your tattoos while you slept. I like that one, and the one on your shoulder was nice, from what I could see."

"Wow, you are...a stalker."

"I'm observant. Thank you very much."

“Your best friend won’t be too happy about this.”

“She doesn’t have to know, Romeo.” Chloe husked this into Beca’s ear, causing the shorter girl to shudder. “It’ll be our little secret.”

“I’m bad news.”

“Yeah, so are the best of them in all the movies.”

“Ugh, please don’t compare me to movies. Any.”

“What? You don’t like movies?” Beca just shrugged. “How-not liking movies is like, not liking cotton candy or ice cream cake. What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m a lot more than just emotionally stunted. Trust me.”

“That’s okay with me.”

Beca gave the redhead a curious look, but Chloe just smiled and kept walking. It terrified Beca however because Chloe had just barreled into her life, and she was doing a horrible job of even trying to stop it. In reality, Chloe Beale was just as much trouble as she was in her own way.

The girls finally arrived at the diner and took a booth in the back. The waitress took their drink orders as well as their food orders for burgers before leaving the two alone once more.

“So, are you going to try out for the football team?” Chloe asked.

“I don’t know yet,” Beca replied, playing with her napkin.

“Why not?”

“Well, I don’t know.” Here it goes again, this opening up mess without knowledge. “I know my dad would want me to play, and I love playing, but-it’ll be tough not hearing him screaming at the top of his lungs from the bleachers, my mom screaming beside him.” Beca smiled faintly at the memory, but it disappeared as quickly as it came.

“Well, I know I’m not your mom or dad, but I will be there screaming you on when I don’t have a volleyball game, and I’m sure Stacie will be screaming too. She likes you, you know.”

“Of course. What’s not to like?”

“Ego for one.” Beca only smirked. “Seriously though, Becs.” And there’s the nickname, the nickname her dad called her, but she somehow couldn’t bring herself to scold the redhead, and that angered her deep inside. “If you love it, play. The team could probably really use it. Stacie didn’t lie when she said that idiot was slow. He’s lost a few big games that anyone else would have won for us had he picked up his pace, like he does with every girl in school.”

Beca looked up now as Chloe looked out the window. She could see pain flash through Chloe’s eyes as she mentioned her ex-boyfriend. Beca wasn’t all that good at showing genuine compassion or emotion. She could run a pretty good game, but she didn’t want to do that with Chloe. That made her curse herself. Chloe shouldn’t be different. She should be just another pretty girl. Yet, here she was about to really comfort her-with the truth.

“Hey.” The redhead met her gaze. “Forget that tool. You’re beautiful, Chloe, inside and out, and anyone would be lucky to have you.”

Chloe's face instantly lit up a million watts, and somehow, Beca now longer regretted being honest.

"Thanks," the redhead sighed, instantly reaching over and grabbing the brunette's hand despite the crowded diner. That was one thing Kelly didn't do. PDA. And Chloe wasn't even her girlfriend. "That's the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me."

"Seriously? Is everyone in this town deaf, dumb and blind?"

Suddenly Chloe pointed a finger at her. "See! I told you! Adorable."

"Oh, shut it, Beale."

The girls' food arrived, and a comfortable silence settled as Chloe awaited Beca's reaction. Beca loved burgers, and she had been to just about every place in Atlanta with Darren. As she took the first bite, she drew her eyebrows in concentration before her eyes bulged. Chloe grinned wide as she watched.

"Wow," Beca said after gulping it down. "This is-"

"The best. I told you. Let's just get this straight now. I'm _always _right."

Beca smirked. "Even when you're wrong?"

"Yup, and the sooner you figure that out, the easier this will be for you."

"I do like a challenge."

"Suit yourself."

“Well, I mean I’m already here risking a puke-filled closet, so...”

“See, you do like me!”

“You were sort of in my house. I mean-”

“Oh, don’t try to make excuses, Beca. You play it off with this badass devil-may-care attitude, but there is a huge heart in that little body, and you like me.”

And that was the moment Beca realized that Chloe Beale could read her like a book, and for that, Chloe Beale was trouble.

Chloe and Beca spent their entire weekend together listening to music, though Beca refused to play her mixes just yet, going to the park, watching movies. Well, Chloe watched and Beca pretended to. They did their homework together, and Will could not believe Chloe was able to get Beca to do so. She hadn’t done her homework in the last three weeks at all. Then again, Chloe was one to keep Aubrey grounded as well, and though he had to keep it a secret, he was okay with it because Chloe was definitely making a positive impact on his daughter.

Beca wasn’t sure how Chloe was able to get her to do things she would never in a million years do otherwise. She actually watched “The Breakfast Club” from beginning to end on Sunday afternoon, and she maybe sort of enjoyed it. Of course, Judd Nelson became her temporary idol during that movie, but she would never say it out loud. Either way, Chloe was glad to see her interested as they lay on the brunette’s bed. Chloe had her head resting on the brunette’s lap as Beca sat against the headboard, and it was something that both terrified Beca as well as soothed

her. She had never been much for physical contact. The only contact she had growing up were kisses on the forehead from her stepdad and his hugs, which were actually quite bountiful but nonetheless, that was it. Kelly rarely touched her outside of the comfort of Beca's room, and even then, they had only kissed twice. Cuddling had not been her thing, and Beca dealt with that. She wasn't much of a cuddle buddy or a hugger or any of that. Then came Chloe Beale, and she started turning everything Beca knew on its head. For that, Chloe Beale was trouble.

As Sunday wound down, Beca and Chloe began their goodbyes. Aubrey was due to be home by seven, so they knew that it was time for their weekend to come to a close. Chloe stood up from Beca's bed, pulling the brunette up with her and into a tight hug.

"I had a great weekend," she breathed into Beca's neck, and Beca could not stop the blush that was now reddening her cheeks.

"S-so did I," she replied shakily, her hands softly on the small of Chloe's back.

"I'll see you tomorrow, okay, and be on time. I miss you when you skip first period."

Beca smirked. "I'll see what I can do."

Chloe at last pulled away, and it was a funny feeling. She wanted to lean down and just feel Beca's lips, with her lips, but she knew it wasn't right. It couldn't be right. It could only end badly. A secret friendship was enough. It had to be. Beca Mitchell was some kind of trouble, and Aubrey would have a fit if she found out that Chloe thought otherwise. So she didn't kiss her. She only patted her arm before turning and leaving the room.

Beca flopped down on her bed now in a daze. She could have sworn Chloe was looking down at her lips, but she had to be imagining it. She didn't like the way the redhead had bulldozed through her carefully built walls, and she knew she had to pump the breaks before things got out of hand. She wasn't there for that. Her goal was simple. Stay low, finish out the year, and convince her dad to let her go with her aunt Allison before she resorted back to total chaos. That was the goal, and she could not stray from that. Chloe sure was doing a great job of sabotage however, and for that, she was trouble.

3. Oh Wells and What Ifs

A/N: Okay, okay! You've convinced me to upload once more! Three chapters in one night! You guys are spoiled! Haha well then. I guess i enjoy it though. With such a huge following already, how couldn't I? I love the response. Thank you to everyone. I want to respond back to you, but this story is flowing nonstop through my head, so I'm working overtime on it. Here's the next chapter. I hope you enjoy it!

Song: Crave You-Flight Facilities

Why can't you want me like the other boys do?

They stare at me while I stare at you

Why can't you want me like the other boys do?

They stare at me while I stare at you

Why can't you want me like the other boys do?

They stare at me while I crave you

I walked into the room dripping, in gold

Dripping, dripping

I walked into the room dripping, in gold

Dripping, dripping

It's true, I crave you

It's true, I crave you

May came without error, and Will Mitchell was rather proud of his daughter, though she didn't care to hear him express that. She had passed all of her classes with above a B thanks to Chloe, he was sure. The fights were not as frequent, and she had not received anymore tattoos as far as he knew. He was sure the redhead across the street had a lot to do with that as well. The thing was that Beca usually went over to Chloe's when Aubrey was swamped with work in her room or out completely with her Mock Trial group or her mother. Yeah, they did the whole mother-daughter bonding thing. Chloe and Aubrey also had the end-of-the-year glee club competition to prep for, but still, Beca seemed content with the little bits of time they were given together. He only wished that the two stepsisters would at least try to get along. Where family dinners became more frequent, Aubrey and Beca butting heads did as well. Lauren wasn't much help either with her comments about everything his daughter did, but he couldn't find the heart to call her on it. This didn't go unnoticed by Beca, and it proved that the strain on their relationship could in fact worsen from where it already was.

Beca made her way onto the quad for lunch, and she found a bunch of booths set up. She could see Chloe, Aubrey and Stacie setting up one booth. When Aubrey disappeared inside the building, Beca made her way over to the two girls.

"What's going on here?" she asked, an eyebrow raised.

"Activities fair," Chloe gushed. "It's to sign up for all activities and sports for next year."

"Hmmm."

"Have you changed your mind about our club?"

"Uh, no."

"Well, Beca, you should go check out the football table then," Stacie nudged her. "It looks like two of the freshmen are running it right now, the water boy and that goofy kid. You would want to sign up before Bumper shows up."

"I still don't know if-"

"Beca," Chloe whined. "We've been through this. We agreed that you would try it out."

Beca definitely wasn't sure. Football here was a commitment, a tie to the place. It was hard enough to let her last team down with getting kicked out. She was sure that Dawson was struggling without her. She was also sure that she would have to play against them as they had the past season, and her teammates were never too fond of her simply because she was a girl, and she was better. The quarterback Eddy James had always had it out for her, and he always managed to make her fumble somehow. Usually, she would still make the big play, and

that angered him even more. Still, she loved the sport, and Darren would want her to play.

"I'll be back," she huffed, waving off Stacie's and Chloe's squeals.

Beca sidled up to the Barden High Rebel football team's booth where two boys stood. One had curly brown hair and a lopsided grin on his face. His counterpart was a bit taller with cropped brown hair and a goofy grin on his face.

"Hey," the boy greeted her. "I'm Jesse Swanson, and this is Benji Applebaum."

"Hey, I'm Beca Mitchell," she replied, nodding her head. "I wanna sign up for the team. The football team."

"Right." He didn't even flinch, and Beca was relieved. Most boys would joke right about now. "Here's this form to fill out. Just put down your name and stuff."

She filled out the paper as quickly as she could.

"You know, it's nice to see a girl come out for the team," Jesse remarked. "You're probably a lot tougher than half the guys on the squad, myself included."

She smirked. "I won't argue with that."

He grinned again. Just as she handed the form back, a voice boomed from behind her.

"Whoa, ho, ho, Mitchell, what are you doing?" Bumper asked, joining them. "Cheer squad is-somewhere over there." He waved his hands as if shooing her.

“Well, you should get back over there then, huh?” she deadpanned.

Jesse chuckled until Bumper glared at him. “Seriously, Mitchell.”

“I play football. That’s my thing. Therefore, I’m signing up.”

Bumper’s expression changed from amused to realization instantly. “Wait, you-you played for Dawson, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, that’s right. We, uh, beat you. Bad. I scored three touchdowns on your defense, one on your special teams. Remember now?”

He made a weird face. “Just remember this, Mitchell. This is my team.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

With that, she turned on her heel. Stacie and Chloe were watching the scene intently, and Stacie looked as if she could kill Bumper where he stood. She returned to them, and Chloe immediately grabbed her hands.

“How did it go?” she asked, hope in her eyes.

“Well, he started, but-I reminded him of our win against them last season, and well, he couldn’t really say much after that.”

“Wait, what school did you go to?” Stacie asked now.

“Dawson High.”

“What? No way. You were the one running all over the defense.” She laughed. “Donald, Bumper’s right-hand bitch,

is the safety. The whole school made fun of him for eating your dust for like two weeks. Classic.”

“Well, I guess now, we’ll be on the same team.”

“I’m so proud of you, Beca,” Chloe beamed, and Beca couldn’t help but mimic the grin.

“Thanks for talking some sense to me and-helping me out this year.”

“Oh, don’t worry. I didn’t mind, and you signing up means you’re staying, so-” She stepped closer now, their faces only inches apart. “No getting kicked out, okay?”

“Got it,” Beca breathed, trying to swallow the huge lump rising in her throat.

Before Chloe could make another move, Stacie nudged her.

“Evil stepsister, twelve o’clock,” Beca hissed now, pulling away from Chloe as she looked up.

Aubrey was walking down the stairs of the building, and when she saw Beca standing at their booth, she huffed. Beca would swear she saw steam coming out of her ears. She strode over to them and took her place behind the booth.

“Beca, if you’re not signing up, I’ll need you to make some room here,” the blonde snapped.

“I was just about to sign up,” Beca deadpanned, and Aubrey’s eyes widened, her face turning a tinge of green. Beca burst into laughter. “Chill out, step-monster junior. I was only joking.”

By now, Aubrey was stressed over finding members for the group as well as her stepsister's intentional schemes to tick her off. She stepped up to Beca now.

"Your attitude sucks, you're a grade-A pain in my ass, and I know you like Chloe," she snarled.

"Okay, whoa there," Beca chuckled. "Chill out. I really like these shoes without puke all over them, and I do not _like _your friend in any way other than that, a friend. Maybe more of an acquaintance." With as genuine as Beca sounded, Chloe was sure this was true, and her heart broke a little. "Now, I'll let you get back to your little glee club. Have a good day, ladies."

"I can see your toner through those jeans!"

"My what?"

"Toner. Musical boner!"

"Oh yeah? Well, feel free to suck it."

Beca walked off now. Aubrey was fuming, and Chloe was instinctively rubbing circles on the blonde's lower back. Aubrey shook her off and returned to the other side of the booth, throwing on a fake smile and beginning to hand out flyers.

With school about to be out of the way, Beca planned out a routine for herself. She would run every morning with the dawn then she would work out twice a day on weights. She had been assured that the school gym would be open to athletes all summer. She would mix during the day after breakfast and a shower. Then she would go for a walk or do something in town. Aubrey would be traveling to Baton

Rouge to visit her grandmother for six weeks, so it left Beca at the hands of Chloe, who was still just as drawn to her despite the revelation of Beca's true feelings. They hadn't really had time to talk with finals, glee club, and Aubrey's disdain for the brunette heavily increasing for the last four weeks. Beca had been fine by it, and it had made it easier to slow her roll with the redhead. However, all that went to shit when she stopped her after English, a class not with her father to her relief, by her locker.

"Hey, Becs," she greeted with a sly smile.

"Hey," Beca returned, unsure of what the girl wanted to say.

"Are-you coming tonight? To our glee club final? We're dancing in cute mini-skirts. Kinda."

Beca smirked. "Is that supposed to make up my mind for me?"

Chloe leaned over, her lips brushing the DJ's ear, causing a shudder. "Not so much the skirt itself. Just the thought of me _in _the skirt."

"Uh, yeah, I'll-check it out." What the hell was up with this girl? "I guess."

"Yay!" She was standing straight again. "Oh, and there's a big party down at the lake tonight as an end-of-school sort of thing. I was wondering if you wanted to go with me."

"A party?"

"Yeah, there will be swimming and drinking and a bonfire. Stacie and the girls are going too. Aubrey doesn't go to that stuff though."

“Uh, okay, sure. Yeah, I’ll go.”

“Okay, Jessica’s DD, so you can leave with us after the program, okay?”

“Okay.”

“K, see ya later!”

Beca could not believe that she was here, in the auditorium ready to watch Chloe and this damn glee club sing. Will had asked her to sit with him and Lauren. She said she was meeting someone and rushed off, sitting on the other side of the auditorium altogether. As she sat, another person sat beside her. She looked up to see the kid with the goofy smile from the football team.

“Hey,” he greeted, donning said smile. “Beca, right?”

“Yeah,” she returned. “Uh, Jesse?”

“You got it. So what are you doing here? Here to see Aubrey? She’s your stepsister, right?”

She snorted. “Yes she is, but no, I’m not. I was forced into attendance by a hyperactive redhead.”

“Oh, Chloe Beale? Yeah, she’s always so nice and-happy.”

“You got that right.”

“Hey, so what position do you play? In football?”

“Halfback.”

“Oh, so you *were* the one that ran all over the varsity team at Dawson, huh? And as a freshman? That’s pretty impressive.”

"Yeah, thanks. My dad taught me everything I know. He played at Notre Dame before he blew out his knee."

"No way. Mr. Mitchell-"

"Oh, no. I meant my stepdad, Darren Cale. Will Mitchell is my-sperm donor."

Jesse chuckled. "Oh, understandable. So you excited for the season then?"

"Yeah, I'm ready to get back into it. What position do you play?"

"Receiver, and our best receiver just graduated, so I'm hoping to see some varsity PT this year. You know, I'm sure you'll get the starting spot. Tom has to be the worst runningback of all time. He would be a good fullback, but he was really the best we had."

"Well, I hope so."

"Yeah, but hey. If you wanna work out together or go over the playbook, so you can get caught up, I'll help you out."

"Really? Yeah, that would be great."

"Cool. Here, put your number in my phone." She did so.

"Hey, why are you here anyway?"

"Well I'm in choir."

"Shouldn't you be up there then?"

"No, that's the glee club. I'm in choir."

"What's the difference?"

“Bumper started the boys’ choir club because he refused to perform with the Bellas. Him and your stepsister have this thing against each other. I don’t really know why. We just performed though, so now I decided to stay and check out how the girls do.”

“Fair enough. I never pegged you as a choir boy.”

He chuckled. “I never pegged you for a football player, so we’re even.”

The show started then, and the curtains opened to reveal the Bellas in short pencil skirts, and Beca thanked the Heavens Chloe had not lied. She looked phenomenal in her heels, her calves chiseled and tanned. Her hair was pulled up in a tight bun, and she had on red lipstick. She looked stunning, and Beca was enchanted. The spell broke however the moment they started singing. It wasn’t their voices. Their voices were great. It was the song choices. Beca would bet her turntables that the songs they were singing were only on vinyl from decades ago. They were slow love songs. “I Saw the Sign”? “Eternal Flame”? The whole auditorium was pretty much nodding off, and Beca could not believe this. Leave it up to uptight Aubrey to decide on the most boring and frustrating setlist known to man. Now, she had a logical reason for never joining the club. When it was finally over, Beca said a silent thank you to whoever had given such a gift. Chloe was still all smiles when their eyes met, and Beca grinned, hiding her relief with pride.

Parties. Beca Mitchell did parties. It was part of the whole persona. It was how she handled being star halfback at Dawson. It was how she handled her sexuality in the beginning too, making out with girls at such parties and

blaming it on her alcohol consumption. Yeah, Beca could definitely do parties, but this party was huge. It wasn't only Barden High in attendance. Now, Dawson High was only about a half-hour drive, but Beca had never expected to recognize the people that she did. She especially didn't expect to see Kelly there with all of her stuck up friends, yeah, the popular girls Kelly hid Beca from for all of eight months. She didn't see her at first, but you know how these things go. Things always manage to get interesting eventually.

Beca walked down the shore flanked by Chloe and Stacie, Chloe linking their arms as usual. It was that touch that sent Beca's mind into a reverie about the many times Kelly had stepped away from her in the halls, shied away during classes and even games. She would hug Jeff Madsen, the wide receiver, but never her. She hadn't even seen Kelly yet, so she wasn't aware of her presence, but she somehow recalled all of it. It was now evident to her that Kelly had been ashamed the entire relationship. It was why they only hung out at her house, why she never went over to Kelly's or out on dates. It made sense now, but Beca had been blind to it at the time, or she had ignored the signs. Yeah, that was possible. Now, she tried to brush it off. It was quite sad, but Chloe didn't seem to mind at all what anyone thought, and that was solidified when another ex showed up. Tom Kent.

"Chloe!" he slurred, hurrying up the sand towards them, and she sighed in irritation. "Chloe, hey, where have you been?"

"Hiding from you," Chloe returned coldly.

"Oh, come on, Chlo', don't be like that."

“Bye, Tom.”

Beca, now with a smirk on her face, continued walking forth with Chloe only tightening the hold on her arm, leaving Tom behind them. They reached the keg, and Stacie poured them each a cup. As promised, there was a large bonfire in the center of the place. Beca had worn a black tanktop and her favorite swim trunks, the Batman symbol engraved on them. Chloe had complimented them, and though the admiration in her eyes as she scanned over the brunette's body made Beca's heart swell, she played it cool with a simple and detached “thanks”. Chloe of course looked beautiful as always in her teal bikini with her white sarong-type skirt draped around her waist. Stacie had on a black bikini, no covering aside from that, and boys everywhere gawked at the sight of the two hottest girls in school hanging so close to Beca. She had already solidified a reputation at Barden, but this was so much more.

Beca didn't see Kelly through her first few drinks. She was feeling pretty good. Stacie was talking with the pitcher of the baseball team, and Amy was telling stories of her childhood in Tasmania around the fire. Beca and Chloe sat near the shore, their feet being washed over by the low tide flowing in.

“This is nice,” Chloe sighed in content, resting her head on the DJ's shoulders. Beca tensed as always, but she relaxed soon after. “I'm so glad school's over. What are you doing for break?”

“Well, I wanted to go to North Carolina to see my aunt, but with football in the fall, I decided to stay here and work out. Work on my music. Nothing much. My aunt might come out here though, so I'm hoping for that.”

“Oh, we should totes work out together. I work out usually in the mornings.”

“If you’re up for it, Beale.”

“Is that a challenge?”

“Everything about me is a challenge to you, remember?”

“Right.” Chloe paused for a moment. “You were-just trying to throw off Aubrey, right? When you said that I was just-an acquaintance?”

Beca sighed, recalling the conversation then. She knew she hadn’t meant it, but if she told Chloe that, the girl would not cease on driving the brunette mad with emotion. Before she could answer though, another voice called her name. She looked up to see a tall girl with wavy, blonde hair and soft brown eyes standing a few feet away. Beca’s heart dropped.

“Beca?” Kelly called again, moving closer. “Beca, oh my gosh, hey. Where-where did you disappear to? I heard you were expelled, but no one knew where you were going.”

Beca was instantly irritated as she stood, Chloe following suit. “Why would you care, Kelly?”

“Look, Beca, I’m really sorry about your parents, but-I-I didn’t know how to deal with-all of that.”

“You didn’t know how to deal with a lot of things.” Beca looked over the girl’s shoulder to see those familiar faces of Kelly’s high maintenance friends, and she scoffed. “You didn’t know how to deal with us or a relationship. Thing is, if you didn’t want one, that should have been the first thing

you said to me instead of us playing hide-and-seek for eight months.”

“Beca-”

“No, Kelly. What are you doing here anyway?”

“We were invited to this party. You-do you go to Barden now?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Oh. Well, Beca, can we-maybe talk somewhere else?” She looked at Chloe now.

“We have nothing to talk about.”

“Please. Can you just let me explain myself?”

“Anything you have to say, you can say it right here.” She felt Chloe at her shoulder, moving closer, and she was thankful. “Unlike you, I’m not ashamed of who or what I am, so go on, so I can get back to my night.”

Kelly pondered it a moment, looking over to make sure her friends were still occupied. Beca snorted. “Well, it’s just-I know that I wasn’t ready, and I treated you bad, and I understand it was hard for you to let me in, and I ruined it, but-I’m really sorry, Beca. I really am. I was childish and afraid, and you deserved better from me. I just wanted to know if we could maybe try-”

“Time’s up,” Chloe now chimed in. “Come on, Babe.”

Without another word, she tugged Beca’s hand, and they made their way down the beach away from the gaping

blonde. Beca's eyes were wide and trained on the redhead beside her now.

"What the hell was that?" she gasped.

"Me saving you," Chloe chirped nonchalantly as they reached some rocks.

"Thanks. I-wow. I didn't expect that in a million years."

"Ex-girlfriend?"

"Yup, first and last."

"What did she-do?"

Beca only shook her head at first, but then she just sighed in defeat as the words banged on the inside of her lips to escape. She took a large gulp of her beer.

"She hid me," she huffed. "She was ashamed of us, of me, and the night my parents died, I went to her in real bad shape. She just-shut the door in my face. That was the last I talked to her. It explains a lot though, doesn't it? I don't get close to people. They end up leaving me when I need them the most."

"Is that why I'm just an acquaintance?"

Beca sighed. "It's just-easier that way, Chloe. There's no obligation or expectation."

"Becs, I-"

"You don't have to say anything, Chlo. It's fine."

"No, Becs, listen please. I'm not going to hurt you. I wanna be your friend. I won't leave you."

“You can’t promise me that.” She chuckled bitterly. “My parents couldn’t even keep that promise. You can’t even be around me when Blondie’s around, so don’t make promises you can’t keep.”

“Beca, if you really needed me, I wouldn’t care what Aubrey thought. I would be there. Like I said, I know what it’s like to lose someone close to you. Bree was the only one I could depend on, and I’m willing to be that person for you.”

“You just don’t quit, do you?”

Chloe grinned now. “Nope, so let’s save ourselves the trouble and give in.”

“You’re trouble, Beale.”

“I guess we’re one in the same then.”

Before Beca knew what was happening, Chloe was leaning in closer to her, and soon, their faces were only millimeters apart. Beca tried to move. She had to move. This couldn’t happen. It would only complicate everything. She began to move back, but she was sitting on a rock. She could only go so far. Then there was a voice shouting, and both girls looked to see who it was calling Chloe’s name. Beca had never been so happy to see Tom stumbling toward them. It wasn’t for long though because the irritation on Chloe’s face transferred to her, and the alcohol in her own veins had her overly angry all of a sudden. They walked towards him, and he turned back towards the fire when he heard someone calling his name. Some girl went to hand him a beer, and Beca scoffed. What a tool. He really had the audacity.

“Beca,” Chloe hissed before they reached him. “Why don’t you go get us a drink, and I’ll be right there, okay?”

“Are you sure?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah.” She squeezed the brunette’s hand reassuringly. “I’ll be right up.”

Beca nodded, and Chloe pecked her cheek before she walked off, trying to hide the burning feeling right on the spot where Chloe’s lips had touched. She walked past Tom as he zeroed in on Chloe and went for her. Beca found Amy near the keg.

“What’s up, Short Stack?” she greeted, seeming not at all hammered though Beca had seen her take multiple shots all night. “How’s it going?”

“I still don’t really know what I’m doing here,” Beca chuckled.

“Living the dream. I still can’t believe they got my sexy fat ass here.”

“Hey, guys,” Stacie huffed, walking up to them. “How are you liking this, Beca?”

“It’s something.”

“Where’s Chloe?” Beca jerked her head towards the redhead. “Oh. Uh, Beca.” Beca was pouring Chloe’s drink now. “Beca!”

“Huh?”

“She doesn’t look too happy.”

Beca turned around, and sure enough, Chloe was fuming, and her eyes were glossy. She tried to stalk past Tom, but he grabbed her arm roughly and jerked her back. She tried to break his grip, tears already falling, but he started dragging her off and away from the party. Beca handed Stacie the two drinks and rushed forward. Chloe was begging him to let go now, but he was telling her to cut it out.

“Hey!” Beca yelled, Stacie, CR and Amy approaching her now to see what was going on. “She said to let her go, dude.”

Tom turned around, looking down to meet stormy blue eyes that flashed dangerously.

“We’re busy here,” he spat. “Move along.”

“She *said*-to let her go.”

“Beca-” Chloe whimpered, but Beca didn’t hear her.

“And who the hell are you?” Tom asked with a snarl.

“Your worst fuckin’ nightmare if you don’t let her go,” Beca growled now.

He chuckled. “That’s cute. Is this it, Chloe? You’re a fuckin’ dyke now? You disgusting little-”

He didn’t get off another word. Nope, not a chance. Beca’s fist collided viciously with his jaw, and he was taken off his feet by the powerful blow. He fell to the sand in a heap, groaning in pain. Beca stepped over to him, looking down as he gripped his jaw. He spit out a tooth, and blood trickled from his lip.

“Touch her again,” Beca growled, “and it’ll be more than a tooth you lose.”

With that, Beca turned on her heel. It seems the entire party had tuned in, but Beca had tuned out and therefore didn’t realize it. When she walked away from Tom, grabbing Chloe’s hand, there was a round of cheers and laughs. Bumper, Donald and Unicycle appeared.

“Not a good way to start your football career, Mitchell,” Bumper chided sarcastically.

“Not a good way to end his either,” Beca shot back. “I’d keep him on a leash there, Bumper.”

Stacie smiled as she handed the DJ and Chloe their drinks.

“Thank you,” Chloe hissed to Beca as they settled near the fire.

“I owed you one,” Beca replied simply.

“Well, I didn’t exactly hit your ex in the face.”

“I’m sure you would have had she touched me or talked to me that way.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right.” Chloe giggled. “But you’ll be seeing Tom a lot. I won’t be seeing your ex around unless I have really bad luck.”

“Yeah, well, I can handle myself, Red. No worries.”

“Just one thing.”

“What?”

“Show that big-headed idiot how to run the ball and not just score off the field.”

Beca smiled, and Chloe beamed. “You got it, Beale.”

Beca guzzled down her drink now, looking into the fire. She called Amy over to bring her another one. She surely wasn't helping her case of hiding her crush on Chloe with what she had just done, and it hit her now. She couldn't like the redhead though. It was too dangerous, and she was popular. She had dealt with a popular girl already. Maybe she wouldn't be as ashamed, but there was so many more ways to hurt Beca, and she was sure that even happy, nice, friendly Chloe could manage one. She would still have to be hidden from the blonde that lived under her roof, and that was enough to stop Beca. To Chloe, she admired the brunette more than ever, and though she knew that the DJ had her walls up, she wouldn't cease her fight to get inside and prove to Beca she was nothing like Kelly or anyone else she characterized in that way.

Chloe grabbed onto the brunette's arm now, and Beca tensed as always. She didn't relax as she normally did though, and Chloe was worried. She pulled away gently then, pretending to wave at someone. Before long, everyone was near the shore dancing and such. There was an awkward silence between Beca and Chloe now, and the redhead was really confused. A bunch of guys came over, asking her to dance, but she declined. She didn't want to leave the DJ. However, she just about cried when Stacie came over and asked Beca to dance, and the brunette was up in a flash. Chloe watched before walking off to get another drink, and all Chloe could do was wish that she could trade all of the boys who had asked her to dance for just one dance with Beca Mitchell.

Beca knew that Chloe was only turning down the dance floor invites for her, but she couldn't let her do this. It was back to going too far too fast, and Beca didn't want that. She knew that this summer was going to be difficult with Aubrey gone, but she planned to make herself as busy as possible and fast. Working out with Chloe couldn't be too bad, and she would also have Jesse to work with. Hopefully her aunt would come, and she wouldn't have to think of so many excuses. She didn't miss the look of hurt in Chloe's eyes when she immediately followed Stacie to the dance floor however, and she didn't like that look at all. Dammit, Mitchell. This was going to be hard.

4. Second Nature

A/N: Jeez, guys! I'm really flattered by all of your reviews lol I love you guys too. I feel like we have a great relationship haha. I guess my boyish charm really does show in my writing. Maybe a little haha anyway, I hope you guys are enjoying it so far. I've never had so much reaction so quickly, so Im really happy about it. Im working really hard. I usually write three chapters at a time, one big chapter cut into three, so once I have three more, I'll update. thank you though. You guys are great motivation!

Song: Break Your Heart-Taio Cruz

Now listen to me baby

Before I love and leave you

They call me heart breaker

I don't wanna deceive you

There's no point trying to hide it

No point trying to evade it

I know I got a problem

Problem with misbehaving.

If you fall for me

I'm not easy to please

I might tear you apart

Told you from the start, baby from the start

I'm only gonna break break ya break break ya heart

A morning run had never felt so good for Beca. Since school let out the week prior, she had been running each morning at six, to everyone's surprise, and she always completed at least two miles. She would usually end up at the school gym for lifting, and after, she would sometimes take a swim in the personal Mitchell pool in their backyard if Aubrey and the girls weren't hogging it. Sometimes she would go out there anyway to rile up the blonde, but usually, she would just wait. The runs had been helping her however. Ever since she had made out with Stacie in the the taller girl's jeep at that lake party, and her guilt had jumped into overdrive thinking about Chloe, she had needed a release. She only did it to get over Chloe, and it backfired. She felt worse. This release was much safer than being caught between best friends.

She remembered every Saturday morning when her and Darren would take a run along a trail in the mountains he had discovered. It was soothing and exhilarating, and they

would run side by side up the trail then back down, resting at the bottom and having some kind of inspirational talk. There was one in particular that always remained with her.

"Dad, do you really think I could play high school football?" she asked the bear of a man after one such run at the start of the summer before she entered high school.

He rested a paw firmly on her shoulder. "Becs, you are so talented, but most of all, you're tough. You're like titanium. You went through some tough stuff as a kid, and it burned you and molded you, but it didn't break you. You can handle football. You're small, but you're quick. You have agility and versatility that most halfbacks would kill for, and you can definitely take a hit as well as make one. You scored twenty touchdowns in eighth grade. Most college and NFL halfbacks don't score that in a season twice as long, and those kids were huge. You're gonna be just fine, kiddo. First and foremost, you have to believe in yourself."

"Were you scared when you started college ball?"

He chuckled. "I was terrified, and I was half the size I am now." He did only have about four inches on her now. "But I embraced my flaws, and I turned them to my weapons."

"You were great though." He had shown her tapes of his games. "You definitely would have been drafted had you had the chance."

"Yeah, but I don't regret it. Had I not been working at the factory, I never would have met the auditor that came to the facility three years ago. Your mother, and that means so much more than an NFL career to me because it gave me the two most important people in my life."

"Thanks. For showing me how to play and believing in me. For loving me I guess. You're the best dad ever."

"I know it was hard for you, Becs, but let me tell you this. Any father that can walk out on their kid is a coward, and I just wanna give you and your mom what you deserve. I love you just as much as if you were my own, and I will always be there, at every game yelling and cheering for my little girl. I promise that. You make me better when I see you play. You have a passion for the game that not many players do, and I adore you for it. You're going to be great, kid. You watch, and I'll be right there beside you."

Beca would miss hearing that man roar from the stands, her mom squealing with joy even though she barely caught the gist of what was going on. He had been a die-hard 49er fan, and he had taken her to see them play the Falcons in the NFC division championship the year prior. He had taught her everything he knew about the game, and she inherited his love for it. They would spend hours analyzing game film or working on plays. He taught her how to throw, catch and hold the ball when she ran it. Her mom was skeptical at first, but when she saw how much joy it brought Beca and how strong it made her daughter's bond with her husband, there was no way she would jeopardize it. Beca knew her parents would be there sitting on a cloud and cheering her on. This only motivated her to be at her best.

After her run, Beca met Jesse at the gym like she had everyday for the past week and a half. Aubrey still had not left yet, so she had the entire volleyball team working out together everyday, Chloe included. The redhead had worked out with Beca in the evenings every other day however, so they still saw each other. They were on the court when Jesse and Beca walked in. Chloe smiled at her,

and Stacie waved, causing Aubrey to scoff. Beca just sent a wink out in their general direction, and Jesse nudged her.

“You do have a way with the ladies, Mitchell, I’ll give you that,” he chuckled.

She smirked. “Stick with me, Swanson, and I may just teach you the tricks of the trade.”

Beca looked different today. She had no eyeliner on, and Chloe noticed, but she still looked gorgeous to the redhead. She watched as Beca and the boy from the football team entered the gym. Maybe one more chance with a halfback wouldn’t hurt. She knew that the DJ was much different than Tom, and she was pretty sure she had bigger biceps too, just a smaller ego.

Beca and Jesse started light on their lifting, but they soon worked their way up until they were competing with each other, seeing who could lift more but not putting themselves in any danger. Beca was impressed for sure. As goofy as Jesse seemed, he had some real strength. They ended up comparing biceps as well as abs, and they were unaware of the girls on water break watching in amazement, namely a busty brunette and a vibrant redhead. Even Aubrey had done a double take walking past the window that separated the weight room from the gym, and she was torn between wanting to puke and wanted to take a picture. If only Beca’s interior wasn’t so rough, she might wait. What? Damn stepsisters.

Soon, Beca and Jesse were doing squats, pushups and sit-ups before closing out with dead lifts and pull-ups. They were sweaty and tired, but Beca felt great. She felt as if she may be able to really get better after the loss of her parents, and she wanted so much to make them proud. Oh,

if they could see her now. She smiled as she took a drink of water.

“Wow, Mitchell,” Jesse said, eyes wide. “You’re a beast!”

She chuckled. “Thanks, Swanson. You’re not so bad yourself.”

“Dude, you benched two hundred twenty! That’s more than ninety percent of the team! I on’y hit two-ten. You’re miniature!”

“Shut it, Swanson. Size really doesn’t matter. It’s now proven.”

“It was still impressive. You almost hit three hundred in your squats.”

“It actually helps being lower to the ground. My dad taught me that.”

“Yeah, well the team is definitely gonna be able to use you.”

“I really do hope so.”

He looked over her shoulder then before looking back at her and giving her a wink and a large grin. “Hyperactive redhead en route.”

Beca waited a few moments then turned around to find herself face-to-face with none other than Chloe Beale, who was grinning wide.

“Hey, rebel,” she greeted, her hand automatically grabbing Beca’s forearm.

Beca was trying to slow her heartbeat and breathe evenly. She cleared her throat.

“Hey, Red,” she replied, putting her usual smirk in place.

“Working out?”

“Yup. Oh, Chloe, this is Jesse Swanson.” She hitched a thumb at Jesse, who gave a small wave. “Jesse, Chloe Beale.”

“Jesse. We have math together right?” He nodded. “Cool, so, DJ, what are you doing tonight?”

Just then, Stacie appeared beside the redhead.

“Hey, Beca,” she said in her most appealing voice.

“Hey, Stacie,” she replied. “Jesse, this is Stacie Conrad. Stacie, Jesse.” They shook hands. “Oh, and I’m not doing anything tonight other than mixing.” She spoke to Chloe now.

“Well, why don’t we go to the movies?”

“Chlo, you know I don’t like movies.”

“What!” Jesse boomed now. “How do you not like movies? Not liking movies is like-not liking puppies or cotton candy.”

“That’s what I said!” Chloe squealed.

“No, I do not like movies,” Beca huffed.

“Well, then maybe we can go to Keller Park,” Chloe offered. “They’re having a free concert there tonight with a bunch of bands and food and stuff.”

“What about your bestie?”

“She doesn’t go to that type of stuff. She’s staying home I guess.”

“I don’t-”

“Please.”

Beca’s heart dropped as Chloe put on her best puppy dog face, and the DJ knew right then and there she had just discovered her greatest weakness. She was done for.

“Yeah, okay. Jesse, you wanna come?” Chloe’s grin faltered a bit.

“Uh, I don’t wanna intrude-”

“No, that’s fine,” Stacie chimed in. “You can keep me company, so I don’t have to be a third wheel to these lovebirds.”

Beca could feel her face catch fire, and she ducked her head. Even Stacie, who had had her tongue down Beca’s throat for a good hour, was making jokes like that. This wasn’t good. Chloe’s grin only came full force once more as she squeezed the DJ’s hand.

“Okay, so we’ll meet up at six, okay?” Chloe asked. “You guys can follow us.”

“Uh, yeah. J, you can come to my house, and we can hang out there.”

“Sounds good to me,” the boy agreed, and the four split up.

After showering in the locker room and getting changed into the extra clothes they brought along, Jesse and Beca

walked out to his truck and slid inside. She gave him directions to her house, and they made it there in no time after picking up a pizza.

“So, you really share a roof with Aubrey?” he asked.

“Unfortunately,” she huffed.

“Yeah, she always seems to be wound up. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her smile.”

“Me either, but winding her up is quite entertaining at times.”

He chuckled. “You are definitely trouble, Mitchell.”

“Tell me something I don’t know.”

Beca never really thought of what it would look like to Will Mitchell if she brought a boy over. She hadn’t given him the privilege of knowing she was into girls, and why should she? So as they made their way up to her room, Will stood up from the couch.

“Beca, can I talk to you a second?” he called.

She huffed, squeezing her eyes shut. “Go up to my room, J. I’ll be up in a bit. Second door on your left.”

He nodded and rushed up the stairs, and Beca turned to her father.

“Yeah,” she sighed.

“Uh, I don’t think we’ve talked about having boys over, and in your room,” he pointed out.

“Yeah, why would it-” Realization donned on her then, and she tilted her head back.

“Well, I didn’t even know you had a boyfriend, and so I never was asked permission for him-”

“Jesse isn’t my boyfriend, Will. We work out together. At the gym. He’s on the football team.”

She didn’t give him more than that. She didn’t want to tell him that she was now on the team as well. That wasn’t his business in her head, and he could find out through one of his colleagues.

“Look, Beca, we still don’t allow boys in this house without-” he began, but she cut him off.

“Well, I’m sure,” she scoffed. “I can’t think of any that would come for Aubrey.”

“Beca, you cut it out now. I don’t feel comfortable with-”

“Dude, I’m gay. Does that make you more comfortable or less? I really don’t care either way, but yeah. I’m gay. I like girls. A lot.”

“Beca, cut it out. This is not-”

“No joke, bro.”

“You can’t be serious! Stop playing! This isn’t-”

“You would know had you ever called and talked to me. You didn’t. Your problem. Not mine. Therefore, it isn’t Jesse you should be worried about.” What she said next was for sheer effect, and she couldn’t stop herself from saying it. “You

should've been worried about Chloe in there when the door was shut."

With that, her father turned red as a ripe tomato as he began to shake with rage and realization. She didn't allow him to say anything more. She turned on her heel and rushed up the stairs. Jesse sat on the floor near her desk eating a slice of pizza, and he flashed her a wide grin when she entered.

"What?" she asked, quirking an eyebrow.

Then he burst into laughter, and it was infectious. She giggled as well.

"Dude, I think you just gave your dad a heart attack," he breathed, wiping his eyes. "I couldn't really hear, but I heard him yelling about a boyfriend then it got really quiet, so I figured you broke the news to him."

"Yeah," she sighed, trying to control her laughter. "I kinda told him it wasn't you he had to worry about. He should've worried about Chloe up here. It was a lie, but it shut him up. For now until she does actually come over again. Damn, I didn't think of that." She then just shrugged.

"Yeah, how the hell did you manage that anyway? Having her all gooey-eyed over you? Isn't Chloe Aubrey's best friend?"

"Dude, I have no idea. She has no personal boundaries. She just-started being around all of the time, but-I don't do relationships." Beca liked Jesse. He didn't judge her, and she felt comfortable around him. She had always felt more comfortable around her stepdad and her bisexual aunt Allison than her mom or other aunts. She guessed that,

being the way that she was, having a male figure around was easier though.

Jesse grinned again. "You like her, don't you? You like her, and you're scared."

She grabbed a piece of pizza, and slugged him in the arm. "Dude, shut up. I don't know if the Nazi princess is home or not."

"I think she would have already appeared during that argument, especially if you mentioned Chloe, you know. She did leave the gym pretty fast though. She wasn't there when we finished."

"She's probably out with the step monster."

"But you like her, right?"

"Dude, I don't know. What I do know is that it can't happen, and it won't."

After eating their pizza, Beca hooked up her playstation 3 to the large TV that Will had had in the room, and they began playing Black Ops until five thirty when Beca picked out her clothes. She had only taken a fresh pair of shorts and a tanktop to the gym. She threw on a pair of black shorts that reached the middle of her calf and red Converse before sliding on a shaggy grey vest over her red tanktop. Jesse was clad in a red v-neck and black jean shorts, and she wondered if they matched too much but just shrugged it off in the end.

"Hey, what's all this stuff?" Jesse asked, hovering over her desk.

“DJ equipment,” she replied, not looking up from tying her shoes.

“Oh, really? You’re a DJ? That’s awesome.”

“Yeah, I try. I make mashups, mixes and stuff.”

“That’s cool. I gotta hear something some time.”

“Sure thing.” She smirked.

At six sharp, Beca’s phone rang, the opening bars of titanium playing. It had been her ringtone since Darren had used titanium as an analogy of her. The text was from “My Favorite Redhead”, a title Chloe had claimed for herself in her contact list.

“Come on, J,” she said. “They’re across the street.”

As they left the room, Aubrey came out of the bathroom and strolled into her room, rolling her eyes at the two. Beca only smirked before jumping down the stairs. They walked outside, and Will called to her once more. She turned back. “Where are you going?” he asked.

“To the park with some friends,” she replied.

“Did you need-”

“Bye, Will.”

She turned immediately and followed Jesse to the truck after closing the door behind her. They pulled out of the drive, Lauren’s car now beside it, and they saw Stacie’s jeep parked outside of Chloe’s house. Stacie drove off first, and they followed.

"You know, B," Jesse sighed, and she rolled her eyes at the nickname. Of course. Well, she started it. "I don't really know Chloe too well, but from what I've seen, she's really nice. Maybe-"

"Look, J, I'm sure she's amazing, but I-I just got out of my first real relationship, well it was real to me not her, but I'm not ready for all of that."

"I just think that you better let her know then because she seems like she's really going for it."

"Tell me about it. Every time I try to say something though, those damn eyes leave me speechless." It was Jesse's turn to smirk now, and she swatted his arm. "Seriously, Dude, she's gonna be the death of me. I did kinda drop it to her once, but she just kept saying how she wouldn't do that to me. I wanna believe her. I probably already do, but I just-I'm not about that."

"Listen to your heart, bro. Trust me."

"Wow, I feel like I'm in a romantic comedy. Let's stop."

He chuckled. "Well since we're gonna be best of les-bros, I should warn you now. I'm all about movies. I wanna score movies when I'm older, bring people to tears you know."

"Oh, great. Wait, who said anything about best anything, Swanson?"

"Oh, please. We're already comparing muscles and playing Black Ops. Dude, we are so set to be best friends. Benji is my buddy, you know. We talk Star Wars and stuff together, but he really isn't into video games, crazy I know, and he doesn't work out. Hence, the waterboy position. Therefore, you're my new bro."

“Okay, I guess I can deal, but under one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“Don’t ever, _ever, EVER _say ‘les-bro’ again in your life.”

He only chuckled as they pulled into the parking lot outside of the park. They stepped off of the truck, and they could see that the place was pretty packed. Beca could see a large, stone stage at one end of it where people were setting up drum sets and microphones, preparing for the show. She didn’t get excited about too many things, but music and football had made the cut early on thanks to her stepdad. As they rounded the driver’s side of the truck where Stacie and Chloe parked, the two girls stepped out.

“Oh my gosh, Chlo, look!” Stacie squealed, pointing at Beca and Jesse. “They match!”

“I knew it,” Beca sighed in exasperation. “I fuckin’ knew it.”

“I dressed first, bro,” Jesse pointed out, eyebrows and hands raised in mock surrender.

“Yeah, yeah. I didn’t think anyone would notice.”

“Hey, it’s okay,” Chloe assured her, taking her hand. “Stacie and I sort of color coordinated as well, so don’t worry.”

Beca took in the two women now, and her jaw dropped. Chloe was wearing a very low-cut red v-neck and red converse, exactly like Beca’s. Stacie was wearing a red tanktop, red Nike high tops, and both girls wore very short jean shorts.

“You guys are wearing the same shoes!” Stacie pointed out to the two girls. “Awww.”

Beca’s cheeks were burning, and she gulped audibly. Jesse could only shrug, giving her an apologetic look. Chloe was grinning from ear to ear, and Beca offered her a lopsided smile.

“Okay, let’s go!” Jesse directed, saving his new best friend from further awkwardness.

Stacie linked her arms with the boy, and Chloe held tight to Beca’s hand as they made their way onto the grass and towards the stage. A boy was already on stage checking mics, getting ready to start the show off promptly at six thirty. Chloe leaned into Beca’s side as they walked, and Beca could not get over the huge grin on the redhead’s face. Chloe really liked Beca, but maybe this was just Chloe’s way. She seemed to always be touchy-feely, even with Stacie and the other girls. Maybe Beca had been wrong. Maybe the redhead didn’t like Beca that way. Maybe Chloe had only thought she wanted to kiss her at the party after a few drinks because of the drama with Kelly and the presence of Tom. Yeah, Beca was sure she had misread everything in the past two months, and she had been overreacting the whole time. They were friends. That was it, and she could relax. Yet, she couldn’t help feeling like that would be too easy.

The bands began playing, and Beca could not deny that they were pretty impressive for being undiscovered and mostly local. She was bobbing her head to the music in no time, honestly enjoying herself. The group got themselves drinks and snacks periodically, and it was a good night. When one band came on stage, Jesse pointed to the singer.

“Hey, that’s Luke!” he yelled over the noise to his friends.

“Who’s Luke?” Beca asked.

“He’s a foreign exchange student from London,” Jesse explained. “He’s on the team too. He’s a linebacker mostly, but he’s also tight end. He’s got good hands, makes some good catches.”

The tall blonde had picked up a guitar, and he was quite good with it, Beca once again had to admit. The lead singer’s voice was raspy but strong, and she enjoyed the sound they created. They were sat on the grass now, and Chloe was scarfing down a stick of cotton candy. She offered a piece to the DJ, and when Beca opened her mouth to refuse it, Chloe stuffed it in. Beca’s eyes widened but allowed the snack to dissolve in her mouth. Chloe giggled before sliding closer to Beca and leaning into her side. Beca quickly tensed, and she started rethinking all that she had assured herself of only minutes ago.

“Be right back,” she said, gently sliding away from Chloe and standing up. “Bathroom.”

Chloe frowned as the brunette rushed off, and Stacie gave her a sympathetic look. The taller brunette had just sent Jesse off for nachos, so the two girls sat alone.

“You know, I had really planned to bed that fun-size snack,” she told Chloe, “but you have it bad, Chloe. I can’t even do that to you.”

“I just-I don’t get it,” Chloe huffed.

“You said that she went through a lot with that ex of hers. Maybe she’s just not ready.”

"I don't even know if she likes me."

"Chloe, every straight guy and lesbian like you."

"Well, Beca's different from everyone apparently. She's so hard to read that it's frustrating."

As if on cue, Jesse returned with a plate of nachos. Both Chloe and Stacie looked up at him as if he had come bearing the cure to cancer. He froze and looked down at them.

"Uh, what's going on?" he asked cautiously. "Where's Beca?"

"Sit down, sweetie," Stacie instructed, patting the space beside her. He obliged quickly. "So...what has the DJ said about Chloe here?"

He chuckled. "Is this why I'm here?"

"No, but now that Chloe's out of her mind with confusion, I thought we should probably ask."

"Look, she *just* handed me the best friend card. I don't know-"

"She said something today. She had to. It's a simple question, Jesse." Stacie slid her hand up his leg now. "Does she like Chloe or not?"

Jesse could only nod dumbly. He mentally cursed himself however when Stacie smirked. "Dammit, please don't tell her I said anything. She'll kill me."

"Well, if she likes me, what the hell is her problem?" Chloe squealed in frustration.

"I don't-"

"Please, Jesse. It stays between us. I swear."

"Well-she just said, she doesn't do relationships. She-just got out of a bad one I guess, and she's not ready for all of that."

"Yeah, I met that little bitch. She really treated Beca like trash. She hid her from her friends."

"Okay, but think about this, Chlo," Stacie now said. "If you were to date, are you willing to take the wrath of Aubrey, or are you going to hide it awhile? What about Aubrey's parents? Your mom? What about at school where Mr. Mitchell works? Where Aubrey is all the time with us? Maybe that scares her."

Chloe thought over the question a moment, but before she could voice a reply, Beca returned and sat down beside her. The three looked at her.

"What did I miss?" she asked, raising an eyebrow at them.

"I was just trying to seduce your best friend here," Stacie answered instantly.

Beca chuckled. "I told you I'd teach you the ways of the force," Beca smirked at Jesse.

"What are you-" Chloe began, but Jesse cut her off.

"Yeah, yeah," he drawled. "Here, have a nacho. The last band's about to go on."

Beca took the offered snack before settling down beside Chloe except they weren't parallel now. Her knees were

even with Chloe's feet, so Chloe could only see her back. When the final band finished their set, the four got up.

"You guys wanna get dinner?" Jesse asked, slinging an arm over Beca. "Our treat."

"_Your _treat," Beca retorted.

"Down, girl." She jabbed him in the rib. "Ow!"

"Watch it, Swanson."

Stacie nodded, but when they looked to Chloe, she was already walking toward the truck. Beca raised an eyebrow at this.

"Did I-do something?" she asked to no one in particular.

"It's what you're not doing, Mitchell," Stacie replied, watching her friend.

"Huh?"

"She likes you, you know?"

"What do you-"

"Oh, never mind. Come on. Let's go."

The two followed Stacie out, Jesse patting Beca's shoulder before retracting his arm. She knew deep down why the redhead was upset. She had been wrong. She had tried to fool herself, and it didn't work. Chloe liked her, and Beca was acting like a real coward. Could she blame her though? She was just kicked to the curb by her first real girlfriend, hidden for eight months prior to that. If she gave Chloe a chance, who was to say that the redhead wouldn't hide her from Aubrey or Aubrey's mom and Beca's dad since they

were so close? She wouldn't be able to be with her during school with Aubrey around, and she couldn't handle me. Sure, she was trouble. Sure, it had been her decision to let her stepsister hate her. However, it was Chloe's decision to fear Aubrey, and Beca had no say in that. She wouldn't fight for something that Chloe was willing to let go. Maybe she should talk to the redhead, but nah. That wasn't Beca's thing. She decided to do what she always did, avoid the issue and wreak havoc. This time, the havoc would be on an innocent redhead's heart and mind, but Beca did not think of that. Not at the moment anyway.

5. Project XYZ

A/N: Wow, I really love you guys! Honestly I'm getting so much support on this that it's unreal. I was told today that I'm way too "fluffy" to be a guy, but what can I say? I'm a hopeless romantic lol. I thank everyone for all the reviews. Havent had time to respond because I've been working on the next three chapters, but this one turned out super long, and they may be about this length going forward. Hope its okay!

Song: Please Don't Say You Love Me-Gabrielle Aplin

Heavy words are hard to take

Under pressure precious things can break

How we feel is hard to fake

So let's not give the game away

And fools rush in

And I've been the fool before

This time I'm gonna slow down

'Cause I think this could be more

The thing I'm looking for

Just please don't say you love me

'Cause I might not say it back

Doesn't mean my heart stops skipping when you look at me like that

There's no need to worry when you see just where we're at

Just please don't say you love me

'Cause I might not say it back

The first month of summer flew by. It seemed that Aubrey was pushing the volleyball team to the limit before she left for Baton Rouge at the end of the month. Beca and Jesse were pushing their own limits in the weight room, progressing pretty quickly when they had one another to motivate them. With Aubrey trying to spend as much time with Chloe as possible before leaving, Beca had been relieved from dodging Chloe's attempts at her. However, much to her disdain, she sort of missed being around the redhead. That was never good. She reacted to it by mixing to fill in time. When she wasn't mixing, she was either working out, going over the playbook with Jesse, or playing catch with him and Luke, who she met when her and Jesse had gone down to the field one day. He was a really cool

guy, and he was rather excited to be playing with the halfback that had run circles around him and the defense the year before. Beca liked the guy. He was really laid back, and he had great taste in music. It turned out that his older brother worked at a local radio station, and he told Beca to let him hear some mixes and possibly pass them off. Beca assured him she would, and they exchanged numbers.

On some days, Beca, Jesse, Luke, Stacie and Benji would go down to the lake. Amy, CR, and Lily would tag along as well occasionally, and they would spend the day goofing off. Beca wasn't sure it was such a good idea, but she found that she really enjoyed their company. She had never really made close friends, but she trusted Jesse. She found herself revealing little facts about herself to him and not feeling bad about it in the least. She figured that aside from her household, Barden wasn't all that bad. Friends weren't either. Her dad wanted to be on the not-so-bad list as well, but one thing that Beca Mitchell could not be was bought.

It was the last week of June, and Beca had just dressed after a long workout and a shower. Her and Jesse had planned on going to the record store downtown to see what they had going on and wait out the time before Will, Lauren and Aubrey left, and Will walked into her room. She was sat at her computer working on her latest mix when he entered, and she turned to look at him. He handed her a set of keys, and she gave him a curious look.

"What are these?" she asked.

"_Those _are the keys to your truck," he replied with a wide smile. "It's out front."

Beca sighed. "Will, if you're trying to buy me off right now, it's a failure. Take it back if-"

"Beca, look. You survived the year-"

"It was like a month."

"You had above a B average. You passed driver's ed with flying colors, and you've been through a lot, but you tried."

"I didn't do it for you."

"That's fine, but you did it. That's your gift. We got Aubrey a car too, so-"

"So you can't let anyone think I could ever be a daughter you abandoned, so you could trade her for a new, blonde, uptight one, right? Had to make it even?"

He sighed in defeat. "There's a full tank of gas in it. Have a good week, Beca. We'll be back Sunday. The kitchen's stocked. Just please clean up after yourself."

Will left then, and Beca chuckled to herself as she tossed the keys on the desk. She could not believe her father had actually tried to buy her. It was pathetic. Even Darren had not tried to spoil her right off the bat when they met just so she would like him. Sure, he took her to the parks and stuff, but they really didn't spend much money until she had already accepted him. He built the bond from scratch. He didn't try to buy it preassembled. Will Mitchell could not possibly believe he gained any points with that. Before Beca could continue to humor herself with what had just taken place, her phone began to ring on her desk. She picked it up to see it was her Aunt Allie.

"Hey, Auntie," she answered with a wide grin.

“Hey, grasshopper, what are you doing?” the woman asked.

“Waiting for my friend, so we can go down to the record store.”

“Oh, really? Just a friend, huh?”

“Yup, it’s a boy.”

She chuckled. “Yeah, that confirms it then.” The fact that Aunt Allie had come out as bisexual shortly after Beca came out had only strengthened their bond. It really helped.

“Besides that though, any cute girls at that school?”

“Eh, there are a few, but you know, after Kelly, I’m not really ready for it.”

“That makes sense, but don’t be so hard on yourself, Bug. That girl was stupid, and she didn’t deserve you. Regardless of that, you can still tell me all about these new girls next week when you help me settle into my brand new Barden condo!”

“What! Really!”

“Yes, ma’am, already signed the papers. If I like it enough, maybe I’ll stay there. Will can’t really argue with that, can he?”

“No, I really don’t think he can. Thanks, Auntie Allie.”

“No problem, kiddo. Truth is, I miss you way too much. I mean we didn’t see each other much before, but I know that you need someone who actually wants to understand you, not keep you out of obligation.”

Beca chuckled now. "Speaking of which, you'll never guess what just happened."

"What?"

"He tried to buy me off with a new truck."

"Seriously? How pathetic is that?" A moment's pause. "You kept it though, right?"

Beca snorted a laugh now. She swore her and her Aunt Allie were the same age. In reality, they were only ten years apart.

"Yeah, I did," Beca replied. "I didn't, like give him kudos or anything, so I don't know."

"Well, hey. You'll have me there soon, so no worries."

"That's great. I'm excited. I have a lot to tell you and maybe some people for you to meet."

"Really! Ooh, now I'm super excited." Beca giggled. "I'll see you soon though, grasshopper."

"Okay, Auntie. I love you."

"I love you too, bug."

Beca hung up, and for the first time in quite awhile, she was genuinely happy. She could not wait for her aunt to get there. She knew it would be as close to home and her old life as she could get, and she was okay with that.

After the record store, Beca came home with Jesse to find Stacie and Chloe in her room.

"There are my two favorite stalkers," she said sarcastically when she entered.

"Bree just left," Chloe informed her. "It's movie night."

"I don't-"

"I know you don't like movies, but I haven't seen you in forever, and I did get you to watch 'The Breakfast Club', so I think I can manage another."

"I love that movie!" Jesse gushed, and the three girls raised an eyebrow at him. "I mean, well, yeah. It's a pretty cool flick."

Beca only chuckled at her friend's antics.

"Where are the 'rents?" he asked now.

"They're driving Aubrey," Beca replied. "Thank God. It's like a week to myself."

"Wow, lucky. Should we throw a party?"

Beca pondered it a moment. "Hmm, that might be an option."

"So we heard Will bought you that sweet truck outside," Stacie told her.

"Yeah, you know, the old 'let-me-just-buy-off-my-kid-that-hates-me' act? He tried. And Failed. So what movie are you torturing me with tonight?"

Beca nearly tore her eyeballs out watching The Notebook. It was the sappiest thing in the world, and with Chloe curled into her side before the beginning credits even started, she knew she was in for a long night. Chloe loved

the movie, and she was sure she even heard Jesse sniffing at some points from his place on the floor, Stacie resting between his legs, her head on his shoulder. She smirked at the boy as his eyes were glued to the screen. The girls had ordered pizza, and when the doorbell rang, Beca was the first one up and down the stairs. She returned with two boxes as well as three unannounced visitors. Fat Amy, CR and Lily followed her up with three more pizza boxes of their own.

"Look what I found wandering the driveway," she sighed to the others in her room.

"Stacie told us they were over here celebrating their freedom from our dictator, so we decided to stop by and join the fun," Amy informed her. "What are you flat butts-oh, The Notebook? Are we interrupting some lady loving, Beca?"

"No, if anything, just cock blocking Jesse over there."

"Hey, guys," Stacie greeted, not leaving her spot.

Beca saw Chloe's face fall when she realized she would now have to share the DJ, but Beca waved it off and opened up the boxes. She settled back on the bed with one box, and her and Chloe each took a slice, now both sitting against the headboard. When the movie was over, the group went down into the living room where there was more space.

"So a week without the 'rents, huh?" Amy quipped. "Are we throwing a fiesta?"

"It's possible," Beca returned.

“We’ll all pitch in,” Stacie said now. “We could be like that movie, Project X.”

“Yeah, and I think Lauren’s car is still in the garage. Maybe we will.”

“That would be epic.”

“You seem a lot more cheery today though, DJ.” CR pointed out. “What’s up?”

“Well, my aunt’s coming here for the summer,” she replied, unable to keep it in. “She rented a condo close by, so now I can escape from this place a little more.”

Chloe’s frown only deepened. The DJ wouldn’t even be across the street anymore that much.

“That’s awesome, Beca, congrats,” Jesse said with a grin.

“Yeah, she wants to meet all of you guys too,” Beca went on. “She’s really cool. She acts our age, I swear, but she was like my best friend.”

“Oh yeah! We get to meet the family that doesn’t consist of Aubrey and her stuck up mother!” Amy cheered, raising one fist in the air. “I’m excited.”

Beca chuckled. “Yeah, she’ll definitely get a kick out of you, Amy.”

“Who doesn’t? I was the funniest person in Tasmania, with opposable thumbs.”

“Of course you were.”

The party that Beca threw was strictly for the purpose of letting loose, and if Will and Lauren found out and got wound up, all the more success it was. Will did teach at the school after all, and the way it was looking by eight o'clock, it would be a memory that lasted for a long time. The second night the group had come over to Beca's, Amy had brought two bottles of whiskey and some tequila, courtesy of her parents. Lily had also snagged some Korean alcohol, and Beca would have sworn it was something on the level of moonshine. One sip, and she just about forgot her name. Chloe had been sitting beside her, and when she snuggled into the DJ's neck, Beca had not even thought to shy away. Beside that, the group had finally received a definitive affirmative from her on the party, and planning had commenced the next day despite the worst hangovers ever experienced. The entire group had sent out mass texts. Beca had even allowed Jesse to invite the entirety of the football team sans Tom. She figured she could deal with Bumper. She would have to learn to as he would be her quarterback very soon.

The party was to start at eight. There was a crowd outside by seven forty, and Beca opened up the doors. Soon, her backyard was filled. She had her laptop hooked up to a huge sound system Luke had brought, and she and the group had created a pretty good playlist. They had all taken a shot each when they first arrived at the house, toasting to the epic party that was about to take place, and Beca was already on her second beer. She was feeling good. Stacie and Amy had set up a beer pong table, and the games were on by half past eight. Chloe found Beca at the back door, helping Luke bring out one of four kegs they had his older brother purchase for them. They had advised all guests to bring something to contribute, so there was indeed a surplus of drinks, and Chloe had a mixed drink in her hand as well, courtesy of Stacie.

“Hey, DJ,” she greeted after Beca set down the keg.

“Hey,” Beca replied with a lopsided grin, no doubt already buzzing.

“You wanna be my beer pong partner? We’re playing Jesse and Stacie.”

“Yeah, I can do that.”

“Well, come on.”

Chloe took her hand and led her to the beer pong table in the kitchen. There were people in and around the pool enjoying the music, and others were spectating the pong game.

“Hey, bro!” Jesse greeted when the brunette reached the table. “You ready for this?”

“I was a middle school basketball star, J,” she informed him smugly. “You’re done.”

“Bring it on, Mitchell.”

Beca wasn’t lying one bit. Despite her buzz, she hit four cups right off the bat, and Chloe hit another two. Jesse was able to take down three cups, and Stacie hit one. However, the two brunettes still only had four cups left, and Beca had them rearrange the remaining ones. She bent her elbow, poised in a very pretty shot, and Chloe smiled. Beca focused on the front cup, gently tossing the ball and making it in.

“Count ’em down, Swanson,” she smirked.

Her next shot hit the back cup, and Stacie downed it. Beca feigned a yawn as she hit the third cup. The fourth shot swirled out, but Chloe handled her own, taking down the last cup and giving Beca a victorious high five. It was then that she pressed her lips to Beca's, and with all of the alcohol, Beca was pretty foggy. Chloe pulled away, but she was still celebrating their victory while Beca stood there dumbfounded. Jesse knew she may have just had her buzz killed, and he rushed around the table, throwing an arm around her shoulder and pulling her from her stupor. He grinned at her, and she shook herself to gain her composure.

"Nice job, Mitchell, I'll admit," he said with a nod.

"Get to drinking, you two," Chloe smirked.

"Yeah, I'm gonna get another drink," Beca assured him, slapping his back.

Chloe's heart just about shattered when Beca took off in a hurry. She knew she shouldn't have made the move she had. She had scared the DJ away now. How could she blame herself however? Beca was shutting her out when she had been nothing but nice and persistent. She liked Beca a lot, and she believed she deserved a fair shot. It pained her to see the short brunette so upset about a kiss. Chloe had known though. She had been warned. Beca Mitchell was trouble, and she had no business chasing someone who was running away at top speed. She had done it to herself. She was sure that she should at least go talk to Beca and apologize to try and savor their friendship. She headed outside, but she stopped dead in her tracks when she saw Beca talking to a familiar blonde.

Beca was in her own home. At her own party. She was supposed to be safe from any idiots or drama. Even Bumper had complimented her on the party and thanked her for the invite albeit somewhat smugly but still. Beca had not thought in a million years that she would still, in her own home, have to face the very reason that she had just left Chloe broken. She stood up after getting herself a cup of beer from the keg, and she found herself before none other than Kelly.

"What the hell are you doing here?" she asked instantly.

"I-Beca-" she started, but Beca continued.

"This is my house. Who invited you?"

"Well, I was invited, but I didn't know you lived here. I swear."

"Who?"

"That guy, Greg?" She pointed to one of the guys with Bumper. "He's my cousin."

"Wow, seriously? Can I ever catch a break?"

"Beca, can we just talk? I am so sorry for how I treated you. I was a bitch. I was stupid, and I messed up, but I know that you only did everything I asked of you." She ran a hand up Beca's chest now. "I just wanna make it up to you."

"There's nothing you can do to make it up to me. I coped just fine without you. I'm here now, so you can either enjoy the party and stay out of my way, or you can leave. Your choice."

"Becs, come on." She stepped closer now. "Just come on."

Beca's mind was on overdrive. She was angry, irritated, hurt, awestruck, and a million other emotions she couldn't readily deal with. Maybe if she just gave in this once, she could forget it all. Maybe she could just this once stop thinking. She began to lean forward slowly, but when she closed her eyes all she saw was vivid red and blue. Her mind instantly cleared. She put a hand to Kelly's chest and pushed her back.

"Leave, Kelly."

She stepped away then and headed back into the house. She saw Chloe standing near the door, but she didn't acknowledge her. Instead, she called out to Fat Amy.

"What up, Short Stack?" the blonde asked.

"Let's take shots!" she hollared.

"Aw yeah! DJ! Wicka wicka whaaa!"

Amy immediately filled up six shot glasses for her, Beca, and CR. They took two each, and downed them in one go. Beca chased the fire in her throat with a beer. She was much too focused on getting hammered to see Chloe leave the house without telling a soul. She also didn't see Kelly walk out right after her.

Chloe rested against Beca's truck a moment as she took in deep breaths. She had no idea she could screw up something so fast. She just wanted Beca to see that she wouldn't hurt her, that she really liked her, and she wouldn't screw her over. As she stood there, the front door opened and closed to reveal the same blonde that Beca had been talking to, Kelly. It may have been the alcohol. It may

have been the broken heart. Whatever it was, Chloe was driven to approach her and stop her from walking away.

“You listen here because I’m only gonna say this once,” the redhead growled. “You stay away from Beca. You shattered her heart, and I’m the one picking up the pieces, so move on with your pathetic self and stop chasing what’s no longer yours.”

Kelly only giggled. “Really? Let me tell you something, Red. Beca was in love with me. I was her first everything, and I can guarantee you that she won’t ever forget that. I can’t be replaced. She just admitted that. You’re only a rebound for what’s already been mine and what will continue to be mine. She’ll come around, and you’ll feel really stupid for coming up to me tonight.”

“You’ll stay away if you know what’s good for you.”

At that, Chloe turned and reentered the house feeling much better. Although she didn’t have the brunette, she decided then that she wouldn’t give up. Beca had only just had her heart broken. She was coping, and at least she didn’t allow Chloe to be the rebound. The redhead could at least respect that. She had to. Chloe Beale was many things, but she was not a quitter.

The night ended when the cops were called at four in the morning, and everyone disappeared the moment the alert was received on CR’s police scanner app she had on her phone. Beca was left with Jesse, Amy, CR, Chloe, Luke, Stacie and Benji. They would stay the night and clean up would occur the following morning. Or afternoon. All in all, it had been a great party, and they still had a lot of alcohol left that they would stash at Chloe’s seeing as her mother

was rarely home, and it was closest. It would probably last a good part of the summer.

Lauren's car didn't end up in the pool, but a lot of beer and red cups did along with quite a few glow sticks. When the police had finally arrived, Beca had pretended she was sleeping. She said there was nothing going on there, that her family was asleep. They had taken it. Beca had then returned to the kitchen where the others had waited, and they all burst into joyous laughter. The backyard was a huge mess as was the kitchen. It smelled heavily of beer and alcohol, and Beca could swear she even smelled a little bit of weed in the air. In that time, she had had to put out a fire in the tree out back, break up a fight between two girls over a body shot or something, and kick a couple out of her room before they did something very inappropriate. To be fair, she did allow them fifteen minutes in Aubrey's room so long as they remade the bed, and it seemed to suffice. To top it all off, they had in fact shot enough film combine to pass as a documentary, and although it wasn't exactly Project X, it would sure be a forever type of memory. Beca could definitely not complain about the party, and she also couldn't complain about the awesome friends she had somehow managed to obtain in this hell. I mean, they did stay to help clean up. Yeah, she decided that friends weren't too bad. The only problem was a certain redhead finally crossing a very thin line into the awkward phase right outside of friendship. The issue? Beca had felt all of the cliché effects of a first kiss that she had never even felt with Kelly, and she thoroughly enjoyed it in spite of herself. Damn, that redhead.

Beca hadn't spoken to Chloe all week. She had been working out and working on mixes nonstop, and Chloe had been hanging out with Stacie, away from the shorter

brunette and hoping that the kiss would be forgotten. Beca didn't forget. She dreamed about it, daydreamed about it, wrote songs about it, _mixed _songs about it. It was a slow torture, and Beca had no idea what to do. She didn't want to lose Chloe, but she wasn't ready to take it further than friendship. You know Beca Mitchell however. She didn't talk out issues. She just allowed them to wreak havoc.

Will and Lauren's only way to find out about the party, or at least some sort of event, was the large stain on the carpet in the living room where some girl had lost her liquor and Jesse could only scrub so much out, and the burnt trunk and branches of the tree outside. When confronted, Beca just shrugged and told him that she was heading out. When asked where she was going, Beca informed him that Allison had arrived, and she was going to help her settle into her condo. He was confused then surprised then enraged in a span of six seconds, and he had Beca call her to come over before the brunette could leave. Beca was frustrated, but she did so to get the old man to shut up.

Allison arrived in her red convertible, her long brown hair that reached to the middle of her back cascading around her shoulders and her stormy blue eyes, like that of her niece and her sister, shining with excitement. The side of her head was shaved, a star there, and her arms were sleeved with colorful ink, stars lining her shoulder. She had never been fond of Will Mitchell, so when it was revealed that he had been not only cheating but raising someone else's daughter without worry about his own, it had solidified permanent disdain for him. Beca met her on the lawn, and the smaller brunette ran into her aunt's arms like a little kid. Her aunt lifted her up, spinning her in a circle on the grass before setting her down and ruffling her hair.

"How's my favorite nephew?" she joked. "Whoa, let me see that ink." She grabbed Beca's arm. "What? You got the grasshopper? Your mom would love that!"

"I see where the influence comes from," a deep voice said from the porch.

"I see where the lack of it comes from as well," Allie immediately shot back with a sweet smile.

"What are you doing here, Allison?" He was already annoyed.

"Well, it's a free country I believe. I wanted to come see how my niece was faring here."

"I'm gonna go get my bag," Beca informed her, giving her aunt freedom to tear Will apart.

"Go ahead, Bug," she said. Once Beca was in the house, she locked eyes with Will.

"I won't have you here influencing her-"

"Okay, stop right there, Will. You're the one that abandoned her, that got yourself a new family and a new life without even warning her or explaining it to her. She didn't figure it out until you called and said she was moving in with you, your wife, and your stepdaughter."

"That is not your business."

"It is my business, Will. My niece is my business because I was there for her when you left, and my sister was too broken to cope. When you went out and replaced them, I helped them heal, and Darren picked up the pieces. He was the greatest man to ever walk this earth, and he raised an

amazing kid. She stopped acting out when she finally got the father she deserved, so you have no moral right to say anything about it or rip her from our lives. She's our family. The only reason you got her was because your name happens to be on a document under "Father". I could take you to court, Will. I could fight for her and air out your laundry all over this state, or you can just let me do this. I moved here to be close, and she comes to me. Don't try to take that from her because of your jealousy. You ruined your chances to be a father to her."

"I'm trying, Allison!"

"Eight years too late, Will! She needed you then. She doesn't need you now."

"You're supposed to be trying to help her."

"Help her or help you? I'm here. I am helping her since your pride refused to let her be happy. You don't deserve anything from me or my niece. She'll come to me whenever she pleases, and if you try to stop her, I won't hesitate to take you to court. I've already talked to my lawyer, and based on the history, I have a pretty good case with the best lawyer in Georgia money can buy. It's up to you though, Will. You don't get to pick and choose when to be a father."

Will was furious, but once again, he was left speechless. Beca smirked from behind the door before running up to her room and grabbing her duffle bag and laptop case. She also grabbed the keys to her truck and rushed out as Will walked in. She said nothing to him as Lauren entered the room.

"I don't see why you don't just let the woman take her," his wife shot at him.

Beca awaited his reply, but he said nothing. "Way to have my back, Will. Yeah, listen to the step monster like you always do, Will," Beca snarled. "She *does* have your balls in a jar. Solve the problem and raise your perfect little family without me."

"That's enough, Beca!" he shouted, turning to her. "You're always out to cause trouble."

She snorted a laugh. "Look at you. You can never stand up to her for your own blood. I didn't ask to be brought into this world. That was your mistake, but now you can erase it. Just say the word. I don't need you anymore. Like I said, my dad's dead, but even he's still doing more for me. I won't be your charity case anymore, Will."

She walked out of the door and down to her smirking aunt.

"Yeah, I see where the influence comes from definitely," she chuckled. "Come on, kiddo."

"I'll follow you in the truck I got out of this entire torture ride."

"Okay, keep up, bug."

Allie's new condo was a vast place with a large backyard and a freshly trimmed front lawn. There was a swimming pool out back, and it was more of an actual home than a condo. The place was already furnished, and it was a very elegant design all around the house. Beca had her own room there, and she was quick to set up her DJ equipment there. Yeah, she wasn't planning on going home anytime soon. The place was only two blocks from the Mitchell residence, so she couldn't really complain. After setting up her room, Beca met her aunt in the kitchen, and Allie took two sodas from the fridge for them.

“So...” she sighed as they sat on the back patio. “How’s the music going?”

“It’s going well I guess,” Beca huffed. “My friends keep trying to talk me into joining glee club.”

Allie snorted. “That would be a sight to see.”

“Shut it.”

“I’m just saying. Speaking of friends, tell me about them.”

“Well, we all planned to go to the lake tonight, so you’re coming with.”

“Oh, yay! Anyone _special _I should be worried about?”

“No.” Allie could read right through her niece’s fronts.

“Try that again.”

“Maybe...”

“You’re getting warmer...”

Beca huffed. “Okay, yes.”

“Bingo! What’s her name? Tell me about her.”

“Her name is Chloe. She’s step monster junior’s best friend, and she has no regard for personal boundaries. She’s a bubbly, hyperactive redhead with the bluest eyes that hypnotize me, and she is always so nice and friendly.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“I’m just not ready. Anyway, she probably hates me by now. She-sort of kissed me last week, and we haven’t spoken

since then. She may or may not ditch us tonight.”

“You should talk to her, Becs, at least help her understand why.”

“You know I can’t do that. I don’t talk. I just destroy.”

“You can’t or you won’t? We both know the answer to that. Becs, do you wanna lose her completely from your life?”

“Well, no, but-”

“Then you have to give her something before she gives up on you, and it won’t be because she doesn’t care about you. It’ll be because she cares so much that she’s willing to give you what she thinks you want. What you think you want.”

“Damn you and your logic.”

She chuckled. “It’s experience. Wisdom. I’ve been there, babe, and it’s not worth your pride to let it slip away. Now go call her because I wanna meet her.”

With that, Aunt Allie got up to get ready for the night, and Beca retreated into the den. She sat down and pulled out her phone, hovering over the redhead’s name a few moments before hitting “call”. After three rings, Chloe answered.

“Hello?” she answered in an apprehensive tone not at all characteristic that made Beca frown.

“There’s my favorite redhead,” she said with all the enthusiasm she could muster.

On the other line, Chloe blushed and let out a giggle. Damn, that giggle. “And there’s my favorite DJ.”

“Are you coming tonight? My aunt really wants to meet you, and she won’t shut up until she does.”

“I heard that!” Allie called from down the stairs, and both Beca and Chloe laughed.

“Yes, I’m coming,” she replied.

“Okay, we’ll pick you up at seven, okay?”

“Okay, see you in a bit.”

Beca couldn’t fight the wide grin now on her face as she hung up, and Allie appeared at the foot of the stairs with the same grin.

“You and I both know you like that girl,” she concluded smugly.

“Whatever you say,” Beca sighed.

At seven on the dot, Beca and her aunt were parked outside the Beale residence in her slick black Chevy Silverado. Chloe was already locking up the house. Jesse and Luke had picked up the kegs earlier to take them to the lake, and Benji had taken his father’s grill. Beca could not believe how excited she was about an outing surrounded by people she actually considered close friends. Her and Jesse had become extremely close in little to no time at all, and he was almost like a twin brother the way they read each other and finished one another’s sentences. It had freaked her out at first, but Stacie and the others had found it comical.

Allie and Beca stepped out of the truck as the redhead approached, and she ran into Beca’s arms, an action that the DJ allowed herself to smile at. She couldn’t deny it. She

had missed the redhead, and she knew she owed Chloe more than what she had been giving her. A friendship was better than nothing at all, and she hoped Chloe would agree.

Beca set the redhead down before moving aside so that Allie could take a good look at her. Chloe watched in worry as the older woman sized her up, eyes squinted and lips pursed. Beca rolled her eyes at the older woman, and at last, she grinned.

"Aunt Allie, this is Chloe Beale," Beca introduced. "Chloe, this is the famous Aunt Allie."

"Oh, she's being modest," Chloe said, shaking the woman's hand. "I'm her_ best friend_, Chloe."

"So this is the girl who kept you sane out here?" Allie quipped. "I thank you for that, Chloe."

"It was rough, trust me. This one's a tough one to crack, but I managed."

"I like this one, Beca."

Beca blushed. "So do I."

Chloe sat between the two brunettes in the cab of the truck, and Beca headed off for the lake. Aunt Allie played the twenty questions game with Chloe, and the redhead answered each question without hesitation. Beca couldn't deny she was nervous, and her eyes kept glancing at the two from behind her sunglasses. Allie didn't ask anything too ridiculous or revealing for that matter, and that was one of the many reasons Beca loved her. Though she could read people better than anyone the younger brunette knew, she usually didn't need verbal confirmation of much.

Therefore, her questions were general. At last, they arrived at the lake, and Beca parked down on the beach beside Jesse's red truck and Benji's van. Beca helped Chloe out, the redhead looking stunning in always in a deep purple bikini and her white sarong, and Beca had donned another pair of Batman trunks with both the Joker and Batman on them. The trio made their way down the sand where the others were already gathered. Even Donald had come at Lily's invite, and he bumped Beca's fist as she reached them.

"Guys!" Beca called. "This is my aunt Allie. Aunt Allie, these are my friends."

"Do we have to hide the alcohol?" Amy asked quickly, and Allie chuckled.

"No, but I will take a drink," Allie said, and Amy quickly fetched the three drinks.

"Anyway," Beca proceeded. "This is Cynthia Rose or CR, Fat Amy-"

"Fat Amy?" her aunt asked, giving her a weird look.

"She calls herself that so twig bitches don't do it behind her back."

"I like you already."

"Oh you ain't seen nothing yet, Auntie!" Amy assured her with a cheeky grin as she shook her hand. Beca rolled her eyes but laughed.

"Moving along, this is Stacie, Benji, Luke, Ashley, Jessica, Denise, Lily, Donald and Jesse."

“Best friend at your service,” Jesse added, shaking her hand.

“Actually, I’m the best friend,” Chloe corrected him.

“Hey!”

“Shut it, Swanson. You gave up that right when we schooled you in beer pong.”

“You had the child sports prodigy on your team! That’s unfair. Beca!”

“I’m staying out of it,” Beca immediately informed him.

“Wow, I like them,” Allie said, nudging her niece.

“Yeah, they’re the coolest glee club and choir nerds I’ve ever met.”

“So you all sing?”

“Yes!” they all chimed.

“Yeah, they’re really good, but step monster junior is their Nazi leader, so she gives them songs older than all of us combined to sing. It’s revolting.”

“She speaks truth,” CR nodded sadly.

“And Jesse, you’re in choir too?” Allie asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied, “but Beca and I met because of football.”

“Football! Beca, you’re gonna play again?!” She suddenly jerked the small DJ into a tight embrace. “Why didn’t you tell me! I’m so proud of you!”

“Thank-the hyperactive redhead,” Beca breathed out.

Allie then released her and quickly hugged Chloe, who of course hugged her back.

“Thank you, hyperactive redhead,” she giggled. “I’m so proud, Beca. I will definitely think of staying down her. I miss seeing you play, and your dad would be so proud.”

Beca only grinned at her aunt, knowing she was absolutely right. Darren and Allie had been really close when they first met, and she loved him for her sister. Her aunts Sarah and Michelle had also really enjoyed Allie, and they had been a really tight family despite distance.

“Oh, by the way, your other aunts are gonna try and make it out soon,” she informed Beca. “I have to let them know you’re playing again. Sarah still has your middle school jersey.”

Beca blushed. “I knew she would.”

“She said it was her good luck charm.”

Beca had allowed her Aunt Sarah to have her middle school jersey when she was having a breast cancer scare. She had come out just fine, but she blamed it solely on the jersey and the tapes of Beca’s games she watched in the hospital. After that is when she had started traveling a lot because she didn’t want to waste her life away.

Throughout dinner and several drinks, Allie was thoroughly entertained with Amy’s many far-fetched tales and Jesse and Beca’s constant banter. Chloe sat beside the DJ, but she didn’t get too close, and Beca noticed. She knew she should be thankful. It was what she had wanted, but she couldn’t help the feeling of longing for the redhead to reach

out and take her hand or link their arms. Still, she said nothing. It was a calm night, and the redhead was smiling. She was grateful for that.

After dinner, the group made their way down to the moonlit water. Jesse had music playing in his truck, and they started throwing one another into the cool waves. Somehow they wound up in a game of free-for-all chicken, and Beca surprisingly had Chloe on her shoulders. She was battling Stacie atop Jesse's shoulders currently, and soon, Amy was rushing forth with Jessica atop her.

"Move you bitches!" she cried. "The kracken has been unleashed!"

In one fluid movement, the two had knocked Luke and Ashley into the water. Cynthia Rose and Denise had capsized first, and Benji was balancing a light Aunt Allie on his own shoulders. Allie had been able, with much struggle, to throw over Lily and Donald. Once Chloe knocked Stacie away, Beca stepped towards Benji.

"Okay, Red, let's see what you got," the old woman said, their hands locked. "This is your initiation into the family!" Beca just about fell over herself at that, but Chloe only giggled and pushed forth. Beca felt her legs tighten around her, and she realized then that this was not her best idea. She had Chloe pressed against her neck, her body, and Chloe's long, gorgeous legs were making her head spin. What she was unaware of was what effect the touch of her hands squeezing the redhead's thighs were doing to the taller girl above her. Both of them were spinning right about now, but Chloe still managed to sink Aunt Allie and Benji. Suddenly, Beca felt herself stumble back as Amy belly-bumped her. She caught her footing just barely.

“Hey, Amy, that’s cheating!” she growled.

“Feel the fat power!” Amy shot back, causing Allie to giggle.

“Come on, Chlo, last one.”

Chloe immediately locked hands with Jessica, and Beca held her own, all of her working out paying off now. Everyone was cheering them on.

“I should’ve taken that cardio tip more seriously,” Amy panted.

“How much have you done?” Jessica asked above her.

“You’re seeing it.”

Jessica broke concentration for one minute, and Chloe was able to knock her over with a splash. The redhead threw her arms up in victory as the others cheered. The moment her legs loosened around Beca, the brunette grinned deviously. Allie’s eyes widened as she read her niece, but she wasn’t fast enough to warn the redhead. Beca grabbed her calves and launched her backwards into the water with a splash. Everyone went dead quiet until the redhead emerged, eyes narrowed and looking like a very angry cat. Beca was the first to burst into hysterical laughter, and the others followed suit. Chlo rushed towards the brunette, grabbing her head as she doubled over in laughter and tipping her forward into the water. Beca jumped up instantly coughing and floundering. The others only laughed harder. She wiped water from her eyes, and lunged at the snickering redhead, tackling her under the water once more. The others watched in amusement as the two interacted. Everyone knew the two had deep feelings for one another, and they couldn’t wait until the day Beca

was healed enough to act on them. As their friends, they would continue to help in any way that they could. It was what friends were for, and whether Beca could believe it or not, that's what they were. Although she didn't allow them deep inside of her walls, she had in fact crawled deep inside of their hearts, and each and every one of them could attest to this.

6. As Children Do

A/N: So, are we ready for another chapter? Thanks again for all of the support. I love you guys so much, and I'm glad you enjoy it! Without further ado...

Song: If You Could See Me Now-The Script

Tattooed on my arm is a charm to disarm all the harm

Gotta keep myself calm but the truth is you're gone

And I'll never get to show you these songs

Dad you should see the tours that I'm on

I see you standing there next to Mom

Both singing along, yeah arm in arm

And there are days when I'm losing my faith

Because the man wasn't good he was great

He'd say "Music was the home for your pain"

And explained I was young, he would say

Take that rage, put it on a page

Take the page to the stage

Blow the roof off the place

I'm trying to make you proud

Do everything you did

I hope you're up there with God saying "That's my kid!"

"Why do you love music so much, Daddy?" she asked.

Darren smiled and picked up his small twelve-year-old stepdaughter, who could still fit easily in his lap as he faced his computer.

"Well, you sing all the time, don't you, grasshopper?" he asked.

She giggled. "Yeah, and Mommy says I'm cute, but I'm not."

He chuckled. "Of course not. You're tough, but does music make you feel good?"

"Yeah, a lot."

"Okay, well music is the universal medicine. It heals all of the pain and scars on the inside that doctors can't see, like ones on your heart. It makes you feel better. Making music is a way to get all of your emotions out. It's a home for your pain. You can write music or mix music to sound the way that you feel. It gives you an easier way to speak, to be heard."

"You know, you're really smart, Daddy."

He smiled that signature boyish grin of his, his wife standing at the door with a matching grin.

"Thanks, Bug, and so are you. That's how I know I can teach you to make music like me."

She brightened significantly. "Really! You'll teach me!"

"Of course. You're my little princess."

"Daddy, will you stay my daddy forever and ever?"

His grin only widened, and Leah's heart swelled, tears forming in her eyes. "Yes, forever, Bug."

"Don't leave me, okay?"

"I never will. I promise."

Beca ran her fingers subconsciously over the headphone tattoo on her dominant left wrist, the hand she learned to write music with. She had been thinking of her stepfather as "If You Could See Me Now" came on the radio. She had just pulled up to the Mitchell residence. She had made a deal with Will at last. Well, Aunt Allie did. She could stay with Allie during the week as long as she came home on the weekends and ate with him and Lauren. She didn't complain. She just complied. She stepped off the truck, muscles a tad bit sore from the most strenuous workout her and Jesse had completed thus far. She wanted nothing more than to take a shower and get to mixing.

Chloe heard Beca's truck pull into the driveway across the street through her open window. It had been a few days since the lake party, and she usually worked out with Beca during the evenings when she wasn't working out with the volleyball team at Aubrey's orders. At least she wasn't breathing down their necks constantly.

Chloe decided to go see the brunette, so she changed into jean shorts and a plain white v-neck before heading over to the Mitchell residence. Her and Beca had been texting nonstop since the lake party, and she had a hunch that Beca's aunt had spoken to her about the redhead. They had been doing great, and Chloe was respectful of the brunette's boundaries. She knocked on the big red door a few times and waited. It was Lauren who opened the door.

"Hey, Chloe!" she greeted warmly.

"Hey, Lauren," Chloe returned with a sweet smile. "I came to see Beca."

Lauren's smile faltered instantly. "Chloe, why do you hang out with that girl? She's nothing but trouble, you know."

Chloe's anger instantly began to rise, but she kept her reserve. "You don't really know her then, Lauren. She's really nice and sweet when you give her a chance."

"Chloe, you're not-I heard that she's a lesbian. You wouldn't-"

"We're just friends, Lauren, but I haven't told Aubrey because she won't give her a chance either, and I don't need her judging me on it. I like Beca."

"Well, Chloe, she can only hurt you. She's going to end up in jail or something soon."

Chloe knew her reserve wouldn't last long. "Can I just go up and see her please?"

Lauren opened her mouth to say something more but thought better of it and moved aside to let the redhead in. Lauren returned to the den while Chloe hopped upstairs,

her smile long gone and irritation evident in her eyes. She opened the door to the brunette's room quickly, but she found that Beca was nowhere to be found. Then she heard something that caught her attention, a soft but strong voice floating from down the hall. Chloe looked towards the source. It was coming from the bathroom she guessed. She knew that she was supposed to be watching boundaries, but she couldn't help it. The voice was so sweet and full of emotion. Her favorite song "Titanium" was what was being sung, and she couldn't help herself. She could hear the shower water running, and she carefully opened the door just a bit. As the voice grew louder, Chloe stepped into the foggy room and shut the door. She stood there for a moment, staring at the emerald green shower curtain that she knew was concealing the small DJ. As Beca hit a higher note, she couldn't stop herself from pulling the curtain back slightly with a grin.

"You do sing!" she squealed.

"Dude!" Beca hollared, whipping around and losing her footing before falling hard on her ass in the shower. She tried to grab the shower curtain to save herself, but that, along with the pole holding it up, came down with her. "OW!"

"Ooh, sorry!" Chloe said. "But you do sing!"

"I'm aware! Jesus, Chlo, what the hell are you doing?"

"I came to see you, but you weren't in your room. Then I heard you singing."

"So you decided it was a good idea to just waltz in?"

"I really didn't decide anything. It just-happened."

“Wow, you are something else.”

Chloe grabbed Beca’s arm and helped her up, the brunette clutching the fallen curtain to her body with her face as red as Chloe’s hair. Chloe just stood there grinning.

“I’m-nude,” Beca pointed out, cowering behind the curtain.

“You should totally join the glee club,” Chloe went on, ignoring Beca’s comment.

“I can’t concentrate on anything when you’re standing there grinning like that.”

“You should be more confident about-all that.”

“Oh my God! Chloe, I’ll be out in a sec. Just please.”

It was then that it must have hit Chloe how wrong of a choice she had made, and her grin fell away instantly.

“Oh my God, Beca, I’m so sorry, I-”

“Chloe, just please.”

“Okay.”

Chloe quickly retreated out of the bathroom, tears already forming in her eyes. She wanted to just leave, just go back home and kick herself for being so stupid. After everything had just been fixed, she made such an impulsive move. She was dead set on running home. Then she remembered the evil woman downstairs constantly judging the DJ, and instead, she turned into Beca’s room, closing the door behind her. She looked around the room, and she saw the DJ’s laptop up. She lit up once more, wiping her tears away. She sat down in the desk chair. She knew it would probably

be a bad thing to touch it, but this was Chloe. She lived to test boundaries. Her hands darted to the keyboard and quickly retracted, hitting play.

“Oops,” she said to no one.

She waited a beat, listening for any footsteps before sliding the headphones over her head.

Beca could not believe what just happened. She stood stone still for a long few minutes after Chloe vacated the bathroom, allowing herself to calm down. She could not believe the audacity of the redhead, but something about it all intrigued her. She shook it from her head and quickly fixed the curtain before rinsing out her hair and stepping out of the shower. She knew she had probably scared Chloe with freaking out the way she did. The redhead was already walking on eggshells around her, and she didn't like being the reason Chloe was so unlike herself. She decided she would have to show Chloe it was okay, that she wasn't mad. After she dressed, she headed to her room, hoping the redhead had stayed. As she opened the door, she found the taller girl sitting at her desk with the DJ's earphones over her ears. Beca smirked as the redhead bobbed her head to a mix Beca had been planning to tweak a bit. It was “Titanium” and “Daylight” by Maroon 5, a mix two years in the making that shouldn't have worked but had come around pretty well in her ears. Beca crept up behind her, and when she was right behind Chloe, she grabbed her shoulders in a swift movement. The redhead squealed, jumping off of the chair and landing on the ground with a thud. Beca doubled over in uncontrolled laughter as Chloe floundered around. When she looked up at the brunette, she scowled.

"That wasn't funny!" she shot out, standing up.

"You-should've-seen your-face!" Beca breathed between laughs. "Oh my God! Priceless!"

"Shut up." Chloe couldn't help the giggle that escaped her however. "You're a jerk."

"You love-" Beca caught herself just in time, her eyes wide. "my humor."

Chloe caught the slip-up but knew better than to acknowledge it. "Keep telling herself that."

"So, to what do I owe the pleasure, Beale?"

"Well, I saw you pull up, so I thought I'd come bug you."

"You never bug me." *Dammit, Mitchell, lock it up!* "Uh, but, do you always watch me like a stalker to see when I come home?"

"Eh, more or less. By the way, that mix is awesome. Is that yours?"

"Yeah, so I guess with or without my okay, you would have heard them."

She grinned. "You know it. Your dad wasn't biased though. You're really good."

"Thanks. So, what do you wanna do today?"

"I don't know. I didn't think that far ahead."

Beca snorted a laugh, and Chloe's cheeks flushed. "Okay, well since I'm forbidden from my aunt's each weekend, how

about we go get some Chinese takeout then come back here, and I'll show you what all of this stuff can do?"

Chloe's eyes got ten shades brighter. "Really! You would do that!"

"Well, you already heard a mix. For me, that's the hardest part."

"Yay!"

Chloe reached out and grabbed Beca's hand, but the moment she did, her eyes bulged, and she dropped it. Beca quirked an eyebrow. Then, without really thinking, she grabbed Chloe's hand back and pulled her down the stairs, completely oblivious to the glare Lauren shot them from the couch. When they got into the truck, Beca pulled out and onto the road.

"Beca," Chloe said softly, knowing this had to be done. "Does it bother you? When I touch you?"

Beca sighed, well aware that this had to happen. Everyone had warned her.

"Chlo, I understand that you're like that. You're touchy feely, and I got used to it. It isn't that. I just-don't want you getting hurt if I don't exactly do it back and stuff."

"Okay, Beca, you know I like you, but I know you're not ready. I just-wanna understand what you're afraid of. I thought you trusted me."

"It's not about trusting you, Chloe. It's just, you know, you get hurt once, and it's hard to trust the situation ever again, not necessarily the person. Listen, I mean, hypothetically, what exactly would you tell Aubrey?"

"I don't have to tell her anything. If she doesn't like it, that's her problem. She's my best friend, not my mother. She can't tell me who to be with."

"What about her mom and dad?"

"What about them? I wouldn't be with them. I'd be with you. You know, I just had this conversation with Lauren actually. She told me you were trouble, and I told her that she didn't really know you if that's all she could say."

"Really?"

"Yeah, when she answered the door."

Beca couldn't help but smile. "Thanks. Look, Chloe, I-I like you. I can see myself liking you as more than a friend one day maybe, but I'm not ready. I just got out of my first relationship, and I know you deserve more than a mess like me. I'm just asking for time."

"That's all you had to say, Becs. I can do that. I'm willing to do that."

"Yeah, I know. I'm just not one to talk things out. I act things out instead, in a negative manner."

"It's okay. We'll work on that."

Beca spent the afternoon showing Chloe the ins and outs of mixing, being patient with her as her stepfather had been patient with the DJ. Chloe got the hang of it pretty easily, but when she did take on a look of complete confusion, Beca couldn't help but laugh. It was the most adorable thing in the world. She was glad she hadn't lost the redhead, and Chloe saying that she wouldn't mind Aubrey if they were to get together had her thinking that maybe

Chloe wasn't like Kelly. Maybe she wouldn't hurt her. Maybe, just maybe, she could allow herself to be loved again.

On Monday afternoon, Beca and Chloe met up with Allie for a day on the town. Beca had planned out pretty much a whole day where the three of them could bond together, and she was rather excited. They stopped to eat at Penny's, where Allie was convinced that the two girls were exaggerating about how good their burgers were. They took a seat at the booth in the back, Chloe sitting beside Beca, and the waitress took their drink and burger orders.

"So, Beca," Allie sighed. "Football. How's the workout going?"

"It's going well," Beca nodded. "I got up two thirty-five Saturday and yesterday morning. Twenty pounds over Jesse and the same as Luke, and that guys a beast."

She chuckled. "And how's volleyball, Chloe?"

"It's going really well," Chloe replied. "Without Aubrey here, we can actually work together without wanting to tear our hair out. After we lost the championship last year, no one signed up for this year except us, so that leaves Aubrey and I as co-captains, but she's not too good at sharing. Like, at all."

"Wow, and you live with her, Beca?"

"Eh, I piss her off to entertain myself. You know, Chloe stood up to the step monster for me."

"Is that so?" Chloe nodded with a wide grin. "Better you than me, Red. I'd tear her to pieces."

"I just don't understand what he sees in her, you know. She's a demon."

"Honestly, Becs? I think Will was intimidated by your mother."

"But how would that make sense? He's obviously intimidated by his wife now. She took his spine, and when she talks shit to me, he doesn't say a word."

"Yeah, but your mother was bright and fun and full of life. He was stiff and gloomy all the damn time. He wanted someone to drown in his misery with him, someone as stiff and sullen as him."

"Well, that's Lauren alright." Chloe chimed as their drinks arrived.

"How the hell are you best friends with Aubrey?" Beca asked now.

"Well, she isn't always like that. She's been worse this year since the state championship. Lauren was really disappointed. I've known her since we were five. We always played together being right across the street, and Will and Lauren took me in. Lauren wasn't always like that either, but she does push Aubrey too hard. That's why Aubrey's the way she is. She just wants Lauren to be proud." Beca couldn't deny that she could relate. "Anyway, Aubrey was there when my dad died. She was there for me, so I guess we just stayed friends. She doesn't treat me great all the time, but we have our moments, and I'm too nice to just ditch her."

"Of course you are," Allie said. "You're like an angel."

“She can’t be an angel,” Beca snorted. “Redheads don’t have souls. Aubrey’s just God punishing her for being a ginger.”

Allie nearly spit out her sprite at that as Beca slapped the table, laughing hard. Chloe slapped her upside the head, stopping her laughter.

“Ow, not necessary!” Beca hissed, now rubbing her head.

“Neither was that comment,” Chloe retorted.

“Sorry, Chloe, but it was a good one,” Allie chuckled.
“Okay, though, let’s behave before we get thrown out of this fine establishment.”

After Allie at last admitted Penny’s in fact had the best burger she had ever tasted, the trio headed off into Atlanta, and Chloe was in awe when they pulled into the parking lot of Six Flags. She was jumping up and down in her seat like a toddler, and Beca smirked.

“No way!” she gasped as they stepped out.

“You said you’ve never been, Chlo,” she reminded her, one of their earlier conversations popping into her head.

“Neither has Aunt Allie, so here we are. It’s part of being a kid.”

Darren had brought Beca and Leah twice one summer, and Beca had loved the Batman coaster they had, although she only just scraped the height requirement. Of course she did. It explained why she had her white tanktop with the yellow and black Batman logo in the middle on today. She took Chloe’s hand as they made their way inside. They rode every single ride there was to ride, and Chloe had a blast as well as Aunt Allie, who was indeed the thrill seeker and a

child at heart. Chloe had never been on a roller coaster, so it was no surprise when she cut off all circulation to the DJ's hand on every single one. They rode the Batman coaster three times, and Beca was running around like a little kid after each go. Chloe smiled.

"Can we go one more time please?" She begged her wary looking counterparts.

"We'll wait right here, Becs, go on," Aunt Allie said with a smile.

"Okay, be right back!"

Beca ran off, and Chloe giggled as she joined Allie on a bench beneath an umbrella.

"I swear, sometimes she's three years old again," Allie sighed.

"I bet she was adorable then too," Chloe commented aloud, still staring after the small brunette.

"Oh, well, why don't you come stay with us tonight, and I'll pull out the photo albums?"

Chloe looked at her with a big smile. "Really?"

"Yeah, of course. I know Beca won't mind. Well, she may mind the pictures a bit but not you staying over." Chloe blushed, looking away once more. "You really like her, don't you, Red?"

"Is it that obvious?"

"Maybe a little." She squinted her eyes, leaving a small distance between her thumb and index finger to emphasize

the point. "I trust you though. She's happy, and though she isn't ready now, I know she will be eventually. She's just trying to cope, you know. She lost her parents then a guy she hasn't seen in almost a decade swoops in and whisks her away just for the sake of his reputation, to get back at my sister and her family. You know what though? I'm sort of glad he did because if he hadn't, she never would have met you, and even if she would've been with me and content, she wouldn't be as bright as she is now. You know, she loves football, but her aunts and I were really scared that she wouldn't play without Darren."

"Her stepdad, right?"

"Right. He played at Notre Dame but didn't get to go into the draft because of a knee injury. He started working at a warehouse building airplane parts, and my sister was the auditor. She loved the job somehow, and I don't know how because auditors seem uptight and snobby. My sister was—well, she was a lot like you, happy all of the time. Then Will did that, and it broke her apart. I don't know. Anyway, she met Darren, and before that, Beca couldn't stay in one school to save her life. Then he came in, taught her how to play football and make music. It focused her energy on something other than acting out, and he saved her. She loved the game as much as he did, and they went to games all of the time. She's an amazing player, and she showed all the boys up. They were jealous, but she didn't care because Darren wouldn't let her. He was proud, and all she wanted was her dad to be proud of her. Oh, he loved her so much. It was amazing. They even looked alike with their damn smirks and lack of height." Chloe giggled. "He always bragged about her to everyone and anyone who would listen, and when his sister got breast cancer, he gave her tapes of Beca's games to watch. Beca gave her that middle

school jersey, and to this day, she swears it was that jersey that made her healthy again.”

“She’s amazing. I know that many people here don’t see it. I know Will and Aubrey and Lauren don’t, but I do. I understand that they didn’t give her a chance. They just expect her to get over it, and I guess I sort of did too at first, but now I’m willing to wait.”

“I guarantee you, Red, it’s worth it. She has the biggest heart, no matter how many pieces it’s currently in, but she’s healing. She’s actually trying to heal when the Beca we knew would always just shut down and bottle it up inside. She would let it consume her, and she would go into self-destruct mode. She’s gonna play football again, and it’s all thanks to you, so don’t give up. She likes you. She just doesn’t want you to have to deal with this for her. She has to prove to herself she can do it before she gives her love to someone else.”

“You know, she’s right. You’re really awesome.”

Allie chuckled. “Thanks. I was only ten when Beca was born, so we were pretty close in age. We’ve always been close, and I helped her cope with her sexuality last year. You know, I hadn’t even admitted to myself that I liked girls *and* boys, and there goes that hobbit telling her parents and the rest of the world.” They shared a laugh. “She inspired me, and I came out. She’s everything to me now. I would do anything for her, and if I didn’t mean any of this, I wouldn’t say it. If I didn’t trust you, Chloe, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. I know it’s hard for her to talk about it and get you to understand, but I also know she wants to, and I’ll help her in any way that I can because I just want her to be happy.”

“She’s proud of you, trust me. She loves you very much, and I do hope you stay. I know she deserves someone much better than Lauren looking after her.”

“You’re a good one, Chloe, and I’m glad it’s you that found her.”

That night, after visiting the Botanical Gardens and picking up dinner, the three arrived at Allie’s condo exhausted. They had stopped at Chloe’s house to get the redhead some clothes before heading back, and Beca had suggested she bring her bathing suit. She had. Now, as Beca and Chloe sat at the table unpacking dinner, Allie disappeared upstairs.

“Thanks for today, Becs,” she said softly. “It meant a lot to me.”

“You can’t complete your childhood until you’ve been to an amusement park, Chlo,” Beca said in a serious manner. “There’s a checklist somewhere. Like, have you ever, uh, built a blanket fort?”

Chloe blushed and duck her head. “No,” she muttered.

“What!?”

Without another word, Beca jumped up from her chair and darted upstairs. Chloe raised an eyebrow. She could hear low chatter coming from the second floor but couldn’t make out the words. Several moments later, she heard two sets of footsteps on the stairs, and she looked up to see Beca and Allie carrying down what had to be every blanket and pillow in the house. Chloe beamed. Beca nonchalantly re-entered the kitchen and started carrying chairs into the living room. Chloe sat there, patiently sipping her soda while Allie and Beca silently constructed the most epic

structure ever seen. It took them all of fifteen minutes before Beca came into the kitchen. Allie followed, and she began grabbing all of the food. Beca grabbed Chloe's hand without a word and yanked her into the living room. Chloe's eyes widened. The fort they had created was huge in both length and width. It covered the entire room. There was a nice-sized opening at the side, and the sheets even draped over the TV, held on the wall by thumbtacks. The floor was laden with pillows, and Beca and Allie looked rather proud of themselves. Allie crawled in and set the food on the coffee table within. She then motioned the other two to follow her. She had also brought down a box, but it had yet to be opened. Beca and Chloe sat down beside her, and she handed out the plates. They began to eat, and Chloe was still in awe.

"Wow, Beca, you don't kid at all, do you?" the redhead breathed.

"See, that's the thing though," Beca returned. "I 'kid' *a lot*. Hence, the fort."

Chloe giggled. "Thank you for watching out for my childhood."

"Oh, it's my pleasure. I really just needed an excuse to build a fort."

"You never need an excuse to build a fort," Allie chided.

"Dammit, I wish you would have told me that a long time ago. Anyway, Chlo, one year, all three of my aunts came home for Christmas."

"Oh boy!" Allie sighed with a chuckle.

“Yeah, oh boy is right. Anyway, my mom had to stop by at work, so she left them and my dad home with me. Well, I was feeling a bit sad that my mom was gone on Christmas Eve even for a little while, so they went around the house collecting every blanket, sheet, towel, chair, pillow and stuffed animal. They cleared the rooms and everything. When I got out of the bath, I walked down the stairs, and it was like a tunnel of blankets. I had to climb inside, but the whole living room was like a giant tent. My dad had the playstation hooked up, and they had a bunch of snacks, and they were all in their pajamas just like me. I was the happiest kid in the world.”

“Wow, that sounds like so much fun,” Chloe gushed. “You have a great family.”

“Yeah, I do. I can’t wait for you to meet the rest of the aunts. The three of them together in a room is quite a show. Aunt Sarah was always a class clown. She travels a lot now and has been all over the world. Aunt Michelle is a doctor in Seattle, but she has the crudest sense of humor.”

“She taught Beca all about sex ed in seventh grade before school started,” Allie snorted. “When she found out Beca liked girls, she apologized for like three hours because she thought she had made her scared of penises.”

The three of them burst into a fit of laughter, Beca nearly choking on a piece of pasta.

“Aw, is that what happened, Becs?” Chloe asked.

“I’m not exactly sure actually,” Beca replied thoughtfully. “Huh.”

“No, it was not,” Allie assured her. “Beca liked girls since she was little. She used to walk around with a picture of

Demi Moore in her diaper.”

“I did not!”

“You so did. Then, in like third grade, she had a huge poster of Christina Aguilera that she used to sing love songs to. ‘Genie in a Bottle’ was her jam.” Chloe burst into giggles.

“Ugh, and you made it so long without embarrassing anecdotes.”

“Oh, speaking of which.” Allie reached over and opened the box now.

“What is that? Oh, please. Tell me that’s not-”

Allie handed Chloe a book out of the box. Beca attempted to reach for it, but Chloe held her forearm to the smaller girl’s chest as she opened the book. It was a photo album. The first page included Beca in the bath, Beca running away from the camera with only a diaper. On her head. There was one of her with her face full of chocolate and her eyes wide. There was one of her and her mom in the hospital the day she was born. Will was not in the picture. Chloe giggled, and Beca collapsed atop the pillows groaning.

“You were the most adorable thing!” Chloe cooed, pinching her cheek.

Beca slapped her hand away. “I’m not adorable, Beale, we’ve been through this.”

“Well, you had a cute butt!”

“Oh my gosh! You are so creepy!”

"I'm going to make copies of these, so when you get famous, I can sell them."

Beca shot up. "You wouldn't dare."

"Don't test me, Mitchell."

Chloe spent a good two hours laughing over pictures with Allie, and after the second album full of them, Beca adopted the "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" philosophy, actually explaining some of the more recent pictures to her. There was even the trading card of Beca in her football gear that she had given Allie after seventh grade.

"Oh my gosh, wow!" Chloe gasped. "Now, I can't wait until the season."

"Chloe Middle Name Beale!" Beca snapped. "My aunt is right there!"

"Like I mind," Allie scoffed. "I'm not the one that made you scared of boy junk."

Chloe and Allie laughed while Beca scowled. "You two are evil."

Despite being thoroughly humiliated, Beca was really enjoying her time with the two most important girls in her- wait, what? Wow, it was the truth. Chloe was important to her. She couldn't imagine a life without her, and Beca was starting to feel less and less terrified of the fact. I mean, she was actually admitting it to herself now. It was the glint in her bright blue eyes, the megawatt smile, the melodic voice that sent Beca's thoughts into overdrive. This girl was really getting under her skin. She had planted herself in Beca's life, slowing tearing down her walls brick by brick. Sure, it was still alarming, but it wasn't as scary as it had

first been. Beca was actually rooting for her. Seeing Chloe interact with her aunt was magical, and she knew that Allie liked Chloe a lot. Allie wasn't one to beat around the bush or pretend. She had invited Chloe to stay over without Beca asking her, and that spoke volumes. For Christ's sake, she had helped Beca build her a fort and take her to an amusement park. Yeah, Chloe had received the coveted stamp of approval, something Kelly had never even been close to getting even from Beca's mother. This was different, and both Beca and Allie were sure that Beca's parents would approve as well. Well then, Beca sure did have some thinking to do.

7. The One Time I Wanted to be Wrong

A/N: You guys...are awesome. I love this so much. So much support. I guess this fic is coming out better than ever intended, and I'm thankful for that. You should all know me well by now. We need high school dramatics all over this of course, and I'm never one to make things too easy, right? So here...we...go. Oh, and to DieZeitVergeht, I really hope your teeth feel better

Song: Love Somebody-Maroon 5

You're such a hard act for me to follow

Love me today, don't leave me tomorrow, yeah

But if I fall for you, I'll never recover

If I fall for you, I'll never be the same

I really wanna love somebody

I really wanna dance the night away

I know we're only half way there

But you can take me all the way, you can take me all the way

I really wanna touch somebody

I think about you every single day

I know we're only half way there

But you can take me all the way, you can take me all the way

I don't know where to start, I'm just a little lost

I wanna feel like we never gonna ever stop

I don't know what to do, I'm right in front of you

Asking you to stay, you should stay, stay with me tonight

With two weeks until school started and one week until football practice began, Beca, Luke and Jesse spent a lot of time on the field mastering their footwork and working on plays, doing their warmup agilities and shuffling drills to get their forms ready for play. Today was no different. They were tossing the ball around, Beca catching passes from Jesse and getting past Luke when a tall, barrel-chested man with dark hair appeared from the tunnel that led into the locker room. He had on khaki shorts and a maroon polo, one of the school colors. He approached the three as they regrouped at midfield.

"Swanson," he greeted firmly. "Bryant. You guys getting ready for the season?"

"You know it, Coach Jackson," Jesse returned.

"And who is this?" The coach nodded at Beca now, and Jesse grinned.

"*This*, is our new secret weapon, Coach. Your future star halfback."

"Oh, really?" He surveyed Beca now, who didn't shy away. "How do you figure?"

"You remember that really bad loss to Dawson High last year?"

He huffed. "How could I forget? That damn little halfback-" His eyes bulged as realization hit him head on. "No way! You?"

Beca chuckled, taking his extended hand. "Yes, sir. Beca Mitchell," she said.

"Wow, kid, you were phenomenal! Our defense couldn't keep up." He eyed Luke now who just shrugged. "And what are you doing at Barden?"

"Just moved here."

"Wait, Mitchell? Like, as in, Will Mitchell?"

"Yeah, that's my father."

"You don't say. This is crazy. Well, I've never coached a girl before."

"Trust me, Coach," Luke said now. "On the field and in the weight room, she's more than just one of the guys. She's going to show up half the team, I swear. She's tougher than

majority of them. She benches two thirty-five with ease, no help.”

“Wow, you’re-small.”

“But fast. You saw it. I of course saw it. She’s going to score a lot of touchdowns for us.”

“Well, I’ll see you at practice next week then, Mitchell.”

“Yes, sir,” she replied, relieved that he didn’t show any signs of disdain. “Looking forward to it.”

“Carry on then. Stay strong.”

Beca left the field that day feeling great. It had been a great few weeks all in all. Her and Chloe had been almost inseparable since the night at her Aunt Allie’s, and her, Jesse and Luke had been working hard on their workouts. She even put up with movie night once a week with the whole gang at Allie’s, and she actually enjoyed it. She had also given Luke some of her best mixes. He had really enjoyed them, and he had given them to his brother, who had also loved them and was now working on getting the okay to put them in rotation. She also got to spend a lot of much needed time with her Aunt Allie. They talked about anything and everything, the one person she could really lay herself bare to, and Allie gave great advice. That advice had ultimately led her to this upcoming night. Everyone was meeting at the lake to finish off the last of the alcohol they had accumulated over the summer, and Beca planned on finally asking Chloe to be her girlfriend. After much deliberation and many mind changes and a dozen talks with Jesse, Stacie, Allie and even Cynthia Rose, Beca had at last made the courageous decision to hand over her heart. She had never been more excited and anxious in her life, but she knew she was ready now. She had even had a long talk

with her mom and stepdad one night, kneeling beside her bed. When she finished asking for their blessing, she had felt the deepest peace to ever fall upon her, and she knew then that she was making the right decision. She trusted Chloe. Chloe had proven herself. It was going to be perfect.

Beca was showered and ready to go by six thirty. They had planned to meet at seven, and she had to fetch Chloe. Aubrey would be home that night, but she didn't go to parties, and besides, Chloe had assured Beca that the blonde would not be a factor in their relationship. She donned her best pair of Batman trunks with the emblem on one side and the figure himself on the other and her batman tanktop. She then slipped on her Batman flip-flops and combed out her hair. She was feeling confident, and she loved it. She had only ever felt like this doing music or playing football, but Chloe had changed that. As cheesy as it sounds, she was the music now. Thoughts of the redhead laced each mix, each written song, and Beca didn't mind anymore.

Chloe was already at Beca's truck when the brunette came out. Will and Lauren had already left to pick up Aubrey at the airport, so Beca locked up the house and grinned at Chloe. Chloe could tell there was something different about the DJ, something brighter and livelier, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. Her accusations were confirmed however when Beca, of her own accord, scooped the redhead into her arms and picked her up into a tight hug.

"Did you miss me?" Chloe giggled.

"Yes, I did," Beca returned.

She opened the passenger door of the truck and helped Chloe inside. She turned the music on the moment she

started the vehicle, and she was singing along softly.

“Okay, who are you, and what have you done with my DJ?”
Chloe chuckled.

Beca glared at her playfully. “I’m just in a good mood, Red, jeez.”

“Oh, okay. Sorry. Well, I’m glad you’re in a good mood.”

“You should be.”

“May I ask why?”

“Well-” Beca didn’t wanna tell her yet, so she came up with another reason that was just as truthful. “The season starts in a week, and I met the coach today. He’s pretty excited that I’m on the team once Jesse and Luke bragged about who I was.”

Chloe beamed. “You’re gonna be great, Becs, and I’ll be there.”

“Would you-even wear my jersey?”

Chloe’s eyes widened. Tom had never even offered his jersey. “Really?”

“Yeah, of course. What’s my number one fan without my jersey?”

“Oh my gosh, yes! Of course I would wear it, Becs!”

“Good.” Beca’s cheeks nearly split with the grin she was now sporting. Tonight was going to be perfect indeed.

They arrived at the lake, and the boys had already unloaded the last two kegs. Amy had a large collection of

bottles around her. Aunt Allie was already talking to Jesse about the best movies of the 80's with a beer in hand, and Luke was on the grill flipping burgers and turning hot dogs.

"Hey, Strawberry Shortcake!" Amy hollared at Beca and Chloe, and Beca rolled her eyes at the title Amy had cashed in on for them. "Now the party can start!"

Beca hugged her aunt and bumped Jesse's fist, both of them looking at her knowingly. She had revealed her plans to them already. She even had a necklace she was going to give Chloe. It had been her mother's, but she was really serious about all of this. She had finally admitted the scariest thing possible to herself. She didn't like Chloe Beale. No, she was falling in love with her. She loved the redhead, and it was vital she proved it as Chloe had done for months.

Beca handed Chloe a drink and fetched herself a beer as Donald lit up the bonfire. The moon was bright tonight, and the water glistened.

"Damn, two more weeks before school," Amy sighed. "It's torture I swear."

"It's gonna be a good year," Beca assured her with a grin. "I can feel it."

Amy raised an eyebrow now, and everyone else had the same look of confusion on their faces. Amy spoke for all of them. "Who the hell are you, and what have you done with my little ball of rage?"

Beca and the others chuckled heartily. "Will people stop asking me that? I'm just confident it's going to be the best year ever."

“What the-”

“Yeah, B, we definitely have a shot at a state title with you behind the line,” Donald assured her. “I heard you were out-shining Luke here in the weight room.”

Beca only shrugged, a smug smile on her features as Luke grinned.

“She’s a little Tasmanian Devil,” Luke said.

“That’s what all my boyfriends back home call me,” Amy chimed now. “It’s an honor.”

“I don’t even wanna know,” CR huffed. “Aubrey comes back tonight too. Back to military basic training come monday.”

“Well, we better make the best of this last night then, huh?” Stacie smirked.

Everyone raised their drinks in agreement and took a swig. It wasn’t long before everyone was taking shots with Amy and scarfing down burgers. At one point, Chloe squirted Beca in the eye with the ketchup, and she fell into a fit of laughter. Beca had simply stood up, threw Chloe over her shoulder like a rag doll and carried her down to the water with Stacie chasing behind them filming it. She tossed the redhead into the water, ketchup bottle still in hand.

“Why are you so strong!” Chloe huffed, slapping the water when she emerged.

Beca raised her arms and flexed her muscles. “Fire power! You need tickets to attend the gun show, baby.”

“Oh, God, never mind! I changed my mind. You can’t hang out with the football team.”

“Aw, come on. You know you can’t wait to see me in my gear.”

Chloe pouted. “Dammit. You got me there.”

“Aw, what happened to ‘I’m always right, even when I’m wrong’.”

“Shut it, Mitchell.”

Beca smirked. “Make-me.”

“Challenge accepted.”

Chloe lunged out of the water after Beca, and the brunette turned and ran away.

“Careful, Chlo!” Stacie yelled. “She’s a star halfback.”

“I don’t give a damn!” the redhead screeched. “She’s dead!”

“No, you can’t kill her!” Jesse yelled. “We need a state ring!”

“Oh, so you’re just using me for my body!” Beca yelled back. “Thanks, Swanson. You’ve been demoted from your best friend role.”

“You don’t mean that!”

“Try me!”

“Take it back, Mitchell! Take it back!”

Now Jesse was running after her. She made a u-turn, slipping between both him and Chloe, and the two collided, sending them both flying back. Everyone let out an “ooh!”

as Beca stumbled forward in a fit of laughter, falling to the sand. She rolled over on her back.

“Beca!” Amy suddenly yelled.

Before Beca could look up however, the wind was knocked out of her with a flash of red. Chloe now had her pinned down.

“Say uncle!” she demanded.

“Or what, Beale?” Beca scoffed. “We can lay here all night.”

“Get a room!” Amy yelled.

Before Chloe knew what was happening, Beca had broken free and she was now tickling the redhead. Chloe jumped back onto the sand as Jesse at last stood up rubbing his head. Beca stood now too with a smug grin on her face. She took Chloe’s hand, pulling her up. Chloe made to stalk past her in mock anger, but before Beca could think, she grabbed the redhead’s wrist and pulled her into her arms, unaware that all eyes were on them in silent angst.

“You giving up?” she asked Chloe softly.

“I never say die,” Chloe shot back.

“How about don’t say anything?”

“Or-”

Before she could finish the sentence, she was cut off by Beca’s lips pressed firmly to hers, and her eyes widened before fluttering shut. Her mind was racing. It wasn’t the alcohol. Alcohol hadn’t even relaxed the DJ last time. Besides, Beca’s eyes told Chloe how gone she was, and she

wasn't nearly gone enough for this to be a mistake. This was real. Beca was full on kissing her with so much passion and desire that it made the redhead's head spin. It was as if a fire had been lit in the pit of her stomach, warming her from the inside out and setting her heart ablaze. Then cheers erupted behind them, but Beca didn't care. She only smiled into the kiss. She wouldn't pull away. It was Chloe who did pull away. Yeah, Chloe. The one who had begged for this moment for months, who had promised Beca she would never be like Kelly, who had sworn to never hurt the DJ. Yeah, Chloe pulled away. Not because of not liking it. Not because of being unsure. Not even for oxygen. She jumped away when a screeching voice broke through the air. She turned around to see Aubrey making her way down the beach. She was surveying the group near the fire, trying to find Chloe. She hadn't seen her yet. There was still a chance to save herself because at the moment, every promise to the DJ was forgotten. Chloe was utterly terrified of her best friend.

Chloe walked forth, and met Aubrey a few yards away from the group. Even then, the conversation was clear, and Beca edged forth to be sure of what she heard.

"My mom said you've been visiting that outlaw at _our _house!" the blonde shrieked.

"We're friends, Aubrey," Chloe said softly, fear lacing her tone. "What's-"

"Really? Because she happens to like girls, and I know that wouldn't be a problem for you. You're with her like all of the time."

Beca waited. She waited for Chloe to say it wasn't her business, that she had no say in it, that it was her decision.

She waited, begging for the words to come out, but what actually came out of the redhead's mouth tore her to shreds.

"Aubrey, I don't even like her that way," Chloe stammered. "We're friends. She needed a friend. No one gave her a chance, and you know me. I just wanted to be friendly."

"My mom says you were being much more than friendly, Chloe."

By now, everyone was staring at Beca, pain and apology in their eyes. Allie looked appalled beyond belief. She had trusted the redhead even more than Beca had. Never had she seen this all turning out this way. Beca was frozen. She couldn't move or speak.

"Tell me what it is then, Chloe," Aubrey demanded. "You wanna associate with that hoodlum that will end up getting you into trouble or hurting you-"

Beca was surprised that it wasn't Chloe who spoke up now to defend her. It was Jesse. Never had she seen the good-natured boy so angry as he jumped to his feet.

"Hey, Aubrey, shut up!" he growled. "You know nothing about Beca! Maybe if you took that stick out of your ass for a few minutes, you would be able to see that! We're her friends. Your friends too. They like her, and we know the real her, so stop fucking talking!"

Aubrey was fuming now, fists and teeth clenched. She looked back at Chloe.

"Is that what you want, Chloe?" she breathed. "Are you picking her over me?"

“Bree, I never said that. I was just being nice. Nothing’s going on though. I swear I-”

Beca at last shook herself from the trance, and she walked forward, shocking everyone. The group held in a deep breath. She stopped at Chloe’s side, but what was seen in her eyes as she passed the group was what terrified them. It was something they had never witnessed even though she had come to them right after her parents died. Allie hadn’t even seen it the day of the funerals, and she could feel tears welling up in her own eyes. That was horrific because Allison Chalmers never cried. It wasn’t anger or fear or rage. No, that probably would have been so much easier to swallow. It was pain. Real, deep, unsaturated pain in her stormy blue eyes, and Jesse and Allie felt their breath hitch.

“Aubrey,” she sighed, defeat written all over her face, and Chloe flinched, knowing what she had just done. She had become everything she swore up and down to never be. Beca had finally let her in only moments ago, and she had done this. She had broken the promise. “I’m sorry.” Now everyone was really horrified. Even in this short time, they knew Beca Mitchell didn’t apologize. “Chloe was just being nice like she always is. Maybe I thought it was something different, and I’m sorry if I made it sound that way when Will asked. I guess I was just trying to get you mad, or him mad because he thought I was kidding about being gay. I’m not trying to take your friend from you, and I’ll back off. Simple as that. Nothing’s going on. I don’t need to be anyone’s charity case anymore. Thanks. I’ll be out of the way. Just don’t be mad at her. I guilted her into coming over, and you know Chloe’s too nice for that, so...”

Chloe could read between the lines of the entire speech Beca had just given, and her heart broke as the DJ walked

up the beach to her truck. Allie and Jesse rushed after her. Chloe didn't know what to do. She didn't know what to say. She had done it. She had done what Kelly had done, what Will had done. She had become spineless when Beca needed her the most. She had been a coward in the face of her best friend. She knew she didn't deserve the brunette's love, and she had just proved it. She had just wiped out all of the progress she had made in the last few months in just a few minutes.

Aubrey looked at Chloe expectantly though the anger that had adorned her face had dramatically subsided. She looked just as confused and surprised at Beca's apology as everyone else, and she didn't know what to say.

"Did you want a ride home?" she at last asked.

"Uh, no, I was actually staying with Stacie tonight," Chloe managed, thinking of any excuse not to go with the blonde. "We're helping her uncle paint his garage in the morning."

Aubrey nodded and headed for her car, leaving Chloe there lost and unsure of what to do. Stacie rushed to her side, pulling the redhead into her arms as sobs began to wrack her body.

"Come on, Chlo," the tall brunette whispered. "Let's go."

When the two were in the jeep, and were driving off, Stacie glanced over her at her friend. She wanted to feel bad, but honestly, it was her who had messed up. She knew she had to be blunt with Chloe as she always was, or the redhead would never understand.

"Wh-what did I just do?" Chloe gasped.

"You lost her," Stacie replied calmly. "You let her go, Chloe. She had this whole thing planned. She was gonna finally ask you to be her girlfriend. _That's _why she was so happy tonight. She talked to every single one of us about it, and every single one of us backed you, told her to trust you. She probably hates me because I scolded her for even thinking you would hurt her. I'm sorry, Chloe, but as your friend, I have to be honest with you. That might be it."

Chloe said nothing. She knew it was true, and there was nothing that she could say or do at the moment as she fell apart. Finally, the DJ was going to ask her out, make it officially, grant her wishes and make her dreams come true. Then, in one impulsive instant, Chloe had destroyed the happy ending. They didn't exist. She had hurt Beca deeply. She saw it in her eyes. The apology to Aubrey of all people was enough. Chloe had never seen the DJ hurt, even a week after burying her parents. She was hurt beyond repair, and it was all Chloe's fault.

Over at Beca's truck, the brunette was slumped in the passenger seat with Allie and Jesse beside her. Her walls were already back up, and Allie could read it in her eyes.

"Beca," she called softly.

Beca looked up with the most fake smile Allie had ever seen and nodded.

"Beca, are you-" she began, but the DJ cut her off.

"Aunt Allie," she said calmly. "I'm fine. Really. I prepared myself for it, you know? I always knew what would happen, but at least I can say I tried, you know. I did."

"Yeah, you did, Baby, but-"

“No, auntie, I’m okay. And Jess, thanks for putting that bitch in her place.”

Jesse grinned. “That’s what bros are for. Just know I’ll always be here.”

“You know, and still, after that, I believe you, so that means I’m fine. Come on. Let’s get back to the party.”

Allie couldn’t argue with her niece as she exited the truck and headed back to the fire. Stacie and Chloe had already left, and the others were quiet. Beca was hurt. She was beyond hurt, but she wasn’t ready to admit to herself that she had been right the one time she had pleaded to be wrong. She just wanted to drink and enjoy the night and forget about it. She had known. She had always known. Relationships weren’t for her, not even with bubbly, persistent redheads. She should’ve known that it was her luck to be hurt by the nicest of girls, and she vowed to be okay with it one way or another.

Amy didn’t need telling to hand Beca a shot, and the DJ downed it.

“Beca,” CR sighed. “You know we’re still your homies, right?”

Beca smiled. “Yeah, I know, and thanks for not backing down.”

“Oh, please, Short Stack, I’d pick you over blonde-zilla any day,” Amy scoffed.

The others nodded their agreement, and Beca was proud of herself. She refused to let Chloe push her to shutting down completely and losing her friends. She realized that it was

too late for that. She was in too deep, and she couldn't handle losing anymore people.

Two-a-days. Beca was thankful for two-a-days. They practiced from six a.m. to eight a.m. then they came back and practiced from four p.m. to six. She mixed in between and worked out with the team every other day. Tom was not at all happy about seeing her at practice, and he was even more upset about how nice the coach was being to her, but when she was sure the week without the redhead could not get any worse, it did. When she returned from Friday's practice to the Mitchell residence, her father entered her room and slapped a piece of paper on her desk. She looked up at him warily. He was already red in the face, and she sighed. She really wasn't up for an argument today, but just seeing his face riled her up.

"Why didn't you tell me you signed up for the football team?" he asked.

She shrugged. "Same reason you didn't tell me you were cheating on my mom. Didn't feel obligated to I guess."

He growled. "Dammit, Beca, cut the shit!"

"I like playing."

"You're a girl!"

She gasped and instantly grasped her crotch. "Oh my gosh! No way! How come no one told me! That explains why I'm forced to use my fingers on all my bitches!."

He slammed a fist onto the desk. "What the fuck is wrong with you!"

“You tell me. You’re the sperm donor!”

“You realize I have to sign this paper for you to play? The coach gave it to me at the faculty prep meeting this morning.”

Now Beca was beyond furious because she knew what he was trying to say.

“So what? You’re not gonna sign it, Will? Football is the only reason I didn’t fuck up at this school yet. It’s what I do! I did it last year, and it made my dad proud of me! It’s all I have left because my mom and dad are gone! All my dad left me was the game, so go ahead! Take it away from me! That’s what you do best! Tear the happiness from my mom and I because you’re not happy yourself! Let your jealousy consume you again! Go ahead!”

Beca then realized she had tears in her eyes, and she wiped them furiously, standing up from her desk and walking towards the window. Will’s anger instantly evaporated, but he still was very skeptical regardless of her playing prior or not. Coach Jackson had informed him of her success against them with Dawson, but he wasn’t so sure. He knew it would be a low blow even for him to take it away from her though, but she needed to learn discipline, and after the constant bickering between Aubrey and Beca had finally died down to silence, he knew he needed a way for them to come to the middle with actual communication. He now had a plan.

“Okay,” he sighed. “I’ll sign it.”

“But...” Beca knew him too well.

“You’ll need to do something else. Now, you and Aubrey both live under this roof, and you two need to learn to

communicate.” He stepped out into the hall now. “Aubrey, come in here!” Aubrey was at his side straight away. “Okay, Beca, listen. I’ll sign this, but you have to join Aubrey’s glee club.”

“What!” both girls shrieked, Beca now turning to him.

“No way,” Beca scoffed.

“Aubrey, you said you have a spot to fill,” Will said, “and you two need to get used to each other.”

“Can she even sing!” Aubrey screeched.

“You know what?” Beca sighed. “Never mind. Forget it. I won’t play. I hate this fuckin’ school anyway. No harm in getting kicked out.”

“Beca, I’m asking you to try it for one semester.”

“Have you heard their songs? It’s torture! The setlist is older than you!”

“Beca-”

“All she ever does is call me a hoodlum or an outlaw and look down on me.”

“Hence, this compromise.”

“And you should hear what everyone says. She’s a dictator. I’m not anyone’s little bitch. I-”

“Beca! Your choice! Football or nothing.”

Usually, Beca would take the bait and just simply drive Aubrey mad while she was it. The thing was that ever since the last meeting at the lake, she didn’t feel like doing

anything of the sort. Usually when she was broken, she just fucked shit up and found her release. Now, all she could do was work out and go to practice. If she lost football, she would be done, and the destruction would be to far more than just school property. So she knew she would oblige. At least she would have the girls, but damn. She could no longer avoid Chloe.

8. Friday Night Lights

A/N: So this chapter's a little different as far as POV goes somewhere in the middle. I'm sorry if I confuse you, but I really wanted you to get the full experience of the big event in this chapter from Beca's eyes. please understand lol but I do hope you have prior knowledge of football because this is where it all begins. I love the game, so that's why I put it in here. If you have questions, let me know in my inbox and ill give you a quick lesson lol

Song: Hall of Fame-The Script

Yeah, you can be the greatest

You can be the best

You can be the King Kong banging on your chest

You could beat the world

You could beat the war

You could talk to God, go banging on his door

You can go the distance

You can run the mile

You can walk straight through hell with a smile

You could be the hero

You could get the gold

Breaking all the records they thought never could be broke

Yeah, do it for your people

Do it for your pride

How you ever gonna know if you never even try

School started at Barden with not much of a bang. Beca no longer sat with Stacie and the girls. She took a seat with Jesse, Luke and Benji. She would still walk to all her classes with Stacie that they shared, and she didn't even look at Chloe in the five classes they shared (yeah, that definitely had to be either a sign or really bad luck sharing so many classes). She had glee club second to last of the day before weight training, and she had been dreading it all day. Now, as she walked with Stacie from Chemistry, the taller brunette looked over at her. Her and Stacie, despite the taller girl being Chloe's other best friend and the obvious physical attraction between the two brunettes, had really grown closer platonically over the summer and the last two weeks. She was Beca's safe haven for glee club, and she also had the other girls as well.

"Beca, don't feel too bad, okay?" she coaxed, grabbing the shorter girl's arm. "If it's any consolation, she's been crying over this for two weeks now. She knows she messed up."

“Exactly,” Beca sighed. “*She* messed up, so I can’t feel bad for her. Stace, you knew how terrified I was of her, of this. I’m just- glad that it happened before I asked.”

“Yeah, but I know it doesn’t make it hurt any less. I’m sorry, Beca. Never in a million years did I see that coming when Chloe swore up and down it wouldn’t.”

“Eh, you guys were just trying to convince me to do what I already wanted to do. I’d rather say ‘oh well’ than ‘what if’ right? That’s what my mom used to say.”

As they walked into the room, they were met by Aubrey standing at the front of the room already looking rather irritated and angry. Beca wanted to smirk, to lock eyes and throw her off the edge, but she just couldn’t because there was a certain redhead standing beside her that Beca just could not look at. Instead, she sat between Stacie and Cynthia Rose trying to will herself to become invisible. Yeah, no such luck. When the bell at last rang to signal the start of class, Beca was even more disturbed to find that no teacher entered.

“Where’s the teacher?” she hissed to CR, who grimaced.

“You’re looking at her,” she replied, jerking her head at Aubrey.

“What?!”

“Mrs. Ellis technically is the teacher, but she barely checks in. Aubrey’s club.”

“Oh, right,” Aubrey’s tight voice now came. “Ms. Mitchell.” Beca quirked an eyebrow. “Since you’re new to our group-”

“Not by choice,” Beca huffed.

“You will have to do an audition, so that I can see where to throw you.”

“K.” Beca thought that was over, but when she looked up into the silent room once more, Aubrey was looking at her expectantly. “Wait, now?”

“Well, yeah! I can’t do much until I know what I have to work with.”

“Posen, anyone can sing those songs you choose.”

Aubrey bit her lip, now visibly shaken. “Just sing a song!” she shrieked.

Beca sighed and stood up, kicking her chair back and headed up to the front with all eyes on her. The other girls cheered her on. Aubrey and Chloe sat down at a table right in front of the stage. Beca looked down at the table a moment before grabbing the cup that was filled with various writing utensils, dumping it out on the table.

“Hey, what-” Aubrey began, but Beca cut her off.

“Chill out, Posen,” Beca shot out. “Jesus. Your face is gonna stay like that.”

She sat down on the stage now cross-legged, setting the cup upside down in front of her. The other girls were standing up now, Stacie with her phone recording and waiting to see what the DJ could do. Chloe feared looking up but when Beca started tapping a beat with her hand and the cup, she couldn’t help but glance up slightly so that her eyes were level with the cup. Then, when Beca’s thick voice floated through the room, she couldn’t help but look up, and tears were forming immediately.

As long as you love me

We're under pressure,

Seven billion people in the world trying to fit in

Keep it together,

***Smile on your face even though your heart is
frowning***

But hey now, you know, girl,

We both know it's a cruel world

But I will take my chances

At this point, the others were nodding to the beat, and Lily somehow joined in with a booming beatbox that made Aubrey snap her head back. Amy, Jessica, Ashley and Denise gave some backup vocals for the chorus. Somehow they all understood the DJ's song choice.

As long as you love me

We could be starving,

we could be homeless,

we could be broke

As long as you love me

I'll be your platinum,

I'll be your silver,

and I'll be your gold

***As long as you lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-
love me***

[illegible]

I'll be your soldier,

Fighting every second of the day for your dreams, girl

I'll be your Hova

You could be my Destiny's Child on the scene girl

Don't stress, don't cry, we don't need no wings to fly

Just take my hand

As long as you love me

We could be starving,

we could be homeless,

we could be broke

As long as you love me

I'll be your platinum,

I'll be your silver,

and I'll be your gold

[illegible][illegible]

Every eye in the room widened when Beca didn't stop there. She broke into a fluent rap verse that sent shivers up the spine, and even Aubrey couldn't keep her jaw from dropping. Stacie grabbed her chest instinctively, nearly dropping her phone, and Chloe just about fell over as her mouth hung agape. Beca was moving her shoulders with the beat, proving she had rhythm. It was beautiful, and Chloe nearly burst.

I don't know if this makes sense, but you're my hallelujah

Give me a time and place, and I'll rendezvous, and I'll fly you to it,

I'll beat you there

Girl you know I got you

Us, trust...

A couple of things I can't spell without 'U'

Now we are on top of the world, 'cause that's just how we do

Used to tell me, "Sky's the limit", now the sky's our point of view

Man now we stepping out like, "Whoa"

Cameras point and shoot

Ask me what's my best side, I stand back and point at you

You, you the one that I argue with, I feel like I need a new girl to be bothered with,

But the grass ain't always greener on the other side,

It's green where you water it

So I know we got issues baby true, true, true,

But I'd rather work on this with you

Than to go ahead and start with someone new

As long as you love me

We could be starving,

we could be homeless,

we could be broke

As long as you love me

I'll be your platinum,

I'll be your silver,

I'll be your gold

As long as you lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-lo-love me

[illegible]

As long as you love, you love me, you love me,

As long as you love, you love me, you love me,

As long as you love me

When she finished out the song, she set the cup back down and stood up. Stacie and the girls in the back clapped and cheered, and Chloe slyly wiped her eyes. Beca had stolen glances at her the entire time, and even if she hadn't, Chloe understood. Maybe Beca hadn't given up on her yet. The truth was, Beca wasn't sure she could. It was too late. She was falling for the redhead, and she had no idea how to deal with that. She hadn't been in love with Kelly. They had never even spoken the words. She had stayed with Kelly because she hadn't known how to leave, how to break up with someone, for fear of hurting them. Now, here she was, her heart broken into a million more pieces, and still, she could not hate the redhead. Dammit. That didn't however mean it could ever work between them. Beca just figured she could do what she always did, break hearts before they broke hers and get her kicks for a little while before moving onto the next. It was easier that way.

Aubrey was still staring straight ahead as Beca walked off of the stage, bombarded by hugs.

"You've got a voice, Short Stack!" Amy said.

"You've got a flow, B!" CR chuckled, patting her back.

"That was sexiest thing I've ever seen!" Stacie gushed.

“You are amazing.”

“Thanks,” Beca said with her old smirk in place before she turned around. “So, Posen, can we start this class now?”

After forty-five minutes of vocal warm-ups and “Turn the Beat Around”, Beca was happy to be back in the gym for weight training. Luckily, Luke was in there since he had a free period, and they went to practice right after. He spotted Beca as she spotted him, and they were really pushing it out.

“Oh, come on, boys!” Stacie barked playfully. “You can do better than that.”

“Please, pretty boy can’t keep up with me,” Beca smirked.

“You wanna wager on that, mate?” Luke raised an eyebrow.

“Bring it on, bro.”

Minutes later, Stacie was over Luke, and CR was over Beca as the two football players went through stages of weights in the bench press to see who could lift more. The other girls watched while they continued their workout since Aubrey was back in the class, and she was fuming at the end of the row while spotting Chloe. Beca was up to two hundred forty pounds now, Luke five pounds behind her. She got in ten repetitions before CR added ten more pounds.

“Come on, Short Stack!” Amy cheered. “Pump and Dump!”

“Damn, yo, this girl is on fire!” CR said.

“Let’s go, Mitchell, raise up!”

By the time Beca could no longer lift, she was sitting pretty at two hundred fifty-five pounds while Luke maxed out at

two forty-five, aware he had gone too fast. He stood up, clasping Beca's hand as they embraced.

"I still have better abs," Luke smirked at her.

"Prove it!" Stacie instantly demanded.

Luke pulled up his shirt smugly to reveal a bulging six pack of lean muscle. Beca shook her head and shyly looked away.

"I told you," Luke said.

"Come on, Beca," Stacie nudged. "Let's at least see."

Beca slyly lifted her shirt slightly before ripping it up with a grin. Now this was a six pack. The muscles looked to have been chiseled by the finest of sculptors, every one of them defined and toned perfectly beneath fine ivory skin. Stacie moaned at the sight, and everyone laughed.

"Sorry, Luke," Stacie managed.

"Yeah, Luke, I'm straight as a board, but she got you," Amy sighed, and the others nodded in agreement.

Beca grinned from ear to ear as Luke chuckled and threw an arm around her.

"Watch out, ladies!" he boomed. "This is our secret weapon this year."

"Well, at least she'll be kicking Tom to the sideline," Stacie sighed.

For the last two weeks, Beca had definitely been showing up Tom, and once they went into full pads on the field, he had been trying to get her killed. He was put at fullback

when she ran the ball, and he refused to block for her. Still, she was much too agile, and she easily improvised and made a break. When Tom played defense, he would hit her ruthlessly, but she just jumped back on her feet and kept going. They had their first game in two weeks, and Beca felt good about it, but she was sure she still would be second string to Tom with him being a junior. She didn't care. She just wanted to get some playing time, and she knew she would probably at least play in the junior varsity game.

The two weeks went by slow for Beca with glee club classes full of boring songs and grueling vocal exercises. Aubrey would usually just give her backup vocals, and she could deal with that. It wasn't like they were doing anything special aside from some competition with the choir club in the fall. Football practice had become intense, and Coach Jackson was thankful that Jesse had gone over the playbook with Beca. On the day of the first home game, Beca donned her new black football jersey, a big maroon "21" on it with her name printed on the back. It had been her stepdad's number throughout pop warner football and all the way up to Notre Dame. She still had his old college jersey hanging on her wall, and she kissed it good luck that morning. Aunt Allie had remained in Barden, and she was super excited for the game. Since Beca had not been able to give Chloe her jersey after all, Aunt Allie took the honor, wearing the white alternate jersey of the Rebels. As Beca entered the school, everyone was slapping her hand and getting hyped for the game. Jesse and Luke flanked her, and the volleyball girls all cheered them on.

"You better win tonight, guys," Stacie warned playfully. "I'll be there throwing my voice out."

Beca chuckled at her friend's antics, but she did like the idea. In the back of her mind, she still hoped Chloe would be there too, rooting for her. Either way, she was sure she would be able to take a cheerleader home that night with all of them gushing over her all day.

When her and the boys went out for lunch that day, she turned on the radio in the truck, and her day immediately brightened. Her jaw dropped, and she pulled over to the side of the road when she heard one of her mixes on the radio.

"They're playing my mix!" she screeched. "On the radio! That is awesome. That is amazing!"

Luke grinned from the backseat. "It's a sick beat," he assured her.

"Yeah, I told you that your beats are sick," Jesse reminded her.

"Their house DJ made a mix of this, but yours is better."

"Yeah, it is," Beca scoffed. "Damn, this is gonna be a good day."

[BECA'S POV]

When the boys and I arrived at the field that night, the atmosphere completely changed. I had not played junior varsity the night before, so I was a bit scared that I wouldn't play at all. I wondered if Will had put a limit on my playing time as well, and I refused to put it past him. I also refused to believe I would really start in front of Tom, who had arms the size of tree trunks as a junior, so when Coach Jackson entered the locker room after everyone was

suited up, the words that fell from his lips nearly gave me a heart attack.

"The ground game is what's going to keep us alive tonight," he began, looking at all of us as we gathered before him. "These guys are a bit smaller than us, but they've got rockets. Edwards," He looked at Tom now, "you'll be our fullback tonight. You'll be blocking for Mitchell. Mitchell, you'll be our halfback tonight. We'll have some passes in the flat, but I'm working around dives and pitches."

I was quiet at the back of the group, my fingers clenching around the face mask of my scarlet helmet in my hand, dangling at my side. Tom grunted a few feet in front of me, stealing a glance in my direction. No one said anything. Bumper gave me a sarcastic-laced sympathetic look. He must have known that Tom was going to hang me up after the game, but I couldn't focus on that right now. I couldn't refuse the spot. It was my chance, and besides, no anger in the world could match the pride that would be on my aunt's face tonight, on my dad's face tonight. She had been more excited tonight than I had been, and I knew she was going to be grinning like mad when I stepped out. I also knew that Darren Cale would be standing on a cloud watching.

We lined up at the mouth of the tunnel leading onto the field. I could see the cheerleaders lining the outside of it, cheering and holding up signs. The girls closest to us held a large paper poster we had to run through, and by the time their countdown began, my head was spinning. I carefully slid my helmet on, closing my eyes and mentally pumping myself up for the rush that came next. When I heard Evan Grady, our senior linebacker, yell from the front of pack it was time to attack, I growled with my team then we were at a run through the paper. When we burst through it onto the lush green field, the only voice I made out was my aunt's

screaming my name although it did sound like more than just one person screaming for me. This riled me up, and I was ready to prove myself tonight.

“That’s my baby!” Aunt Allie howled. “Number twenty-one. That’s my baby!”

I smiled as we huddled in the center of the field, excited now to show my dad up in the clouds that he had every right to be proud of me. I was going to make tonight my night. I was going to make this my game. Tom would get over it. The truth was that I had been chosen as starting runningback for a reason. I was about to show him why.

Okay, so about that last statement. It had never crossed my mind that my lead blocker for the night that was supposed to protect me was the guy on the team that currently hated me most. I was getting drilled every play because Tom would slyly step aside and let the defense stream into the hole I was meant to run through. I was tired, aggravated and ready to launch my helmet at his head when Coach Jackson pulled me aside.

“Come on, Mitchell!” he screamed. “We need you to get out of the backfield!”

I said nothing. I stood on the sideline awaiting our defense to get us the ball back. Tom walked past me, shoving his shoulder into my own with a smirk.

“You’ll be back to JV by the second quarter,” he hissed and walked away.

I knew I had two choices now. I could continue to blame him for my failure as starter and take a seat on the JV bench next week, or I could rise above it and do what I had originally intended. I could make it my game. I looked up,

and a pair of bright blue eyes caught my attention at the bottom of the bleachers, determination in them. A little ways above that were deep navy blue eyes that matched my own. My aunt gave me a firm nod, and I interpreted it as "Forget that jerk and make something happen". I returned it quickly just as the defense hustled off the field. Luke grabbed my shoulder pad roughly and pushed me onto the field.

"Go get 'em, Mitchell," my buddy growled. "By any means."

I lined up for the play behind Tom. That first play was a bust. I was taken down behind the line the moment I took the ball from Bumper, Tom looming over me with a permanent smirk and Bumper slapping his helmet in frustration. I slammed the ball on the grass and stood up, walking back to the huddle. Bumper awaited the play from the sideline. It was a counter play. I would step to one side to bait the defense and immediately break the other way.

"Don't screw this up, Mitchell," Bumper growled.

Tom wasn't in front of me now. He was on the line. I took deep breaths, listening closely to Bumper's count. When the ball snapped, I took a quick step to the right, watching as the defense's linebackers threw themselves that way. My step to the left was so quick that I surprised myself. Bumper put the ball in my abdomen, and I gripped it, bounding threw a narrow hole between Tom and Luke. The linebackers had changed direction, but my acceleration was off the charts. I turned the corner, and all that I saw now was the safety racing towards me. There would be a very slim chance of moving past him as fast as he was coming. I kept running until he was within inches of me then I spun. It was a quick spin move out of his grasp, and as he fell to the turf, I continued moving at top speed until I

crossed into the end zone. I heard the crowd on our side erupt as I tossed the ball to the referee and headed to the sideline. I looked up at the scoreboard once our kicker made good on the extra point. We were down by six now, the opposing team's kicker botching the extra point on their second touchdown, and I was feeling good now. I could hear Aunt Allie still cheering for me, but I didn't grin. I was zoned in on the task at hand now. Tom stood at the far end of the sideline angrily sucking down water. Jesse came over to me and patted my shoulder pad.

"You did amazing, B," he admitted with a nod. "Listen, I see what Tom's doing out there, but don't let him get to you, and definitely don't depend on him. He isn't there. Make it happen. Run it like a single back play and get down the field. They can't touch you once you get around that corner, and I'll be there blocking. Show him what's what. Coach put you in for a reason."

I nodded at him with pure drive in my eyes. As I took a drink of water, that's when I heard it.

"Let's go, Becs!"

It was a high-pitched squeal from behind me. It wasn't Aunt Allie's voice, but I could identify it anywhere. It was the melodic voice of none other than Chloe Beale. I didn't turn around. All I could do was smile to myself before Jesse yanked me by my shoulder pad. The opponent's halfback had fumbled at our twenty-yard line after Donald delivered a hard hit, and we had the ball. I ran onto the field with him and stepped into the huddle. The first play of the drive was a short pass to Jesse, and he took it up to the forty-yard line. The next play was a run, a dive that had me running behind Tom to the left of the center. I kept my eyes on Tom closely. When the ball snapped, I took the hand-off and

watched as he leaned to the right. I did the same, racing around the line to the right and bursting through it into open field. The linebacker was in my path. I did a quick stutter step, juking to the left and leaving him on the ground. The cornerback was now trying to cut me off, but Jesse intercepted him with a hard hit. The tall safety was now once again the only one left standing to stop me. He came from my right side, and as his hands slid across my thighs, I stuck my arm out stiffly and hit him in the helmet, stopping him in his tracks and throwing him off. The end zone was soon below my feet, and the crowd once again went crazy. Aunt Allie whistled and hooted as I headed back to the sideline.

“Mitchell, that wasn’t the play!” Coach Jackson hollered, approaching me.

I cringed, but suddenly, Luke stepped between us.

“Coach, please,” he said softly. “Mitchell had to improvise. If you haven’t noticed, Tom is being a worthless fullback. He isn’t blocking. He’s just stepping aside. The kid saved a loss.”

Coach Jackson eyed him, and it were as if something clicked. Immediately, he turned on his heel and made a beeline for Tom. I smiled as Luke swatted my shoulder.

“Good job, kid,” he beamed. “You’re killing it.”

We won the game twenty-eight to seventeen, and I had three of our four touchdowns. Coach Jackson could not believe how well his gameplan had worked, and he couldn’t be more proud. Tom was silent compared to his usual howling and random rap lyrics he usually did after practice in the locker room. He just packed up his bag and headed out with his head hung, refusing even a shower. I enjoyed

my warm shower in the volleyball locker room on the other side of the wall of the boys, but I could still hear the cheering around me. When I finished, I headed back to the locker room and dressed. As the team cleared out, Coach grabbed my shoulder before I could pick up my bag. He said nothing at first. He just gestured me to follow him. We went into his office, and he closed the door behind us.

"I saw what happened," he at last sighed. "I was a bit late, but I saw it. Yet, you didn't say anything, Mitchell. You didn't tell him, and you didn't tell me."

"You put me out there to run the ball," I reminded him. "To make plays not excuses."

He smiled at my quoting of one of his favorite phrases.

"That's right, isn't it? We make plays not excuses, and you did, Mitchell. You had a hell of a game. You pushed it. You improvised. You had every reason to make an excuse, but no. You kept going, and that's why I kept you in. Before your first break, you had -23 yards rushing. You ended the game with-" He checked the book. "165 yards. Kid, that's more than any of my backs have racked up in a game ever, and I've been coaching for seven years. Don't get me wrong. Tom's a tough back, but he is a short-yardage gainer. I had to have a passing game in order to get close enough for him to score, but Bumper was throwing so many passes that his arm gave out quickly. Now, we have a balance. I'm going to keep you at starter, and you earned it, so don't let Tom or anyone else tell you otherwise. Do you got that?"

"Yes, sir."

We shook hands then I left the locker room feeling really good. I felt even better when I stepped outside, and I was

met with not only my aunt Allie but two other squealing women, one with long blonde hair falling in waves and another with long black hair and blue streaks running through it. Both had bright green eyes like my dad, my aunts Michelle and Sarah. I chuckled to see Aunt Sarah wearing my middle school jersey. She was really small, like smaller than me. Each of them wrapped me in a big hug.

“Oh, Baby, you did so good!” Sarah gushed. “I’m so proud of you. I know your dad’s up there right now with God saying ‘That’s my kid!’ You showed the guy how it was done even though the oaf tried to get you killed.”

I chuckled. “I didn’t even see you guys up there!” I told them.

“We were hiding,” Aunt Michelle said. “That was amazing, Becs. I recorded the entire thing. Oh, I missed seeing you play. That was great.”

“Hey, Mitchell!” someone called. I turned to see Jesse rushing towards me with Luke. “Hey, we’re going down to Penny’s to celebrate. Are you-oh, hi.”

I chuckled. “Jesse and Luke, these are my other aunts, Michelle and Sarah. Aunties, this is Jesse Swanson, my best friend, and Luke, my best mate. They’re different, trust me.”

They all shook hands, and I smiled before turning back to the three women.

“You guys wanna go with us to the diner?” I asked.

“Hell yes!” Aunt Allie squealed. “They have the best burgers there.”

Sarah scoffed. "Now, that's a lie."

"I bet you twenty bucks."

"Deal."

I chuckled at the two women, but I could not be happier. I had missed my other aunts dearly, and I could not believe they had come to my first game. I silently thanked my stepdad and mom before following them into the parking lot. Maybe it would still be a good year after all.

9. Breaking Point

A/N: So thank you to everyone for all of the reviews and follows! I have the best followers ever I swear! I love you guys! I hope I'm making you happy here! Sorry for the heartbreak but you should know me by now. I love suspense haha. Don't worry. everyone gets their happy ending somehow some way.

Song: Red-Tyler Ward (the male version)

Loving her is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street

Faster than the wind, passionate as sin ending so suddenly

Loving her is like trying to change your mind once you're already flying through the free fall

Like the colors in autumn, so bright just before they lose it all

***Touching her was like realizing all you ever wanted
was right there in front of you***

***Memorizing her was as easy as knowing all the words
to your old favorite song***

***Fighting with her was like trying to solve a crossword
and realizing there's no right answer***

***Regretting her was like wishing you never found out
that love could be that strong***

Losing her was blue like I'd never known

Missing her was dark grey all alone

***Forgetting her was like trying to know somebody you
never met***

But loving her was red

Loving her IS red

Penny's was indeed the hotspot for the school after the friday night lights shut off. Everyone was there, even Tom, and he grunted when he saw Beca walk in. Chloe was there was well with Stacie and the girls. Beca was a bit nervous, but she calmed down when everyone began clapping her shoulder and slapping her hand. Stacie, Jessica, Ashley and Denise jumped up to hug her. Amy slapped her on the back, and CR bumped her fist as well as Lily. She was on cloud nine, and nothing could bring her down. She introduced the girls to her aunts, even Chloe, and Allie even smiled a bit. Beca had been talking to her about it frequently, about Chloe, and Allie knew the brunette wasn't over the

redhead. When Chloe stood up and took Beca into a hug, the DJ froze.

"You had an amazing game, Becs," she whispered into her neck.

"Thanks," Beca breathed, stepping away quickly, and Chloe frowned.

Beca didn't look into her eyes for fear of her reserve shattering. It was a good night, and she wouldn't let Chloe ruin it. Jesse and Luke connected a few tables, so that they could be closer to the girls and also fit Beca's three aunts and themselves. They gave the waitress the usual burger orders before settling in.

Beca, Jesse and Luke immediately started talking about next week's matchup against Walker High School, one of Atlanta's largest schools for sure.

"You were running all over those guys," Jesse boomed at Beca, sipping his milkshake. "They didn't even know what to do, but that safety was all sorts of pissed off that he couldn't stop you. He spent the majority of the game getting bitched at." She just shrugged with a small smile, so he went on. "Come on, B, don't be so modest. You know you kicked ass out there, and you definitely shut Tom up."

"Yeah, Beca, you were killing it," Luke backed him. "Your footwork is impeccable. You were shaking guys left and right. You broke like six tackles."

"Well, thanks for blocking for me, guys," she said.

"It's our job to protect you, Mighty Midget Mitchell," Luke assured her with a chuckle as she punched his arm.

“So we going to the lake after this?” Stacie called over to them.

“Yup,” Luke nodded. “Kegs will be delivered shortly.”

“I hope you don’t mind, Aunt Michelle,” Beca said. “I know you’re a doctor and all.”

“A doctor, Becs, not a cop,” Michelle reminded her.

“Oh, please!” Allie scoffed. “Remember, we met her in Vegas last year for her birthday. She got plastered and stood naked on the roof of Caesar’s Palace.”

The table chuckled. “Hey, I know how to have fun, but I also know how to keep a hangover away.”

Jesse’s eyes widened. “You have GOT to show me that trick.”

After everyone one ate, the entire football team, volleyball team sans Aubrey, and cheerleading squad headed to the lake to continue celebrating the football team’s first win. The first volleyball match wasn’t until the following week, so football was what got everyone excited for now. Barden was definitely football-oriented. Beca was met by three shots from Amy, and she downed them all quickly.

“Is it always like this?” Beca asked Jesse as he handed her a beer.

“Yup,” he nodded. “What can we say? We like winning.”

“Hey, B, why don’t you go get me your iPod?” Luke questioned as he set up the sound system. “Let these guys get down to some of your mixes?”

“Sure, it’s in the truck. Be right back.”

Beca rushed back up the hill to her truck and grabbed her iPod from the glove compartment. With her mixes now on the radio, she was no longer shy about playing them. She still couldn’t believe they had made the rotation however, but she couldn’t be happier. As she closed her door and turned back towards the bonfire, she came face-to-face with crystal blue eyes and red hair, and her breath hitched.

“Becs, can we talk?” Chloe asked in a small voice.

“We have nothing to talk about, Chloe,” she sighed.

“Please, can you just listen to me? Please.”

Beca tried with all her might to brush her off and walk away, but with those wide ocean eyes looking at her with desperation, she just couldn’t do it.

“What, Chloe?” she huffed.

“Look, I know I messed up, Beca, but-I was scared because we were drinking, and I-I wasn’t sure if you had really meant to kiss me, and I told you that when it was official, I wouldn’t hide it, but I didn’t know what you would do when you woke up and realized you kissed me, if you would still feel the same sober or run away. I was just scared, Beca, please understand.”

“Look, Chloe, despite that, you let her sit there and talk about me that way. Jesse had to stand up for me, and I just don’t see how you’re going to be able to handle a relationship with me when you can’t even handle a friendship. It makes no sense. I want to trust you. I tried. I was ready for it finally, and you just-you reminded me why I hesitated in the first place. I can’t do it.”

"Just tell me, Beca. Tell me, do you still like me or not?"

Beca let out a bitter bark of a laugh, and Chloe flinched. "You wanna know the ugly truth, Red?" Beca opted for blaming the alcohol in her system for what she was about to admit. "I fell for you. I am so deep in that it fuckin' kills me because I can't even stay mad at you."

"Then, please just-"

"I can't do this, Chloe. I can't. You tore me apart just when I had come to terms with this. You *knew* how hard it would be for me to do it, to admit it."

"I know, but Beca I wasn't sure, and I was caught off guard by all of it, by you and by Aubrey coming. I don't wanna lose you."

"You should tell your best friend that then come talk to me."

With that, Beca pushed past the girl and headed back down to the beach. Chloe tried to stop the tears that formed in her eyes, but she knew that she had royally screwed up. She just wanted to rewind time and fix everything, but she knew it was not possible. She had to figure out what to do. She was scared of Aubrey, but the blonde was her best friend. If she really loved the redhead, she would understand. She was much more scared of losing Beca for good, and she had to figure something out. For now, she could not. Instead, she returned to the party and downed every drink that was shoved into her hands. It may have not been the best idea, and it could lead to even more trouble, but Chloe could not think about it right now. Yeah, that was her problem. She didn't really think. She acted on impulse.

Beca was hammered by midnight, and she could care less. Her aunts had retired early, making her promise to be safe and not drive. Beca assured her that Jessica would be taking her truck home, and Denise would pick her up from there after dropping off Jesse, CR and Luke. Beca was taking shot after shot with Amy, joking around and having a blast as Barden's new star. Everyone was going crazy for her mixes, and when Luke announced they were hers, everyone swarmed her to have a drink with her or congratulate her. Even a drunken Stacie couldn't help but cling to her arm awhile and dance with her. Girls on the cheer squad she had never met were sliding numbers in her pockets, and she was just grinning like a madman.

"Hey, sharing is caring!" Luke chuckled as another cheerleader kissed her cheek and walked away. "Leave some for the rest of us poor souls, B."

"I got this!" she slurred, patting his back.

Across the sand, Chloe was watching intently, trying not to cry or think about it or watch all of the girls throw themselves at Beca. She was hurting, but with each pang in her chest, she took another shot, and it was soothed for awhile. Then someone snaked their arms around her waist, kissing her neck roughly.

"Hey, baby," Tom slurred into her ear.

"What do you want, Tom?" she asked, trying to sound irritated but failing.

"Why don't we get out of here?"

"No, I-"

Then she saw Stacie grinding against Beca on the sand, and her mind went cloudy. She immediately grabbed his hand and trudged up the beach towards his truck. Beca looked up just in time to see them disappear inside the sea of vehicles on the beach, and her temper flared. She instantly retracted from Stacie and slammed her beer onto the sand. Stacie looked up to see Chloe leaving, and she sobered significantly within seconds. Beca took deep breaths, trying to calm herself down, waving Stacie off. She grabbed another shot then two then three, but when her anger still hadn't subsided, she gave up.

"Jessica," she yelled to the small blonde. "Can you take me now please?"

Jessica immediately nodded and stood from her chair. Beca handed her the keys to her truck. Luke and Jesse tried to ask her where she was going, but she just waved them off. Denise went to her car as well, promising to come back for the boys, and they all left.

"Where we going, Beca?" Jessica asked, pulling off of the beach.

"The Mitchell residence," she managed, trying not to cry.

When they pulled up, Beca already recognized the car parked in the Beale driveway from practice, Tom's black Honda. She had every urge to walk over there, bang the door down, and tear him apart. She refrained however. It had been Chloe's choice. She had walked away from the redhead, and though it would never be a logical reason in an argument, Beca felt herself weakened. She bade Denise and Jessica tonight and watched them drive off. As she locked up the truck, she heard the door across the street close, and she looked over. Tom was storming out, but

when he saw her, he slowed his steps and gave her a wide lopsided grin.

“Hey, Mitchell!” he yelled. “I guess second-string backs still get first-string ass, huh?”

Before she knew what was happening, she had dropped her keys and was rushing toward him quickly. His drunken stupor slowed his reflexes, and he couldn’t react before she threw her entire body into his chest, knocking him to the ground. Her buzz was long gone as she reared up, straddling his torso and throwing down blow after blow on his face. He at last was able to grab one arm and jerk her off to the side. She still threw kicks into his abdomen as he hollared in pain, and he took a wild swing at her, missing her face by just a hair. She jumped up quickly, stomping him mercilessly as Chloe ran out of the house.

“Beca, stop!” she screeched. “Please stop! We didn’t do anything!”

Beca obliged after one solid kick to his face that made him bark in pain, clutching his busted nose. He rolled towards her, and she gave him a swift kick to the groin, his hand instinctively grabbing it.

“Tom, leave now!” the redhead yelled, tears in her eyes.

The boy crawled towards his truck. Beca walked over to him, grabbing him by the back of his shirt, and yanked him up before shoving him into the front of his car. He stumbled to the driver’s door, opening it and getting in before turning it on and driving off.

“Beca, come inside before the cops come,” Chloe begged. “Lauren _will _call the cops.”

“Or Aubrey will come out!” Beca shot back.

“I don’t care, Beca, just please.”

It was the tears in the redhead’s eyes that made Beca allow the redhead to take her arm and drag her inside then up to her bedroom, closing the door behind them. Beca turned on her the moment she did so, and Chloe stopped, flinching at the rage in her stormy blue eyes.

“You didn’t do anything!” she snarled. “Good fuckin’ try, Chloe! He wouldn’t be here!”

“Beca, I didn’t-we didn’t. We just talked.”

“Talked! About what, Chloe! How many times he got to fuck you before you were even with all of his other girls!”

“No. I-we almost did it, but it was a mistake. I saw you dancing with Stacie, and I got mad. I left with him, but when we got here, I couldn’t do it I swear, Beca!”

“Don’t swear to me! Don’t fuckin’ swear to me because all you do is break those fuckin’ promises. You’re scared of Aubrey! You’re scared of everyone, and I’m tired of being the fuckin’ fool! I’m done with your bullshit!”

“Beca, I was mad! I-”

“No, Chloe! You can’t do that to me! You can’t run off with some guy or come fuck your ex again every time you get mad at me when it’s your fault I’m mad to begin with! You can’t punish me when you’re the one that fucked up!”

“Beca, stop! You know why he cheated to begin with! I never slept with him! That’s why he did it, and I don’t want that! I don’t wanna give it to him!”

“Just fuckin’ stop, Chloe! You disgust me!”

All of the pain in Chloe’s mind instantly clashed with raw anger, and she snapped. “Fuck you, Beca! You say that I’m scared, but it’s not just me that’s scared, Beca! You’re terrified to fuckin’ let go! You’re terrified of someone actually fucking loving you with all of your issues and problems and fuck-ups! You’re scared that I might actually see through that badass facade and call you on it! You’re trying to hide the good in you behind chaos, but I see right through your bullshit, Beca! I see it, and you’re nothing but a fuckin’ coward.”

Chloe instantly regretted ever opening her mouth the moment Beca shoved her into the wall and pinned her there, striking terror in the redhead’s heart. It quickly dissolved however when the brunette crushed her lips into Chloe’s in a bruising kiss. Chloe was taken aback, but she couldn’t move. She couldn’t do anything. She then became lost in the kiss, and she gripped Beca’s elbows as she became dizzy, the brunette the only thing keeping her on her feet. Beca pressed herself into Chloe’s body, intent on proving to Chloe she was no coward. Her lips trailed down to the redhead’s neck where she bit down hard on the skin, and Chloe whimpered. Beca reached down now, grasping Chloe’s thighs and lifting her up, the redhead’s legs instinctively wrapping around the brunette’s body. Her hands now got tangled in chocolate tresses as Beca pulled her from the door and threw her onto the bed. She pulled Beca’s tanktop off and unhooked her bra quickly. Beca pushed down Chloe’s jean shorts, underwear as well onto the floor. With her feet, Chloe removed Beca’s trunks, and Beca just about ripped off her t-shirt and bra in desperation. Both girls were foggy in the mind, a daze falling over them, and Beca had become an animal, rage overtaking her as she roughly ran her hands over Chloe’s

body. Chloe couldn't even complain, forgetting about what her first time was supposed to be like according to all of the movies. Beca felt the same. Their centers were now aligned, Beca grinding to create a friction that elicited a gasp then a throaty moan from the redhead beneath her.

"Beca, please-" she gasped, clawing at the brunette's back now.

Beca zoned out. She couldn't hear the words of Chloe's begging for her to please her, to give her everything. She kissed and sucked all over the redhead's body, and neither was concerned with the dark marks now lining Chloe's neck and shoulders. Chloe tried to pull her closer, but Beca pinned her wrists over her head. Then, in one fluid motion, she ran her fingers up the redhead's heat, Chloe moaning aloud, her eyes rolling back. She tried to break the restraint on her wrists, but Beca was much too strong. Finally though, Beca entered her with two fingers. Her hips bucked upwards to meet the downstroke, and she was moaning with each thrust that Beca's hips created. Beca was now breathing hard into her neck, tickling her spine and making Chloe shudder beneath her. Beca released her wrists to slide her hand behind her neck, pulling her up into a rough kiss. Chloe immediately dug her claws into the brunette's hips, speeding up the thrusts. It was pain and pleasure all mixed in one, and her head was spinning. She slid a hand down between them now, rubbing Beca's center and at last gaining a moan from the shorter girl. They thrust together in perfect rhythm, breathing heavily into one another the scent of alcohol and the feeling of pure desire. At last, both of them arched into one another, tightening around each other's fingers as their bodies convulsed. Both girls let out a loud drawn out moan, signaling their rush over the edge. Beca then collapsed

onto the redhead, trying to catch her breath, and Chloe hugged her tightly.

"I'm-not-a coward," she breathed.

"Then neither am I," Chloe returned in a near whisper.

"Prove it to me."

Chloe awoke the following morning, convinced that the night before had been a dream. When she stirred and felt two strong arms strengthen their grip on her waist from behind though, she reached down and felt the familiar delicate skin of Beca's smaller hand, and she knew it was real. She smiled, snuggling closer into the brunette. Beca's eyes fluttered open, and she immediately went into a panic, but when she saw the long red locks splayed out around her, she instantly calmed and was assured it was Chloe and not someone else. The night before wasn't a dream. She wasn't sure what this meant for them or what would occur in the days to come, but for the time being, she was tired of denying her love for the redhead. She needed her, and for now, she would embrace the moment.

She nuzzled into the redhead's neck, gently kissing her shoulder. Chloe turned around in her arms to face her, and bright cerulean orbs met stormy blue. Chloe kissed Beca's lips softly. She remembered the words Beca had last said before they fell asleep, and she knew what they meant. She was aware she would have to tell Aubrey, but for now, she just wanted to bask in the moment of being in the arms of the girl she loved.

"What time is it?" Beca asked.

Chloe glanced back at the clock on her nightstand. "11:15."

“Well, I’m gonna go home and get showered, and you get ready.”

“Why?”

“We’re going to lunch with my aunts.”

Chloe beamed. Beca was actually going to bring her along. She kissed the brunette’s lips again after a nod before Beca slid out of bed and pulled her clothes on.

“Beca,” Chloe called.

“Yeah,” Beca asked from inside of her tanktop as she pulled it on.

“I love you.”

Beca froze a moment before pulling her shirt down and smiling. “I love you too, Red.”

Beca and Chloe pulled into Allie’s driveway at half past twelve, and they walked in. When Allie saw Chloe attached to Beca’s hand, she put on a cheek-splitting grin, hoping they had worked everything out.

“Aunt Michelle,” Beca said. “Aunt Sarah, for your official introduction, this is my girlfriend, Chloe Beale.” Allie squealed with glee, hugging the redhead tight.

“Wow, you work fast,” Sarah smirked.

“Well, Chloe,” Michelle said, shaking her hand. “I’m the doctor in the family. Therefore, I know things that make a homicide look like a natural death in an autopsy.”

“Michelle!” Allie snapped as Sarah and Beca chuckled.

"I'll remember that," Chloe returned with a tentative smile.

"She's kidding, Babe," Beca assured her. "Well, kinda. Okay, no, she's not, but it's okay." Her aunts chuckled. "You guys ready for lunch?"

"Can we go back to Penny's?" Sarah asked. "I need another one of those burgers."

"Yeah," Allie said smugly. "Which reminds me. You lost the bet, so your treat."

Sarah slumped. "Dammit. Fine."

The women took Chloe's usual booth at the back when they arrived at Penny's, and they got comfortable, Chloe assuring the waitress it was the usual order. Allie wanted to ask about how the two had worked it out, but she didn't feel the need to embarrass the redhead now, so she just continued to grin madly.

"Can you stop looking at us like that?" Beca groaned at her. "You're creepy."

"What?" Allie scoffed. "I can't be happy for my niece?"

"You can be happy without that creeper grin on your face."

"Sorry."

"So, Chloe," Michelle started once their drinks arrived, and Beca knew where this was going. Michelle Cale was not Allie, and her line of questioning was always intense. "Since I've already given you the 'hurt-her-and-i'll-make-your-death-look-like-an-ac cident speech-"

"You said one sentence!" Sarah screeched, but Michelle waved her off.

"Let's get down to it. You're a-junior?"

"Sophomore, ma'am," Chloe replied.

"Okay, same age. Good. Are you more experienced than girls your age?"

The others bit back a laugh as Chloe's cheeks flared. "No, ma'am."

"Are you sexually active?" Beca blushed now, and Michelle caught it. She too read her niece like a book. "Oh, I see."

"Oh my gosh!" Sarah gasped. "You totally took her v-card, Rebeca Jade Mitchell! It was last night, wasn't it!"

Chloe was bright red now. "Can you please not tell the whole restaurant!" Beca hissed.

"Wow," Allie said smugly. "Guess that answers that question of how this happened."

"Hmmm," Michelle hummed, eyes still looking over Chloe. "Do you play sports of any kind?"

"Yes," Chloe gulped. "Volleyball."

"And do you sing or do anything with music? Because Beca's very musically inclined"

"Yeah, I'm in glee club with Beca."

Allie and Sarah broke into a fit of laughter. Allie had already heard about Will's compromise, but it was still hilarious.

"You're in glee club, Becs!" Sarah snorted. "50 badass points from you!"

Beca shook her head, her cheeks on fire.

"She's an amazing singer," Chloe said now, trying to back her a bit.

"Oh, we know," Allie said. "We've called her grasshopper since she was a baby because she was always singing and humming while she jumped all around the house. She sang all the time like a cricket, but she had the stamina of a grasshopper jumping all around and never sitting still. I guess you would know all about her stamina now though, huh?"

Chloe only grinned now. "Is that why you have the grasshopper tattoo?" Chloe asked her girlfriend now. Beca nodded shyly. "Aww, that is so adorable!"

Sarah laughed again. "Hey, Becs, she's, uh, ruining your street cred slowly but surely."

"Yeah, yeah," Beca drawled.

"Well, she did sing to me for her glee audition," Chloe said now with a devious smile, and Beca gripped her thigh in warning, but Chloe didn't care. "A-Justin Bieber song."

Allie and Sarah only laughed harder now, Sarah nearly falling out of the booth as she gripped the table for support. Michelle still had the scariest poker face Chloe had ever seen, but she was intent on proving to the older woman that she wasn't afraid.

"So, what are your intentions with our niece, Chloe Beale?" Michelle went on.

Chloe suddenly locked eyes with her, her most serious face in place. “To teach her the art of sexual education,” she deadpanned.

Michelle held her straight face all of two more seconds before the entire table besides Beca burst into laughter. The smaller brunette ducked her head in raw embarrassment.

“I like her, Becs,” Michelle at last grinned. “She’s a keeper.”

The conversation was light after that, and Beca was grateful. At one point in the meal, Chloe got up to go to the bathroom, and Allie was already locked on Beca.

“Explain,” she prompted firmly.

“What-” Beca began, but the intent stare of her aunt made her sigh in defeat. “It was after the party, when I got dropped off. I was mad. She left with her ex, but when I came home, she ran out of her house. I-may or may not have beat up our fullback, but she said they didn’t do anything, and I can confirm that now.” She smirked despite herself. “Anyway, we-got caught up in a moment. Boom, here we are.”

“Okay, I’ll bypass the juicy details, but you guys talked about it, right?”

“Yeah, she thought I had kissed her that night on impulse because of the alcohol, and she was scared. She’s gonna tell Aubrey about us though so...”

As if on cue, the bell above the door rang, and Allie looked up to see a blonde she recognized from the Mitchell

residence. Will's wife. She guessed the other blonde with her was Aubrey.

"Okay, Becs," she hissed. "I understand she said she would tell her, but uh, she may just be ambushed in a few minutes."

"What? Why?" Beca turned around to see Aubrey and Lauren, and she immediately whipped back. "Holy shit."

"Go tell her!"

Beca jumped up quickly, ducking her head and rushing to the bathroom. Chloe was washing her hands as Beca closed the door.

"Hey, babe, I-" Chloe started, but when she saw the tightening of Beca's jaw, she stopped. "What's wrong?"

"Uh," she drawled a moment. "Well, I know you said this was real. This is official, and I believe in you, but I still don't think it would be right to let you be ambushed, so-uh, Aubrey's here. With Lauren."

Chloe's eyes widened. "Are you-"

Before she could finish the question, the door opened, and Beca quickly stepped into one of the stalls, closing the door. Aubrey walked in, and she froze when she saw Chloe.

"Chloe?" she said. "What are you doing here?"

"Uh, hey, Bree, I just came to get a burger," she said, and she was already on a wrong track.

Aubrey stood at the sink to wash her hands, and Chloe watched her intently.

“Well, come on,” Aubrey said. “You can eat with my mom and I. We just got here.”

“Oh, no, Bree, I already ate.”

“Well, what are you...”

“I just came to use the bathroom.”

Inside the stall, Beca’s head was spinning. Chloe was already back to her fear mode, and Beca was already boiling with anger. Her three aunts had seen the blonde enter the bathroom, but none of them knew what to do. They were all pretty worried, and they were really just waiting on the screaming match while Allie explained the situation to the other two women.

“Come say hi to mom then,” Aubrey said with a smile, grabbing Chloe’s hand. “Come on.”

Chloe couldn’t say anything. She couldn’t decline. She just allowed herself to be dragged out of the bathroom. Beca stepped out of the stall, kicking the door open in a rage. If she left the bathroom and Aubrey saw her, the blonde would know what was up. Sure, it would make everything a bit easier, but Beca didn’t want that. She wanted Chloe to do it. She needed to know Chloe wanted it too. The door opened again, and Beca was expecting Chloe to come back in and bring her out, to show Aubrey and Lauren and Beca she wasn’t afraid anymore. Instead, Beca found herself face to face with her aunt Allie.

“You okay, Bug?” she asked.

Beca huffed. “I hid in the stall while Chloe bitched out again!”

“Just give her a chance, Bug,” Allie coaxed. “You know how hard that has to be for her. She once again didn’t even have time to prepare herself.”

“Yeah, you’re right. Okay. I know she’s too nice to just tear Aubrey’s heart out. Can you just, go see what’s going on out there, so I can come out?”

Allie nodded and exited the room once more. Chloe was now sitting across from Aubrey and Lauren chatting up the women like it was nothing. The problem was that Aubrey was sitting beside Chloe facing the bathroom, and even with Beca’s height or lack thereof, she would still be seen. Sarah was leaning back in her seat, listening to the conversation to see if Chloe was telling them yet, but when she caught Allie’s eye, she just shook her head sadly. Allie looked down the hall to see another exit at the end past the bathrooms. She scurried back into the bathroom.

“Okay, Becs,” she sighed. “Just go out this other exit and come back around, so we can finish eating. They’re facing this way. It’ll at least look like you came to meet us.”

Beca was gripping the edge of one of the sinks currently, but she nodded, straightening and following Allie out of the bathroom. As she walked out of the other exit and around the building, she took deep, calming breaths to compose herself before entering. When she reached the front, she could see Aubrey’s table through the window. When she opened the door, Lauren looked up, and she gave her a disgusted look. Beca just kept her eyes straight ahead as if she was looking for her aunts. She hurried back to their table, but she could feel three intent sets of eyes burning a hole in her back as she sat down. Back at the other table, Aubrey scoffed.

"I'm really glad you stopped hanging around her, Chloe," Lauren said, sipping her coffee. "She is a disease that can only get you in trouble. I understand you just made friends because you're a nice girl, and you felt sorry for her. You must have missed Aubrey too."

"She's a scoundrel," Aubrey added. "She always wants to cause trouble with her tattoos and those ear monstrosities. I can't believe Dad made her join glee club. She's nothing but trouble."

"That's probably why your dad left. He loves you, Aubrey, because you are the ideal daughter. Who the hell would wanna raise something like that? It's pitiful. Her mother was probably the same exact way. He should've left her to that crook of an aunt of hers that went to the house with all of those tattoos. Ugh, it's disgusting. I can't wait until she gets herself locked up. Hell, I bet she winds up dead like her no-good mother."

That was it. The entire time, Chloe was biting down hard on her tongue, surely drawing blood, as her fists shook beneath the table, but at that last comment, she could no longer hold it. She slammed her fists on the table.

"That's enough!" she screeched, the entire restaurant, including Beca's table, now looking at her. "You're my best friend, Aubrey, and I love you, but your mother has your head all fucked up! You're both stuck up and believe you're better than everyone, but you're not! I know Beca, and I love her like she loves me! She loves her friends! She doesn't treat them like her servants or subjects the way you do! Ask them! You know nothing about her, so you can stop talking about her behind her back when you're no better yourselves! I can't believe I'm even friends with someone so cold and heartless half the time! I love you, Bree, but

you let your mother turn you into something hideous! You're the disease, Lauren! You make yourself feel powerful talking shit about a teenage girl and her mother, whom you've never met in your life, and _you're _pathetic! You know why she's the way she is? Because your husband is even more pathetic leaving her because he couldn't handle seeing her or her mother happier than he was, so he decided to drown with you and the sticks up your asses! He's just mad because Beca and her mom weren't cowards like him because that's what he is! A coward! I don't care anymore! I thought I needed your acceptance, but why would I want acceptance from ignorant, snobby people like you! Beca and that aunt you talked about? They accept me, and they love each other without putting you or anyone else down! You're pitiful, and I don't care what you think of me, but that will be the last time you _ever _disrespect _MY GIRLFRIEND _in front of me again!"

Aubrey and Lauren were frozen as Chloe finished her rant. Their eyes bulged, and their mouths hung agape as Chloe stalked over to Beca's table. She pulled the brunette from her seat and kissed her with the utmost passion. The entire restaurant broke into applause, and Aunt Allie threw up her middle finger to Lauren, who had now stood up.

"You ready to go, aunties?" Chloe asked sweetly.

"Becs!" Michelle bellowed. "This one is definitely a keeper. Better her than me."

"That's what I said!" Allie shrieked. "I'd finish that bitch like a cheesecake!"

Chloe took her smirking girlfriend's hand and led her to the door.

“Chloe!” Aubrey shrieked. “What are you doing? She’s brainwashing you!”

“No, Bree, you were brainwashing me. For far too long. Now, if you’ll excuse me, we have a date to get to. Have a good day.”

And that was when Beca knew it was all real. Chloe loved her. Chloe meant what she had said, and she had proven she was no coward in the flashiest of ways. Beca could not help but grin.

“Well,” she sighed as they exited. “This is definitely going to make glee club a bit more exciting.”

10. Safe and Sound

A/N: So thank you to everyone for all of the reviews and follows again! I’m trying to keep it going here. A lot of sports, some more drama of course but now some real bechloe struggle, you know! We got this lol. Oh and I hope you know volleyball too!

Song: Dont You Worry Child-Swedish House Mafia

There was a time

I used to look into my father’s eyes.

In a happy home

I was a king, I had a golden throne.

Those days are gone,

Now the memory’s on the wall.

I hear the songs

From the places where I was born.

Upon a hill across a blue lake,

That's where I had my first heartbreak.

I still remember how it all changed.

My father said,

"Don't you worry, don't you worry, child.

See heaven's got a plan for you.

Don't you worry, don't you worry now."

"I don't think I can do this, Dad," Beca huffed as she picked up her helmet from the backseat.

Darren turned around to her and put his hands firmly on her shoulder pads. It was half an hour before her second football game ever, and she was struggling because in the first game, she had fumbled on the last play and lost the game. The team had been pretty mad at her.

"Do you love the game, Bug?" he asked, and she nodded. "Then remember that. In the end, it's just a game, baby. Don't you worry now. It was your first game. Now you get to show them that you can play, that you're not a quitter. You're my baby, and you're tough. Okay?"

She nodded again. "Thanks, Dad."

“Win, lose or tie, I will always love you, and I will always be proud of you, Bug.”

Beca went on to score three touchdowns in the fourth quarter, wiping out a thirteen-point deficit and leading her team to victory. The team never doubted her again.

With a minute left in the game, Coach Jackson called a run play. Tom was lined up in front of Beca, and when he heard she was now dating the redhead, he had been more than ruthless with her. Luke and Jesse had heard about Beca kicking his ass that night, so when he was asked about his busted face by the team and said he wrecked his ATV, the two boys had burst into laughter. Ever since then, he had been trying to injure Beca on the field, but he could not.

Beca had been getting hit hard by the much larger defense of Walker High, but she had still managed two touchdowns. Chloe and Aunt Allie were up in the stands, donning Beca’s white jersey and her maroon one for Chloe while the brunette on the field wore her black one. She could hear them screaming for her. Will hadn’t come once again, but she didn’t care. Her family was in the stands tonight, and that was all that mattered.

Bumper lined up under center, and he called out the count. On the third, the ball was snapped, and Beca rushed forth, taking the ball from the quarterback. The hole immediately collapsed thanks to Tom, too wrapped up in his grudge against Beca to care about losing the game, so she raced around to the edge. Luke moved out to block her, laying out a hit on two guys. She got in stride with Jesse as he led her down the field. This was it. The clock was running, and they wouldn’t have time for another play with no timeouts left. She cut back inside of Jesse as he took out the cornerback.

The other cornerback was racing toward her. He lunged at her legs, and the brunette shocked everyone. She hurdled over the boy gracefully, landing on her feet and rushing forward. It was now a foot race with the safety. She turned on the jets, putting her head down and running her hardest. She felt his helmet collide with her shoulder, his arms wrapped around her, but she kept driving her legs. At last, he was able to yank her down to the ground. The stands were quiet as the buzzer went off to signal the end of the game. Beca looked up to find the line that marked the entrance of the end zone was behind her at her knee. The grass below was lined with white paint that read "REBELS". She was in. She had scored. The crowd suddenly burst into cheer as she stood up, tossing the referee the ball and trotting back to her team. Luke and Jesse picked her up on their shoulders. They hadn't beaten Walker High in five years, and Beca had done it for them. It wasn't as big as the Dawson High rivalry, and they still had three games before then, but it was still big. Coach Jackson grabbed Beca when they reached the sideline and embraced her.

"You're the truth, kid!" he howled. "Great job! Edwards!" He then shouted at Tom. "You'll be playing defense next game. Luke, how does fullback sound? You can protect this one."

"Of course, Coach!" Luke sounded, and Beca grinned as she slapped the boy's hand.

After a shower, Beca left the locker room feeling amazing. Ever since the day in the diner, her and Chloe had been well. Beca's aunts had worshipped her and praised her speech, reciting the pieces they remembered over and over until Michelle and Sarah left that Monday. She still hadn't talked to Aubrey, making glee club completely awkward

when Beca told CR and Stacie about Chloe's outburst, and Lauren had told Will everything, but Will couldn't really punish Beca for Chloe's actions. Either way, he didn't get on Beca about coming home for weekends anymore to please his wife, and Beca couldn't complain.

Allie and Chloe were waiting outside of the locker room grinning from ear to ear. Allie hugged Beca first, ruffling her hair then Chloe jumped into her arms.

"You did so good out there, Babe!" she squealed. "I'm so proud of you!"

"Thanks," Beca replied with a grin.

"So are you staying over tonight, Chloe?" Allie asked.
"Then we can all go to your game together in the morning."

"You-you're coming!" Chloe squealed.

Allie quirked an eyebrow. "Did I need an invite?"

"No, no, of course not! It's just-usually Lauren counts as the one coming to see me, but that's not happening anymore, and my mom never comes, so-"

"Well, Red, you're part of this family now. We're going to see you."

"Yay! Okay, yeah, I'll stay over. I have to go get my bag from home though."

"I'll take you," Beca offered. "We'll see you at the house, Aunt Allie."

"Okay, I'll whip up something for dinner."

The rest of the football team was going out to celebrate as usual, but since Chloe had a game the next morning, Beca had opted to stay in with her. They had really been pretty much inseparable the whole week aside from their respective practices, and Beca was genuinely happy finally. After saying her goodbyes to Jesse and Luke when they exited the locker room, Beca led Chloe to the truck, tossing her duffle bag in the backseat.

“So you guys play in Athens next week, right?” Chloe asked as Beca started the truck.

“Yup, we play Cedar Shoals,” Beca sighed. “Coach says they have a really fast runningback, and he’s thinking of letting me play some defense.”

“That’s so good, Baby. You’re the best on the team.”

Beca smiled as Chloe slid a hand over her thigh. “Thanks for being there.”

“Of course. I told you I’d be there. Aunt Allie and I will be in Athens next week too. I have a game Thursday night, but none Friday or Saturday, so we’ll leave right after school.”

“And...you look really sexy in my jersey.”

“You think so? Well, check your phone.”

Beca gave her a weird look but took her phone from Chloe which the redhead had been holding during the game. As she unlocked the screen, she found that her wallpaper was now a picture of Chloe blowing a kiss in her jersey. Beca smiled.

“God, I love you,” she chuckled lightly.

“Tell me something I don’t know,” Chloe smirked.

“Whoa, you spend way too much time with me.”

“Maybe a little bit, but it’s okay. It’s because I love you too though.”

“So are you ready for tomorrow?”

“Yeah, I think so. Haven’t talked to Aubrey, but we’ve still been playing pretty well. We play Clarke Central, and they’re really tall.”

“I wouldn’t know what that means. To me, everyone’s really tall.”

Chloe giggled. “Sorry, Babe. I’m talking six-foot-four tall.”

“Damn, what the hell do they feed kids in Athens?”

“Their young.”

Beca chuckled. “Okay, you’ve been around Amy too much too. Or Lily. Yeah, probably Lily.”

Chloe only shrugged. “So Aunt Sarah’s coming back at the end of October?”

“Yup, she’s thinking of finally settling back down in the states. She wants to watch more football, and she could pretty much work at any technology company she pleases. That’s what she got her degree in before she started traveling; programming and stuff.”

“What does Aunt Allie do?”

“She owns her own graphic design company from home. She also creates websites and software for businesses and

stuff.”

“That’s pretty cool.”

“Yeah, all three of them are crazy smart. I swear, you would think they were all real sisters.”

“They’re not?”

“Well, no. Michelle and Sarah are. They’re my dad’s sisters. Sarah is twenty-six, and Michelle is thirty-five. My dad was the middle child. Aunt Allie is my mom’s baby sister. They had another sibling, a brother. My Uncle Robert, but he passed away when he was little. Pneumonia.”

“Wow, that must be so hard for Aunt Allie.”

“Yeah, it was, but my mom’s entire family is so-full of life. They always see the brighter side. They’re just like you, I swear. I got my pessimistic views from Will. I know that, but my grandma was always singing and stuff. She passed away when I was seven, right before Will ditched us.”

“Wow, that’s a strong family though, Beca. I see where that part of you comes from.”

Beca smiled. “Yeah, they’re pretty amazing.”

“What was your-dad like?”

“Well, he loved football and music and sports in general. He taught me to play basketball, baseball, football, ping pong. We played video games together. He was always optimistic too. He played college football, but he blew his knee out.”

“Yeah, Aunt Allie told me.”

“Yeah, but he wasn’t angry or anything. He believed in God’s plan, you know. He figured that it was God’s way of bringing him to us. If he had been drafted, he never would have met my mom, but man. He was always laughing and joking. He really made my mom happy. I always thought my mom was happy with Will, but then I saw her with my dad, and I knew the difference. He really made her smile. He loved us. He would always play guitar while I sang, and he sang with me too. He had a great voice. He loved movies although I hated them because of their cheesy, predictable endings. He was a sappy romantic, but in a way, he really taught me to love. He healed my mom and showed me that Will wasn’t the only type of guy in the world. I guess that’s what made me see that Kelly wasn’t the only type of girl in the world when I thought about it, and that helped me. He always does.”

“He sounds amazing, Becs, and he did a standup job raising you. No matter what anyone says, I would never want you to change.”

“Just know, Chlo, if it wasn’t for you, I would’ve already torn Barden apart.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

After Chloe retrieved her bag from her house, where her mother was nowhere to be found as usual, she returned to Beca’s truck, and they headed to Aunt Allie’s.

“Chlo?” Beca called softly, and the redhead hummed her response. “Could I ask you a question? I mean, you don’t have to answer it if you don’t want to, but-”

Chloe grabbed her hand. “It’s okay, Babe, go ahead.”

“How-uh, how did your dad die?”

Chloe sighed heavily, looking out the window to compose herself before answering. "He-he committed suicide. He, well, he started suffering from insomnia when I was two or three. See, he was a Marine, and he went on a lot of tours. Well, he came off active duty when I was born, but-he wasn't okay. It really messed with his head, but my dad was a proud man. He never talked about his problems, kind of like you. He held it all in. Soon, he was hearing voices. He almost killed me once. I tapped him when I woke up with a bad dream, and I startled him. He had me pinned on the ground until he realized it was me. He cried for hours. It was really bad, and my mom either didn't see it or didn't wanna call him on it because it just got worse. He had schizophrenia, and he would always talk to himself. When I was six, on my first day of first grade, I came home, and-I found him in the living room. He shot himself only a few minutes before I arrived. Will had just arrived home, and he heard it. He called the police, and-yeah."

"Jeez, I'm really sorry, Chloe. With you finding him. That's-I'm sorry, Babe."

"It's okay. It was hard for me, but I just figured that he was finally at peace with the demons in his head. He could finally rest and escape."

Beca smiled. "Always the optimist, Beale."

Chloe beamed at her now. "That's why we work so well, Mitchell. Opposite poles and all that."

"Right."

When Beca and Chloe arrived at the condo, they were met with the sweet scent of garlic bread and tomato sauce. Aunt Allie was preparing lasagna.

“How the hell did you have time to make all of this, woman?” Beca asked as they entered.

“Skill, honey,” Allie shot back. “I heard pasta’s good for the nights before the game.”

“Uh, why didn’t I get pasta last night then?”

“Pizza, pasta, same thing.”

“Wow, you really have a new favorite niece.”

“It’s the red hair.”

Chloe giggled as Beca scowled at the older woman before taking their bags up to her room. Chloe quickly set the table. She had been over at the condo a few times that week, so she was familiar with the place. She liked the feeling of having a family, and she was glad it was someone as cool as Allison Chalmers. When the three were finally settled in at the table, they passed around dishes and began to eat.

“Oh my God,” Chloe groaned after a bite. “This is the best lasagna I’ve ever tasted.”

“Chalmers family secret, Beale,” Beca smirked. “Always the best.”

“Yeah, but believe it took years to perfect it,” Allie assured her. “The first time I made it, the edges were burnt black and the middle was cold. The second through fifth time, the noodles were too hard. I’d say it took about five years to get it right.”

Chloe giggled. “Well worth it.”

“So what are you two doing after the game tomorrow?” Allie asked.

“Well, Luke’s band has a gig tomorrow at the park,” Beca told her. “He told me to invite you too. I’ve been helping them write some songs.”

Allie suddenly jumped up, pointing a finger at Beca, who instinctively jumped back. “Holy shit! I almost forgot! I heard your mix on the radio today! I was like ‘hmm, sounds familiar from the night at the beach’ and they were like ‘DJ Pocket Rocket-”

“No!” Beca gasped. “They really said that!”

“No, but it would’ve fit.” Chloe burst into giggles. “Anyway, they said DJ Titanium B, and I automatically knew it was you. Why didn’t you tell me!”

“Well, Luke gave them to his brother that works at the station. I first heard it the day of our first game, and it slipped my mind.”

“Oh, were too busy playing pocket rocket with Red here.”

Beca and Chloe both blushed furiously. “How can you say that with a straight face?”

“Becs, I’m twenty-five. I’m still not a prude, okay? Which speaking of twenty-five, someone here is turning sixteen soon.” She looked at Chloe.

“Not me,” Chloe shook her head. “My birthday’s in February.”

“I know not you, Red. Beca’s been trying to avoid it though. Her birthday’s in October.”

“What! Becs, why didn’t you tell me!”

“That’s why,” Beca deadpanned. “You guys act like it’s Christmas.”

“It kind of is,” Allie shrugged. “I’m so gonna top last year’s gift.”

Beca dropped her face into her hands, and Chloe gave her a curious look. “What was last year’s gift, Beca?”

Allie burst into laughter as Beca shook her head. “Proof that my aunt is a teenager.”

“What was it, Babe?”

Beca was quiet for a long while as Allie slapped the table in hysterics now. The smaller brunette finally dragged her hands down her face, cheeks rose red as she took a few more bites of her lasagna, stalling.

“Well, go on, Becs,” Allie urged, a huge grin on her face. “Tell her what your awesome aunt got you as your birthday and coming-out present.”

“Oh my God, Beca!” Chloe gasped. “Was it a strap-on! And you hid it from me!”

Allie could no longer breathe she was laughing so hard, and Beca banged her head against the table repeatedly.

“Wow, Becs, I thought we were past the dark secrets step here,” Chloe pouted.

“Babe, shut up, or I swear-”

“She’s-gonna-punish you-with-her-pocket ROCKET!” Allie gasped as she continued to laugh and clutch her sides, and

Chloe fell out of her chair now giggling.

“Like I’ve said before, you two are evil.”

After dinner and cleaning the kitchen, Beca and Chloe retired to their room. Allie followed them upstairs. She gave them a weird look as they entered the room, and Beca caught it.

“What?” the younger brunette asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I don’t know,” Allie said slowly, tapping her chin in thought. “I just feel like I’m missing something. Like, there should be a reason I shouldn’t let you two share a bed, but you can’t get knocked up, so... Maybe it’s a religious thing? Eh, whatever. Night.”

With that, she stalked down the hall to her bed. Chloe’s cheeks were already hurting from smiling so much as she giggled again.

“I love her,” she sighed in content.

“Yeah, me too, but she’s still weird,” Beca scoffed.

“She’s special, Babe, now hurry up and get in bed. It’s late, and we have to be up early.”

“Okay, woman, chill out.”

Once the girls were dressed for bed, they slid under the covers of Beca’s queen-sized bed. Chloe rested her head on Beca’s shoulder, their fingers entwined and resting upon the brunette’s taut stomach. Chloe’s fingers lightly traced the muscles through her shirt. Beca smirked as she did so, her own hand stroking ginger curls.

“You are never again to flash your abs at Stacie again, understood?” Chloe grumbled.

“Okay, so, just the others?” Beca asked innocently, and she was met with their hands hitting her gut hard. “Ah! Ow!”

“Does that answer your question?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Chloe awoke in bed the next morning to cold sheets. She frowned, sliding out of bed. When she entered the hall, she was met with the smell of sizzling bacon and two voices harmonizing downstairs. She smiled as the sweet symphony wafted up to her.

I could lift you up

I could show you what you wanna see

And take you where you wanna be

You could be my luck

Even if the sky is falling down

I know that we’ll be safe and sound

We’re safe and sound

I could fill your cup

You know my river won’t evaporate

This world we still appreciate

You could be my luck

Even in a hurricane of frowns

I know that we'll be safe and sound

Safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Hold your ground

We're safe and sound

Safe and sound

I could show you love

In a tidal wave of mystery

You'll still be standing next to me

You could be my luck

Even if we're six feet underground

I know that we'll be safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Chloe walked down the stairs and leaned against the threshold of the kitchen, hugging herself as she watched her two favorite brunettes singing and dancing while they prepared breakfast. They maneuvered around one another seamlessly through the kitchen. She could smell the sweet cinnamon of french toast, and her heart swelled when she

took in their wardrobe. Both of them were wearing white shirts with “Beale” across the back above a large maroon number “6”. The name was the same color as the number. They were representing her. She donned her megawatt grin and began singing along with them. Beca smiled to herself without the need to turn around. Allie smiled as well.

Safe and sound

Safe and sound

Hold your ground

Safe and sound

I could lift you up

I could show you what you wanna see

And take you where you wanna be

You could be my luck

Even if the sky is falling down

I know that we’ll be safe and sound

I could lift you up

I could show you what you wanna see

And take you where you wanna be

You could be my luck

Even if the sky is falling down

I know that we'll be safe and sound

We're safe and sound

We're safe and sound

We're safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Safe and sound

We're safe and sound

Hold your ground

We're safe and sound

Safe and sound

We're safe and sound

"She has a voice too, Becs!" Allie gushed when they rounded out the song. "Keeper!"

"I think I already figured that out," Beca smirked as she pulled plates out and stacked french toast upon them. "Thanks for the confirmation though."

Allie slapped bacon on each plate before setting them on the table. Chloe kissed Beca's cheek before sitting down at the table. The two brunettes joined her moments later with glasses of orange juice, and they all began eating.

“So, you guys know about volleyball, right?” Chloe asked. “Like you enjoy it? I don’t want to drag you guys to a sport you don’t like.”

She looked up nervously to see Beca and Allie smirking at each other.

“Chlo,” Beca sighed, now looking over at her. “You’re looking at a woman who won two national titles with UNC a few years back.”

Chloe’s eyes widened, and she struggled to swallow her bite of bacon.

“What!” she squealed, looking at Allie. “Does this family ever run out of surprises! Jesus!”

Allie chuckled. “It was a long time ago, but yeah. We know volleyball. Beca was there when we played in Atlanta for keeps. She was only nine, but she understood.”

“Wow, you guys are like a box of chocolates.”

Beca snorted. “Cute, Beale, now hurry it up. You have a game to win.”

Chloe, Beca and Allie arrived at the gymnasium an hour later, and Chloe headed to the locker room after a deep kiss with her DJ. Allie and Beca then made their way to the stands behind the Bella bench. Chloe entered the locker room where Stacie and the girls were already dressing.

“Red!” Amy yelled, getting up to slap her hand. “You ready to crush it today?”

“I’m hoping so,” Chloe said.

“Oh, no, were you sexually active last night? It kills your stamina.”

“No it does not!” Stacie argued.

“Well that explains why *you* take two matches to warm up,” CR sighed.

“Okay, guys!” a booming voice now came, and Coach Anna Mendez entered the room. “Get suited up and meet out on the court for warm-up.”

Most of the girls were already good to go and headed out of the locker room in their t-shirts and sweats they warmed up in, their uniforms beneath. Chloe quickly began dressing, and as she pulled her t-shirt down over her head, she was cast in a shadow. She looked up to find Aubrey standing there. Chloe locked eyes with her but said nothing. At last Aubrey sighed.

“Chloe, I don’t want to fight with you anymore,” she sighed.

“Does that mean you’ll give my girlfriend a chance?” Chloe instantly returned.

“How are you going out with her. She’s so-” Chloe huffed and turned to leave, but Aubrey stopped her. “Chloe, stop. Please.”

“No, Bree, I know it isn’t your fault, but the things your mom said were cruel, and you play along because you want her acceptance, and I don’t like that. I don’t like people who need to put others down to feel better. I told you why Beca’s like that. She created chaos when her dad walked out on her without even giving her a reason. She was a happy kid before that. He never called or came back. What would you think, Bree? It’s easier for you because your dad left before you were born, but think if Will were to leave

you right now. He was there since you were two, Aubrey. You know what that means? It means he was going behind Beca's mom's back since *she* was two. For five years until he finally left. What would you think? Would you be all fine and dandy? You're always angry at the world now, so I couldn't imagine how much worse it could possibly be. She lost two dads and a mom, Aubrey. Think about that before you judge her. I got to know her, yeah, behind your back. That should tell you how good of a friend you've been to me. We love her though, and you can accept it or we can part ways for good."

"Chloe-"

"No, you think about that. Now, we have to go. It's game time."

Beca had never been so flustered about a sport. When Chloe shed her t-shirt and sweats to reveal very short, black, spandex shorts and a tight spandex-like sleeveless jersey, she just about fainted. Her hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail, and she wore long socks that reached her knees, the same color as her Bella blue jersey that made her eyes pop. She had dressed in the locker room, so Beca only saw said outfit when she walked onto the court.

"You're drooling, dear," Allie chided with a smirk.

"I can't even deny it right now," Beca breathed.

When the match actually began, Beca was enthralled. Chloe had the height, but she had been right. The girls they were playing were giants. Yet, Chloe was blocking the majority of their shots with help from Stacie. Lily was really fast getting digs and saves, and Jessica was an amazing setter, and so was CR. Aubrey and Amy actually each had a

ridiculous spike. Amy hit one blocker in the face on one play, and the victim fell to the floor grasping her nose. She needed a substitute, and Beca whistled for the large Aussie. Amy pointed at her and saluted, and the two brunettes in the stands chuckled. When Chloe spiked once, it hit right inside the line, so fast that the other team couldn't react. Beca went crazy, throwing her arms to her sides with one forearm on her aunt's chest whooping and hollering. Jesse and Luke had joined them during the second match, and they too were going wild.

When it was Chloe's turn to serve in the tie-breaking fifth match, they only needed one more point to win. The opposing fans began chanting to break her concentration. Chloe looked at Beca, and Beca gave her nod, one finger up to ask for a second. She then whispered to Luke, Jesse and Allie. They all nodded, and in unison, they all let out a loud whistle, followed by "Hey!" The entire gym looked at them, including the other team, but Chloe knew what to do. She took a deep breath and hit the ball over, catching their opponents off guard and scoring the final point. They jumped up cheering, and the opposing coach ran to the referee to claim they had been distracted. The referee only shrugged before gesturing to the Bellas as the winners. Aubrey had seen what Beca and her group had done, and she started to think over Chloe's words as they huddled in the center. She saw Beca's shirt with Chloe's number on it, and she started to think that maybe, just maybe, her stepsister wasn't so bad.

Beca jumped down the stairs, hurdling over the Barden bench to catch Chloe in her arms and swing her around. She kissed her softly.

"That was amazing, baby," the brunette hissed.

“Well, I had a little help,” Chloe returned with a wink.

“Eh, well, those idiots over yonder were annoying the shit outta me.”

“Mm hmm, sure.”

“I love you.”

“I see that. I love you too.”

Allie appeared beside them as Beca set Chloe down, and she clapped the redhead’s shoulder.

“You have a mean spike there, Red!” she bellowed. “Jeez, that was beautiful. I was a blocker back in my day, but you, ma’am, are seriously amazing out there.”

“Are you serious? You won two national championships. WITH UNC!”

Suddenly Coach Mendez was beside them with wide eyes.

“Wait, did I just hear UNC?” she asked then she looked at Allie, and her eyes bulged further. “No way. Are you-Allison Chalmers?”

“Yes, I am,” Allie said, shaking her hand.

“What are you doing here?”

She looked over at Chloe. “I came to see my niece play.” Chloe’s smile just about split her face.

“Wow, I played for Maryland, but you were a legend, girl. Hey, maybe one of these days you come help us out on the court.”

“Yeah, no problem.”

“Chloe can give you details, and great game today, Beale.”

“Thanks, Coach.”

The coach then walked away, and Chloe was all smiles. Allie and Beca couldn't help but mimic it. The redhead pulled Allie into a hug.

“Thank you so much,” she breathed.

“For what, Red?” Allie chuckled.

“Everything. You're amazing. I see where Beca gets it from.”

“You're pretty amazing yourself. Beca's lucky.”

As Chloe finally walked back to the locker room to shower and dress, she was still sporting her megawatt smile. She couldn't help it. For most of her life, she didn't really have her parents around. With her father being sick, and her mother trying to avoid it all, she had been alone a lot save for Aubrey. She had finally realized however that Aubrey and her mother had always tried to make her think they were the best of the best. They had always questioned her every decision with every friend she made and everything she did, and it made no sense to her until now. Then she found Beca, rough around the edges and covered in grime, but once she dug through all of that, she discovered a heart of gold. She was taken into a family that she loved right away, and she found that because unlike Will, Aubrey and Lauren, she really wasn't a coward. She didn't judge, and she did have a big heart and an open mind. It was why she had found happiness, and she didn't regret it one bit. Maybe Aubrey would come around, maybe not. Regardless,

Chloe was finally genuinely happy, and she wouldn't trade it for the world.

11. Homecoming

A/N: So how are we doing so far? Is the football too much? If so, Im sorry. I love football and I miss playing therefore Ive put a lot of the action in. I can cut down if you guys would like of course. I just realized how much it is so let me know! Oh and HAPPY BIRTHDAY BLUEWASABI24!

Song: Anna Sun-Walk the Moon

Screen falling off the door door hanging off the hinges

My feet are still sore my back is on the fringes

We tore up the walls we slept on couches

We lifted this house we lifted this house

Fire-crackers in the east my car parked south

Your hands on my cheeks your shoulder in my mouth

I was up against the wall on the west mezzanine

We rattle this town we rattle this scene

What do you know? this house is falling apart

What can I say? this house is falling apart

We got no money, but we got heart

We're gonna rattle this ghost town

This house is falling apart

Homecoming week came into Barden in style with everyone hyperactive and ready for it. They would play Dawson High that Friday. The Rebels remained undefeated with Beca at the helm. Jesse and Donald were also catching a lot of big throws, but Beca was racking up over one hundred yards each game. Dawson High was the biggest game so far however, and it meant everything to the school. They had played them last season, and Dawson had won courtesy of Beca, but this year, the tables were turned, and everyone was counting on Beca to bring home the first rivalry win in eight years.

Chloe and Beca had practically moved in with Aunt Allie, and they were happy with it. Allie loved having the girls around, and when their other friends came over, it was always a blast. Amy always had some new story to tell, and Jesse was always at Beca with their playful banter. Beca was finally happy, and even with glee club, she didn't mind. At the end of October, they would have their first public program with the Rebels, but Beca just planned to slump through the horrid setlist.

Everyone was routing for Beca and Chloe to be the first dual homecoming queens, and they had even gone as far as crossing out the boys' names on the voting cards and replacing them with Beca's without the brunette aware. They would of course be attending the dance together. Beca usually didn't do school dances, but with Luke's big brother being the DJ and promising to pump his set with her mixes, she promised to go. Of course it had _nothing

_to do with big, blue pleading eyes beneath red hair begging her. Nah, never that.

Chloe and the volleyball squad would also take on the Dawson High team that week, on Thursday night, and Beca had let her know that Kelly was in fact the school setter. Chloe wasn't worried, and neither was the DJ. Dawson's team was miniature compared to Barden, and they had the odds in their favor. All in all, the week was full of adrenaline, and no one could wait until things popped off. Friday night after the dance, everyone would of course end up at the lake, and they planned to show up with a victory in their possession.

On Thursday night, Chloe was on the court warming up before the game. She could see Kelly tossing her dirty looks ever since Dawson took the opposite side of the court, but she didn't mind. She knew Beca would be there for her. Yeah, she knew that, but she didn't expect the surprise the DJ brought with her. The doors opened with cheers fifteen minutes before the game, and Chloe and the team looked over to see Beca leading Aunt Allie, Aunt Sarah and the entirety of the football team, sans Bumper and Tom, into the gym. The craziest part? They all had shirts on that read one of the girls' names. Jesse's read Conrad on the back. Donald's of course read "Onakuramara_" for Lily, and Sarah, Allie, Luke, Beca and the rest of the football team were wearing "Beale" shirts. Aubrey could not believe it, and neither could Lauren and Will, who were up in the stands supporting their "perfect" daughter. They watched as Beca pointed at Chloe as she entered with a wink, and Chloe giggled. The football team assembled right behind the Barden bench, and the coach greeted them. Allie had been down to the gym a few times a week helping the girls, and though she could vouch and say Aubrey was highly

annoying, she missed the game and loved being on the court again.

Chloe leaned over her seat where Beca was perched right behind it.

“You’re amazing, you know that right?” she hissed.

“Only for you, Red,” she smirked as they kissed softly. “I also see you have another fan.”

Chloe knew she was referring to a certain setter from Dawson. “Yeah, she can’t keep her eyes off me. It’s okay though. I only have eyes for you.”

“Okay, Beale, I came to see you tear shit up not make googly eyes at my niece all night,” Sarah said sternly though she had a huge grin on her face. “Get your head in the game!”

Chloe giggled. “Sorry, Aunt Sarah.”

“Good luck, Red.”

“Thanks.”

To say it was war that occurred in the gym that night was an understatement. Dawson took the first two matches easily, but when Beca started a chant throughout her entire group that overpowered all of the Dawson fans, and the Dawson volleyball team recognized who she was, the atmosphere changed. Momentum was swung over to Barden. Beca got a real rally going as loud as she was hollering. The smirk was wiped off Kelly’s face in the middle of the third match. She went to set a ball but decided to hit it over to catch the defense off guard. As it softly flew over, Chloe rose up over the net, swatting it

back down and hitting Kelly directly in the face. The next thing heard was Beca.

“That’s my girl!” she screeched, causing her friends, her team, the Barden bench and her aunts to laugh. “Did you see that! Take notes because that’s my girl! Show ‘em how it’s done, Baby!”

Chloe was red in the face as she got back into position, a grin playing at her lips. Kelly was scowling at her by now as Aubrey served it over, and Chloe could only smirk. It all changed then however. Kelly lost focus, making stupid decisions and horrible passes. Barden took the next two matches easily by more than ten points each, and it was all for a tiebreaker. The two teams huddled up between matches, and the gym was silent. Allie jumped down into the huddle.

“Coach, I think you should put Aubrey and Chloe up front,” she said. “Number eleven is looking for the line to hit. With these two up front, she won’t have a chance, and she’s the one scoring the majority of their points. The setter is out of it already mentally.” Chloe grinned. “That’s all you need to do, and it’s in the bag.”

Mendez nodded, a grin spreading across her face as she changed around the rotation as Allie had suggested. The brunette climbed back up into her seat, and Sarah grinned.

“Show off,” she muttered.

“Oh please,” Allie retorted. “If this was a lacrosse game, you would be doing the same thing.”

It was true. Aunt Sarah too had been all about sports. She was an all-American lacrosse player at Duke, and she had

been a force to be reckoned with. She smiled but said nothing.

When the match began, it went by slow in a shootout. The teams continued to score back and forth. When they were tied at fifteen, Dawson was able to score three points in a row. They only had to make it to twenty one points and win by two. They scored another when Lily missed a dig after colliding with Ashley, and the Dawson crowd was getting rowdy. They quieted when their player got ready to serve. Beca prepared for this, and with the snap of her fingers, everyone knew what to do. As the girl cocked her arm back, the ball in her other hand in front of her ready to be thrown up and hit over, Beca and her group stood up. Just as she threw up the ball, they all yelled, "BOOM!", and the girl hit it, but it went out of bounds as the yell caught her off guard. That gave Barden a point, and it was Chloe's turn to serve. Before she served, Beca and her team were already chanting "Chloe! Chloe! Chloe!" They died down as she posed to serve, and Dawson wasn't loud enough this time to distract her. She put the ball in play, and when it came back over, Amy swatted it down hard right over the net for another Barden point. Chloe served again, and the ball went back and forth a few times before her and Aubrey blocked a spike for another point. She served for a third time, Barden only down by one, and it was Kelly who set the ball too low, so her spiker hit the ball into the net. Beca's crowd was now on their feet permanently. Dawson tried to break Chloe's concentration this time, but she still put it in play. Ashley spiked it down for another point when it came back on Lily's nice pass. They only needed one more point, and Chloe was full of adrenaline with Beca's voice in her ears. She put it in play easily, and it became like a tennis match for a long time. When the ball came back on Barden's side for maybe the sixth or seventh time, Lily hit it up, Jessica set a pretty pass, and Chloe ran up

and swatted it hard. It went towards the back, slamming into the ground. They were awaiting the line umpire's signal to see if the ball hit in bounds or not. The whole gym was silent then his hand went up, towards Barden. It was in.

Beca was the first to once again jump over the seats, and she picked Chloe up in a big hug as always. The football team was going wild as they descended onto the court with other fans. Will grimaced as Lauren made gagging sounds watching the redhead in Beca's arms giggling.

"You are amazing, Baby," Beca hissed. "I love you so much."

"Thanks for being here," she said. "For all of this."

"You deserve it. I'm the only superstar here. I had like thirty shirts made."

Chloe giggled. "You are amazing. How did I get so lucky?"

"I should be the one asking that question, Beale."

After the game, Beca shot over to the Mitchell residence for a second to grab a flash drive she had left there. She was surprised to be met with yelling when she opened the door. She had been sure she was the only reason there was ever yelling amongst the perfect family. Chloe had waited out in the truck, and Beca listened by the door a moment.

"Mom, I tried-" Aubrey was crying, like _really_ crying, but Lauren wasn't having any of it.

"That was pathetic!" she barked. "Had it not been for your dyke best friend, you would have lost!" Beca clenched her

fists but did not move."You called that blocking! Your grandmother could defend better than that."

"But, Mom, Coach said-"

"You disappoint me, Aubrey! I can't believe you really wanted to celebrate that sloppy play! Go up to your room and make a list of everything you did wrong! It was hideous, and if you're not here to win, stay the hell off the court!"

Aubrey then darted out of the kitchen and up the stairs in tears. Beca could not believe what she was seeing, and she felt a sharp pang of sympathy?-in her heart. Before she could even think of what she was doing, she walked up the stairs, and she was standing in front of Aubrey's room. She knocked, but she was sure the blonde could not hear her over her own sobbing. Beca gently opened the door, stepping in and closing it behind her. Aubrey was at the corner of the bed, her knees drawn up to her chest and her head ducked in between them. Beca didn't know what to say at first, but she didn't allow herself to think. She just opened her mouth.

"I think you had a great game," she said softly, and Aubrey jumped when she heard the voice, looking up and giving Beca a confused look. Beca went on. "You were really doing your job out there. I know that maybe your mom wanted you to have more big plays, but the little things you did kept you guys in it. When Chloe missed that block, you saved the point. Your serving was immaculate today too."

"R-really?" Aubrey gasped. "You mean that?"

Beca chuckled softly. "You think I would be up here if I didn't mean it? I know we haven't exactly been friendly, but I know volleyball. My aunt Allie, you know, the one with all

of the tattoos? She played for UNC, and they won two national titles.”

“Yeah, she’s been helping us.”

“Yeah, and she said the same thing. You did great out there, Aubrey. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.” The blonde said nothing then, so Beca turned to leave.

“Beca?” she now called.

“Yeah?” the brunette returned, looking back.

“Thanks. You’re not so bad after all.”

Beca laughed again. “I’m human, just like you are. When people hurt you, you sit up here and cry. That’s good. People hurt me, I inflict chaos. I don’t know why. I just do, so I’m sorry.”

“B-but you make Chloe really happy.”

“And I’m glad I do. That’s all I care about. I know me talking to you now would make her happy because if it wasn’t for me, she would be up here right now instead of hiding in the truck.”

Aubrey smiled at that, the first smile Beca had ever seen on her. She liked it. “I’m glad that she’s happy.” Suddenly, the smile fell away, and her expression was stern. “But you hurt her, and I will kill you, Mitchell.”

Beca grinned. “Fair enough, Posen. I won’t. She makes me better. She makes me not need or want trouble, and for that, I love her. You’re lucky too because she loves you.” Aubrey let the words sink in as Beca turned to the door once more. “She misses her best friend, Aubrey.”

“I am sorry, for how I treated her.”

“Then maybe you should tell her that. I’ll see you later, Aubrey.”

The nostalgia of the volleyball win carried over to Friday night the moment the lights came on on the field. Beca was up front now, deemed captain by her team, and she was leading them out tonight. Jesse and Luke flanked her as always, the DJ oblivious to Tom’s snarl behind her. She was used to it by now. She slid her helmet onto her head, her hair set in place by a skullcap. Each player had war paint on their faces, black lines beneath their eyes. They were out for blood tonight it seemed, hunger in their eyes. Beca wasn’t aware that Will was present as he was drawn to chaperone this year’s homecoming game. Usually the Dawson-Barden game ended up in some sort of riot, so the school had extra personnel on standby tonight. Beca led her team to the mouth of the tunnel where the cheerleaders were already lined up, a large poster ready to be ran through. The spikes of the players’ cleats tapped against the cement tunnel floor. You could feel the energy everywhere. Tonight was their night.

“Who are we!” Beca yelled.

“Rebels!” The team howled.

“Whose house is this!”

“Our house!”

“I can’t hear you!”

“Our house!”

“Let’s go!”

They tore through the poster and were met with overwhelming noise from their stands, which were overflowing tonight. People honked from behind the goalpost fences, watching from their cars. Beca could only hear Chloe and her aunts now though. As Chloe stood in the stands awaiting the start of the game, someone slid in next to her. She looked over, and she was surprised to find Aubrey standing there, looking over the field.

“Bree?” Chloe said. “What are you doing here?”

Aubrey smiled now and looked at her. “I came to sit with my best friend. And...maybe support my not-so-bad stepsister that calmed me down after a fight with my mom yesterday.”

Chloe beamed with her megawatt grin, and Beca’s aunts beside her also were now sporting small smiles though they didn’t look over.

“I’ll ask for details later,” Chloe assured her before turning back to the field.

When the game began, it was a tough battle immediately. The first quarter ended with both teams scoreless, and the second quarter went four of its eight minutes the same way. Dawson finally returned a kick for a touchdown, but their defense was killing the Barden offense. They had intercepted three of Bumper’s passes, and Beca was picking up very little yardage. The worst part of it was that Devin Marshall, the Dawson linebacker, had never liked Beca, and he was out for blood. On one particular play, he rushed into the backfield, picking her up around the waist and slamming her into the ground. Coach Jackson called for a penalty, but none was given, and Devin pushed himself off of Beca roughly, slamming her head back into the turf.

“Bitches don’t play football,” he growled at her. “You gon’ learn today.”

It wasn’t until the fourth quarter that things got really bad. Barden was down by two touchdowns with six minutes left when Beca took a pitch, and she was blind sighted. Tom had been put back on the offensive line when Kevin Sheldon was injured, and he just about rolled over to let Devin in. His helmet clashed with her helmet, and he was four times her size at least. She hit the turf so hard that the sound was heard around the field, the air whooshing out of her.

“And stay down!” he growled in her ear.

She did. Beca didn’t move as Jesse and Luke came to her. Her eyes were closed.

“Beca!” Jesse called. “Beca, wake up. Come on, B. You got this.”

“She’ll stay down if she knows what’s good for her,” Devin threw back.

Luke shoved him away as he cackled, and Coach Jackson was getting ready to come onto the field. The crowd was quiet as the Dawson defense laughed.

“Beca!” came Chloe’s voice from the quieted crowd. “Baby, get up!”

Then Beca’s eyes fluttered open. She heard Devin taunting her, and she was quick to jump to her feet. The Dawson defense quieted now, looking at her in awe. Coach Jackson ran to her.

“Mitchell, you okay?” he asked.

"Give me the ball, Coach," she growled.

"But are you-"

"Coach, I need you to give me the ball."

"Alright, kid." He pulled Bumper to him. "24 Counter. That's the play. Break!"

Beca lined up behind Bumper, sliding her mouthpiece back in. Her eyes were locked with those of a smirking Devin, and she growled. The ball was snapped, and Bumper set it in her hands. She rushed through the small hole left for her in the line, and she was running right at Devin. He grinned, running forwards now. Beca dropped her shoulder for impact, and what happened next stunned the entire stadium. Beca ran right through the boy, throwing him down hard onto the turf. She spun around another linebacker. The cornerback came, but Donald crossed the field and laid him out. Jesse took the other cornerback out of the play, and all that was left was a safety that Beca knew well. Jason Nichols had always been one to push her around and be rough with her just as Devin had. He closed in on her, and at the last second, she stuck her arm out, hitting his neck, and shoved him out of the way. She then reached the end zone, and that turned the tide. The Barden side was alive once more, and Will stood on the sideline in shock, not believing what he had just seen. That was his daughter, and she had held her own.

Barden got the ball back when Unicycle intercepted a pass from Dawson's quarterback, but they were pinned only five yards out of the Dawson end zone. The offense rushed onto the field. The first play was a nice throw to Donald that got them over the twenty. The next pass went to Luke for a ten-yard gain. Jesse took another pass over midfield. The next

play was all Beca. Bumper faked a pass before tossing it out to the DJ, and she made a break for it up the middle. Devin grabbed onto her easily, but she kept driving her legs. She was able to create space between them, throwing her body into him and knocking him off of her, his head slamming into the turf. He didn't get up, but Beca didn't care. Both cornerbacks were closing in. She waited until the last possible second to jump high into the air. The two cornerbacks collided, helmets clashing together, and she landed over them gracefully before rocketing down the field. The safety lost the foot race in seconds, and once again, Beca was in the end zone. The game was tied but not for long. Dawson was able to kick a big field goal after that, and there were only twenty seconds left. If Barden didn't score quickly, it would no doubt be over. Coach Jackson pulled Beca and his biggest guys including Bumper, Donald, Luke, Unicycle and Jesse aside.

"Okay, Mitchell, I need you on this kickoff," he explained. "You guys have to block for her until she can hit an opening. She'll field it. You're faster than all of them, kid. You can do it."

Beca nodded and followed the boys onto the field. Chloe yelled shrilly when she saw Beca walk on. Beca had never been on the kickoff team before. By now, Will was watching the game intently. Aubrey was bouncing up and down in anticipation. Stacie and the rest of the volleyball team were standing in the row behind Chloe's, anxiety overtaking them. When the ball was kicked off, Beca positioned herself under it. All she was thinking about at that moment was wiping the smirk off of Dawson's faces. She caught the ball and immediately rushed forward, right behind Luke. Bumper took out the first two defenders, falling over with the second one. Jesse and Donald were blocking left and right as Luke led her down the path. Devin came forward

now, and Luke looked back at Beca. He would have to throw himself into the block, and she would be on her own after Unicycle took out the safety. Luke launched himself forward, taking down Devin with ease, and Beca broke through the opening in a flash. The entire stadium was on its feet now holding its breath. If she could just outrun Jason, she would be in the clear. He was coming at her fast. When he was close, he lunged at an angle. Beca decided to use her size now. She ducked as low as she could without her knees touching the ground, and Jason flew over her, half landing on her back. She tossed him off then as she stood again and ran forth as the buzzer signaled the end of the game. She dove into the end zone, and that was it. Barden had won. There was cheering and hollering. After so long, they had finally defeated Dawson. The fans descended onto the field, and Dawson fans were already jeering and yelling insults, mainly at her. The old Beca would have already been up in the stands cracking skulls, but the new Beca didn't give a damn about anything once she turned around and ended up with an armful of a beautiful redhead. Chloe peppered her face with kisses.

"Don't ever scare me like that again, Mitchell!" she shrieked, and Beca grinned.

"Were you worried?" the brunette asked slyly.

"Of course! You wouldn't get up at first! I was about to go find that guy and knock him out."

"Yeah, he's always been a jerk, but I'm okay."

"Yeah, I see that." Just then, Devin passed by them, walking towards the Dawson bus, and he sneered at her. "Keep walking, Bitch Boy!" Chloe hollered at him, and his eyes flashed. "Yeah, what! She ran all over you!"

Luke and Jesse burst into laughter from behind Beca as they watched Devin stomp away, and Beca captured the redhead's lips in a searing kiss.

"Chill out, Million Dollar Baby," she snickered.

"You do know movies!" Chloe squealed.

"Shut up, Beale."

Beca set Chloe down, and she now saw Aubrey standing behind Chloe. They shared a small smile as Aubrey patted her shoulder.

"Good game, Mitchell," she said. "Phenomenal."

"Thanks, Posen," Beca smirked. "I try."

Beca saw Will heading her way too wearing a small smile, but she was only just getting used to Aubrey. That guy didn't have a chance, so they told Aubrey they would see her at the dance then Beca led Chloe off of the field.

After heading home to shower and get dressed for the homecoming dance, Beca and Chloe arrived at the gymnasium where the dance was being held. Jesse and Stacie were waiting up front for them with Donald, Lily, Luke, Ashley and Amy. Allie and Sarah had taken a million pictures of the couple before they left the house. Chloe was in a baby blue spaghetti-strap dress that reached her knees, and Beca was in black slacks, a black button-up, a blue tie and blue suspenders that mimicked Chloe's dress color. Jesse and Luke wore the same except their ties and suspenders were purple and red respectively to match Stacie and Ashley. They headed inside, and they were met with the booming bass of one of Beca's mixes. Chloe squealed in delight when she heard it, immediately pulling

Beca onto the dance floor. Beca couldn't even deny the girl. She was just happy to be with her that night. It was the first time she felt like a normal high school kid. Of course, Kelly had refused going to the dance with her last year, so she had missed the event all together. She was glad to find Chloe before she missed another.

Throughout the night, Beca rotated between dancing with Chloe, checking out the DJ booth with Luke and meeting the older Bryant boy Eli, and cracking jokes at the punch table with Jesse and Amy. When it was time to announce homecoming king and queen, Eli lowered the music to a low hum, and Mr. Zedek, the arts teacher and usual event committee advisor stepped to the center of the gym. Everyone turned to watch him. He had a card in his hand, and he was looking at it in a confused manner, but Coach Jackson, who was also the economics teacher at the school, whispered something in his ear with a smile. He then looked at Beca slyly while Mr. Zedek only shrugged, bringing the microphone to his lips.

"Okay," he sighed. "So...this year is a tad bit different as we have had a people's choice vote thing sort of go on here."

Everyone snickered as Beca had never been advised of all of them secretly adding her to the ballot, so she was oblivious to it all. She had known she was on the homecoming court since she had to line up at halftime when they were introduced to the fans, but she had no idea that everyone had wanted her _and _Chloe to win. She did find it rather odd though that there were two sophomore girls and no sophomore boys, but in typical Beca fashion, she had been dense and oblivious, shaking it off.

"So let me first-introduce your homecoming queen because that's easier," Mr. Zedek went on. "Anyway, homecoming

queen is-Barden Bella Chloe Beale!”

Chloe was in shock, but Beca kissed her cheek and pushed her towards Mrs. Kent, who was awaiting her with a sash and a crown. She draped Chloe in the sash before setting the crown on Chloe’s head and everyone cheered. Then they quieted as Mr. Zedek returned his eyes to the card in his hands.

“And...your, uh, well, your homecoming-*king* I suppose, is-uh- Barden Rebel Beca Mitchell!”

Beca froze in her spot as the crowd roared, laughter and applause echoing around the gym. Luke and Jesse were cackling now, and Beca threw them each a glare. They only shrugged and pushed her towards Mrs. Kent, who also gave her a sash and a large crown nearly too big for her head. Chloe was giggling now as Beca took her hand. Jesse, Luke and Stacie snapped pictures of them as they stood at the center.

“You knew, didn’t you?” Beca hissed.

“You’re dense, aren’t you?” Chloe shot back.

“How so?”

“Becs, they didn’t even pick a sophomore boy. Everyone voted for you.”

“But-wow, okay. Sinking in now.”

“Like I said. Dense!”

“Shut it, Beale.”

Once the pictures were finished, it was time for the couple's dance as king and queen. Beca smiled when the song came on, and Chloe did as well, their eyes locked as everyone watched with big grins. Jesse, Luke and Stacie could not be happier knowing the smile on their little friend's face was real. In the short time they had known Beca, she had made a huge impact on their lives, and they didn't regret a moment of it. She was like a sister to them, and they loved her as she loved them. Even Aubrey was smiling, glad to see that her best friend was truly happy after all the redhead had endured. Chloe had always been the type of girl to dream about true love since she was little and talk about marrying her high school sweetheart and starting a big family with the white picket fence and a big house. Yeah, that was Chloe, and from where Aubrey was standing, it looked like she was finally on the right track. Everyone tuned in as Beca and Chloe began to sing the duet together, the redhead taking the lead.

All I knew this morning when I woke

***Is I know something now, know something now I
didn't before***

And all I've seen since eighteen hours ago

Is blue eyes and freckles in your smile

In the back of my mind making me feel like

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

I just wanna know you, know you, know you

'Cause all I know is we said, "Hello."

And your eyes look like coming home

All I know is a simple name

Everything has changed

All I know is you held the door

You'll be mine and I'll be yours

All I know since yesterday is everything has changed

And all my walls stood tall painted blue

***And I'll take them down, take them down and open up the
door for you***

And all I feel in my stomach is butterflies

The beautiful kind, making up for lost time,

Taking flight, making me feel like

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

I just wanna know you, know you, know you

'Cause all I know is we said, "Hello."

And your eyes look like coming home

All I know is a simple name

Everything has changed

All I know is you held the door

And you'll be mine and I'll be yours

All I know since yesterday is everything has changed

Come back and tell me why

***I'm feeling like I've missed you all this time, oh, oh,
oh.***

And meet me there tonight

And let me know that it's not all in my mind.

***I just wanna know you better, know you better, know
you better now***

I just wanna know you, know you, know you

All I know is we said, "Hello."

And your eyes look like coming home

All I know is a simple name

Everything has changed

All I know is you held the door

You'll be mine and I'll be yours

All I know since yesterday is everything has changed

All I know is we said, "Hello."

So dust off your highest hopes

All I know is pouring rain and everything has changed

All I know is a new found grace

All my days I'll know your face

All I know since yesterday is everything has changed

12. We Prove That We Can't Help but Care

A/N: So thank you to everyone for all of the reviews in such. I honestly think that this story is winding down soon, but don't worry. There will be a sequel if anything. Who knows? Maybe Beca will play baseball or something lol but anyway. It's been a short ride with such fast updates, but maybe I'll be able to make it last longer. I'm not sure yet lol. Either way, I'm not going anywhere so... If anyone has suggestions, feel free to inbox them!

Song: Today My Life Begins-Bruno Mars

I've been working hard so long

Seems like pain has been my only friend

My fragile heart's been done so wrong

I wondered if I'd ever heal again

Yesterday has come and gone

And I've learn how to leave it where it is

And I see that I was wrong

For ever doubting I could win

Life's too short to have regrets

So I'm learning now to leave it in the past and try to forget

Only have one life to live

So you better make the best of it

Oh just like all the seasons never stay the same

All around me I can feel a change (oh)

I will break these chains that bind me, happiness will find me

Leave the past behind me, today my life begins

A whole new world is waiting, its mine for the taking

I know I can make it, today my life begins

October fourteenth was a normal day like any other day. The football season was going okay, the Rebels somehow losing two games in September by a margin of less than ten points, but they were still ranked high in the state. Beca was on her way to being all-state with over eight hundred yards and sixteen touchdowns on the season already. Glee club was still torture, but at least her and Aubrey weren't at each others throats as much. That is, until Beca started downing the setlist, and Aubrey just about went postal. Beca could not understand what the deal had heard the blonde listen to more modern music in her room, so what the hell was the issue? She just shrugged it off and remained at the back of the group when they had their first program, and everyone laughed at them. Beca definitely lost cool points being up there. The only good thing was that Beca got out of wearing a skirt, donning blue trousers and a button-up instead.

Today just felt like another Saturday. She woke up next to Chloe, had breakfast with the redhead and her aunts, went to Chloe's game at noon then at five in the afternoon, Allie sent the couple grocery shopping. Beca hated shopping, but she did it. It seemed that Chloe however loved it, and she had to stop and look at every single thing.

"Baby, do you really have to read nutrition facts on Cheerios?" she groaned. "It helps hearts or something like that. It says it on the commercial."

"You really have to learn patience, sweetheart," was the only response she received from the redhead as she pushed the cart.

"We're getting Wheaties anyway. Breakfast of champions."

"Great slogan. Not so great cereal. We're getting Cheerios."

"Okay, but at least get the Honey Nut kind."

"Fine, I'll compromise."

"Thank you because you know if you get regular, I'm just gonna end up drowning it in sugar."

"I have no idea how you do it, and you're still healthy."

Beca winked at her. "It is surely a gift."

By the time Beca was able to get Chloe through the entire shopping list and out of the store, it was seven fifteen.

"Chlo, how the hell do you spend two hours in a grocery store when we only got like six bags!" she asked

incredulously, but the redhead just shrugged and began loading the groceries in the truck.

As they drove home, Chloe turned on the radio, singing along and dancing in her seat. On the inside, she was screaming and shouting in anxiety. She had known her girlfriend was dense, but she had no idea she was this dense. She could not wait until they arrived home. It was surely going to be epic.

Beca at last pulled into the drive, and her and Chloe grabbed the bags to take inside. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, so Beca pushed through the door like nothing. She set the bags on the kitchen island, and the two put the groceries away. When they were finished, Beca looked around the living room.

"Where the hell are those women?" she muttered then she heard a scream from out back.

Beca immediately ran to the back door, Chloe on her heels, and when she opened the door, she was met with "SURPRISE!" from a million different places. She jumped back slightly before registering the scene before her. There was Jesse, Amy, Stacie, Luke, Benji, Allie, Sarah and even Aubrey surrounded by the rest of the football and volleyball teams sans Tom of course. Even Bumper stood in the group. Beca slapped her forehead then and groaned.

"You forgot, didn't you!" Chloe squealed.

"Dammit," Beca grumbled.

"Really?" Luke asked. "You forgot your birthday, B?"

"The question is how the hell did you all find out!" All fingers pointed to the redhead then, and Beca glared at her

while she donned her most innocent puppy dog face, instantly turning Beca to mush. "Dammit, Beale."

Chloe pulled her into a tight hug now, kissing her forehead.

"We're your friends, Baby, we're not just going to NOT celebrate your birthday," Chloe said.

"I just came for the cake," Amy said, Stacie jabbing her with an elbow. "Okay, and I came for you, Short Stack. We did come baring gifts."

Amy pointed to a table on the patio piled with gifts.

"No, guys, you didn't have to!" Beca groaned.

"Oh, okay," Amy shrugged, making a move to go get her present back before CR slapped her arm and stopped her. "Oh, no, I mean yeah, we did. We love you, pint-size."

"I love you too, awesome nerds, I guess."

"Now, let's get this party started!" Allie hollered, and Luke immediately started the music.

Beca turned to Chloe now, pulling her into her arms once more.

"I hate how much I love you sometimes," she growled.

Chloe giggled. "It was mandatory, Baby. I wouldn't be able to live with myself skipping this. It's the day God brought you here for me."

Beca snorted. "You are such a cheese ball!"

As she said it, someone slapped her upside her head. She turned around to see Allie standing there with a death glare pointed at her.

“You be nice, Beca!” she warned. “I’m watching you.”

“You really do have a new favorite niece.”

“Well, look at the colorful mane!” Sarah squealed now.
“She’s like a lion. MUFASA!”

Chloe giggled as Beca shook her head. She turned back to Chloe now, capturing her lips in a deep kiss. Allie nudged her now.

“Save that for later, _after _you open my gift,” she husked.

“Oh my God!” Beca groaned. “You better be kidding.”

Allie only winked and walked across the yard to get a drink. Jesse came over and handed Chloe and Beca each a cup.

“Happy Birthday, best bro!” he said with a beaming smile.

“Thanks, J,” Beca replied, sipping her drink before shooting him a look. “What *is* this?”

“Birthday drank. That’s what Amy said.”

“Great. I’ll never make it to see seventeen.”

“Stop being so negative, B. Drink up and enjoy the night.
WE ARE THE KINGS OF CAMPUS!”

Beca cringed at his booming announcement, but everyone else raised their drinks. After eating and drinking for an hour or so, Stacie and Amy dragged Beca over to her presents to open them. She was rather scared to do so, and she just hoped Allie would keep her present hidden away until after the party. It wasn’t so bad after all though. Stacie had given her a yellow Batman decal for her truck,

and Beca was extremely excited. Jesse had added to it with Batman seat covers and a steering wheel cover. Luke gave her a book of ab workouts and a dumbbell set. Ashley, Jessica and Denise each also gave her some sort of Batman paraphernalia; a long-sleeve shirt, a bed comforter and pajama bottoms. She was jumping up and down like a child, and everyone chuckled. Aubrey gave her a brand new composition book for her songs with an old Batman comic on the cover. Lily and Donald gave her a Batman decal for her playstation console and controllers, which he knew she had because they played online together with Luke and Jesse almost every weekend now. CR had given her some slick new headphones and an iPod case, Batman of course. When Beca read Bumper's name and Fat Amy's name on the same present, she quirked an eyebrow at them. Bumper looked away, sipping his drink, and Fat Amy only gave her an expectant look, so she quickly unwrapped the present. She found a Batgirl suit inside that was rather revealing.

"Uh, Fat Amy, I-" Beca began, but Amy cut her off.

"No, that one's for Strawberry." She gestured to Chloe, who flushed red. "Keep looking."

Beca then pulled out a full Batman suit, and she was in awe.

"NO WAY!" she squealed.

"I figured that Halloween's around the corner, and glee club usually delivers the candy-grams dressed up before the dance they hold, so I got your costumes for you. I had to get the kid size, but 's alright."

"You know she's not just going to wear that for Halloween, right?" Allie asked.

“Neither is Chloe,” Jesse burst into laughter, and Beca scowled at him.

She continued on to the rest of the presents as there were a lot, and most of it was either Batman-themed or football themed. The entire team, after finding out Beca’s favorite NFL team from Chloe, pitched in to get her a personalized San Francisco 49er jersey with her name and number, and she was over the moon with joy when she saw it. It also turned out that Aunt Allie had not gone as extreme as she had inferred. She and Sarah had purchased Chloe, Beca and themselves tickets to see the 49ers take on the Falcons in Atlanta come December. Beca jumped up when she saw the tickets and ran around the yard. It was then that Chloe discovered another secret about her girlfriend. The little shit could do a backflip. With no hands. Drunk. Holding a beer.

When the presents were all opened, and the cake had been devoured, everyone swam a bit and socialized before they began clearing out until it was only Beca’s closest friends and her aunts, the usual group. Chloe pulled Beca into their room a moment as she at last fetched her present for the brunette. She handed Beca the box, and Beca gave her a curious look.

“You really thought I wouldn’t get you something?” Chloe asked her, raising an eyebrow. “Open.”

Beca did as she was told, opening the small box to find a guitar pick inside with her initials on it.

“Baby, this is great, but-I told you that I never got to go get my guitar from my mom’s storage.”

This was true. She had told the redhead that her beloved guitar that her stepfather had given her had been left in her mother's storage unit after they passed, and Will had never allowed her to go get it, saying she didn't need it when she should be focusing on not getting kicked out of school. Aunt Allie had the key to the storage unit, but Beca had never thought about it afterwards, and it slipped her mind after she told Chloe.

"Yeah, I know," Chloe replied nonchalantly, moving to the closet and pulling something out.

Beca's jaw dropped when Chloe pulled out a slick black guitar, shiny as new with fresh strings.

"Wow," Beca gasped. "This looks just like the one my dad got me."

Chloe grinned. "That _is_ the one your dad got you."

"What? How-"

"I told Aunt Allie where it was. She went and got it then we took it down to the music store. They polished it and put on fresh strings. We did it yesterday since you stayed at the field. Look closer at the top."

Beca leaned her head towards it, and now she could see "DJ Titanium B" in gold, elegant writing along the strings at the base of the neck. She grinned.

"Wow, Babe, this-this is the best gift I've ever received."

"Oh, please, Babe. We practically rewrapped a gift."

"No, Baby, seriously. This means more to me than you could ever know. I love it. Oh, and I have something for

you.”

“It’s not my birthday.”

“Yeah, but I meant to give it to you when, you know, I was going to ask you to be my girlfriend the first time, and I still want you to have it.”

Beca set the guitar down and rummaged through her drawer a moment before pulling out a small baby blue box. She opened it up to remove a small silver necklace with a diamond-studded heart-shaped pendant dangling from it. It was beautiful, and Chloe gasped, putting a hand to her mouth.

“Becs, that looks-super expensive,” she breathed.

“I wouldn’t know,” Beca replied with a smirk. “It was my mother’s.”

“That makes it priceless, Becs! I can’t take-”

“No, I want you to have it. My mom always said that when I found someone special and fall in love, I should let them wear it, so that’s what I’m doing.”

Chloe allowed Beca to clasp the chain around her neck before embracing her girlfriend in a tight hug. Beca kissed her softly. When they pulled away, their foreheads resting against one another.

“I love you, Becs,” Chloe whispered. “I swear I won’t ever hurt you again.”

“And somehow, I believe you,” Beca smiled.

When the two returned to the living room, they found Amy and Aubrey harmonizing on a Little Mermaid song. They gave them a curious look.

"Can you please save the birthday sex for _after _we pass out?" Luke asked them as they entered. "Maybe even for tomorrow?"

"Sure thing, bro," Beca shot him. "Uh, what the hell are they doing?"

"Drunken karaoke," Jesse shrugged.

"Hey, Auntie Allie, where's the pinata!" Amy slurred all of a sudden. "Tha's the best part!"

"What are you? Eight?" Jesse asked.

"I don't remember, actually."

"How about we play some pool football?" Beca asked.

"I'm in!" Luke boomed.

"Me too!" Jesse declared, already pulling off his shirt once more.

The girls all agreed, and they walked outside. Luke and Beca were captains, and they chose their teams quickly. Beca had Chloe, Aubrey (who took some major persuasion), Jesse, Stacie, CR and Amy. Luke had Donald, Lily, Benji, Jessica, Denise and Ashley. They jumped in the pool with the Nerf football Beca received, and they played what seemed to be not quite football but fun enough. On the first play, Beca threw a pass to Jesse, and it was Denise that nearly drowned him. Beca was laughing so hard that she nearly drowned herself as well. They were in the pool for a

good hour and a half before they called it a night. They took turns taking showers amongst three bathrooms while Aunt Allie laid out blankets and pillows all over the living room for the group.

“You won’t get in trouble for staying, right?” Beca asked Aubrey, genuinely concerned.

“No,” Aubrey smiled. “My mom’s on business, and dad said it was okay.”

“Oh okay. You and Chloe can take my bed.”

“Oh, no, that’s-”

“Aubrey, it’s fine. Go ahead. And...thank you. For the gift.”

“You’re welcome.”

They shared one last smile before Chloe took Aubrey’s hand and led her upstairs. Jesse clapped Beca’s shoulder now.

“You let her have your bed on your birthday?” he asked incredulously. “You’re a saint.”

“Shut up, Swanson,” Beca smirked. “Are you tired?”

“Not really anymore.”

“Good. We can play Black Ops II. Aunt Sarah got it for me.”

“Sweet!”

Beca and Jesse were playing in the den, separate from the living room, for much longer than they thought. They were zoned in though, killing zombies and trying not to cry out when they died on their co-op mission.

It wasn't until someone startled her by tapping her on the shoulder that she jumped and saw that the clock read "3:35". She looked up to see Chloe there. Jesse chuckled.

"What the hell, Chlo?" she hissed.

"I couldn't sleep," she pouted then she looked at the screen. "What are you guys doing?"

"Playing zombies."

"Ooh, can I play?"

"Do you know _how _to play?"

Chloe just shrugged before grabbing the controller from Beca and plopping down between Beca's legs. Jesse grinned at his best friend, and she waved him off. Putting her arms around Chloe's waist, she put her hands over Chloe's on the controller.

"Okay, Babe," she huffed, "you use this to shoot, this one to move, this button is to aim, this is to reload, this is to switch weapons, and this is to take cover. Do you got all that?"

"I think so."

"Okay, un-pause it, J."

Jesse did so, and the first thing Chloe did was shoot Jesse.

"Hey!" the boy snapped.

"Shut it, Swanson, it didn't even hurt you," Chloe shot back.

Chloe was standing there staring at Jesse's character on screen, following him around.

"So when do the-" Suddenly a zombie jumped down from the opening in the roof right in front of her character, and she screamed, throwing the controller up and jumping to her feet before running around to the back of the couch.

Beca and Jesse fell over each other in laughter, clutching their sides as Chloe pouted from behind the couch.

"You are assholes," Chloe growled.

"You-should have seen-your face!" Beca breathed, rolling on the floor.

"Priceless!" Jesse agreed.

Chloe glowered at them until they calmed down. Beca at last stood up, walking towards her.

"I'm sorry, Baby," she said softly. "Come here."

Chloe moved forward, but as she did, Beca's eyes grew wide, looking over her shoulder. Jesse's bulged as well.

"I'm not stupid, guys," Chloe scoffed. "Stop joking."

Suddenly someone grabbed her from behind, and she screamed again as she was pulled back. Then she was released. She whipped around to find Allie clutching her sides in breathless laughter. Jesse and Beca were back to their hysterics well.

"I hate this house," she huffed.

"Stop being a baby, Red," Beca breathed.

“Let’s see who the baby is when I drop pink nail polish on your new Batman comforter.”

Beca sobered instantly. “You wouldn’t.”

“I would. Superman-is better-anyway.”

Beca gasped, grasping her chest, pointing a finger at Chloe. “You take that back or I swear I will end you, Beale!”

It was a grueling Monday afternoon in glee club. Aubrey was freaking out more than usual, and Beca didn’t really understand what was getting her so wound up.

“What the hell’s going on?” she asked Chloe when Aubrey excused herself yet again to hit the bathroom.

“December’s coming,” Chloe returned as if that completely explained it.

“She doesn’t like Christmas either?”

Chloe giggled softly. “It’s not that. Regionals are coming up.”

“Regionals? There’s fuckin’ regionals for glee club?”

“Yeah, babe, have you ever watched the competitions on the show Glee?”

Beca quirked an eyebrow. “Seriously?”

“Oh, right.” She threw her hands out now. “Watch out, everyone! I’m dating a badass!”

Everyone gave her a weird look but chuckled at the unimpressed expression Beca was giving her. Chloe just giggled.

"I thought I was almost out of this class," Beca groaned.
"Now we actually have work."

"Yes, Baby, there's work in a high school class," Chloe said sarcastically. "Who would've guessed, right?"

"You're really testing limits here, Beale."

"Anyway, yeah, but it's okay. We're probably doing the same choreography for the same songs for the millionth time, which is why we _never _see past regionals."

"Who the fuck arranged this-" Beca stopped, raising her eyebrows.

"What? What's wrong?"

"I'll be right back."

Beca rushed out of the room just as Aubrey was about to walk back in. Aubrey gave her a confused look as the brunette blocked her entrance.

"Aubrey, did your mom have anything to do with this setlist?" she asked firmly. Aubrey suddenly found her shoes really interesting. "Aubrey, you can tell me. I'm trying to understand."

"Beca, don't worry-"

"Just tell me, Aubrey."

"You don't-"

“Tell me!”

Aubrey nodded slightly, but Beca was looking at her so intensely that she saw it.

“Okay, Bree, listen to me,” she sighed. “If we keep that setlist, you can kiss Regionals and every other competition-”

“Beca, we are not changing the setlist.”

“Then we are not changing our losing streak.”

“If we do it according to plan, we will-”

“Did you do it according to plan last year because you didn’t make it then either.”

“I’m not arguing over this with you. This is my club, Beca. Take your opinions to the field.”

Beca opened her mouth to speak again but just sighed and opened the door to let Aubrey in. Chloe watched them enter before Beca returned to her side. When Chloe asked, she just shook her head, slumping down in a chair. Before Aubrey could get them to do another round, the bell rang, and everyone shot towards the gym.

“What happened, Beca?” Chloe asked, worried about her girlfriend’s distant look.

“I talked to her about the setlist,” she huffed. “I asked her if Lauren had anything to do with it. She nodded, but she couldn’t even look at me then, and she really believes we can win with it.”

“Yeah, she thought that last year too, but she doesn’t listen to me at all.”

“I don’t even know why I care.”

Chloe smiled. “Because you love us and don’t want us to look like fools.”

As the girls entered the gym after dressing, Beca found Luke at the back of the room messing with the stereo system.

“Hey, B, check out what’s on the radio!” he shouted.

When Beca heard the mix, she froze. It wasn’t just any mix. It was a mix with her voice singing the lyrics. She hadn’t even meant to put it on the flash drive for Eli. Chloe had a wide grin on her face, and Aubrey stopped dead in her tracks.

“That you, B?” CR asked now, and Beca nodded slowly.
“Damn, girl!”

“That’s so hot!” Stacie gushed, and Chloe quirked an eyebrow at her.

“That’s your mix?” Aubrey asked, still staring at the stereo.

“Yup,” Chloe answered proudly. “That’s her voice too!”

“How did you put those songs together? They’re completely different.”

“That’s the art of it,” Beca at last recovered. “I take songs that no one would ever think of putting together, and I make it work.”

"It's great, right, Aubrey?" Chloe said. "It's awesome and new and fresh. Hey, maybe Beca can make us a mix for Regionals."

"Come on, Chloe. Let's get to lifting."

Beca only smirked because although she dodged the question, Beca had a feeling that Aubrey was starting to cave. She laid down on the bench, and Luke stood behind her to spot the weight. Once they were finished, Beca gave Chloe a kiss goodbye before following Luke to meet Jesse and go to practice.

"So we play Cross Keys this week?" Jesse asked.

"Yup," Luke replied. "They're like a bunch of Hulks running around. Hey, what's up with you, B?"

Beca huffed. "Just Aubrey."

"I thought you two were getting along."

"Yeah, but that-damn glee club setlist is despicable. I didn't know we had regionals."

"Why didn't join choir?" Jesse asked. "We rock Regionals."

"That wasn't the deal with Will. The deal was that I bond with Aubrey through glee club."

"But you guys would probably bond better now outside of the club."

"If I quit glee, he'll make me quit football."

"Wow, your dad-"

"Will."

“Is ruthless.”

“I know.”

When practice started, the team warmed up before working on plays. It had become routine to dodge Tom’s cheap shots during practice for Beca, but today she was irritated from jump street with him being extra obnoxious that day. As they started running plays, Beca ran out for a pass in the flat behind Jesse, and as she looked back to wave at Bumper, she was blind sighted, smashed to the ground. She looked up to see Tom growling at her as he stood. Beca jumped up and pushed him.

“What the fuck is your problem!” Beca barked.

“You,” he answered simply.

“Grow up, douchebag!”

He pushed her now. “Do something about it!”

“I did. I kicked your ass once, and I’ll do it again.”

Tom was now in her face, their face masks pressed against each other as Coach Jackson appeared looking angry.

“Edwards, what the hell was that?” he screamed at Tom.

“You trying to get her killed!”

“That bitch took my spot!” he roared.

“You know what? No, you handed over your spot with your lousy attitude and even lousier play. Hit the locker room, Edwards. You’re off this team.”

“Coach! I didn’t-”

“No! Get off my field now!”

Tom looked back at Beca now, anger flashing through his eyes. “This isn’t over, Mitchell.”

Coach Jackson shoved him off before turning to Beca. “Don’t let him get to you, kid. I need you to focus, alright?” Beca nodded. “Okay, back to work! Let’s go!”

Beca walked back to the huddle, and Bumper looked over at her now.

“I wouldn’t take the threat lightly, Mitchell,” he warned. “Tom lives for football.”

“I didn’t get his dumb ass kicked off,” she growled.

He snorted. “Try telling him that. Guess you have to change schools again.”

“Just call the fuckin’ play, Allen.”

Beca arrived home at six that night exhausted, and Chloe and was already home with her aunts making dinner. Chloe took one look at her and knew she wasn’t in any better of a mood. As she trudged up the stairs to put her bag in their room, Chloe followed.

“Babe, what’s wrong?” she asked softly.

“Nothing,” Beca grunted.

“Please, don’t shut me out. Talk to me, Becs.”

“I’m fine.”

“Babe, you’re not-”

“Chloe, leave it the fuck alone!”

Beca instantly regretted it as Chloe took a step back, hurt blanketing her face. She sighed.

“Chloe, I-”

“No, no, it’s fine. Uh, dinner’s almost ready.”

With that, she left the room, and Beca fell back on the bed with a roar. When she didn’t come down for dinner right away, Allie descended the stairs and entered the room.

“What’s going on, kiddo?” she asked, sitting on the edge of the bed. “And don’t you yell or shake your head at me. Talk to me. Now. That’s an order.”

Beca knew her aunt was anything but kidding, and she sat up slowly.

“Tom got kicked off the team,” she huffed.

Allie raised an eyebrow. “Isn’t that a good thing?” she asked.

“Well, yeah, but-he made a threat. He told me it wasn’t over, and you know me. I’m not scared, but Bumper kept saying things like I shouldn’t put it past him or take it lightly. He cheap shot me though. I wasn’t the reason he was kicked off.”

“So what is the problem, B? Are you scared?”

“I-I guess I’m just angry because I’m really trying to do right. I’m really trying to stay in line, but it angers me.”

“So, what I understand is that, since you don’t want to cause chaos, you have no way of channeling your anger.

That's what it is. You don't know another way to channel your emotions. You never learned aside from football, but that was where the problem lies. Therefore, Beca, you just need to calm down. First of all, don't take it out on Chloe because she's the one here for you then just-write music or listen to it or something, anything to calm you. Think this. The consequences of you doing something troublesome. You get kicked out of school, and you lose Chloe. There's no issue aside from the fact that you're having havoc withdrawals." Allie laughed at this, and Beca scowled at her. "It's true."

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

"I'm always right. Now let's go down and have dinner, and you can talk to Red."

Beca nodded. "Thanks, Auntie."

"Eh, I'm used to it."

Beca bumped her shoulder playfully as she threw an arm around her niece. They headed down the hall then the stairs before entering the kitchen. Sarah and Chloe were talking about college at the table. Sarah looked up when they entered.

"Can you hurry the hell up, grasshopper, I'm starved!" she whined.

"Yeah, yeah," Beca smirked, sliding into her chair.

"So, what's the deal? What happened today?"

"You remember the fullback?"

"That almost got you killed the first game?"

“Yeah, that one. Well, he hit me with a cheap shot today, and the coach saw it. He kicked him off the team, and then before he left the field, he threatened me, and I’m just angry because I can’t let it out by punching him in the face.”

Sarah grinned. “Wow, Red really did a number on you, huh? Self-control and all.”

“Not really. I still snap at everyone when I’m angry.” She looked at Chloe now. “I’m really sorry, Babe. I didn’t mean to take it out on you.”

Chloe offered a small smile. “It’s okay. I understand.”

“Yeah, but don’t let that shit become a routine,” Allie warned. “I’ll skin you, Mitchell.”

“Wow, you’ve turned my aunts against me.”

“No, I’d do the same to Chloe if it were the other way around.”

“Oh, that makes me feel so much better!”

After dinner and cleaning the kitchen, Chloe and Beca settled into bed, sleep not too far off.

“You know, I’m here for you, right?” Chloe asked, her head resting on the brunette’s chest.

“Yeah,” Beca sighed. “I know, and I’m sorry. This whole pacifist thing is new to me.”

“I know, Babe, but we’re in this together.”

“It’s just-I feel weak.”

“Becs, you are not weak. You’re strong enough to walk away. Do you wanna throw away the season and let the team and everyone else down the way he did? Do you wanna get kicked out of another school and have to leave us? That would be a weak thing to do.”

Beca smiled. “I’m really glad I don’t have to be my own voice of reason.”

“Yeah, me too because I’m not prepared to bail you out of jail.”

Beca chuckled and kissed her forehead. “Thanks, Red.”

“Anytime, Mitchell.”

Beca had never been scared of anything ever since she was a kid. She had had doubts, second guesses, insecurities, but she had never had fears. That had all changed. There was one thing in the world Beca Mitchell feared more than anything, and that was losing Chloe, the bubbly hyperactive redhead that had turned her life upside down, for the better.

13. Superhuman

A/N: Okay, so I will warn you that this chapter is a bit rocky, but bare with me. I am not one for a cheesy anti-climactic story as you all know. Anyway, this chapter is really set on building up to a plot peak. There are still some enjoyable parts. Im not trying to scare you out of your wits lol. Anyway, thank you for all of the reviews and followings. This story has been a real big hit. Ill try to work in all of your suggestions but some of them are just hard to fuse in with the way

***we're going here. Im doing my best though so thanks
to everyone who sent one in. Here we go!***

Song: We Are Young-FUN

Give me a second I,

I need to get my story straight

***My friends are in the bathroom getting higher than
the Empire State***

My lover she's waiting for me just across the bar

***My seat's been taken by some sunglasses asking 'bout
a scar, and***

I know I gave it to you months ago

I know you're trying to forget

But between the drinks and subtle things

The holes in my apologies, you know

I'm trying hard to take it back

So if by the time the bar closes

And you feel like falling down

I'll carry you home

Now I know that I'm not

All that you got

*I guess that I, I just thought
Maybe we could find new ways to fall apart
But our friends are back
So let's raise a toast
'Cause I found someone to carry me home
The moon is on my side
I have no reason to run
So will someone come and carry me home tonight
The angels never arrived
But I can hear the choir
So will someone come and carry me home
Tonight
We are young
So let's set the world on fire
We can burn brighter than the sun
So if by the time the bar closes
And you feel like falling down
I'll carry you home tonight*

Chloe woke up to a huge surprise on Halloween morning. Her eyes fluttered open before the alarm, but she still found herself alone in the bed. She stood up groggily, not noticing that though she was alone in bed, she was not alone in the room. As she walked over to the dresser to find clothes, someone jumped from the top of the wardrobe to the floor. She jumped back with a squeak before registering what stood before her. She bit back a laugh. There stood Beca in all of her glory donning her Batman costume, fists perched on her hips as she posed. She had the muscular torso with the black bat popping out from the chest, the utility belt with the yellow emblem, and the mask with the pointed black ears.

“Oh my gosh, Baby, you look-sexy,” she breathed.

Beca winked at her. “That’s what I thought,” she smirked. “Now hurry up and get your costume on, so we can get the pictures that are no doubt awaiting us downstairs out of the way and get to school. I wanna test this baby out.”

Chloe giggled but saluted her before grabbing her costume from the closet along with the some black tights since the costume Amy purchased only had what had to be bathing suit bottoms. Beca proudly descended the stairs into the kitchen, startling her aunts, and they squealed. When they realized it was their niece, they burst into laughter.

“Watch out!” Sarah bellowed. “We’re working with a badass.”

“And don’t you forget it,” Beca told her, pointing a finger at her.

“Wow, Becs,” Allie breathed. “That’s impressive. It really is kids’ size, huh?”

“Shut it, woman!”

“Where’s Batgirl?”

“Getting dressed.”

“Come eat breakfast. Superheroes need their strength too.”

Once Chloe had eaten breakfast and Sarah and Allie were satisfied with the amount of good pictures they took, the couple headed off to school, Beca’s Batman decal shining on the back window of her truck as she gripped her Batman steering wheel.

“We’re so winning the costume competition,” Chloe smirked.

“They have those?” Beca asked.

“Of course, Babe. You’re never too old for Halloween. Is that mask hindering your driving ability at all?”

“Nope, I’m good.”

When they arrived at school, they met up with the group, and everyone burst into a fit of laughter at one another. Amy was a giant kangaroo complete with pouch and a stuffed baby kangaroo inside. Jesse had taken the Ironman approach, and Stacie was a sexy cop apparently. Luke had also donned a superhero costume, Captain America to be exact. Aubrey was even dressed up as Crewella DeVille, and no one could deny how fitting it was at times. Jessica, Ashley and Denise were the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion, and the tin man from Wizard of Oz. Cynthia Rose had foil in her mouth and a big clock hanging from her neck. She was Flava Flave the rapper. Benji was dressed as Darth Vader,

and Lily and Donald had come in as Mulan and the Prince of Persia.

“Are we ready to tear it up?” Jesse asked.

Everyone nodded, and he led them into the school. Others in school had generic costumes like witches and pumpkins or nothing at all. They all stopped to gawk at the group before snapping a million pictures. When Coach Jackson saw his players, he chuckled and saluted them. They returned it with huge grins. Will watched them walk in and shook his head, a small smile playing at his lips. Principal Kendrick thanked them for ringing in the holiday, and they all agreed to hand out candy-grams after lunch. There would also be a dance held that night, and that would also include the costume contest. Everyone was enthralled with the group throughout the day, mainly Chloe and Beca, and when the two ran into Tom on the second floor, his eyes flashed angrily as she shoved his shoulder into Beca. Beca turned right around to go after him, but Chloe grabbed her hand.

“Easy there, Batman,” she hissed. “Come on. We have to get to Glee club before Aubrey barfs all over us.”

“If she dirties my costume, she’s dead,” Beca grunted.

Chloe giggled. “When do you plan on taking it off?”

“Eh, next game. Maybe.”

“You still have to go to practice, Babe.”

“Batman can play football too. Didn’t I tell you?”

“I’m sure he can. My own fun-size superhero action figure.”

After an hour of handing out candy-grams with the glee club and some choir members and a grueling practice after school (where Beca was in fact forced to take off the costume), Chloe and Beca each showered in the locker room before heading to the dance. Beca was only going for the contest and some free cupcakes, but Eli was DJing again, and he was spinning her mixes. At one point, he called her up to the booth.

“Let’s give it up for your own DJ Titanium B!” he announced into the microphone. “You may know her as star runningback Beca Mitchell! It looks like she’s taken up the role as Barden Batman as well!” He chuckled.

Tom watched from a corner angrily with Bumper and Unicycle as Beca descended the stairs up to where Eli was stationed. Everyone was hollering and hooting for her, raising their hands.

“What would you like to tell your fans, B?” Eli asked her in his thick British accent.

“Let’s win a ring!” Beca hollered, and the entire gym roared in agreement and applause.

She raised her punch cup, and everyone did the same. That’s when Eli played her mix of “Raise Your Glass” by Pink and “Wild One” by Flo Rida. She jumped off the booth, and Chloe rushed to her side. They joined their group on the floor dancing as they belted out the lyrics. Tom knew he couldn’t just allow the tiny brunette to get away with coming into his school and taking everything from him. He looked over at Bumper with a small smile.

As the dance wound down to its end, Mr. Zedek once took the microphone to announce the winners of the costume competition. His eyes were wide as he read over the card.

“And the winners of this year’s costume competition are...”he began. “Batman and Batgirl!”

Everyone cheered once more as Beca threw her hands up, Stacie of course snapping pictures with Luke and Jesse of the couple. Beca picked Chloe up on her back, and the walked over to the man, accepting the small trophy with a jack-o-lantern on top before thrusting it into the air. Yeah, it was going to be a great week.

The dance was over by eight since it was still a school night, and the group when out to Penny’s afterward. Penny, the owner of course, came out and took pictures of the group to hang on the Bella-Rebel wall they had in the diner. She loved having them around, and she always talked about her days as a Barden Bella as well as her late husband’s time as a Rebel. She gave them burgers on the house as the place emptied, and they connected tables to all fit in one place. Beca took off her mask and set it on her lap.

“So you guys play Lakeside Friday in the quarterfinals?” Stacie asked now, sipping hot chocolate with the other girls while Beca and the boys had their usual chocolate shakes.

“Yup,” Jesse grinned. “Coach Jackson and Coach Embry went to scout them last week. They’re really working on their run defense.”

“Yeah, because they’re scared of Beca,” CR snorted. “She’s breaking records.”

“I have to thank the team though,” Beca sighed. “If it weren’t for Luke making sure I didn’t get killed behind the line, I wouldn’t be playing half as well as I am.”

“Always the modest one, mate,” Luke smirked. “You’re so fast that I rarely see you before you break a run. It’s me trying to catch up and block for you.”

“Yeah, Becs, you had three touchdowns last week against Douglass, and there was no stopping you. You were catching passes too.”

“Ooh, remember when she slugged the linebacker?” Jesse chuckled. “She ran right through him the way she did to that prick from Dawson. It was beautiful.”

“We have to watch film before practice Thursday,” Luke informed them. “What about you girls?”

“We have semifinals next Tuesday against Mays High,” Chloe informed them.

Aubrey started shaking at the mention of the game, and Luke slung an arm around her.

“You okay, Bree?” he asked, genuinely concerned.

“Yeah, I’ll be fine,” she lied.

“Aubrey,” Jesse said. “Apart from us getting off on a bad start, you’re our friend now, and we love you. You can be honest with us.”

“I’m just nervous because-because of last year.”

“You’ll be fine. You guys are ten times better this year, but you have to calm down.”

“Bree, I know this is about your mom,” Beca said bluntly, eyes intently locked on the blonde. “Listen to me though. You guys have only lost one game this year. That’s your

best record in decades. You beat Dawson, and you're going to be just fine as long as you don't let her get to you. I mean, we're in high school. It won't be the end of the world win or lose. Have fun."

Aubrey smiled softly at her stepsister with a curt nod, and Chloe grinned.

"Sibling love!" she squealed, and everyone giggled.

"Shut it, Beale," Aubrey snapped.

"Wow, you have definitely been bonding with Beca."

Beca only smirked, and Aubrey did as well. Everyone was quick to point it out with a chuckle, but the two girls only chuckled as well as their food arrived.

When Chloe and Beca made it home, Chloe changed into her pajamas. When she returned from the bathroom, she found Beca laying on the bed still in her costume.

"Seriously, Mitchell?" she asked, crossing her arms.

"What?" Beca asked dumbly. "Come lay down."

"Take off the costume."

"NO!"

"I'll rip it off of you!"

"Over my cold, dead body!"

"Do you really wanna test that?"

Chloe's eyes flashed dangerously, and Beca smirked. The redhead then lunged at Beca, throwing her off of the

opposite end of the bed before straddling her and tickling her sides. Beca was breathless in seconds, trying to grab Chloe's wrists, but she was weak.

"OK! OK!" Beca squealed.

"Are you gonna take it off?" Chloe questioned.

"Yeah! Yeah!"

Chloe stopped abruptly, pulling the mask off of Beca's face before leaning down and kissing her.

"Definitely going to be the death of me, Red," Beca mumbled against her lips.

"At least you can die happy," Chloe teased.

"Eh, I guess so."

Friday came without error, but before Beca could get on the field where she was itching to be, she had to suffer through another Glee club run through. On the third performance of "I Saw the Sign", she growled in frustration.

"Am I the only one who thinks this setlist is going to get us booed off stage?" she roared.

At first, everyone only froze, but then, everyone was grumbling their agreement.

"Beca, do not start!" Aubrey warned, her face flushed.

"Aubrey, those songs are tired! You have all of this talent, and you're ignoring it!"

“Beca, this is tradition. We don’t break tradition.”

“Yeah, losing’s part of the tradition. Do you like losing!”

“Beca-”

“No, Aubrey, you’re doing whatever you’re doing to make your mother happy, but don’t get mad when I punch her in the face for making you cry after we lose!”

The whole room was looking at a fuming Beca with wide eyes.

“That might be the sweetest thing I’ve ever heard,” Amy piped up.

Chloe donned her megawatt grin then as Aubrey’s features softened. She couldn’t help what she did next, and she couldn’t believe she did. She would forever deny it after, but at that moment, she tackled Beca in a bone-crushing hug.

“You’re the best sister I’ve ever had,” she whispered.

“I’m the only sister you’ve ever had,” Beca grunted. “You’re breaking my back here.”

Aubrey stood up at last, taking Beca’s hand and pulling her to her feet. Beca smirked.

“And you thought I was just chaotic for no reason,” she scoffed.

“And I said I was sorry!” Aubrey defended.

“Make it up to me then, Bree. Let me help you.”

“I can’t-”

“No, you can, and when your mom yells at you, at least you’ll have a trophy in hand.”

“I-I don’t-”

Before she could answer, the bell rang. She waved Beca off, but Beca put a hand on her shoulder before leaving.

“Let me help you,” she hissed again, locking eyes with her stepsister for a long moment.

“I’ll consider it,” Aubrey at last said curtly before leaving the room.

When six o’clock came around, Beca slid her helmet on her head, ready to take the field. They ran through the usual poster and huddled up at midfield. They weren’t too worried about tonight, but there were still quite a bit off nerves. They usually were knocked out of the playoffs this round, but with Beca, the whole team felt much more confident. After they warmed up, the seniors headed to midfield once more for the coin toss. Barden would kick it off to Lakeside first, and they lined up to do so. Beca waited patiently on the sideline. Chloe, Aubrey, Aunt Sarah and Aunt Allie were in the stands as always with the other girls, but tonight, they sat closer to the field. Beca had been bouncing off of the walls all day, and they knew how much this meant to her. She had been talking about the game all week, and they knew the entire town was counting on her to do well and get them into the playoffs.

When Beca finally hustled onto the field, the overflowing Barden bleachers went wild. They had giant signs lining the fence with slogans such as “IN MITCHELL WE TRUST”, “Run & Gun, 21” and “MITCHELL 4 PRESIDENT”. The Lakeside defense looked as if they were cowering in their

cleats when she lined up behind Bumper for the first play. He tossed her the ball, and the entire defense came after her. What they weren't aware of was that Coach Jackson had just discovered that Beca had more than legs. She had an arm, and he had decided to shake things up. She took the toss, stopped in the backfield as the defense rushed towards her and aired out the prettiest pass they had ever seen. Jesse was wide open down the field since the entire defense had gone for her. He caught it and rushed into the end zone. Everyone went wild, and Coach Jackson was jumping up and down on the sideline.

When Barden got the ball again after shutting down the Lakeside offense, Bumper handed Beca the ball. She darted right up the gut before the defense had any idea what was happening. Unicycle threw a block on the safety, and Beca was home free, trotting into the end zone to the song of all of her fans cheering and hollering. The Lakeside bleachers were silent.

By halftime, Barden was up twenty-eight to seven, and it was looking good. Beca already had three touchdowns including the throw to Jesse, but she wasn't done yet. The coach knew that. Lakeside had no answer for her speed, and they were beginning to panic.

When the third quarter started, Coach Jackson allowed Beca to field the kick. Once again, like she had against Dawson, she lined up beneath it and hauled it in. She raced down the sideline. When she saw one of the defenders rushing at her from the side, she spun around him, cutting to the middle of the field. Barden was on its feet, the commentator booming from the press box.

"...And Mitchell has an opening!" he hollars. "She spins. She cuts across. She has open field. The twenty...the ten..."

TOUCHDOWN, REBELS! TOUCHDOWN, REBELS! AND CAPTAIN MITCHELL IS AT IT AGAIN! SHE CURRENTLY HAS ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE RUSHING YARDS ON THE GAME!"

On Barden's next possession, after a punt from Lakeside, Beca lined up behind Bumper. When he moved his foot back, she moved down the line, lining up parallel to Jesse. The defense shifted with her. When he snapped the ball, she jerked forward as if she was going to head down the field before cutting back. Bumper faked a pass before slyly tossing back the ball. Beca caught it, running around the opposite side where Donald and Luke were blocking. They took down the linebacker and cornerback as Beca whizzed through traffic. She slammed her shoulder into the oncoming safety, literally running him over before turning on the jets and rushing down the field. Yet another touchdown for Beca Mitchell, and Lakeside was in tears by now as they watched their season slip away.

Beca ended the game with five touchdowns and over two hundred yards, and the commentator announced that they were both state records for most yardage and rushing touchdowns in a game. Including the pass to Jesse, she had six scores for her team, and they carried her off the field triumphantly after shaking hands with their victims. They were hooting and hollering in the locker room, Beca not even caring that they were all undressing. She trusted them all. As she grabbed her bag, Coach Jackson came into the room and motioned for her to follow him. She did so quickly, and they entered his office.

"Mitchell," he grunted, and she was sure she was in trouble before he flashed a wide grin. "You did it, kid! You got us into the playoffs. I'm so proud of you!"

"Thanks, Coach," she grinned, pride radiating from her body.

"Now, I heard your story. Your father felt it was his obligation to tell me about your track record."

She snorted. "Of course he did."

"Look, Kid, I've checked your grades. You're doing great. I know you're dating that star volleyball player too." His grin widened. "She was in my class, and she is amazing, so I know you're doing well. She will surely keep you in line, but I want you to know that if you ever need anything, I'm here, not just as your coach. Tutoring, advice, anything. I've been married twenty-five years, so I think I'm pretty wise." He chuckled. "I can tell that your father hasn't exactly been very helpful or supportive of you. For Christ sakes, no one even knew he had another daughter. What I'm saying is that I'm here for you, and I believe in you."

"Thanks, Coach, really. It means a lot."

"Now, go enjoy yourself. Don't celebrate too hard though. I don't need my team getting arrested or anything like that."

Beca laughed. "You got it, Coach."

"Hey, kid, you keep it up, and by this time next month, you'll be sporting a state ring."

"I won't let you down."

He smiled before standing up and shaking her hand in a firm grip. Beca left to take her shower then. The locker room was just about empty, but she knew Jesse and Luke were close by. They always waited for her to exit. She was never sure why, but she never questioned. She heard

Coach Jackson lock up his office, and she decided just to shower in one of the stalls in the boys' locker room. She quickly washed her hair before she washed her body. Suddenly, as she rinsed, she found herself slammed into the wall she was facing, her nose making contact and immediately gushing blood. She tried to turn to look at who was holding her, but the low growl gave her all of the information she needed.

"Get-the fuck-off me, Tom," she growled.

"When I'm done with you, your bitch will never touch you again," he hissed, reaching down to fumble with his belt.

He was surprised when Beca snorted. "This the only ass you get now? By force? From a lesbian?"

"Shut the fuck up!" he roared. "You should be terrified right now."

"Dude, you're fucking with the wrong person."

He jerked her back before slamming her into the wall again hard, and she spit out the blood now dripping onto her lips.

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!" he barked.

"GET THE FUCK OFF ME!" she retorted.

As he tried to take off his belt, Beca used that time to duck under the arm loosely pressed against her neck and elbowing him sharply in the groin. He doubled over quickly before she threw a knee up, connecting with his nose.

"YOU FUCKIN' BASTARD!" she yelled as she beat into him, Tom leaning against the wall. "DON'T-FUCKIN'-TOUCH-ME! I TOLD YOU! THE WRONG-PERSON!"

Just then, Luke, Jesse and Coach Jackson entered, seeing a nude Beca covered in blood while she beat into Tom, tears streaming down her flushed face. Chloe had seen Luke and Jesse rushing back into the locker room, and her, Allie, Aubrey and Sarah followed in, aware that Beca had yet to exit. Jesse immediately grabbed Beca's towel as Luke and Coach Jackson pulled the two apart, and Jesse covered his best friend. Beca slammed her fist into the wall in anger and rage before allowing him to do so. Chloe stopped when she took in the scene, Tom's unbuckled pants, Beca's nude body and bloody nose and mouth. She understood instantly, and tears filled her eyes. Allie immediately called the police as Coach Jackson shouted for someone to, and he tossed Tom on the floor of the locker room. His assistant coaches entered then, but he waved them off when asked what happened at first, disgust written on his face as he glared at Tom. Luke grabbed Beca's bag, handing her clothes to put on. She did so quickly. It was then that she saw Chloe sobbing into her aunt Sarah's shoulder, and her rage deflated instantly.

"Are you okay, Mitchell?" Coach Jackson asked now, coming back to her.

"I'm fine, Coach," she huffed.

"What happened?"

"I was taking a shower, and he attacked me. When he-he started unbuckling, I slipped out and started hitting him."

"It's okay, kid, the cops are on their way."

"That's not even necessary, Coach."

"Hell yes it is, Mitchell. That's assault."

“He looks worse than me.”

He couldn't help but smile. “That he does, but we can't let him try and turn it on you in the end.”

Beca only nodded as Luke handed her a tissue. She went to the sink and washed off her face. When she was done, she rushed over to her aunts, pulling Chloe from Sarah's arms into her own. The redhead only cried harder, taking Beca in a bone-crushing hug.

“Baby, it's okay,” she coaxed softly. “I'm fine. I'm here. You know I'm tougher than that. It's okay.”

“I-I didn't-know-” she stuttered but couldn't finish.

“It's okay, Baby, we're gonna be fine. We're fine. I'm fine. It's okay.”

After a statement to the police and Tom being thrown into the back of a patrol car, Jesse, Luke, Chloe, Aubrey and Beca followed Allie and Sarah back to the house. Assistant Coach Evans had called Will to tell him what had happened, but he only called Aubrey to see what was going on. Beca didn't even care. Aubrey assured him everything was fine, that he need not come over, but she knew it was more for Will's protection than Beca's. She was still pretty angry, but in the end Luke and Jesse had her calmed down what with joking about her beating Tom's ass again. Still, the entire town got wind of the entire thing within a couple of hours, and the rest of the volleyball team with Donald and Benji showed up at Aunt Allie's condo to check on their friend. Allie ordered pizza for everyone, and she was happy that Beca had so many concerned friends.

“B, you're a legend,” Donald chuckled as he carried in a few cases of beer since they had ditched the lake. They

were all settled on the back patio. "Everyone in town is talking about you beating up that pretty boy. His dad's pretty pissed off too I guess."

"What's that mean?" Beca asked.

Everyone gave her an incredulous look. "Well, see, Tom's dad is pretty powerful. Like town Mayor powerful."

"What! And no one told me!"

"Well, we needed someone to put him in his place," Jesse chuckled, and the others followed. "Don't worry though, B, we saw pretty much everything. It was self-defense. He can't even get out of that. At least he's out of the way though."

Chloe was perched in Beca's lap. Beca's nose was slightly swollen, but the paramedics that had showed up assured her it wasn't broken. Chloe kissed her jawline softly then her forehead.

"I'm so glad you're okay," she hissed.

Beca smirked. "I told you, Beale. You upgraded big time. I'm a superhero."

Chloe giggled. "I see that."

"Just trust me on this, B," Donald went on. "If he does get bailed out, the town's gonna skin him alive or something. His dad's the mayor, but that kid has always been trouble. Somehow, Bumper idolizes him, which is why we don't get along that well anymore, but we got your back."

"Whatever, I'm just glad it's over with," Beca sighed. "We have to focus."

“That we do,” Jesse agreed. “Right after we get drunk and forget about all this.”

“Deal.”

“Well, we still can’t forget that we _did _win tonight,” Luke chided. “By the way, B, what did the coach call you back for anyway?”

Beca smirked. “Will thought it was a good idea to let Coach know of my past track record with schools. I don’t know what he expected to happen though.”

“What a douchebag,” Allie snorted but sobered quickly. “Sorry, Aubrey.”

“Oh, no, it’s fine,” Aubrey immediately answered. “I understand better now what Beca’s gone through.” This was true since Chloe had told Aubrey as much. “Go right ahead.”

“Well, the bastard did call her instead of Beca,” Sarah added. “He couldn’t just come?”

“I’m glad he didn’t,” Beca returned. “I just need you guys.”

“Ah, don’t get all mushy with us, Short Stack,” Amy whined. “I’m not near as drunk enough.”

Beca chuckled. “But I love you though.”

“Tell me that again in three beers, and we’ll talk. For now, let’s toast to victory.”

They all raised their cans, clinking them together, and Beca grinned around at all of them. She couldn’t believe how lucky she actually was to have such great friends. They

were all here of their own accord when her own father couldn't even come over whether she wanted him to or not. He had not even called her, but Aubrey. It was amazing to her, but she couldn't care less. She had the most amazing group of friends, and she knew had she not been able to take Tom, Luke and Jesse would have come. They were always close. They were like the two big brothers she had never had, and her and Jesse still acted like twins half the time. She was lucky. Her parents had definitely been up in Heaven hard at work. Had she not lost them, she most surely wouldn't have found Chloe or Jesse or Luke or Amy or even Aubrey. She wouldn't have real friends that she was no longer afraid to trust and care about. She had fallen in love. She had learned the meaning of friendship, relationships and other things a normal high school student should understand. Sure, she missed her parents dearly. Every game, she wished she could just catch a glimpse of them in the stands for a second, screaming her name. Not a day went by that she didn't think about them, but she knew they were with her always. They had given her an amazing support system including her aunts to continue to grow and heal and be a better person. They had given her Chloe, a girl that at first Beca was sure was trouble. In reality, she was an antidote. She was the one that helped Beca to evolve into a better person. Sure, she lost her temper on Tom a couple of times now, but it was only when it was asked for that she snapped. She had learned self-control, and she continued to gradually. No one could deny that. The only thing that mattered to her was the fact that everyone currently in her aunt's backyard with her believed in her. They didn't only love her on the field or behind the music. They loved her for her. Chloe had loved her for her, and she had not been ashamed to admit it in the end. She had even been able to persuade Aubrey into having a more open mind, and Beca could tell that her life was finally on the right track, and nothing could stop her. Tom was gone,

they were in the playoffs, and she had her friends. What could possibly go wrong? She silently thanked her parents now. Oh, if they could see her now.

14. The Weight of the World

A/N: Here we go, guys! I'm writing as fast as possible as I already have the whole plan in my head, so you'll probably be seeing some really fast updates in the next couple days. I hope you like it! Here we go!

Song: Save The World-Swedish House Mafia

Into the streets

We're coming down

We never sleep

Never get tired

Through urban fields

And suburban lights

We're far from home,

It's for the better

What we dream, it's all that matters

We're on our way, united

Turn the crowd up now

We'll never back down

Shoot down the skyline

Watch it on primetime

Turn up the love now

Listen up now, turn up the love

Who's gonna save the world tonight,

Who's gonna bring it back to life

We're gonna make it, you and I,

We're gonna save the world tonight.

Who's gonna save

Who's gonna bring

We're gonna make it, you and I,

Who's gonna save

Who's gonna bring

We're gonna save the world tonight

The atmosphere throughout Barden was fused with intense anticipation. It would be the first time in fourteen years that the Barden Rebels would play in the semifinals, but it would be the twenty-eighth year since they were ranked high enough to host it at home. This meant they had to travel. They would be playing GW Carver, a team full of trash-talking, dirt-playing, beast of boys that had been to the championship six years in a row now and had four titles

under their belt in the last four years. They had gone undefeated all year, but Coach Jackson had assured his team that Barden had the stronger schedule, playing harder teams than Carver. Dawson would be playing Washington High on the other side of the bracket, so if they won too, they would meet at Dawson for the championship. The only reason they wouldn't play at Barden was because Dawson had only lost one game, Barden losing two. Coach Jackson was furious, saying that the winner of the first head-to-head battle should host the game, but it fell on deaf ears. They had to beat Carver first anyway.

The town was heavily anticipating the matchup after Barden took home the district championship, and Beca couldn't go anywhere in town without someone knowing her. Little kids were running around with replicas of her jersey now on sale at the local sports store. Penny's diner had a replica of her jersey hung up as well, a million newspaper clippings from each paper pinned around it. The latest headline was one that cemented Beca as a legend for years to come.

IN MITCHELL WE TRUST

"Sophomore Beca Mitchell leads Rebels to first semi-final game in fourteen years, racks up five touchdowns and two hundred forty yards in quarterfinals District championship game against Lakeside to set Georgia State high school records for yardage and touchdowns in a game. Mitchell also sets season record for both."

Aunt Allie had purchased at least a dozen newspapers with the article, and one was framed and hung in the den, the mantle already cleared for the awards she expected Beca to get. Beca of course was all the while humbled by the experience, but she thanked her parents every morning and

every night up in the clouds. Chloe was the proudest girlfriend on earth, only rivaled by Beca, and before they took on Carver that Saturday, she was in the Barden gym Tuesday night to cheer on her favorite redhead with the entire football team sans Bumper of course. All of them donned their Barden Bella shirts, and they were rowdy before the game even started. Allie was on the bench tonight taking half the control of the team with Coach Mendez's blessing. She had led them through district championship, and the girls trusted her since they spent so much time with her. Beca loved seeing her smile. Sarah sat beside her right behind the bench. This was really no match though. Barden came out of the gate determined and motivated by their fans. Beca had on her "Beale" shirt, but she was also holding up a "Posen" one now, and Aubrey couldn't help but smile. Lauren only smirked at the sight.

"They're getting along," Will defended.

"Aubrey doesn't need to get along with the likes of-"

"Hey, that's my daughter."

"Oh, really, Will? I never would have guessed. You were a real great father to her."

Will was silent then, but he still smiled at the girls' bond that was forming.

When the game started, Lily served first. She put the ball in play, and she served seven times for seven point to Barden before Ashley missed a block, and Mays received the ball. They put it in play, scoring twice before Chloe swatted back a hard spike. They finished the first two matches in record time, and now, if they won the third, they would move on to the championship. By now though, Mays fans were getting rowdy as well, and there were a few screaming matches

that broke out from across the court. When Chloe started serving in the third match, Beca was on her feet. Mays sent the first serve back over, but Jessica set it perfectly right in front of the net, Chloe running up and slamming it down the Mays blocker's throat. Beca jumped in the air.

"You see that!" she yelled. "That's my baby! Did you see that!"

On the next one that came back, CR set it up, and it was Aubrey that delivered a punishing blow into the setter's grill.

"There you go, Bree!" Beca shrieked. "Take notes! That's how we do it 'round here! Watch my girls work!"

On the next play, Stacie delivered a hard spike that the blocker let go, assuming it was out of bounds. It hit right inside the line, and the referee called it good. After that, Mays was deflated, and they just continued making minuscule mistakes until Amy made one more hard swat for the final point. When the match wrapped up, Barden was victorious, and Beca as always hurdled over the bench. She picked Chloe up, spinning her around with a chaste kiss, but she let go quickly and ran to the middle of the court with her team. Chloe quirked an eyebrow as did the Mays team and everyone in the gym. The whole of Beca's group raised up, arms in the air. They all started singing and moving, Jesse, Beca and Luke taking the lead while Donald, Greg, Marshall Taylor and Evan Rose created the beat with their mouths. The volleyball team giggled before joining in. The gym was in awe.

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

My, my, my music hits me so hard

Makes me say "Oh my Lord"

Thank you for blessing me

With a mind to rhyme and two hype feet

It feels good, when you know you're down

A super dope homeboy from the Oaktown

And I'm known as such

And this is a beat, uh, you can't touch

I told you homeboy (You can't touch this)

Yeah, that's how we living and you know (You can't touch this)

Look at my eyes, man (You can't touch this)

Yo, let me bust the funky lyrics (You can't touch this)

Fresh new kicks, advance

You gotta like that, now you know you wanna dance

So move, outta your seat

And get a fly girl and catch this beat

While it's rolling, hold on

Pump a little bit and let 'em know it's going on

Like that, like that

Cold on a mission so fall them back

Let 'em know, that you're too much

And this is a beat, uh, you can't touch

Yo, I told you (You can't touch this)

Why you standing there, man? (You can't touch this)

Yo, sound the bell, school is in, sucka (You can't touch this)

Give me a song, or rhythm

Make 'em sweat, that's what I'm giving 'em

Now, they know

You talking about the Hammer you talking about a show

That's hype, and tight

Singers are sweating so pass them a wipe

Or a tape, to learn

What's it gonna take in the 90's to burn

The charts? Legit

Either work hard or you might as well quit

That's word because you know...

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

Break it down! Stop, Hammer time!

At that, the entire squad began doing the signature dance, Beca leading them with her "oooh, oooh, ooooh!", and there were cheers from the other Barden fans for them. Chloe grinned up at her little DJ. Anyone could tell that they were having a good time, and they motivating their team. The football team had never supported the Bellas like this due to Bumper being a douche and Tom too busy bedding them to support them. It was all thanks to Beca though. She had created order from her own chaos, uniting the school, and most of the school was in attendance just to be around Beca. Chloe could not be happier.

Go with the funk, it is said

That if you can't groove to this then you probably are dead

So wave your hands in the air

Bust a few moves, fun your fingers through your hair

This is it, for a winner

Dance to this and you're gonna get thinner

Move, slide your rump

Just for a minute let's all do the bump, bump, bump

Yeah... (You can't touch this)

Look, man (You can't touch this)

You better get hype, boy, because you know (You can't touch this)

Ring the bell, school's back in (You can't touch this)

Break it down! (Crazy bridge) Stop, Hammer time!

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

Break it down! (Nice pants, B!) Stop, Hammer time!

Every time you see me

The Hammer's just so hype

I'm dope on the floor and I'm magic on the mic

Now why would I ever stop doing this?

With others making records that just don't hit

I've toured around the world, from London to the Bay

It's "Hammer, go Hammer, MC Hammer, yo Hammer"

And the rest can go and play

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

You can't touch this

When they at last finished, the whole gym cheered, the Mays team hanging their heads as they walked out. Principal Kendrick had even been dancing on the sideline, and he chuckled heartily at the unity of his school. He saluted Beca when she turned, and she returned it. A second later, she had her hands full of a blonde and a redhead as they tackled her to the ground. Will smiled, but Lauren just stalked out of the gym.

"Midget down!" Luke chuckled.

Aubrey jumped up off of her stepsister and crashed into Luke then Jesse and Benji. Chloe kissed Beca's nose, and the brunette giggled.

"You never cease to amaze me," Chloe whispered.

"Then I'm doing my job," Beca smiled.

When she at last stood up, the other volleyball girls hugged her as well. Aubrey was all smiles, and Beca was glad. She knew that Aubrey wasn't so bad behind the mask her mother made her wear, and she just wanted to see her happy.

After the game, the teams of course wound up packing Penny's, and Penny was over the moon to hear that the girls were headed to the championship against the only team they had lost to all year, Cross Keys. They would have to travel the hour to their school the following Saturday, so it gave them almost two weeks to prepare. Since the football team would have that week off win or lose this Saturday, they vowed to be there, and Allie and Sarah promised to go as well.

"So how did you guys manage to get that dance down?" Aubrey smirked when they were settled.

"Youtube is a god," Beca sighed. "We watched that video after practice like sixty times last night."

"So that's where you guys were!" Chloe accused, and Beca nodded sheepishly.

"Sorry, Babe, it was a surprise."

"It was a surprise, alright," Aubrey snorted. "Awesome though."

"Now we have to figure out a number for when you guys win."

"You have so much confidence in us."

"Why shouldn't we?" Donald now questioned. "You guys tore them up. I know you guys lost to Keys, but it was close. You guys got this. The nerves are gone, and you guys are ten times better. Mays was ranked higher than Cross Keys this week. You were the underdogs."

"How do you guys know all this?"

“We did our homework,” Jesse returned. “This was important to us because it was important to you, you know. We stick together.”

“Yeah, we do,” Beca agreed with a wink. “We celebrate Saturday though after we get this game out of the way.”

“You guys better win too,” Stacie warned. “We’re bringing home two rings this fall.”

“Hell yeah!”

As the team finished up at Penny’s and walked out, a little girl that was in the diner ran after Beca. She had to be seven or eight, and she tugged on Beca’s shirt. The DJ looked down.

“Hi!” the little girl squeaked. “I’m Tara. I wanna play just like you. Will you sign my ball?”

Beca gave her a wide grin. “Sure, Tara.” The little girl handed her the ball and a marker, and Beca signed it before handing it back.

“You keep working hard, and you can be even better than me, okay?” Beca said.

“Really!” Tara shrieked.

“Yup!”

“Thank you, Captain Mitchell!”

She ran off back into the diner, and Luke threw an arm around Beca.

“You’re a hometown hero, Mate,” he informed her. “A legend. We are definitely taking that title.”

"You bet we are," Donald howled. "We got this, B, and we got you."

Chloe, Allie, Sarah and Beca arrived home at a little after nine, and Chloe was sore but feeling great. Beca massaged her back and shoulders before working on her legs.

"Are you ready for this weekend?" the redhead asked.

"As ready as I'll ever be," Beca sighed.

"What's wrong?" Beca shook her head. "Becs, don't do that. Tell me."

"It's just-it-it's a lot of pressure, you know. I failed last year in the semifinals. I didn't get out of bounds to stop the clock, and time ran out. We lost, you know."

"Becs, that was a different team and a different you. Luke and Jesse and Donald and the others all behind you. Even Bumper will have your back on the field. You're the best out there, and as long as you do your best, you'll win, but we can believe in you all we want. It won't mean anything until you believe in yourself."

"Yeah, I know. I just-I don't want to let anyone down."

Chloe reached over now, cupping Beca's cheeks and lifting her face so that their eyes met.

"Baby, listen to me, okay? Win, lose or tie, we will always love you, and we will always be proud of you."

Beca's breath hitched at the sound of the words a moment, her eyes tearing up just a bit.

"That's-that's what my dad said to me," she breathed.

Chloe wiped the tears from Beca's cheeks with the pad of her thumbs. "And he was right. We, including your dad, will love you no matter what. You can never let us down. You've already accomplished so much, and you're still in school, baby. We're already proud of you."

Beca nodded before lunging forward and crashing her lips into Chloe's, the redhead falling back onto the pillows. She gripped handfuls of Beca's hair as she deepened the kiss, Beca's arm around her waist now. When they pulled away, Beca kissed her forehead.

"I love you, Chloe," she whispered.

"I love you too, Baby," Chloe replied.

The school was decorated from head to toe in Bella Blue and Rebel red. Anticipation consumed the entire campus as the Rebels readied themselves for their visit to G.W. Carver that Saturday. They would leave that Friday night, and Chloe, Allie, Sarah and the volleyball girls already had reservations at the same hotel as the boys. Everyone was full of ambition, and the teachers were thrilled with the football players in their classes.

"You excited about the game, Mitchell?" Mr. Zedek asked Beca in her third period class.

"You know it, Mr. Z," she smirked.

"You've really got the school going wild."

"Because she's a god on the field," Rena Fields said in a dreamy voice.

Beca smirked, and Mr. Z chuckled. Yeah, Beca was a hometown legend alright, but no one in the world could

make her feel more so than the bubbly redhead beside her.

"Yes, *my* baby is," she shot back, stroking Beca's arm while Rena scoffed.

"That's right, Baby," Beca returned. "All yours."

At practice, Coach Jackson was pushing the team to their limits, and in Glee club, Aubrey was at least attempting to be open-minded to everyone's opinions. Still, she had not decided on change however, but Beca didn't worry. They would be fine.

As Friday night arrived, the team piled on the bus with their bags packed beneath the vehicle in its carriage. The entire town was there to see them off, and the team waved, Beca signing a few autographs and such before boarding. She kissed Chloe goodbye before the redhead slid into the car with Aunt Allie and Aunt Sarah, and the bus was off, the volleyball team and Aunt Allie in their wake with a majority of the parents along for the ride. It was roughly a two-hour ride to northern Atlanta, but the team had been cleared for an overnight with the game so early in the day. They sang and chanted all the way there, Beca sitting beside Jesse with Donald and Luke across from them. Coach Jackson was giddy with excitement. Never had he had such a united and talented team on his hands, and he was betting on them to win.

When they arrived at the hotel, they unloaded the bus as Coach Jackson retrieved the room keys. Beca would be rooming with Chloe and her aunts since she couldn't room with the boys, and they all met up in the coach's room after dinner to go over the gameplan and watch some film. Coach Jackson was dead set on a running game, and everyone understood. They went over the game film of

G.W. Carver in their last game in thorough detail, and by the end, the team knew every weakness and strength they conveyed.

“They’re soft on the left side,” Luke pointed out. “If we can get just a little opening for B, she can run right through them.”

“The safety has a lot of speed however,” Coach Jackson pointed out. “Swanson, you’ll need to worry about him first and foremost. We’ll have Jameson lined up with you to help with the cornerbacks, so that you can get to that safety.” Jesse nodded. “You good with that, Mitchell?”

Beca nodded. “Yeah, Coach, I can beat those linebackers no problem. They’re fast once they start up, but their acceleration off of the snap is poor. I’ll break before they gain speed. I just need that safety off. He’s small though, and I can surely run through him if need be.”

“That’s what I like to hear. Okay, I need everyone at the bus by nine thirty. Game time is eleven, and we’ll need to warm up. There’s breakfast in the lobby and a Denny’s next door if you please. Get some good rest tonight, guys. Curfew is in effect, so let’s go.”

They huddled up, putting their hands in and shouting “Rebels!” before breaking for the night. Beca’s room was across the hall from Luke and Jesse, so they walked down with her.

“We’ve got this,” Luke growled, already thinking about the game.

“Yeah, they can’t run with Beca,” Jesse agreed. “Once she breaks it open, we’re good. We just have to watch that safety. He’ll be the biggest problem.”

“Once we start running, we’ll open it up for the passing game,” Beca assured them. “Those cornerbacks are shorter than Jesse, and he’s bigger all around. If it comes to a toss-up, you got it, J, without a question.” They reached their rooms. “Okay, see you in the morning.”

They bumped fists before Beca entered her room. Allie, Sarah and Chloe were already in their pajamas, and Beca’s Batman pajamas were laid out on the bed. She smiled.

“You forgot them,” Chloe said, eyes still locked on the TV.

“Thanks,” Beca replied, picking them up. “What are you watching?”

“They’re talking about the game on the news.” Beca turned to the TV now, listening.

“...Barden will be solely depending on star sophomore and all-state halfback Beca Mitchell. She leads the state in rushing yards as well as touchdowns this year. Beca Mitchell transferred from Dawson High last year, but she broke out there as well. It will surely be a battle for both teams.”

Beca smirked as she pulled on her pajamas and slid into bed beside Chloe.

“You ready for tomorrow, Bug?” Sarah asked from the bed she was sharing with Allie.

“Yeah, I am,” Beca returned. “We watched film, and it helped a lot. I know I’m faster than them.”

“You have jets, kiddo, just like your dad.”

“I really wish he could be there.”

“Oh, he’ll be there, right beside you. Never forget that.”

Beca smiled, kissing Chloe as they all settled down into bed. It was a big day today tomorrow, and Beca was buzzing with anticipation. She waiting for sleep to come, but it wouldn’t. She continued to toss and turn. Chloe looked over at her, pulling the DJ into her arms.

“What’s wrong?” she whispered, half asleep already.

“Nerves,” Beca replied, nuzzling into her neck.

“Go to sleep, Baby. You need your rest.”

“I’m trying, but I can’t.”

Chloe smiled, pecking the smaller girl’s forehead before beginning to sing Adele, one for the team as a whole, summing up their unity against their opponents.

This is the end

Hold your breath and count to ten

Feel the earth move and then

Hear my heart burst again

For this is the end

I’ve drowned and dreamt this moment

So overdue I owe them

Swept away, I’m stolen

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

At skyfall

That skyfall

Skyfall is where we start

A thousand miles and poles apart

Where worlds collide and days are dark

You may have my number, you can take my name

But you'll never have my heart

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

At skyfall

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Where you go I go

What you see I see

I know I'd never be me

Without the security

Of your loving arms

Keeping me from harm

Put your hand in my hand

And we'll stand

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

Let the sky fall

When it crumbles

We will stand tall

Face it all together

At skyfall

Let the sky fall

We will stand tall

At skyfall

Oh

When Chloe finished the song, she looked down to find her DJ fast asleep, nuzzled into her chest. Chloe smiled, pulling the girl closer before fading into sleep herself. Across the room, two smiles formed on the faces of Beca's aunts in the dark.

The team was on G.W.'s field by ten warming up after a hardy breakfast, doing their agilities and stretching out their muscles. Beca and Bumper were practicing handoffs. Jesse and Luke were catching throws from Assistant Coach Walden. The Carver team came out already loud and rowdy, talking trash from the moment they saw Barden was present. The boys looked over at them.

"Over here, team," Beca shouted, a true captain. "Our game's here. Don't listen to them."

With fifteen minutes left before the coin toss, Coach Jackson took his team into the visitor's locker room, and they gathered around him.

"Okay, guys," he sighed. "We're here. We made it to the semifinals at last, but you have to make a choice now. You can leave this field and be satisfied just making it, or you can go out there and take this game so we can go to the big show!" Everyone roared. "That is entirely up to you. I've done all I can do for you. Now it's up to you. I need every single one of you to do your job and hold your ground tonight. They're going to try and get in your head. They're going to piss you off. They play dirty, but you have to stick to your game because the moment you play their game, it's over. Mitchell, we've all got your back tonight."

"Thanks, Coach," Beca replied, standing up beside him.

"Let's go. I'll see you guys out there."

Beca led her team to the mouth of the tunnel, their cheerleaders lined up as they had come too. Beca halted a few feet from the large poster.

"NOW!" she bellowed. "WHO ARE WE!"

"REBELS!"

"WHO ARE WE!"

"REBELS!"

"I CAN'T HEAR YOU!"

"REBELS!"

"LET'S GO!"

They tore onto the field, their fans going crazy as Carver was already on the field. Beca had waited until the last possible second to prove they were here to top them. They huddled at midfield, putting their hands together and breaking before going to the sidelines. The seniors met at midfield for the coin toss. Barden would receive the ball first. They kicked it off, and Beca fielded it. As soon as she took off, her team created a wall, shielding her. One defender grabbed one of her legs, but she shook him off. They took her down at midfield, and the Rebels were already pumped. On the first play, Beca took the handoff, and just as they had predicted, she burst up the middle faster than the linebackers could react. The safety was already coming at her. He threw Jesse aside, and it was him and Beca. Beca spun away from him, getting to the sideline. He shoved her hard out of bounds, and she crashed into the Carver bench, her ribs banging hard against the metal. She hissed in pain.

“You’re on my turf, bitch,” the boy growled.

She sucked up the pain now, jumping up and rushing back to the huddle. The next play, Bumper threw it out to Jesse, and he was a hard hit, dropping the ball on impact. The boy said something to him as well somewhere along the lines of “and stay down, bitch.” Beca kept her emotions in check, and she made sure Jesse did the same.

“I’m coming for you, dyke!” one of the linebackers called to her as she lined up.

She bit down hard on her mouthpiece, and when Bumper snapped the ball, she took the handoff. The linebacker filled the hole, but Beca wasn’t one to back down. She dropped her shoulder, driving through him. He wrapped his arms around her torso, but she pried him off, her cleat digging

slyly into his unprotected thigh. He yelped, releasing his hold, and Beca rushed down the field. The safety came into view now. She rushed at him, growling as she went. He was sure she would try to take him head on. As he spread his arms, she spun right out of it, and she left him in the dust. She was gone then, rushing into the end zone. She thrust up a fist as her crowd cheered before running back to the sideline.

“Beautiful, B!” Jesse growled. “You got this, Baby.”

“Beca!” Coach Jackson called. “They have that safety at back. Can you play defense?”

“Yeah, Coach,” she roared back.

After Barden kicked it off, Beca followed the defense on the field. She lined up as linebacker, and the Barden fans were in awe. They weren’t sure it was a good idea, and they had never seen Beca tackle, but the first play eased them. They tossed the ball to the halfback, and Beca was in the backfield in an instant. Before the boy saw her, she had thrown her body into him, taking him down. She smirked as she jumped up, heading back to her side. She was small, sure, but she was stronger than anyone. The boy growled in frustration as he stood. Luke slapped Beca’s helmet. They lined up again, and this was a pass to the same halfback in the backfield. Beca read it the moment he ran out to the side. She rushed towards him, and as the ball was thrown, she stepped between it and the receiver. She caught it, already running toward the opposite end zone, and she scored again. Coach Jackson was throwing up his fist in the air, and Beca could hear Chloe screaming at the top of her lungs.

“That’s my baby!” she shrieked. “My baby!”

Beca found those brilliant blue eyes in the sea of people, and she pointed at her with a wink. Aubrey nudged the redhead playfully, and Chloe blew her a kiss. Beca headed back to the sideline, and Coach Jackson slapped her helmet with a large grin.

“You’re the truth, kid!”

On the next drive, Carver scored on a big catch from their tallest receiver. He caught it right over Unicycle. They kicked off, and Beca took it up to the thirty-five-yard line. On the first play, Bumper threw to Luke for a gain of fifteen yards. On the second play, Donald gained another twelve yards. Beca received the next handoff, making it to the Carver thirty before the safety dragged her down. What happened next changed the entire gameplan however. Bumper snapped the ball, and he set up to throw. The linebacker that had been taunting Beca came right through the line. Beca saw him, but he was behind Bumper. She rushed back towards them, but he leveled Bumper hard in an instant. Bumper crashed to the ground, the ball falling out of his hands. Beca was already rushing at it, and before the linebacker could crawl off of Bumper and fall on it, Beca scooped it up and rushed off. She cut around the corner, zig-zagging around Luke. Donald was engaged with the safety, and Beca rushed past him. The cornerback was coming at her now, but he couldn’t catch up. She entered the end zone, and the referee signaled a touchdown, but the crowd remained silent. Beca turned around to find that Bumper was rolling around on the ground holding his shoulder, his throwing arm. Beca knew this was bad. They had only one backup quarterback, and he was a freshman. Donald would usually step in, but they needed him on the side for his size. She rushed back to the sideline now, Barden taking a knee as Bumper was tended to. When they

at last stood him up, everyone stood as well and clapped. Coach Jackson rushed over to Beca.

“Mitchell,” he huffed. “I know I’m putting a lot on you, but I need you at QB for Bumper.”

“But, Coach, I-”

“If you have to scramble, you do it, but I’ll need to put Greg at halfback and Luke at fullback. I need you now, Mitchell.”

“Whatever you need, Coach.”

Beca didn’t take the defense this time, and that led to another Carver touchdown. They were now trailing Barden by only one score at 21-14. Beca took the field, and the stands gasped when she lined up at quarterback.

“Time to kill another bitch!” the linebacker barked, and his defense cackled.

Beca snapped the ball, falling back to pass, Jesse the intended receiver. The linebacker was rushing at her though. At the last possible second, she ducked, and he flew clear over her. She rushed up the middle quickly, and this time, Jesse and Donald double-teamed the safety. She only had to beat the cornerback now closing in. He lunged at her legs from behind, but she hopped, landing with her cleats crushing his wrist. He yelped in pain, but she didn’t stop. It was then that she realized the other cornerback was way too close. He reached for her, and his hand caught her face mask, yanking her down. Her hand stopped her fall, and she yanked her head out of the helmet. No one could believe it. The safety was coming for her now, and with no helmet on, she knew she had to make it to the end zone or it would be a sure injury. She kicked it into overdrive, darting for the goalpost. As the safety lunged at an angle,

she dove forth. His helmet hit her legs, but she reached her hand out with the ball gripped in it, breaking the end zone line. The referee signaled the touchdown, and the fans went crazy. The safety landed hard, the breath whooshing from his lungs. She smirked.

“Try to keep up, pussy,” she snorted before running back and scooping up her helmet.

When she reached the sideline, Coach Jackson grinned. He had no words, but he knew he definitely had a star on his hands.

By halftime, the score was 28-17, and Barden was doing well holding them. Beca would go back to defense a few times in the second half, but Bumper had been taken to the hospital for x-rays. They feared his season may be over, and Beca was worried. She knew how much more pressure would be on her shoulders if he didn't return, but she couldn't dwell on it.

Barden kicked off to Carver to start the second half, and they brought it down to their forty-yard line. Beca took defense on this one. She was hyped up, angry and tired, but she would not slow down. They faked a toss to the back, and everyone except Beca fell for it. She broke through a hole in the offensive line, and before the quarterback could throw it, she tackled him hard. He dropped the ball, and she scrambled up. She scooped it and bounded for the end zone once more. Before she reached it, a solid mass crashed into her left side. It was the halfback. She was down at the two-yard line, and he head butted her helmet.

“I'mma beat the dyke right out of you, bitch,” he growled.

He was then yanked off of her, Luke grabbing her hand and helping her up.

“Score something then talk to me,” Beca growled.

“Fuck you!”

Beca smirked as she joined her offensive huddle. Jesse came with the play.

“Quarterback sneak,” he smirked, and Beca nodded.

Beca lined up under her center, a silent count. Everyone had to count to three in their heads before the snap, and when they did, Beca took the ball and jumped straight over the line. The linebacker came up to meet her, and he tried to push her back, but Luke and the center behind her pushed her into the end zone. Touchdown Rebels.

When the fourth quarter rolled around, Beca was tired, but she had shut Carver up completely. The score was 49-21, and Beca was able to get a break. The Barden fans were already celebrating, and when the buzzer sounded signaling the end of the game, they crashed onto the field. Beca met her team at midfield, and they raised her over their shoulders. She thrust her helmet in the air.

“WHO ARE WE!”

“REBELS!”

“WHO OWNS THIS HOUSE!”

“REBELS!”

Carver was yelling insults, but they didn’t care. They were going to the championship two weeks from the day. She had carried her team at all positions, and now, they only had one more stop before they received their rings. Beca was let down from her team’s shoulders as Chloe rushed at

her, nearly tackling the DJ to the ground. As always, she peppered her cheeks with kisses, and Beca smiled.

“This is the best part of any win,” she said.

Chloe grinned. “I know, right? You’re too tough for anyone on the field, Baby. My superhero.”

As she set Chloe down, she was cast in shadow. She looked up to see Coach Jackson grinning. He ruffled her hair affectionately before pulling her into a bear hug.

“That was phenomenal, Mitchell!” he roared. “You didn’t cry or complain. You took the job I gave you, and you made it happen. This is all you, kid.”

“Coach Jackson,” a voice now came. They looked up to find the Carver coach. “You have quite the player there, sir, and it’s been a pleasure playing you.” The two men shook hands.

“Thanks, Coach,” Coach Jackson returned. “Great game.”

“Good luck in the big game.”

“Thanks.”

After vacating the field, the Barden bus headed home with their fans in their wake. There was singing, dancing, cheering and praise for Beca. They would be escorted into Barden by the local police department in a celebratory manner. The air was full of victory, and they couldn’t be happier. When they arrived at the school though, Beca could see that Coach Jackson’s initial excitement was gone and blanketed by what she interpreted as despair right after he received a phone call coming into town. Her stomach dropped when he called her over with a deep sigh.

“What is it, Coach?” she asked nervously. “Is everything okay.”

“Beca,” he sighed, a hand on her shoulder. “I just got a call. The mayor-he-he bailed Tom out.”

15. I Smell A Set Up

A/N: Okay guys so this chapter is a bit short, but this is the start of the real story here. Things get real! Lol but seriously, I will be updating first thing again tomorrow, but this should hold over until then. Just bare with me, okay? I think everyone for the follows and the reviews. This is by far my top-followed story, and I’m really glad that I decided to write it. I wasn’t so sure at first, and I had some writer’s block here and there, but now my mind is reeling. Anyway, here you go!

Song: I Just Wanna Run-The Downtown Fiction

I just wanna run

I’m out here all alone

I try to call your house

Can’t reach you on the phone

I’ll gather up the nerve

I’m packing up my bag

It’s more than you deserve

Don’t treat me like a drag

Like a game of chess

I predict your move

I think I know you better

Better than you do

I'm sick of feeling cheap

Cheated and abused

Sick of losing sleep

Thinking about you

'm feelin' like I keep on talking

I'm repeating myself,

My words lost all meaning

I keep talking

I repeat myself

I just wanna run, hide it away

Run because they're chasing me down

I just wanna run, throw it away

Run before they're finding me out

I just wanna run

I just wanna run, throw it away

"I'll fucking kill that guy if he comes around here!" Luke roared, and no one had ever seen him so riled up. "He's lucky his daddy's the mayor, but he better keep his distance."

"They have a restraining order on him," Aubrey reminded them.

"It's just a piece of fucking paper," Beca spat, slamming down another beer.

After a long talk with the police, Beca and the group had at last made it to the celebration at the lake, but she was so heated about Tom getting away with what he did. She really didn't care he was out. She had kicked his ass twice, and she would have ended up killing him had someone not come to his rescue each time.

"I don't care," Beca sighed. "Fuck that guy. Let him come around. I won't hesitate to kill him."

"Baby, calm down, okay?" Chloe coaxed from her seat in between Beca's thighs, her head resting against the DJ's chest. "Don't let him get to you."

Beca laughed bitterly. "The funny part is he really expected me to be scared of him just because I was naked. He was barking up the wrong tree."

The group had to chuckle at that. They all let silence fall upon them as they swigged their drinks. The fact that Tom was out was more of an annoyance than anything, but Beca couldn't care less. She was prepared for anything he tried, and she didn't care where it landed her. Her team was behind her, and she didn't give a damn whose son he was. He was trash.

"On the brighter side," Amy sighed, sick of the depression. "We're going to the ship, what! We're going to the ship!"

Everyone chuckled at her antics as she waved her hands in the air. Beca smiled at that, placing a kiss on the top of Chloe's head.

"So what do you guys think about Dawson?" Stacie asked.

"I think it's gonna be a tough game," Beca huffed.

"Tougher only because we're playing in their stadium, and I'll be the first to admit that the referees they choose are usually biased. Barden will choose two referees as well, but we're much more honest about who we choose. Dawson always picks locals or people who used to play there. They're scum."

"I don't care," Luke sighed. "Even if Bumper's out, it just means we'll have to pick up the slack and help out B. You did an amazing job at quarterback though, B, really."

"Yeah, B, you had like all seven touchdowns I think, counting your throws."

"You guys did work though," Beca assured them. "Donald was owning that receiver second half. He couldn't get open, and he was their best."

"Beca can tackle too!" CR reminded them. "Girl, you laid dude out!"

"Yeah, and you also broke the cornerback's wrist," Lily hissed with a snicker.

"B, you dominated, plain and simple," Donald added now.

"They had no answer for you at any position. Those idiots talked a lot of shit, but you held it down. Dawson will be the

same, and that Devin guy will be on you, but you can take them like nothing. We have two weeks to get ready for it, and I know we'll be ready when the time comes."

"Don't even trip, B," CR went on. "You got this covered. We believe in you, and if a fight break out, volleyball will be over, and we'll handle ours."

Beca chuckled. "How did I get so lucky having friends as badass as me? Besides Jesse."

"Hey!" the boy shot out as the group chuckled. "I'm pretty badass."

"No one badass would say that."

"You say it all the time!" Chloe shrieked, and the group chuckled once more.

"Thanks for the backup, Babe."

"Oh. Sorry."

Beca didn't have to worry about Tom all weekend. No, she didn't even see the guy. By midnight Saturday after a few drinks, she was relaxed and had just about forgotten the entire situation. What she learned after that weekend though was to never underestimate a boy with an overly large ego and a lot of money. No, it won't do you any good.

Will walked into the school early Monday morning to find havoc along the halls. He nearly dropped his coffee mug as he watched cleaning crews trying to sand graffiti art off of the walls. There was paper and ceiling tiles all over the place covered in paint, and smoke bombs had been set off leaving a putrid smell. He could not believe what he was

seeing. The moment he entered the office, Principal Kendrick exited his office with a sigh, rubbing his temples.

“Ah, Will,” he said lazily, looking up. “Just the man I need to see. Come on.”

Will cringed as he followed Kendrick into his office, closing the door behind them and sitting down across from the heavysset man. Kendrick locked his gaze intensely for a moment before heaving a large sigh.

“Someone broke into the school Saturday night,” he informed him. “It said ‘F- Tom Edwards’ on the wall in the girls’ bathroom. Now, we know that Tom Edwards was released from jail this weekend thanks to his father, and your daughter was quite upset about it. Someone told the custodian they saw her stay back after everyone left the gym.”

Will could not believe what he was hearing. He wanted to discard all that was being said to him, but history told the tale. He knew what Beca was capable of, and he didn’t care about anything else. He already had his mind made up. His daughter was guilty.

“I’ll bring her to you the moment she gets here,” he huffed.

“Thanks, Will. I’m so sorry about this.”

“Oh, no apology needed, Reed. I know her track record speaks volumes, and I have no doubt in my mind she would pull something like this.”

Beca entered Barden at eight on the dot with Chloe beside her. She kissed the redhead before watching her scurry off towards her first class, and Beca headed down the hall to

English. Before she could even pass the office however, her dad was in front of her.

“Come on, Beca,” he said sternly before shoving her towards the office.

“What?” she asked. “Why?”

He didn’t answer, and Beca was utterly confused by now. She didn’t understand what she possibly could have done wrong. As they walked towards the office, she took in the sight of the main hall now. There was tons of graffiti lining the walls, and she had a feeling that someone had put her name into whatever was going on here. She could not believe it.

Will pulled Beca into Kendrick’s office where she sat before the large man, and he had a look of rage and exhaustion etched on his face. Beca knew that his mind was already made up about it all. She only awaited the outcome.

“Beca, why?” he asked immediately, his hands opened before him in a pleading manner.

“Why what?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“We’ve already seen what you did. Witnesses place you at the scene, and Tom Edwards’ name was written all over the girls’ bathroom.”

“Are you serious? You’re pinning this on me? I wouldn’t be stupid enough-”

“The witness gave your name, Beca.”

“You think I could do all that by myself?”

“Have you not done it before?”

“I’ve gotten into fights, tore apart teachers verbally, but I never damaged property with graffiti.”

“The mayor is going to sue you for slander of his son’s name, Beca, and they will use this against you.”

“Are you listening to me? I didn’t do it!”

“Beca, please.”

“You can ask-”

“You’re expelled, Miss Mitchell.”

“I have the state game in two weeks! Why would I jeopardize-”

“Please remove her to the parking lot, Will. The police will be picking her up shortly.”

Will yanked Beca up without another word, and led her out the front doors to the parking lot. He shoved her against her truck.

“Will, listen to me-”

“You fucked up again, Beca!” he barked. “Once again ruining everything and letting everyone down! I vouched for you, and this-”

“I didn’t-”

“You go wherever you please, but get out of Barden! They’re coming for you! The mayor will have your head, and I won’t be there to dig you out.”

“Fuckin’ listen to me-” He slapped her hard across the mouth.

“You are a fuckin’ disgrace, and your mother is turning in her grave-”

Before he could finish the thought, Beca’s fist slammed into his jaw, knocking him back.

“Don’t ever talk about my mother!” she growled. “Believe what you want! I’ve been set up, but don’t believe me. You never gave a fuck before, so why now? I wouldn’t jeopardize the game I’ve worked so hard to get to for Tom fuckin’ Edwards.”

“I’ll make sure that you have nothing in Barden to stay for. I’m calling Chloe’s mom right now, and rest assured, you will never see her again. Don’t waste your one phone call in jail calling me either. You’re dead to me.”

With that, Will walked off towards the administration building. Beca was in a rage, tears falling down her face. She jumped in her truck and drove away as fast as possible, not caring about anything. Her life had been ripped apart in a matter of minutes, and the one time she had been honest and had not caused havoc, she had been blamed for it anyway. As she drove off, she headed to the only place she figured no one would find her, shutting off her phone. She had no idea what to do or how to face anyone, but she couldn’t think right now. Her mind was blurry, and she just needed to be home, the only home she really knew.

Chloe hadn’t seen Beca since they arrived at school, and she didn’t find the brunette’s truck in the parking lot either. Jesse and Luke helped her look, but they had no idea where she could be. They piled into Luke’s truck and headed for Aunt Allie’s when they found that Beca’s phone

was turned off. They knew they were probably overreacting, but with the chaos at the school about some vandalism scheme that went on over the weekend, they weren't sure what to think.

When they arrived at Allie's, Chloe was surprised to find a very familiar person. That wasn't her DJ. They entered the home, and Allie was standing in the kitchen with a tall, slender copper-haired woman. The two women looked at the trio as they entered.

"Chloe," the woman stated sternly.

"Mom?" she asked. "What are you-"

"Let's go now. We're going."

"What? Why-I-"

"Will told me what you've been doing over here with that hoodlum. Let's go now."

The woman grabbed Chloe's hand, but Chloe pulled away.

"Aunt Allie, where's Beca?" she asked, tears already in her eyes.

"What?" Allie asked. "What do you mean where's Beca?" Aunt Sarah walked in now.

"She-we can't find her. She's not at school. Her truck's gone."

"What? What the-"

"Chloe, now!" her mother scolded.

"No! Let me go! My girlfriend is missing!"

“You don’t have a girlfriend anymore. Come on!”

Chloe was jerked back, but she kept fighting. Allie immediately stepped over, cupping the crying redhead’s cheeks and locking eyes with her.

“Chloe, I’ll find her, okay?” she said softly. “I promise, but you have to go, okay?”

Chloe was broken. Beca was missing, and Will had called her mother. There was something they were missing, and Luke and Jesse were in awe. Once Chloe was gone, Allie and Sarah turned to Jesse and Luke.

“Is Will at the school?” she asked, and they nodded. “Okay, we’re going back. You two go find Coach Jackson when we get there, and I’ll go find Will. Hopefully that will help us find Beca.”

They nodded, and Sarah and Allie followed the boys out. By now, Luke was shaking with rage, his mind already on Tom, and Jesse was worried sick about both Beca and Chloe. He texted Aubrey, letting her know what was going on. They had no idea what to do, but they planned on finding out. Jesse only hoped that Beca was safe. He wasn’t worried about the season or the championship game or a state ring. He was worried about his best friend, and he vowed to himself that if something had happened to him, he would risk life in prison to make sure Tom never got away with anything again. That was how much of an impact the small brunette had had on him, on all of them. That’s how much he loved her and needed her. She was his very best friend, and they were closer than anyone, even than him and Benji had ever been. He couldn’t stand to think that she wasn’t okay because Beca Mitchell was anything was weak. She wasn’t afraid of anything, and above all else, that scared

him because he knew she would never back down from anything, especially Tom Edwards, who had nothing left to lose if something happened to the small brunette.

When they arrived back at the school, Jesse and Luke immediately rushed to the economics room. Coach Jackson was sitting on his desk eating a sandwich and watching game film.

“Hey, guys,” he greeted with a smile. “What’s up?”

“Coach, have you heard anything about Beca?” Luke rushed out.

He stopped eating. “No, why? What happened?”

“We don’t know. She came to school this morning, and then she disappeared. Her truck’s not here. She wasn’t home. We went looking for her. Will Mitchell called Chloe’s mom though saying Beca was a hoodlum and this and that, and she dragged Chloe away, but we can’t find Beca. Beca’s aunts are talking to Will right now.”

The coach threw the remains of his sandwich in the garbage can before standing up and wiping off his hands. He turned off the TV and grabbed his room keys, ushering the boys out before locking up the classroom. Then he speed walked down the hall.

“Come on,” he ordered. “We’re going to talk to Principal Kendrick.”

Meanwhile, Allie and Sarah had just found Will out in front of the administration building. His jaw looked red and a bit swollen, and he looked about ready to kill. It was okay because the two women looked the exact same way if not

worse, rage in their eyes now. They crossed the quad quickly, approaching him. When he saw them coming, he sighed.

"Where the hell is she, Will?" Allie immediately asked.

"What are you-" he began, but Allie cut him off.

"Don't play stupid. No one has seen Beca since this morning, and she isn't home. I just need to know that she's safe."

"I don't know where she went. She just left."

"Are you serious?" Sarah scoffed as Allie tore into the man. "Great father skills, Will, really. I can't believe you. I just told you that your daughter is missing, and all you can say is 'she just left'? That doesn't help me locate my niece."

"She's probably just out being a drama queen. She'll-"

Now Allie grabbed hold of the front of his shirt, pulling up so that their faces were only centimeters apart, her hot breath setting fire to his face. He cowered at the amount of rage in her stormy blue eyes, and he knew then that this was no game.

"She is missing," she growled. "What the hell happened this morning that she left?"

16. If We Have Nothing Else, We Have Us

A/N: So here is the second half of that last chapter. sorry to keep you hanging, but I wanted to give you another update, and I needed to rewrite this part. I really hope this all flows, and I thank you all for baring with me. Trust its worth it. Also, thank you for

***all of the reviews. I wanted to reply to all of them, but
I'm working hard to get these updates for you guys,
but I swear I appreciate it so much! I love you guys!***

Song: It Ends Tonight-All-American Rejects

Your subtleties

They strangle me

I can't explain myself at all

And all the wants

And all the needs

All I don't want to need at all

The walls start breathing

My mind's unweaving

Maybe it's best you leave me alone.

A weight is lifted

On this evening

I give the final blow

When darkness turns to light,

It ends tonight

It ends tonight.

A falling star

Least I fall alone.

I can't explain what you can't explain.

You're finding things that you didn't know

I look at you with such disdain

The walls start breathing

My mind's unweaving

Maybe it's best you leave me alone

A weight is lifted

On this evening

I give the final blow

When darkness turns to light

It ends tonight,

It ends tonight.

Just a little insight won't make this right

It's too late to fight

It ends tonight,

It ends tonight

Now I'm on my own side

It's better than being on your side

It's my fault when you're blind

It's better that I see it through your eyes

All these thoughts locked inside

Now you're the first to know

When darkness turns to light

It ends tonight,

It ends tonight.

Just a little insight won't make this right

It's too late to fight

It ends tonight,

It ends

When darkness turns to light

It ends tonight,

It ends tonight.

Just a little insight won't make this right

It's too late to fight

It ends tonight,

It ends tonight.

Tonight

Insight

When darkness turns to light,

It ends tonight.

“What?!” the coach boomed as Kendrick rubbed his temples.

“Th security cameras went out Friday, but we have a witness-” Kendrick began, but Luke cut him off.

“Sir, who was the witness?” he asked. “Because he’s lying. Beca went with us. You can ask the whole volleyball team, the football team and the cheerleaders. We were celebrating at the lake.”

“Drinking?” Kendrick asked now incredulously.

“No,” Luke shot back, “and that’s not the matter at hand. You just wrongfully expelled Beca, and now we can’t find her. We know she’s messed up in the past, but she changed. She loves our team, and we talked about the Tom thing. She wasn’t mad about it, just annoyed, but she wouldn’t let Coach Jackson and the team down for him. She loves the game, Sir.”

“Her father said he believed she did it.”

“Are you listening to yourself, Reed?” Coach Jackson scoffed. “He didn’t even ever mention he had another daughter until her mom passed away, and she was passed off to Will. He tried to get her in trouble with me too. He doesn’t care about her, but I do. I’ve watched her change and evolve into a better player and a better person. Look at her grades. She’s united this school in just a few months.

She brings crowds to not only the football field but the volleyball court. Her own stepsister would vouch for her, and you knew the two never got along before. Saturday night, I saw every one of my players leave including Beca, so whoever did it, was already here. The only left was Bumper, and he said he was waiting for his mother. There was no way she did all that damage on her own."

"Then who else do I go to? The board of education _and _the mayor agreed on expulsion and arrest. The cops were supposed to pick Beca up."

"Tom," Jesse said simply. "He would write his own name on the wall to frame Beca, and Bumper just lost his spot to her too. He idolizes Tom. If Tom asked him to do something, he would do it. Bumper was mad the whole way home. Principal Kendrick, you have to believe us."

"Well, Bumper was the one who told us it was her."

"That's it then!" Coach Jackson bellowed. "Come on, Reed, just trust me on this. Beca's messed up before, but she wouldn't now. Will just took away her girlfriend a few minutes ago. He wants her to suffer. He's a lousy father, but I know Beca. These kids know Beca better than anyone. They're always with her, and even if she planned something, they would never let her go through it. You know Chloe Beale. She is a star student athlete, and she takes care of Beca before anything else. She would not let her just toss her life away."

"The school board is going to sue. What can I do? They have witnesses."

"We have witnesses too, and an alibi. We can prove the witness was fraudulent."

"Yeah, and we can all vouch that Beca wasn't here," came another voice from the door.

The room turned to find Aubrey and the entire volleyball team standing there nodding, the cheerleaders behind them. The only one missing was Chloe, and by now, Allie and Sarah had talked to Aubrey and told her what Chloe's mother had said. It pained them all, but before anything, they had to take care of Beca the way she always took care of them. Principal Kendrick sighed.

"Who let you all out of class?" Kendrick asked.

"You're always on about school unity," Aubrey went on. "You wanted us to unite, and you know who did that? Beca. I'll be the first to say I judged her before I knew her. She was dating my best friend, and I thought she was just trouble, a ticking time bomb. That's what Will and my mother put into my head, but when my mother put me down about everything, Beca came to me to protect me and calm me down. She's changed, and she loves her friends and her team more than anything. She wouldn't jeopardize her time here with us for Tom, but Tom had it out for her. Look at all the threats he made. He almost raped her, Sir! If Beca wasn't as strong as she is, he would have. She's always protecting us and supporting us, and now we're here to do the same. She's still my sister, and I'm here because what you did was wrong. Of course the mayor put it on her to protect his precious son, but Beca is innocent, and we all know where she was Saturday night."

Kendrick observed the group before him for a long time, and he saw only determination in their eyes, not one sign of deception. He knew that of all people, Aubrey Posen would not lie in anyone's defense no matter who they were. She was one of his prized students, always striving for

perfection, and he now recalled the pain in Beca's eyes as he expelled her. She had in fact worked hard in school and on the field, and he now realized his mistake. She was only trying to better herself, and Tom Edwards had always been trouble. He sighed heavily, knowing he had to fix his mistake before it was too late.

"Very well," he surrendered. "I'll have the board of directors here in the morning as well as the police to take statements. I can't reinstate her until then, but I need all of you here at seven forty promptly to talk to the board and the police. Jackson, get down to the station and let them know to cancel the warrant."

"We have to find her anyway," Luke said, and everyone nodded again.

"For now, back to class, all of you."

After school and practice, Aubrey rushed home. She planned on going to see Chloe first, but instead, she went to her house to handle business there. She found her stepfather in the kitchen reading the paper, and she approached him, anger in her eyes.

"Where's mom?" she asked.

"Work," he replied, not looking up.

"What did you do, Will?" Now he raised his gaze to meet hers, finding the agony and rage there.

"Aubrey, what are you-"

"What did you tell Chloe's mom and Principal Kendrick? You threw her under the bus, and she's your own

daughter!”

“Aubrey, you don’t even know what happened. They saw her-”

“Who? Bumper? The guy pissed off because she took his spot on the team? No, Will, he lied. You wanna know how I know? Because I was with Beca Saturday night. We were all at the lake celebrating the win that Beca worked her ass off to get.”

“Do not-”

“No, I always listen to you and Mom. Now it’s your turn to listen to me, to your kids! My mom always makes me feel like I’m the lowest of the low yet she makes me put myself above everyone else. She made me believe it was Beca’s fault you left, and it wasn’t. What she said about Beca is horrible, and it wasn’t true. I know the real her now, and she took care of me. She cheered me on and reassured me of my talents when my own mother put me down for everything. She loves me. She loves her friends, and she loves Chloe, and you know what you just did? Not only did you just break your daughter’s heart, you broke my best friend’s heart, and for that, I’ve lost all respect for you. Now, your daughter’s missing, and you don’t even care!”

“Aubrey, please just-”

“No! You ruined her life, and all she was trying to do was protect her friends! You let Kendrick believe it was her, but had you been paying any attention, you would’ve seen how much she changed! Now we have to fix this mess, but it’s okay. Beca doesn’t need your help, and neither do I! I’ll save my sister’s future without you!”

With that, the blonde stalked out of the house, leaving Will in shock. She rushed across the street now, reaching the Beale residence. Mrs. Beale's car was not in the driveway, so Aubrey wasn't even sure if they were home. She kept knocking, praying for an answer. When none came, she thought long and hard about her next move until she finally checked the doorknob. She breathed relief when it was unlocked, and she let herself inside. She hurried up to Chloe's room, and the sight before her tore her heart to pieces. Chloe was sitting in the corner of the bed, her knees drawn up to her chest and her head hung as her body shook with deep sobs. They were hoarse, letting Aubrey know she had been crying for a long time, and she was pale white. Aubrey rushed over to her, pulling the redhead into her arms.

"Bree?" she croaked. "Did they find Beca?"

"No," she hissed, her own tears falling now. "Will-he blamed the vandalism on Beca and called your mom. They expelled her."

"What! She didn't do that! She couldn't-"

"We know, and they're setting up a meeting in the morning with the board to reinstate her. We'll all be there too. Coach Jackson's taking care of the warrant they have for her as well."

"B-but where is she? They-we have to find her."

"Chloe, we can't-"

"My mom will be gone all night. Just please, Bree, we have to go to Aunt Allie's and find her. I need her, Bree, but more importantly, she needs us!"

Aubrey pondered it for a moment, knowing Chloe wasn't supposed to leave but also knowing that Beca would do the same had the tables been turned. She knew Chloe deserved to know where Beca was first and foremost. She herself was worried sick, but she was attempting to be strong for Chloe, for everyone. She had to be the strength when their own was missing. She couldn't deny she had developed deep feelings for her alternative sister, and now that she knew who Beca really was and all that she could be, she wanted to help her and redeem herself. She didn't want to be her mother's little clone anymore. Aubrey wasn't that person. She loved her friends, and she needed to start showing it. Now was when it mattered most. She pressed a kiss to the top of Chloe's head.

"Okay," she sighed. "Let's go."

Chloe was up in a flash, pulling her jacket on as Aubrey rose. They rushed downstairs to her car, and they pulled out of the Mitchell driveway. They passed Lauren's car on the way in, and Aubrey knew there would be trouble, but she didn't care. Beca wouldn't have rested until she found the blonde, so Aubrey would do the same.

"Call Jesse and Luke," Aubrey instructed the redhead. "We won't call the girls just yet until we talk to Allie, but tell the boys to meet us at the condo."

Chloe nodded, pulling out her phone quickly and dialing Jesse's number.

"Chloe?" he answered after a single ring.

"Hey, J," she sniffled.

"Are you okay? What happened?"

“My mom just started going off about everything Will said. It was really bad, but she went back to work, and she leaves tomorrow to New York for business, so I don’t care. Are you with Luke?”

“Yeah, we’re just leaving practice. The team’s pretty bent about all this, and Coach Jackson was going to talk to Bumper right now, but he never showed up.”

“Figures. Can you meet us at Allie’s? Just don’t tell the other girls yet.”

“Yeah, of course. See you in ten.”

“K, thanks, Jess.”

Chloe hung up, trying to hold back more tears. Never had she felt so helpless and lost in her life. She had seen firsthand how much Beca had changed, and it killed her to know that the brunette’s own father had torn her life apart. She knew that even though her father had been sick, he had only wanted what was best for her. She felt that he had killed himself to keep her safe, feeling like he could never get better. Sure, it was still a coward’s way out, but he had been severely ill. Will was completely fine. He was just an asshole. It hurt her to know that Aunt Allie and Aunt Sarah were suffering when all they had wanted was what was best for Beca. Chloe just didn’t want to let Beca’s parents down, knowing they were up in the sky praying for their little girl. They had never meant to leave her, and she wouldn’t even be in this mess had they not, but everything happened for a reason, and she knew that she had been sent to help the DJ become the amazing person she was destined to be, the girl that Chloe had fallen hopelessly head over heels in love with. She wouldn’t stop until Beca was safe and sound, and when the time came, she would

take her far away from this madness. She vowed that she would never let anyone hurt her baby again. That was what true love was all about, and Chloe had found it. She just focused on her little DJ as she held the pendant around her neck tightly in her fingers.

Aubrey pulled into the driveway of the condo, and the two girls rushed out of the car. Only Sarah's vehicle was in the driveway, and they knocked with haste. It was in fact Sarah that answered, and she pulled the two girls in.

"Have you heard anything?" Chloe asked.

"No," Sarah sighed. "Allie's out looking, and I stayed here to see if she came home."

"What did Will say when you talked to him?"

"He just kept saying he knew she did all that graffiti in the school, and she deserved to be punished, but fuck that guy. He's an idiot."

"Yeah, I gave him a piece of my mind earlier," Aubrey huffed.

"I'm really glad she has you too now, Bree. I know she's grateful too."

"I'm just glad she still gave me a chance even when I denied her."

"That's Beca. She causes chaos because that's the only way she knows how to deal with pain, but beneath of all that, she is the most beautiful person I know. She loves hard. She didn't accept my brother at first, but soon, they were inseparable, and he loved her more than anything. That's

his babygirl, and I promised him long ago that if anything ever happened to him or Leah, I would always come back to take care of her. She was there for me when they thought I had cancer, and I'll always be there for her."

"Yeah, and Beca has a whole family that cares about her now. We'll find her and make sure she gets her life back if it's the last thing I do."

"You can count on that." She looked at the redhead now. "You okay, Chloe?"

"Yeah, I just-I want Beca," the redhead sighed.

"We'll find her. She's tough. She'll come-" Suddenly Sarah's eyes widened. "Home. She'll go home."

"Why would she go home?" Aubrey scoffed. "I doubt she wants to see Will unless she's planning to murder the guy."

"No, I mean home. Where she feels most at home. Okay, I think I got this."

Just then Jesse and Luke pulled up, rushing into the house.

"Is she here?" Jesse asked urgently.

"No, but I think I know where she might be," Sarah said, standing quickly

They watched as Sarah grabbed her keys and her purse with haste. They waited patiently as she did so then they followed her back outside, and she turned around.

"Okay, Chloe, you come with me," she instructed. "Jesse, call Allie. You have her number, right?" He nodded. "Okay, let her know we'll be right back and not to worry. Just to

come home. I need you three to stay here just in case, and it'll be easier to get her to come home. We'll bring her here after. Call up the girls and Donald and Benji to meet us here. She'll need all of our support when we bring her back."

The three nodded and headed back into the house, Jesse already on the phone. Chloe slid into the passenger seat of Sarah's car, and the older woman pulled out of the driveway. They headed towards Atlanta, and Chloe's leg was shaking with anxiety. She just wanted to find Beca, to hold her and tell her everything was okay. She needed her more than anything, and she wanted so badly to string up Tom and Will and beat them to a pulp with a baseball bat. It wouldn't help now though, and it was up to Beca's friends to fix the mess that had been made. They were going to protect her because they weren't just friends or a team. They were family.

"You know, she really loves you, Red," Sarah said softly. "No matter what happens, she won't give up on you, and I am really grateful you never gave up on her."

"I couldn't," Chloe breathed. "I'm in love with her. She let me be myself. I didn't have to pretend to be something I wasn't for her acceptance, and you and Allie accepted me like family."

"You are family, Red, always. I'd do anything for you the same as I'd do for Beca, and I know Allie feels the same way. You helped our niece in ways we never could, and we'll forever be thankful for that. She's everything to us."

"She's everything to me, too, and I know she deserves the very best."

“She has the best, Red. Look in the mirror, and know that Beca loves you just as much as you love her if not more. That’s why I brought you along. I know she’ll listen to you.”

When Sarah pulled up into the parking lot of the cemetery in East Atlanta, Chloe was more than relieved to see the familiar black truck with the yellow Batman logo plastered on it. She stepped off the car and followed Sarah down the many rows of graves before turning onto one of the cobblestone paths. As they neared a large tree, Chloe could make out the form of a small person rocking back and forth and sobbing into her knees between two graves. Sarah gave Chloe a small smile, gesturing her to go forward first. Chloe nodded. As she stepped forward though, she could hear the brunette talking, and she froze again.

“I’m so sorry, Dad,” she sobbed. “I-I messed everything up. I’m so sorry I let you down. I-I swear I didn’t do it this time. I know it’s my fault though. It came back to haunt me, and- I’m sorry. Just please forgive me. Please, Daddy, come back! Please.”

Chloe was in fresh tears now, her heart shattering at the sight of her badass titanium DJ so broken and hurt. She walked over to her now, kneeling down and pulling the brunette into her arms. Beca looked up now, and her eyes widened when they met bright cerulean.

“Chloe,” she gasped, pulling the redhead tighter to her. “Oh my God, I thought-they took you.”

“I’ll always come back to you, Becs,” she coaxed, stroking her chocolate locks.

“I-I messed up, Chlo. They kicked me out.”

"No, it's okay, Baby. We're meeting with the board tomorrow. Coach Jackson's taking care of the warrant they have for you. It's okay."

"R-Really? How?"

"Well, once everyone heard what Will did, your friends handled business." She smiled. "Everyone's waiting up for you. Just please come home, Beca. Please."

Beca was silent a moment before nodding. Chloe released her, and she crawled over to place a kiss on each one of the headstones before her.

"Thanks, Mom and Dad," she whispered, and Chloe smiled.

"Yeah," she hissed as well. "Thanks, Mom and Dad, for my awesome titanium DJ, and I swear to you that I'll take the best care of her from now on until we see you again."

Beca smiled as she stood up, taking Chloe's hand. They turned, and Beca found Aunt Sarah standing there with a smile. She pulled her niece into her arms when she was within arms' length and hugged her tightly.

"I was so worried, Beca," she breathed. "Don't do that again."

"I'm sorry," Beca sighed. "I just needed to see them."

"I understand. We were just scared with Tom and Bumper out."

"Wait, Bumper? Why Bumper?"

"He was the so-called 'witness' that pinned it on you, and he never showed up to practice, but we're pretty sure he

was involved.”

“I should’ve at least texted you. I’m sorry. I was just-lost.”

“It’s okay. Let’s just get home before Luke and Jesse go assassinate the mayor. I swear Lily said something about having a sniper rifle on standby when we left the school.”

Beca only chuckled, thankful once again for amazing friends.

While Chloe and Beca drove home in the truck behind Sarah, the rest of the volleyball team along with Donald and Benji had arrived at the condo, and they had been convinced by all of town that Beca was in jail. Luke, Jesse and Aubrey hadn’t even heard that, so they really couldn’t shoot it down. Amy was set on believing it was true though, so when Beca finally did open the door, they acted as if she was fresh out of a jail cell.

“Ah!” the Aussie boomed. “What up, Shawshank!”

“Did you get yourself a bitch?” CR asked, and Chloe glared at her.

“Did they spray you with a hose?”

Beca could swear Lily said something about county, but she just shrugged it off.

“I wasn’t even in jail, guys,” she scoffed.

“What!” Amy hollered. “Then where the hell were you that you gave us all a heart attack?”

“You guys were really worried?”

“Is that even a serious question!” Stacie shrieked now. “We were all over town looking for you. We almost went mayor hunting and Bumper hunting as well.”

“Yeah, I cut him off from the goodies,” Amy assured her, and Beca cringed.

“And we’re pretty sure Tom’s in witness protection by now. Principal Kendrick too maybe.”

“Thanks,” Beca huffed. “Thanks for everything, guys really. It means a lot.”

Luke stood now and threw an arm around her. “Becs, we’re a family, and if I ever catch Will Mitchell on the street after football season, I’m going to tear him to pieces. _We’re _your family, and we’ll always protect you on and off the field. Forget a state ring. You come first before any of that, and you mean so much more to us than just a jersey.”

“Are you okay though, B?” Jesse asked now.

“Yeah, I guess,” Beca huffed. “I’m still expelled.”

“Oh, don’t you worry about that. We have it covered.”

“What if the mayor’s able to control the school board?”

“Trust us. We already got it worked out. You have nothing to worry about. One thing to always remember after this though. Never interrupt Coach Jackson’s Subway sandwich. He becomes a very angry man, and when you mess with his boys, it’s on!”

The looks in her friends’ eyes made her a bit worried, but she said nothing. Beca was just glad that she was no longer alone. She had one big giant family that was going to

always have her back, and she would never let them down again for anything.

17. More Than A Game

A/N: So here is the second half of that last chapter. sorry to keep you hanging, but I wanted to give you another update, and I needed to rewrite this part. I really hope this all flows, and I thank you all for baring with me. Trust its worth it.

Song: Girl on Fire-Alicia Keys

She's just a girl and she's on fire

Hotter than a fantasy, lonely like a highway

She's living in a world and it's on fire

Filled with catastrophe, but she knows she can fly away

Ohhhh oh oh oh oh

She got both feet on the ground

And she's burning it down

Ohhhh oh oh oh oh

She got her head in the clouds

And she's not backing down

Looks like a girl, but she's a flame

So bright, she can burn your eyes

Better look the other way

You can try but you'll never forget her name

She's on top of the world

Hottest of the hottest girls say

Ohhhh oh oh oh

We got our feet on the ground

And we're burning it down

Ohhhh oh oh oh oh

Got our head in the clouds

And we're not coming down

This girl is on fire...

This girl is on fire...

She's walking on fire...

This girl is on fire...

Everybody stares, as she goes by

'Cause they can see the flame that's in her eyes

Watch her when she's lighting up the night

Nobody knows that she's a lonely girl

And it's a lonely world

But she gon' let it burn, baby, burn, baby

This girl is on fire...

This girl is on fire...

She's walking on fire...

This girl is on fire...

She's just a girl and she's on fire

Anxiety kept Beca up for most of the night. She had allowed Aubrey and Chloe to take the bed once more, but at six a.m, the blonde joined her in the kitchen. Before either could say a word to one another, there was a sharp knock at the door. Somehow, they both knew who it was.

"I'll stay close," Aubrey assured her.

Beca nodded and stood up, stepping to the door and taking a deep breath before opening it, closing it right behind her. The woman before her quirked an eyebrow as Beca spun and faced her with a small smile. You could tell the DJ was nervous, but she was also determined.

"Hello, Mrs. Beale, before we do anything, I would just like you to please listen to me," she began, and Mrs. Beale only crossed her arms, so Beca went on. "Well, I know that Will told you a lot of things about me, but in all honesty, Will knows nothing about me. He abandoned me when I was seven. He never even gave me a reason. I only found out he had another family last April when my mom and stepdad died, and I was sent here. I'm not saying I'm perfect. I messed up a lot when my dad left because that's how I dealt with it. I destroyed things, but I'm not that person

anymore. I'm set to be on the honor roll this semester. I'm playing football." Mrs. Beale's eyebrow rose higher. "What I'm saying, ma'am, is that Chloe changed everything for me. She's the best thing that ever happened to me, and she made me a better person for her. I know that you're gone a lot, and I'm not saying that's bad, but Chloe stays here, so she doesn't have to be alone. We take really good care of her. I'm respectful of your daughter, and we don't do anything inappropriate. We just like being together because I know what it's like to be alone."

"She has Aubrey," the woman answered now, and that prompted the door to open.

"You're right," Aubrey answered now, and Mrs. Beale's eyebrow rose even higher. "She does have me, and Beca has me as well. Beca isn't all that Will drew her up to be, Emily, I swear. I thought she was at first, but I got to know her, and she has the biggest heart I've ever seen. She takes good care of Chloe. She had the whole football team at our volleyball game, and she was there for every single game. She protects Chloe, and the reason any of this even happened is because of Tom."

"Tom? The mayor's son?"

"Yeah, he wouldn't leave Chloe alone, and Beca stood up for her. See, Tom tried to attack Beca in the locker room after a football game. He's angry, and he tore apart the school to blame it on Beca. I can promise you that my stepsister is nothing like what you've heard, Emily."

Emily inspected the two girls a moment, not saying a word. She could see the pleading looking in Beca's eyes, and even though she didn't know the girl at all, she could tell that it was new for her but genuine nonetheless.

"Tell Chloe I'm leaving for my flight already, and I love her," she at last sighed.

The door opened again then to reveal a bright and bubbly redhead, and the three laughed.

"Bye, Mommy, I love you too!" she exclaimed, hugging her mother. "Thank you."

"Thank these two. I've been convinced."

Once Mrs. Beale left, the three girls walked back inside, Chloe with an arm around both of them and Aunt Allie and Sarah sitting in the kitchen grinning.

"Look at Romeo over here talking to the mother," Allie chuckled.

"Scariest five minutes of my entire life," Beca breathed.

"Oh, it wasn't that bad," Aubrey drawled.

"Are you serious? Copper eyebrows change the whole game. When Chloe's eyebrows get that high, I *know* I'm in for it."

The group chuckled as Allie began making pancakes.

"Well, I'll make some grub, and you guys get ready. We have a meeting to attend to."

"Bumper!" Coach Jackson called when he saw Bumper shuffling across the parking lot. "How's the arm doing, Son?"

"Uh, it's great, Coach," he replied nervously. "I should be practicing by Thursday."

“Nice. Come into my office for a moment then.”

Bumper hesitated a moment before following the burly man into the school and down to his office across from his classroom. Coach Jackson settled into his chair.

“Close the door and have a seat, Son,” he directed, and Bumper obeyed slowly.

The boy fidgeted in his seat, and Coach Jackson scrutinized him for a long time before saying anything. Bumper refused to meet his eyes, but he could feel the tension in the room.

“What’s up, Coach?” he asked now.

“Are you doing alright?” he asked calmly.

“Uh, yeah, yeah, Coach, I’m doing just fine.”

“You seemed mad on the way home Saturday night.”

“I was just tired. Shoulder hurt a bit, but I was okay.”

Coach Jackson knew it was time to work into the issue at hand, eyes intent on the boy.

“Bumper, are you okay with sitting out next game, having Mitchell go in for you?”

“What! No, Coach, I’m okay! And no, Mitchell can’t play! She’s supposed to be expelled!” He immediately regretted his choice of words.

“What do you mean ‘supposed to be expelled’?”

“Well, uh, I heard that she’s the one that did the vandalism-”

“Stop lying to me, Allen.”

“Sir, I’m not.”

“Okay, let’s get down to it. First of all, Mitchell isn’t expelled. What happened, Bumper? I get a call from the mayor this morning that you were framing Tom for this whole thing. The graffiti.”

“Sir, I don’t know-”

“Well, Mayor Edwards has informed the school board, and Tom said that it was you.”

“No, Sir, that isn’t true!”

“So what happened, Allen?”

“Tom wanted us to do it, so that he could get Beca expelled! He said we had to help him. We just helped him, but it was all Tom!”

“Well, that was easy.”

The man stood now, stopping the camcorder that had been sitting on his desk. Bumper’s mouth dropped. He hadn’t even noticed it sitting there. He groaned.

“Come on, kid,” Coach Jackson huffed. “We’re taking you to talk to the school board and the police, so I can get Miss Mitchell reinstated. Oh, and you’re off the team, but I’m sure that’s the last of your worries once you admit to this.”

Meanwhile in the administration building, the police were taking testimony from every volleyball player, football player and cheerleader one by one. Beca sat in the office,

Jesse and Luke to her left and Chloe and Aubrey to her right. Will had not shown up that morning, and Principal Kendrick was sure to have his head when he found the man. The board of education had been seated in the conference room for all of an hour watching the event take place, and the police were intent on finding the truth about the entire situation. The mayor had been barred from the building, and the Georgia State Director of Education, Derek Caine, had every right to do so. Once he was notified that the mayor's son had nearly raped Beca, he came down to Barden straight away.

"And why weren't we advised of this, Kendrick?" he asked.

"I-uh, I don't-know," Kendrick replied nervously.

"Has that boy been suspended?"

The principal hung his head. "No, sir."

"He is to be expelled immediately, and you can tell his father that. He's the mayor, but he does not control education in this state. A child was nearly raped, and Kendrick, you will be suspended until we know what we want to do with you. Beca Mitchell?"

Beca looked up now, Chloe's hand in hers. "Yes, sir?"

"Come over here, please."

Beca stood up and walked over into the second half of the administration office which was separated by a partition. She sat before the tall, slender man tentatively.

"I do apologize for all that you've been put through, Miss Mitchell," he began. "Now I see you have quite a record, but everyone deserves a second chance, and you've been

making well on it. Your grades are superb, your teachers love you, students admire you, you're a role model all around town, and you led the football team to its first State Championship in over four decades."

"Yes, sir."

"So, I'd say I believe you when you say you wouldn't jeopardize all of that for Tom Edwards."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You have been reinstated." He held out his hand, and she shook it.

"Thank you, sir."

She stood up now, her expression sullen, and her friends were gathered around the room after giving their statements to hear the verdict. She reached Chloe, whose eyes were pleading for good news. She didn't say anything at first, dropping her head and shaking it. Everyone gasped, but then she looked up with a wide grin.

"We're going to the ship, what!"

Everyone cheered and embraced their small DJ, and Director Caine chuckled heartily. He knew he had made the right decision in the matter. The group ushered Beca out into the lobby just as Coach Jackson and Bumper came around the corner.

"Hey, Coach," Luke greeted. "Guess who got their star back."

Coach Jackson immediately engulfed Beca in a hug, and while he did, the others shot warning glares at Bumper,

who immediately dropped his head.

“Congrats, kid!” Coach Jackson said.

“Thanks for believing me, Coach,” she returned.

“I told you, I’d always have your back, and I know you. Much better than your so-called father does. We had it covered. They tried to hide it from me, but we figure things out. So I’ll see you at practice after school then.”

“Yes, sir.”

She saluted him, and Jackson grabbed Bumper’s arm before dragging him into the administration office. When Beca led her group out of the building, she was shocked to find the crowd outside of school consisting of just about everyone in town. She saw Penny and Jep Stevens, the owner of the sports store. They were all shouting things like “Bring Back Beca” and “Justice must be Served.” Beca smiled. She stood up on the low wall so that they could all see her, and when they did, everyone cheered and hollered.

“I’m reinstated!” she roared, and the cheers became deafening. “We’re going for that ring!”

The town was wild with joy as everyone put their hands up.

“Mitchell! Mitchell! Mitchell!”

Penny rushed forward as Beca jumped down from the wall, and the elderly woman embraced her. Beca smiled and hugged her back enthusiastically. Her friends grinned as they joined the rest of Barden in their chanting of Beca’s name.

"The mayor's son can rot in hell," Penny hissed to her. "We believe in you, honey."

"Thanks, Penny," Beca returned, tears in her eyes.

"We knew you would be okay, and the mayor has already lost any chance at another term."

Suddenly, another person ran out from the crowd.

"The mayor has resigned!" he exclaimed, and everyone was even more riled up.

Beca smiled over at her team, and Jesse threw a fist in the air. The others followed, and Beca mimicked them. They were going to be just fine.

By that afternoon, Unicycle and Bumper had admitted to helping Tom tear up the school, and they had both been expelled. Tom had also been expelled, but he and his father hadn't been seen since that morning. All seemed well, but Beca knew better than to assume. She was ready for anything, and Jesse and Luke never left her side.

After practice that day, the group headed back to Aunt Allie's house to relax. Aubrey had yet to go home, and though her mother called a million times that morning, she was due to leave to Seattle that day, so the blonde didn't worry. She was sure that Will wouldn't try to find her either, and she was okay with that.

"What's wrong with you, Jesse?" Stacie asked as they sat on the back patio.

"Well, since Bumper and Uni are out, we don't have enough guys for the choir regionals," he huffed. "They always have

to screw something up.”

Beca snorted. “That’s what you’re upset about, J? And you question your badass score.”

He grinned. “Shut it, Midget Mitchell. I just, we worked hard, you know.”

“Well, we do need to focus on getting this ring first and foremost.”

“Yeah, that’s true. Sorry.”

Suddenly Chloe jolted forward in her seat.

“Hey!” she squealed. “Why don’t we put our teams together! Usually the groups have like fifteen people, but you only ever need ten. You guys can join us.”

“Chloe-” Aubrey began, but she saw the hope in Jesse’s eyes, and she had been wanting change anyway now that she had broken out of her shell. “Yeah, we can work together.”

Jesse instantly pulled Aubrey into a large hug. “Yes! You’re the best, Bree.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“So after the season’s up, we can focus on that, and we’ll just meet in one room during sixth period to focus on the setlist.”

“Beca,” Aubrey said now. “Do you think we could figure out a mix?”

Beca grinned now and stood up, gesturing them to do the same. “Follow me to my workshop.”

Practice was getting intense, but the team wasn't worried. Beca and Donald were taking turns at quarterback, but Beca obviously had the better arm. They watched game film every other day, and the boys were pushing it to the limit in the weight room. Luke and Beca were driving each other to their limits, and even after practice, they were on the field with Jesse for another hour or so running plays and playing catch. Coach allowed them to take game film home, and it became homework. They watched it closely, finding something new every time that they watched it. By Friday, they had completely taken apart Dawson's offense piece by piece as well as their defense, and they gave Coach Jackson their notes. Coach Jackson had never been more proud, and he could feel their energy radiating.

The entire town of Barden was ready for the final week of the volleyball and football season, betting on two rings. The town had never really paid attention to volleyball either, but with Beca's help and ambition, she had united not just the school but the entire town. Now, every store and shop in town was intricately decorated in both teams' colors. Penny's would be closed for both Saturdays of the game until nighttime because she wouldn't miss it for the world. The sports store would close early on the day of the Rebels game, and a handful of other businesses were doing the same. Even the local taco place was giving away free tacos the night before the football game, and Beca had it marked in her calendar, an alarm set in her phone. Chloe only laughed at her, but she was sort of excited as well.

After practice on Friday night, they took the volleyball girls out to Luciano's Italian Bistro as a treat before their game the next day. They all sat at a large table in the back, and Allie and Sarah joined them as well. The restaurant assured them they would be getting a discount on all food and free

bottomless beverages. They too recognized the players, and they were happy to have them, wishing the girls good luck the next day.

"This is exciting," Donald hissed to them. "We're famous."

"It's nerve-wracking is what it is," Aubrey huffed, and Luke and Beca, who flanked her, rubbed her shoulders softly.

"Don't worry, Bree," Beca said. "You got this. It's going to be fine."

"Yeah, trust me, Bree," Allie chimed. "You guys are ten times better than you were that first game. Your spikes are impeccable, and that girl is going to have a hard time getting through Chloe upfront. Just remember what I said. They always try to angle it left against the block. Just watch her shoulders. You'll know."

"You guys have the hardest hitters in the state. No one can stand against you when you're on your game. I can promise you that."

As they sat there sipping their drinks, two older men approached the table with toothy grins.

"There are our stars!" they exclaimed, one patting Beca's shoulder. "You guys ready to take that state ring?"

"Yes, sir," Beca replied.

"You guys gotta win. The whole town's depending on you, Mitchell."

"Thank you, sir. We'll try our best."

"If you don't win, the town will shun ya." The men laughed at this, but Beca only cringed.

"Okay, thank you, sir."

"Good luck to you girls as well. We're not too worried. We know you'll bring it home."

With that, the two men went on their way, and Beca looked around at her team. When they were out of ear shot, the table burst into laughter.

"Figures, right?" Luke chuckled.

"Yeah, of course," Beca agreed.

"We're going to bitch slap Cross Keys so hard, their boobs are gonna concave," Amy announced, and her friends only laughed harder.

She was going to say something else until Jesse slyly slung a spoon of spaghetti at her. She grabbed at her chest where the sauce hit, and gasped.

"Shot!" she cried. "I've just been shot!"

"Are you okay?" Beca asked, biting back a laugh.

"Do you need mouth-to-mouth?" CR asked.

"No, no mouth to mouth," Amy sighed. "I'm expected to make a full recovery."

The table once again burst into hysterical laughter as Amy cleaned off her shirt. Chloe looked over at Beca, who was doubled over, holding the table for support.

"I love that laugh," she sighed dreamily.

"I love you," Beca replied breathlessly.

She kissed Chloe's forehead before taking her glass and raising it.

"Let's toast!" she boomed. "To state rings, but more so, to best friends."

"To family!" CR chimed.

"To family!" everyone repeated, and they clinked glasses.

After dinner, they went down to the beach where Allie put up the volleyball net she had just purchased, and the football team played the girls. Beca and the boys didn't take it easy on them either. Who knew Beca was such a talented setter? Luke was swatting down spikes, but Aubrey and Chloe were doing a beautiful job of blocking them. In the end, they took the boys down in five out of seven matches, and everyone was proud. Allie had been coaching from the sideline, and Aubrey and her team felt more confident than ever.

The team called it a night after that, and everyone was sleeping over at Allie's of course, so that they would be able to all leave together. Beca was asleep in the living room when she heard the back door slide open softly then close. She jolted up and looked through the den towards the door, but she didn't see anything. She slid off of the couch, her feet softly landing on the floor before padding over to the back door. She slid it open softly, and she was surprised to find Aubrey sitting there on the steps, looking out over the pool. Beca sat down beside her.

"You need to get some rest, Posen," she hissed. "You'll be no good tomorrow half asleep."

Aubrey laughed lightly. "I'm trying, but I can't."

"What's bugging you?"

"Just-the game. I'm just nervous."

"Okay, Bree, I'll admit that I'm dense, but I'm not that dense. I know there's something else. I promise you can talk to me. I'm here for you."

Aubrey looked away a moment, gathering her thoughts. She had never talked about this to anyone, not even Chloe, and she wasn't even sure that she could, but she trusted Beca, and she would try. It would take a great weight off of her chest if someone could know what she was struggling with, why she refused to go home. She needed release, and if Beca was willing to help her, she knew there was no one better to tell.

"It's just-everything is so messed up. I'm really sorry, Beca, about everything. The truth is, I always knew the truth. I knew that Chloe was right, and I was jealous."

"Jealous of what?"

It was then that Beca looked over to see tears glistening on Aubrey's face, and she quirked an eyebrow. She had never been wgood at comforting people. Social cues were a weak spot in her brain, and she didn't understand what had Aubrey so upset. She threw an arm around the blonde's shoulders, pulling her into her side, and Aubrey rested her head on the shorter girl's shoulder, her nose against her neck.

"You-you escaped," she breathed.

"What are you talking about, Bree?" Beca asked, but Aubrey only cried harder. "I need you to talk to me, Bree,

because you're scaring me. What happened?"

"I-he-Will-"

"Will what? What did he do?"

"I-I was seven. It was-when he moved in. He-he-my mom was at work, and-he came up to my room. He-he did things that-" She couldn't go on, and Beca understood instantly.

"That fuckin' bastard," she growled, tears now wetting her own eyes. "Did you tell anyone?"

"No-I-I just wanted him-someone to be proud of me. My mom wasn't. I-I couldn't tell Chloe. I-I was scared they would take my dad away."

"Aubrey, it's okay. Has he done it again?"

"He-he did it a lot until-I-I was eight or nine. I was at Chloe's a lot, but when-I turned eleven, he tried again, b-but Chloe came over and came in b-before he could. He stopped after that for a long time, but I-"

"Bree, it's okay. He can't hurt you anymore."

"Th-that's why I was so scared when-we found you and Tom because I knew what could happen. I knew what would've happened had you been weak like me."

"You're not weak, Bree. You were a little kid who just wanted acceptance. It doesn't make you sick or dirty or anything like that. You're a strong person now, and you're here now, okay? Once all of this blows over, I promise you that he will never touch you again."

"I-I'm scared. He-he usually only tries things when he's mad since I got in high school, and I-I yelled at him. He was mad, and I can't go home. I-I just-"

"Bree, you're still my sister, blood or not, and I swear to God that no one will hurt you again if I have to kill him with my bare hands. You think he could get away with that? If he did, he would have Jesse, Luke and I to deal with. I won't tell them now, but if it came to that, you know that they would protect you."

Aubrey only nodded, and Beca held her closer. Her head was spinning, and she was angry, but she had to keep Aubrey's focus elsewhere. She realized then why Aubrey was so scared of losing Chloe. Chloe was the only one to protect her without knowing what was happening. She probably stayed with Chloe every time her mom left for business so she didn't have to stay with Will, and Beca had taken that away. She wanted to protect Aubrey though. She couldn't let anything happen to her because she was such a different and beautiful person underneath all of that anger and fear. They were sisters now, and it was her duty.

Beca pulled Chloe into a tight hug before she boarded the bus with the team and the cheerleaders headed for North Atlanta.

"We'll be right behind you, okay?" she whispered.

"I know, Baby," Chloe replied, kissing her forehead.

"Kick ass and take names, and I promise you shall be rewarded tonight." She wriggled her eyebrows, and Chloe giggled.

"Oh, that's all you had to say! We'll win now!"

Beca chuckled, pulling her in for a deep kiss before parting. "I love you, Red."

"I love you too, DJ. Drive safe."

Chloe headed onto the bus now, blowing a kiss back, and Beca slid into the drivers' seat of her truck beside her aunts. Jesse, Luke, Donald and Benji were in Luke's truck, and they followed the bus out of Barden with the rest of the football team, the whole town once again there to see them off. Penny and other parents trailed them as well as they headed towards Cross Keys. The moment they entered the correct neighborhood, it was obvious. The streets were decorated in the green, white and gold of the Cross Keys Indians, and there were people everywhere flocking towards the gym at the end of the street. The mascot was at the gate, and Beca smirked. She had decided to bring a special surprise for the game, and she was pretty excited about it. She met up with the rest of the football team in the parking lot as they donned their shirts, and the girls headed into the locker room. Luke smirked as he pulled out a large bag, tossing it to Beca.

"Get suited up, Mitchell," he ordered, and she smirked.

The atmosphere was dense with anticipation all over the Cross Keys campus. People passing the Barden boys in the parking lot booed them and threw up middle fingers.

"Fuck off!" Luke snarled.

"Fuck you pussies! We'll see you after the game!" one boy in his football jersey barked.

"Oh, really!" Beca yelled back. "I'll be in the State championship after this. Where the fuck will you be, punk?"

The boy quieted now, and the Barden boys cheered. When Beca was suited up and ready, she clapped her hands and led the boys and Sarah towards the door. Allie was already inside. Beca was very surprised to see Mrs. Beale walking in with Lauren, and she smiled. Chloe would be so happy.

The Bellas were on the court warming up when the gym doors opened and their football team entered, but they were all shocked to see what was leading them. It was a small figure, but it wasn't just dressed in the usual Barden shirt. It was donning a full-body Beast costume from "Beauty and the Beast" with the large head, flowing mane and all.

"Bellas!" Luke roared as he entered. "Meet your beast!"

The girls cheered, no one needing to ask to know who was inside the costume. The beast pointed to Chloe then threw up two thumbs. Chloe giggled. She loved her DJ. Beca positioned herself around the cheerleaders, and they all giggled and petted her mane. The boys flowed into the bleachers with Sarah right behind the Barden bench. When the whistle blew, it was time for the start of the game, and the gymnasium was filled to the brim with a loud buzz. Barden would serve first, and Beca joined their huddle, putting her hand as well as they shouted "Bellas!"

Lily served first as usual, and she put the ball in play. Cross Keys immediately answered with a spike for their first point. On the next serve from the Lady Indians, Chloe saved Jessica's pass from going out of bounds, and Aubrey spiked it back over the net. Their six was able to dig it out, and their setter put up a pretty pass. Their tallest girl came up to spike it, but the ball bounced right back into her face as Chloe came up with a last minute block. CR served next, and she served three times before the Indians took it back.

The Indians scored seven points in a row then, and the Bellas trailed by four. Beca was cheering and hollering, and CR set the prettiest ball she had ever seen, Stacie coming up and swatting it hard right down the line.

“BOOM!” the football team and Beca shouted.

It was Chloe’s turn to serve now, and that always got the team going. She served until the end of the match, and Barden was up one match. Between matches, Beca was on the court having a dance competition with the Indian mascot, the music blasting through the gym, the football team singing along and breaking down in the stands.

I like to move it, move it

I like to move it, move it

I like to move it, move it

We like to move it!

I like to move it, move it

She like to move it, move it

We like to move it, move it

We like to move it!

Keep on jumpin’ off the floor

Dancin’ ’til your feet is sore

Party hard just like a smarty girl

’Cause that’s what life is for

(Yeah!)

And we don't party hardly

(No!)

We just party hard

(Yeah!)

And not because we bored

(No!)

We party 'cause we born to party

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Back it up, back it up

Gimme room, gimme room

Gimme room 'cuz, huh!

I like to move it, move it

I like to move it, move it

I like to move it, move it

We like to move it!

She like to shake it, shake it

She like to shake it, shake it

She like to shake it, shake it

Yeah, shake it girl, huh!

We like to party, party

We like to party, party

We like to party, party

We like to party!

We like to move it, move it

He like to move it, move it

They like to move it, move it

Move it, move it, move it, move it

Move it

When Beca landed a moonwalk then a split, it was over, the gym going wild. The girls took the court then, all patting Beca on the back as she returned to the sideline. This match was much tougher, and the Indians were battling.

There was no score for a good three minutes as the ball flew back and forth. At last, Aubrey and Chloe blocked a spike that landed on the line on the Indians' side, giving the point to Barden. Ashley served, putting it in play, but the Indian front woman slammed the ball back down their throat. Soon enough, the Indians had a comfortable lead of ten, and they closed out the match quickly. Beca led her squad in a chant to pump up the girls in the next match, and they took the court once more after talking it over. The third match found Aubrey and Chloe more than determined to bring it in. They were blocking everything, and the Indians were struggling. If the blonde and redhead weren't blocking, Stacie and Amy were swatting balls back at the Indians like flies. CR was giving them the prettiest of passes, and Lily didn't let anything hit the ground. The Indians only scored six points in that match as Barden took it. The fourth match went down to the wire, and Beca was standing on the bottom bleacher with her hands up as the Indians prepared to serve for game point. Barden was down 19-20, and if the Indians scored, they won. As the girl tossed up the ball to hit it, Beca and her team yelled "BOOM!" The ball flew out of bounds, and the match was tied. If Barden won this, they were champions, and Chloe was up to serve. As she walked back to the line where she was to serve from, she looked over at the beast.

"You got this, Baby," she stage whispered. "Give it to 'em."

Chloe nodded, and she threw the ball up. The Cross Keys fans yelled to try and break her concentration, but Beca had worked with her on this at the house, yelling at her as she served, and Allie had done the same to them in practice. Chloe was the best server they had. She put the ball in play. It came back over twice, and when it came back to Barden the third time, Lily hit it wrong. It was flying towards the wall, but Aubrey ran and jumped,

passing it backwards back into the court. Chloe waited for it to come down before raising up and swatting it hard, smashing in the face of the center. Beca ran up and down the sideline.

“That’s my girl!” she shrieked. “Get ’em, Baby! Let’s go!”

Chloe served again, putting it in play, and this time, Aubrey slid on her knee pads to save it from hitting the ground. Jessica kneeled under it and set it up and back behind her. Amy rose high in the air, swatting it down. It hit the back line, and they once again waited impatiently for the signal. Everyone held their breath, eyes intent on the man. He then looked up, his hand in the air...

18. Where We Find Ourselves

Song: Count On Me-Bruno Mars

If you ever find yourself stuck in the middle of the sea

I'll sail the world to find you

If you ever find yourself lost in the dark and you can't see

I'll be the light to guide you

Find out what we're made of

When we are called to help our friends in need

If you're tossin' and you're turnin'

And you just can't fall asleep

I'll sing a song beside you

And if you ever forget how much you really mean to me

Every day I will remind you

Oooh

Find out what we're made of

When we are called to help our friends in need

You can count on me like 1, 2, 3

I'll be there

And I know when I need it

I can count on you like 4, 3, 2

You'll be there

***'Cause that's what friends are supposed to do, oh
yeah***

You'll always have my shoulder when you cry

I'll never let go, never say goodbye

You know...

You can count on me 'cause I can count on you

"The ball was in!" the referee announced. "Barden wins!"

The whole gym lost their minds. The girls jumped up in the air, hugging each other and piling on top of Amy. They had done it. They had won. The Barden Bellas had won their first state championship ever.

They had overcome every obstacle on the court and off of it. Beca had united a community, a team, a school, and her friends had put their blood, sweat and tears into this game. They had not given up. They had gritted their teeth and fought through everything that was thrown at them. Aubrey had not allowed her mother's disdain to derail her. Chloe had not allowed the emotional roller coaster of the week discourage her. Stacie did not allow anything else come on the court with her, and Amy had never underestimated herself. Cynthia Rose had stepped up as front setter, and

Lily had shown focus and sheer determination. Each and every girl had done their job, and they did not allow anything to take their eyes off of the prize. It had all paid off. They had redeemed themselves from last year's failure, and they were champions. They had earned it.

Chloe rushed into the arms of the beast.

"I love you," she hissed. "That means you turn back to a human now."

"Always the cheese ball, Beale," Beca smirked as she removed her beast head. "That was spectacular, Baby, you stayed in it. I love you too."

She pulled Beca into a bruising kiss, her hand grasping the shorter girl's neck. When they broke apart, Chloe rushed back to the team at center court where they were awaiting their trophy.

"I give you your 2014 Class 3AAA Georgia State volleyball champions," he announced into the microphone. "The Barden High Bellas!"

The crowd on the Barden side roared with pride as Aubrey and Chloe thrust the blue trophy high into the air. They waved Beca over, and the DJ put her head back on before walking over to get in the picture. A thousand flashes went off as everyone snapped shots of them. When it was done, she turned around hugging her sister and girlfriend. The other girls gathered around, embracing her in a big hug.

"You've been our drive, B," CR assured her. "Now, we'll be yours."

The volleyball girls were escorted back into Barden by an entourage of fans and police patrol cars. They would have the state championship parade after the football championship, everyone confident that they would win as well. The entire town had waited for word of the outcome, tuning into the news and the radio, and when they found that the Bellas had prevailed, they had been enthusiastic, lining the streets to watch their arrival into town with the police. Penny made them promise to all go back to her restaurant to celebrate with free burgers. When Beca and the boys arrived, Penny's staff had already put tables together for them. They were still singing as they walked in, and Penny had the old jukebox blasting. The girls arrived shortly thereafter with their trophy, and Penny pinned a picture of their win on the board after printing it out in her office. They ordered their burgers and settled in.

"You have to be the cutest mascot I've ever seen!" Allie cooed, pinching her niece's cheeks.

Everyone giggled as Beca swatted her hands away.

"I'm not cute, woman!" she defended. "I'm a beast!"

"My beast," Chloe sighed, kissing her softly.

"I'm about to eat guys, really?" Luke shot out.

"Shut it, Mate," Beca shot back in her best British accent. "We're snogging."

"You've been watching Harry Potter, haven't you?" Aubrey asked.

"Maybe..." Beca replied slowly. "Maybe not."

“That game was fierce,” Jesse gushed. “You guys took it to them.”

“Hell yeah!” CR shouted.

“I told you, Bree,” Beca said with a shrug. “You killed them with blocks.”

“Man, Aubrey saved that pass from Lily,” Jesse reminded them. “It was epic.”

“Then my baby was like boom! This is mama’s house!” Beca boomed, and they laughed.

When their food came out, they started eating. Everyone came up to the table here and there to congratulate the girls, and some took pictures with them. The excitement was raging, and Aubrey felt on top of the world.

“All that’s left to do is bring home that second blue trophy,” Jesse said with a grin.

“You boys got this,” Stacie assured them. “We’ll be right there cheering you on.”

“Yeah, fighting off all of B’s Dawson High groupies,” Luke chuckled.

“Don’t test me!” Chloe said, waving her hands in a gangster rap manner. “I’ll cut a bitch!”

The group chuckled as Beca planted a sloppy kiss on her cheek. They felt amazing, and they knew that if the boys could just bring home the win the following Saturday, it would make for the best year ever. Then they could concentrate on Glee club and make Barden a staple in Georgia high school extracurricular activities.

After dinner and more pictures, everyone returned to Aunt Allie's house. They figured that since after they had informed the police they had celebrated at the lake, it was no longer safe, and Allie had assured them that her house was their house. They set up in the backyard as usual, glad that Allie didn't have many neighbors between two empty condos as they blasted music and jumped in the pool regardless of the chill weather. They drank and talked, the girls feeling super excited about everything. They were having a blast just being together, and once they exited the pool and showered, they gathered in the den for a scary movie. Even Beca couldn't complain. She just loved having her snuggly little redhead in her arms, hand thrown across the DJ's abdomen. About midway through the movie, there was a sharp knock on the door, and everyone jumped. Allie and Sarah looked at Beca, who shrugged but stood up and led her aunts to the door. When she opened it, she found Will and Lauren standing there.

"Where's my daughter?" he asked sternly, and when Aubrey heard his voice, she and Chloe hurried to the door.

"Which one?" Beca scoffed.

"I only have one," he growled, and Lauren smirked.

Beca's dropped to a whisper. "Oh, the one you've been molesting since she was seven?"

Will's eyes widened at the accusation, and Lauren quirked an eyebrow. Aubrey grabbed Beca's arm now, still cowering behind her. Will was speechless.

"Will?" Lauren called, but the man's eyes were on the brunette. "Aubrey, let's go."

Will snapped out of it now, growling at Beca.

“You stay the fuck away from this family,” he growled.

“You keep your hands off of her,” Beca retorted.

“Will, what is she talking about?” Lauren asked, and Chloe was in shock.

“Yeah, Will, what am I talking about?” Beca repeated as Aubrey gripped her arm tighter.

“Beca,” Aubrey breathed shakily.

“Aubrey, let’s go!” Will boomed, and Lauren had never heard him so angry as Aubrey jumped further behind the DJ. “Beca, you stay the fuck away. I told you to leave Barden.”

“Why? So you can keep hurting Aubrey, and no one will believe her? Fuck you, Will. You should have never given her a sister if you didn’t want to get found out.”

“Aubrey, let’s go!”

“Will, what is she talking about?” Lauren asked again.

He turned on her menacingly. “NOTHING! Get in the fuckin’ car.”

“No, tell her, Will,” Beca demanded. “Tell her what you do when she’s away on business.”

“Fuck you, you little bastard. Get the fuck-”

Beca was lunging at him in a heartbeat, tackling him back onto the lawn. She was pummeling into him, everyone frozen. He roared in pain.

“DON’T YOU EVER-FUCKIN’ TOUCH HER AGAIN, YOU SICK BASTARD!” she roared, tears of passion in her eyes, and by now, everyone else was at the door, but no one moved to stop it. “YOU SICK FUCK! I FUCKIN’ HATE YOU, AND I HOPE YOU ROT IN HELL!”

“I’ll have-you-arrested!” he barked back.

“TRY IT, WILL, AND WHILE YOU’RE AT IT, WE CAN TELL THE COPS WHAT YOU-HAVE BEEN DOING-TO MY SISTER! YOU’LL BE IN THAT CELL WITH ME YOU FUCKIN” PRICK!”

Beca continued to beat into him until at last, Jesse and Luke pulled her off but only because Will was no longer moving. She was fuming, huffing heavy breaths. She then turned to Lauren.

“You think he’s so perfect!” she screamed. “Ask him what he’s done! Ask your own daughter! You make me sick, and until you figure it out, my sister isn’t going anywhere.”

Lauren was in tears by now, and she looked to Aubrey who was sobbing in Chloe’s arms. Beca was covered in Will’s blood, but she didn’t care. When Will stirred, she watched as he slowly stood up. He looked up at his wife.

“Let’s go,” he breathed.

“But what about the cops?” she asked.

“No, let’s just-”

“What the hell is she talking about, Will!”

“He molested me!” Aubrey suddenly screamed, losing all control. “He’s been doing it since I was seven, Mom!”

Chloe and the others froze, not believing what they were hearing. Chloe's eyes welled up with the tears immediately as she cradled her best friend, and Jesse and Luke now flanked Beca.

"Get the fuck off this property now," Luke growled, "or I swear, you won't walk out of here alive. If you ever show your face within five feet of her again, you'll wish it was only Beca you have to worry about."

"Lauren, let's go," Will growled.

"No," she cried. "No, you leave, and you get the hell out of my house before I get back. I'm calling the police, and they'll deal with you, you fucking sicko!"

Before Will could even make a move, there were sirens, and police closed in on the house. Neighbors lined the streets, one or more of them no doubt calling the cops.

"Get inside, guys," Aunt Allie directed. "Aubrey and Beca, go brush your teeth."

Beca and Chloe led Aubrey inside to the bathroom, and they each took a shot of mouth wash to conceal the smell of alcohol. The cops were outside taking in a very injured but angry Will, and Lauren informed them of the revelation she had just been given. Aubrey and Beca at last went outside, and the police began talking to the blonde. Allie then stepped up beside Lauren.

"She can stay here," she told the blonde softly. "As long as she wants when you're out of town. These kids are here all the time anyway." She chuckled now. "I love having them, and it's no problem at all. Aubrey's welcome here. She's family too."

Allie never expected what happened next, but when Lauren collapsed into her arms, she held the sobbing woman close, stroking her hair. Mrs. Beale showed up quickly. She was due to be on a flight for New York once more, but she came as soon as Chloe had texted her. Will was arrested after Aubrey's testimony, and the police took photographs of the many bruises and scars on her legs and hips that nearly made her mother sick. Chloe had never even seen them, and she was in a fit of sobs now. Luke and Jesse were still on either side of Beca, who was holding the redhead, and Beca gave her account of what had happened to Will. They didn't arrest her, and the team was grateful for that, but she would still have to go to court for both Will and Tom now if the cases ever made it to see a judge. What could be said however was that on that night, everyone's lives changed. No one, including Lauren Mitchell, would ever doubt Beca again. No one would ever try to discredit or discourage her because as Lauren watched her daughter fall into the small DJ's arms, she knew just how important the brunette had become to Aubrey, to everyone. She had spat on the girl's name since Will had left his family, her mother's as well, but even after losing her parents, three of them, Beca was strong. Still, she cared for Aubrey despite Lauren's disdain. Still the stepsisters had formed a bond, and they would always love each other. She knew that now, and she was glad that Aubrey could finally be herself.

When the night had finally quieted down and Beca had showered, cleansing herself of her father's blood, everyone returned to the movie in the den. Aubrey was still sitting outside between Chloe and Beca, at last calming down. Lauren had gone with Chloe's mom home, and she was glad.

"Bree, why didn't you ever tell me?" Chloe asked softly, stroking blonde curls.

"I-I finally had a father, and I didn't want to risk losing him no matter what it cost," she breathed, shame in her downcast eyes. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry, Bree, but we're best friends. We always will be. You were there when I lost my dad, and I'll be there for you too."

"Yeah, me too," Beca replied.

"I'm so sorry, Beca," Aubrey managed.

"Hey, don't apologize to me. He did nothing to me. If anything, I'm sorry you had to go through that. Had I just been a little more open, you could've told me sooner. I'm sorry."

"I'm just glad it's over."

"Oh, it is because if he gets out of this, I'll kill him for sure. He was lucky this time."

"Thanks, for that."

"Just think about it though. After this, everything can only get better. We'll all be together. You guys can stay here whenever your moms are gone. We'll be fine."

"You're the best big sister ever," Aubrey cooed.

"Big?" Chloe asked, quirking an eyebrow. "She's not bigger in age or size, so--"

"Shut it, Beale, or I'll shave your eyebrows off," Beca shot back.

"It still won't make you any less 'in for it'."

“Touche.”

Focus was back on the following weekend come Monday, and Beca and the boys were working harder than ever. Thanksgiving was that week, so Emily and Lauren would be going to Allie’s house for Thanksgiving dinner Thursday. Until then, the boys were focused on football, and during sixth hour each day in school, they worked on constructing a setlist with Beca of course controlling the show. They threw out song after song, trying to fit them together, and they had a few that stood out to them, but nothing seemed perfect just yet. Beca had mixed at least twenty different songs by now, but something was still missing. It was pretty easy to work with Jesse, Donald, Greg, Benji and Evan however, so Aubrey didn’t mind the struggle much. At least they were all together, and that was what mattered most to each and every one of them.

Thanksgiving came with Chloe, Allie, Emily, Aubrey, Lauren, Sarah, Michelle, who had flown in the day before, and Jesse’s mother Lindsay in the kitchen since Jesse’s dad was deployed during the holiday. Jesse, Luke and Beca were in the den playing video games since Luke’s family had their meal early before his father had to work. Their other friends would stop by after their respective meals, and Coach Jackson and his wife were due over as well. He had never had his own kids, so he looked at Beca, Jesse and Luke as his own in a way. Currently, Beca and the boys were enthralled with the new Madden NFL football game, and they were all on a team playing online. They were yelling and hollering like children, and the women in the kitchen smiled at the ruckus in the house. Aunt Allie was thankful. She had spent many holidays either alone or at her sister’s house, but she spent the rest of the year solo. Having a full house had always been her dream, and she

was already thinking of starting her own family once Beca and Chloe graduated. Her and Sarah were bonding more and more with each day as well, and they promised they would stick together in the end when their baby was grown.

When dinner was finally ready, everyone began gathering in the kitchen. Beca ran up to her room to put her phone on the charger before dinner. As she plugged it in, she turned around to find Lauren standing in the doorway with a small smile on her face, an expression Beca had never been witness to. She stood frozen, watching the woman.

“Beca, can we-talk a moment?” she asked shyly.

“Uh, yeah, of course,” she replied tentatively.

Lauren closed the door behind her and stepped fully into the room.

“I just want to say that I’m sorry for everything that I said to you and about you,” she sighed. “I know I was really hard on you and Aubrey, and I never gave you a chance. I only wanted what was best for her, and-had I known what he was doing, I never would have stayed as long as I did. I just want to-call a truce. I know it must be hard for you losing your parents the way you did, and he was never there. I never meant to hurt anyone, but I always thought that we were the perfect family. I wanted to believe that, and I really did until now. I never thought of what it must be like for you, but your aunts love you, and I know they’ll take great care of you and Chloe and Aubrey when I’m not around. I just-thank you for helping my daughter admit it.”

“You don’t have to thank me. I didn’t make it easy on any of you. I was just-mad because he walked out so long ago, and I didn’t want to be an obligation to anyone. I didn’t know

how to just let go of the past. Aubrey and I didn't get along at all until the day after the volleyball game that you guys argued. Lauren, she's amazing in everything she does, but she only wanted to be accepted. That's why she never told anyone. She wanted to make him proud. I don't want her to have to be someone she's not to impress you or anyone else. Those insecurities will tear her apart, and they will tear me apart too. She's beautiful the way she is, and I love her as if we actually were blood. She'll always be my sister, and I'm glad I have her. She helped me as much as I helped her, and now that this is over, she's so much better."

"I understand, and I did push her too much. I admit that, but I want to be better for all three of you because I know that Chloe was right for scolding me in the diner that day. She really loves you, you know, and she loves Aubrey, and Emily and I respect you for loving them, and for that, we love you too. We're both incredibly sorry for judging you, but we trust you with our daughters, both of them."

"That's all I ask."

"Can I-I hug you?"

Beca chuckled. "Wow, I-no one's ever asked if-"

Before she could say another word, the woman lunged forward and wrapped Beca up in a tight hug. Beca returned it with the utmost enthusiasm, and she couldn't be happier. She could finally let go of all the anger and hatred that had held her back for so long. She was able to move on from her past and be a better person for her family. She knew her parents would be proud. Oh, if they could see her now.

"Come on," Lauren sighed as they parted. "Let's get down there."

Beca nodded and followed the woman downstairs. She took her seat between Aubrey and Chloe, and they both smiled.

“Beca,” Allie said now when everyone was settled at the table. “Will you lead us in prayer?”

Beca nodded with a smile and bowed her head, taking Aubrey’s and Chloe’s hands.

“Lord, we would like to thank you for allowing us all to be here today, for allowing us to find each other. It wasn’t under the greatest circumstances, but I wouldn’t change it. It happened for a reason, and we trust you. Thank you for helping us find ourselves along the way, and please watch over us as we continue to take this journey together. We are forever grateful for this crazy family that you put together. Amen.”

“Amen,” everyone chimed.

“Now let’s eat!” Jesse boomed, and everyone giggled.

“So, you boys ready for Saturday?” Allie asked.

“They will be once I have them run off this meal,” Coach Jackson chuckled, and his players groaned. “Come on, guys, you knew it was coming.”

The team had in fact practiced early that morning, but Coach had really just been focused on the plays they would run Saturday, so it wasn’t too bad.

“I’m ready to tear Dawson up,” Jesse assured them, shoveling mashed potatoes in his mouth.

“Yeah, so Beca, you playing quarterback again?” Sarah asked.

“Yeah,” Beca beamed.

“Wait, what?” Michelle asked. “Quarterback?”

“Oh, yeah,” Sarah said. “I forgot to add that part in when I called you about the last win. The Bumper guy got hurt, and so Beca was quarterback. She was awesome.”

“Wow, impressive, Bug,” Michelle nodded. “Luke and Jesse, you better not let her get killed.”

“Of course not,” Luke replied. “We got this.”

After dinner, the girls settled in the living room eating pie while Beca and the boys including Coach Jackson settled in the den to watch football.

“Oh, jeez!” Coach Jackson groaned. “My star player is a Niner fan!”

“Please don’t tell me your a cowgirl fan, Coach,” Beca smirked.

“Oh, hell no! Atlanta Falcons through and through.”

“Don’t come crying to me when we beat you next month.”

“Like that’s gonna happen, kid.”

“It always happens. What are you talking about?”

He ruffled her hair with a booming laugh. “You’re lucky I liked you before you told me this.”

“I think you’re as lucky as I am.”

“Maybe so.”

Chloe joined the boys on the couch, snuggling into Beca’s side and kissing her cheek.

"You take care of my star back, Beale," Coach Jackson warned with a grin.

"Copy that, Coach," she replied with a salute.

She looked up at Beca, smiling at her. Beca kissed her nose softly.

"I love you," she whispered.

"I love you too," Chloe replied. "Thanks for taking care of us."

"I always will, Baby. You should know that."

"I know. I'm just-I am so glad that I found you."

"I kinda found you, Beale."

"Yeah, but I asked you to be my partner in gym that day."

"Yeah, but I said yes."

"Like you could say no to all this."

"Must you always do that? Can you never just let me be right once?"

"I told you a long time ago, Mitchell, I'm always right."

"Even when you're wrong."

"Aww, there you go. Good DJ." She patted her head.

"Sometimes I don't know if I should kiss you or-"

"Or throw me against a wall first?"

“That was one time. I’m sorry for that though.”

“Oh, don’t apologize.” She dropped her voice to a whisper now, her lips brushing against the shell of Beca’s ear. “I liked it.”

The DJ shuddered involuntarily. “Have I ever told you that you’re gonna be the death of me?”

“Eh, a few times.”

“Right, of course.”

After the game, Donald, Benji, Greg and Evan arrived, and they started a football game with the girls out back. Beca nearly died laughing when she threw Chloe the ball the first time. The redhead caught it then started dancing.

“Babe, you have to run!” Beca yelled.

“OH!” she screamed before running towards Beca than turning back around to run the right way.

Beca, Jesse and Luke could do nothing but burst into laughter, clutching their sides. When Beca threw it to Aubrey, she just about ran over Greg, and she pouted when they informed her it was touch football, and she was down on contact. Donald threw it Lily, but when Jesse was going to tag her, she growled at him, and he jumped away. Stacie caught a ball over Evan’s head, and she spiked it on the ground, throwing up her hands in victory. Chloe, not realizing she had already scored and not caring it was touch football, tackled the brunette. This ended up in Amy yelling “Move, you bitches!” and diving on top of them. When they were finally able to get up, Beca’s team got the ball back, and she threw it to Jesse. Denise belly bumped him out of the way and intercepted it, and Jesse crashed

into the fence. They thought he was hurt, but when they approached him, they found that he was just laughing so hard that he couldn't get up. Coach Jackson just about had a heart attack while Allie rolled around on the grass laughing. After that however, they agreed to take it inside and turn it into a Madden tournament. Beca was able to teach Chloe how to play in a matter of minutes, and they were on a team. When she threw a long bomb, and her receiver on the screen caught it, she jumped in the air.

"Suck on that, muthafucka!" she squealed shrilly that caused Beca beside her to flinch.

"Chloe Elise!" Emily snapped.

She smiled sweetly at her mother. "Sorry, mommy."

Allie of course could not stop laughing once again. After Beca and Chloe won the tournament, the karaoke started, and the adults were all over the place in unsaturated laughter when Amy and Benji sang a mashup of Disney songs. Aubrey joined in as well, and Jesse killed it all when he belted out Miley Cyrus. Well, Beca thought he killed it until the rest of the room joined in with "Party in the U.S.A." When they reached the chorus, everyone paused and looked at Beca expectantly. She immediately shook her head viciously.

"Nope," she said. "Hard pass. Nerd alert!"

Chloe then put on the puppy dog face, and she succumbed to those damn blue eyes.

"SO I PUT MY HANDS UP!" Beca shouted, and the group joined back in, singing and dancing.

Everyone could agree that it was the best holiday they had ever had, and they agreed to do it again for Christmas as the adults cleared out. Coach Jackson reminded his players about practice the following afternoon, and they acknowledged it with a salute. The kids stayed behind for a sleepover of course, and Aunt Allie brought out hot chocolate and more pie for everyone. Everyone was predicting rain or maybe even snow on Saturday for the game, but Beca was enthralled. She loved playing in the rain, and Allie proceeded to tell the story of when Beca caught her first snowflake and burst into deep sobs because she thought she killed it when it melted in her hand. Chloe was shrieking with laughter, and Aubrey was rolling around clutching her sides. Beca pouted on the couch.

"It wasn't that funny, Posen," she snapped.

"You cried-for-a snowflake!" she breathed through her laughter.

"I was like four!"

"You were ten!" Allie retorted.

The whole group now broke out in harder laughter.

"You lie, woman!" Beca roared. "You're a liar!"

"Sure, Becs, sure."

When Chloe was still laughing five minutes later, Beca jumped up and swiftly threw the redhead over her shoulder, pulling her phone out of her pocket and tossing it on the coffee table next to her own. Chloe started screaming, and Allie was laughing too hard to help her.

“What are you doing!” Chloe shrieked.

“Teaching you a lesson, Beale!” she retorted.

“Beca, it’s like thirty degrees out-” Aubrey started, but Beca stopped her.

“Shut it, or you’re next, Posen!”

She carried Chloe out into the back yard, the redhead beating her back and squirming to get free, but she could not break the strong DJ’s hold. Beca then tossed her into the pool, and she landed with a splash. She emerged quickly, floundering around. Stacie followed out with her phone recording, and she was laughing hard.

“You done!” Beca asked her.

“Come on!” Chloe boomed back, throwing her hands up.
“You can do better than that!”

“You look like a wet pussy!” Beca barked with laughter, grabbing her stomach.

As she bent over the pool, she felt a hand grab her shirt and pull her forward. She toppled over into the pool, submerged fully. Stacie and the others now on the patio just about died, breathless from their hysterical laughter. When Beca only floated up to the top, face down, Chloe instantly panicked, thinking she had hit the DJ’s head on the edge. She immediately grabbed the smaller girl and pulled her head up. Her eyes were closed, and everyone froze.

“Baby?” she said, shaking her. “Baby, I’m so sorry. Please! Please wake up! Baby!”

Suddenly Beca's eyes flew open, and she spit a mouthful of water into Chloe's face. She burst out laughing when she saw the look of shock in her girlfriend's eyes. Everyone was once again grabbing at their sides. Chloe shoved Beca away as the DJ tried to control her laughter.

"Aw, come here, Baby," Beca cooed, grabbing her wrist.

"Get away!" she snapped, but Beca only laughed, jerking the redhead into her arms.

She started planting wet, sloppy kisses all over the redhead's face before finding her lips and pressing her own against them. Everyone let out an "awww" as Chloe finally gave in and hugged the smaller girl.

"Becs, how are you standing up in three feet?" Luke asked seriously. "Are you on the step?"

Beca turned around with her most serious expression.

"Tiptoes, Bee-otch," she deadpanned, and more laughter went all around.

"I think Chloe's boobs are keeping her up," Stacie squealed.

"They are rather..." Aubrey trailed off.

Chloe smiled at Beca, and in a second, the DJ had buried her face in the redhead's chest, shaking back and forth and creating bubbles in the water. Chloe giggled and slapped her back before bringing her face up to kiss her again.

"I am so hopelessly in love with you, Beca Mitchell," she huffed.

“Eh,” Beca shrugged. “I understand. I’m fucking awesome.” Chloe glared at her. “I mean, yeah I guess I sort of like you too.” Chloe immediately dunked her head underwater before jerking her back up, the brunette breathing hard. “Okay, okay, I’m in love with you too, Baby.”

“That’s what I thought.” She kissed the DJ once more.

“Okay!” Allie shrieked. “Get out of there before you freeze to death, and your lips get stuck together!”

19. The Boys of Fall

A/N: Okay, so we made it to the state championship game! I’m really proud of the songs for this chapter especially the first one here in the beginning, so I really hope you guys appreciate them. They sum it all up. Please enjoy this now, and please let me know what you think so I know you’re with me because it was a bit quiet last chapter!

Song: Boys of Fall-Kenny Chesney

***When I feel that chill, smell that fresh cut grass
I’m back in my helmet, cleats, and shoulder pads
Standin’ in the huddle listenin’ to the call
Fans goin’ crazy for the boys of fall
They didn’t let just anybody in that club
Took every ounce of heart and sweat and blood
To get to wear those game day jerseys down the hall***

***The kings of the school, man, we're the boys of fall
In little towns like mine that's all they got
Newspaper clippings fill the coffee shops
The old men will always think they know it all
Young girls will dream about the boys of fall
Well it's, turn and face the stars and stripes
It's fightin' back them butterflies
It's call it in the air alright yes sir we want the ball
And it's knockin' heads and talkin' trash
It's slingin' mud and dirt and grass
It's I got your number, I got your back
When your back's against the wall
You mess with one man, you got us all
The boys of fall***

The town of Barden was decorated from end to end in deep scarlet. Blown up posters of Jesse, Luke, Donald and mostly Beca were scattered across the city, the largest one draped over the entrance of the high school of all four of them in action. The elementary school, grade school and middle school had written "Think Blue, Rebels!" on their fences with paper cups stuck into the chain links, the blue referring to the color of the state championship trophy. The

marquee in front of the main shopping plaza had the same slogan scrolling across it on its LED display. Jerseys at Jep's sports store were selling out. Students painted their faces, the numbers of their favorite players on their cheeks, their jerseys on as well. There were chants throughout the city, and it was the most anticipated championship game in the state despite the other classes playing Saturday as well. Barden was a Cinderella tale for sure. News crews came, talking to the players, mainly Beca and getting their thoughts on the game. The entire nation had heard of the epic rivalry due to battle it out in Georgia, and everyone had also heard of the greatest halfback in Georgia history as well as the fact that it was a sophomore girl. Beca had racked up over two thousand yards and thirty-two touchdowns, and it was more than most professional players saw in two seasons much less one. She was a legend, and her family could not be more proud. There was already talk of the field being renamed after her, of her being the first female in the NFL, and every kid in Barden idolized the great halfback B. Mitchell.

On Friday, there was a pep rally despite there being no school, and everyone from the school and the rest of town gathered in the auditorium to meet the players and cheer them on, letting them know the town was behind them. There were many people there that were already doubting them however because of the Dawson hype. Devin Marshall was being picked up by the University of Maryland the following season on a full scholarship, and Dawson had really improved since the first meeting. Old men were already resigning, saying their team had reached their peak. They wouldn't bring home the trophy, but the team shook it off.

Coach Jackson talked for a long while, getting them riled up, but when he called Beca to the podium, the gym

literally went wild with glee. She smiled, shaking her coach's hand before stepping to the podium. She had never been good at speaking publicly. If she did anything in public, it was singing or DJing, but the whole town had gathered to hear her speak, to rile them up for the battle to come.

"The team and I would first and foremost like to thank everyone here for being behind us," she began with a grin, "for believing in us. I thank everyone for welcoming me into their town. I-I went to Dawson last year, and I wasn't welcomed this warmly there, so for you guys, those who put faith in me and never doubted me, we're coming back home with a ring!" Everyone roared. "We've been working hard, and it'll be a tough game, but I have faith in my team that we are ten times better than when we beat them the first time. We've practiced, we've studied them, and we plan on tearing them to pieces on that field tomorrow night. So this one's for you, Barden. Now, let me hear it. WHO ARE WE!"

"REBELS!" the entire gym returned.

"WHO ARE WE!"

"REBELS!"

"I CAN'T HEAR YOU!"

"REBELS!"

"LET'S GO GET IT!"

On Friday night after a hefty dinner, Beca sat out on the back porch, looking up at the sky. She had talked to her mom and dad for over an hour, but sleep was still not close, so she stayed out there. She heard the door open behind her, and she need not look back to know who it was. Chloe

sat down softly beside her, slipping her hand into the DJ's and intertwining her fingers.

"You need some sleep, Baby," she said softly. "The big day's tomorrow."

Beca nodded. "I was-talking to them." She jerked her head upwards, and Chloe understood.

"They're watching you, Baby, right now, and I bet they have never been so proud in their lives. Your dad is probably bending God's ear off talking about you."

Beca smiled. "Thank you, Chloe. You know, you are the most amazing person I've ever met. I know they sent you to me. They knew you would be the one to wrestle me out of my shell and change me for the better. You put up with all of my insecurities and outbursts, and never once did you waver. Not sober anyway." Beca chuckled as Chloe shoved her playfully. "Really though, Baby. You are amazing, and I love you more than anything in this world."

"I love you too, Baby. You know, I was always that little girl that played house and dreamed of meeting the love of my life in high school, and I'm pretty sure I did."

"I just can't believe how lucky I am that you never gave up on me. I was-I was so scared when Aubrey told me about what Will did. I was scared that he had touched you too, and I would have definitely killed him. You're everything to me, Baby. I love you with everything I have, and I promise you that as long as you'll have me, I'll continue to be better for you."

Chloe grinned. "My little rebel. My super-sized cheese ball."

Beca pushed her playfully. "Must you ruin the moment, Beale?"

"Beca, I love you, all of you outside of the jersey, off the field, even in a jail cell but please don't test that theory. I love you always, and I will always be by your side to help you be the person that I know you can be. You're perfect for me just being yourself."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"How so?"

Chloe smiled, and she began to do the only thing she knew how to do above all else to convey her emotions for the DJ. Beca was instantly grinning, pulling the redhead closer as she began to sing.

You tell all the girls "No"

Makes you feel good, yeah

I know you're out of my league

But that won't scare me away, oh, no

You've carried on so long,

You couldn't stop if you tried it

You've built your wall so high

That no one could climb it,

But I'm gonna try

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?

Would you let me see beneath your perfect?

Take it off now, girl, take it off now, girl

I wanna see inside

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?

You let all the girls go

Makes you feel good, don't it?

Behind your Broadway show

I heard a boy say, "Please, don't hurt me"

You've carried on so long

You couldn't stop if you tried it

You've built your wall so high

That no one could climb it

But I'm gonna try

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?

Would you let me see beneath your perfect?

Take it off now, babe, take it off now, babe

I wanna see inside

***Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight,
oh, tonight?***

See beneath, see beneath,

I...

Tonight

I...

I'm gonna climb on top your ivory tower

I'll hold your hand and then we'll jump right out

We'll be falling, falling but that's OK

'Cause I'll be right here

I just wanna know

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?

Would you let me see beneath your perfect?

Take it off now, girl, take it off now, girl

'Cause I wanna see inside

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight

See beneath your beautiful, oh, tonight

We ain't perfect, we ain't perfect, no

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?

Beca turned to the redhead as she finished out the final chorus with her, pulling her into a deep and passionate kiss, arms wrapping around her. Chloe cupped the brunette's cheek, pulling her impossibly closer as they lost

themselves in each other. When they finally pulled apart, their foreheads rested against one another. That was surely their song now. It was perfect. Chloe had in fact climbed Beca's walls and saw beneath the external skin. She saw through the grime and dirt, the external beauty to find that of the internal being that was Beca Mitchell, and she loved it. She had seen beauty where others only saw chaos, ruin and rubble. Beca had indeed carried on far too long on her own, sorting through everything when no one would give her the time of day. Now, she was in full bloom and loved by all. Beca was beautiful inside and out, and she was Chloe's. The redhead could not ask for a better true love.

"I am so hopelessly in love with you, Beale," Beca breathed.

"And I am so hopelessly in love with you, Mitchell," Chloe returned.

"Thank you for loving me."

"Thank you for letting me."

The next morning was cloudy, and there was no doubt some sort of precipitation getting ready to beat down on Atlanta. The town gathered in the football stadium parking lot as Beca and the boys prepared to board the bus for the forty-five minute drive to Dawson. There were cheers and hollars, and cars were readied to follow them. The cheerleaders piled into their own bus, Benji agreeing to dress up in the Rebel mascot outfit. Chloe donned Beca's black jersey as the brunette and her team would be wearing their white visitor jerseys that day. Everyone knew what lay ahead, and Dawson would not be happy seeing their arch rival on their turf. Police from both Barden and Dawson's district would be present, dozens of security officers scattered around the field. Coach Jackson did a roll

call of all of his players, Benji and two of the team's managers loading equipment and bags into the bottom of the bus. Aubrey now had a replica of her sister's jersey as well, and Michelle and Sarah did too, a step up from the middle school jersey Sarah used to wear. The two sisters grinned at their niece, who was now clad in her father's Notre Dame jersey. She planned to wear it beneath her own today, and they knew her father was looking down with his big goofy grin getting ready to watch his little girl play once again. There were pictures being taken, autographs signed on jerseys, and a few more interviews. When three in the afternoon came around, the team at last boarded the bus with chants following them. Beca settled in beside Jesse, ready for the ride.

"You ready, B?" he asked as they bumped fists.

"I was born ready," Beca replied. "What about you, J?"

"Same here. I've been waiting for this day since I was kid running around with a football in the backyard. This is our game, B."

"You got that right," Luke agreed from across the aisle. "We've worked too damn hard to walk off that field without the W."

"I'm ready," Donald sighed. "They're gonna try in get in our heads, but we won't back down. We got this. We're the best, hands down."

"They're already talking about B going to the NFL."

"Let's focus on this game first," Beca chuckled at the comment though it was true. The entire nation knew her now. "I'd be happy if this is the last game I ever play."

“You’re something else, B. You’re modest and humble, and we’re glad you’re the one leading us. You were what we were missing all along.”

“And you guys were what I’ve been missing,” Beca sighed before she realized how cheesy it sounded, and her eyes bulged. “Scratch that.”

“No, you meant that!” Jesse boomed, pointing a finger at her.

“Aw,” Luke said. “Come here you!”

He grabbed her around the neck and rubbed his knuckles over her head before letting her go. She shoved him playfully with a smile.

“I hate you guys,” she huffed.

“Yeah, lucky we already know you’re lying, or I might really be hurt,” Jesse said.

“You would be.”

The district of Dawson was covered in their boisterous blue and gold. Dawson High Chargers paraphernalia was scattered along the streets. Cars had their windows painted with the team name on it. Flags flew proudly in the wind with the Chargers lightning bolt across it. Beca knew the atmosphere all too well. She knew the fans loved to pick fights. She knew the players loved to talk trash. She knew the parents liked to think their kid was the best and would put the others down until they were blue in the face. Her father had been different, and so had she. Her passion for the game led her to be someone else on the field. She was no longer a reckless, ruthless rebel. She was a player of finesse, of dignity, of humility. That would get her through

the day. This was her game now, and she would prove that big mouths and dirty play would get you nowhere. She had a real team behind her now. They had cut off all loose ends and dead weight. They weren't just here to look pretty. They weren't just kids who got into the big game and were satisfied. As they pulled into the parking lot, she could see it in the eyes of every single one of her teammates. They were hungry. They wanted more. Their season wasn't over yet.

The first thing Beca saw when they arrived at Dawson was the group of their girls awaiting them, Kelly at the front. She waved to Beca, but the DJ didn't pay her any mind.

"Hey, baby," she gushed, waving, trying to be cute.

Beca didn't say anything, but Kelly was now running towards her. Before she reached her though, the brunette felt someone link their arms, and she smiled.

"Hey, baby," she said, looking over at her gorgeous girlfriend.

"Hey, Babe," Chloe replied before looking over at Kelly. "Can I help you?" Kelly stopped in her tracks with a scoff. "Yeah, I didn't think so. Bye now."

Beca smirked now. "You know I love you, right?"

"Yeah, but they seem to love you too, hero."

"Chloe Elise Beale, I only have eyes for those big baby blues and fiery red hair. I only have eyes for you. You know what you have in your hands right now?"

"A sexy stud halfback that's about to win a state ring?"

“Aside from that.” She stopped now, turning to Chloe and cupping her face with her hands. “You, ma’am, have my heart, and it’ll always be yours and only yours.”

Chloe grinned at her as the DJ planted a soft kiss on her lips. “Such a romantic.”

“Only for you, Red.”

Beca let her go then and began following the team towards the locker room. Chloe slapped her on the backside as she did with a grin.

“Go get ‘em, Tiger!” she yelled.

“I’m a rebel!”

“Go get ‘em, Rebel!”

High school students were swept from the chill November afternoon into new territory. The visitor’s locker room was transformed into a lion’s den. Black war paint smeared the cheeks of each player right below eyes that had become dark stones. The fearless leader stood aside to watch the metamorphosis unfold. A group of student athletes gradually evolved into weapons of mass destruction, soldiers preparing for battle. Gloves, mouthpieces, helmets, shoulder pads, cleats. Each item became an additional appendage, apart of the man, and woman, it now occupied. Spikes hit tile, joining the thumping of twenty-four hearts in an overwhelming beat. No words were spoken now as the transformation completed. Tonight was their night. Tonight was the night to shut down every doubt, every disbelief, and most importantly, every fear. Breathing was slowed, hearts pounding like a loud bass. Many outside of that room expected them to lose, but all they planned to do

was leave it all on the field tonight. They had seven seniors, seven players that would never set foot on a high school field to play a game again. They would do it for them. They would do it for every fan that came to every game and cheered their heart out. They all had someone they were doing it for. Beca was doing it for her parents, the father that had come into her life by chance and raised her as his own, the one who taught her the love for a game that would take the place of the hatred for her past. She would do it for the hyperactive redhead who had bulldozed through her walls and rescued her from self-destruction. She would do it for her aunts, who had come back for her, who had not allowed her to cope with the past tragedy alone, who loved her although they too came into her life late. She was doing it for her family, who had never missed a game despite the cold, bitter air. Tonight was the night. The end would come, win or lose. They knew that, and they knew it was all or nothing, go hard or go home empty-handed. As the bright scarlet helmets were donned, Coach Jackson stepped to the center of the room. All eyes fell upon him.

“I don’t have to tell you how much this game means,” he began. “You knew exactly how much it meant the moment you stepped inside this room tonight. You knew what it would mean two weeks ago when you beat your last opponent. I don’t need to remind you what this is here. Everyone is scared. Oh no, not us. Everyone in this town, in our town, watching from the stands tonight is terrified of their NFL potential and abnormally large linebacker, their incredibly fast safety and cornerbacks and outstanding quarterback. I’ll tell you something right now, guys. If you go out there and acknowledge that right now, you’ve already lost. Who cares what they have? It matters what *you* have. This game won’t be easy. We both earned our right to be here. It’s certainly going to be a fight to the death, but I guarantee you, if you play until that final

whistle, you won't be on the losing end after that. You leave it all on the field. You need to be able to walk out of here tonight honestly saying 'I did all that I could', and I'll be proud. Who wins this game is up to you. We have linebackers. Luke is number one in the state in sacks. Yes, he beats Devin Marshall in that category. We have cornerbacks. Grey and Swanson have racked up thirty interceptions. We have a quarterback. Mitchell stepped up last game, and Grey has a strong arm, and we have a runningback. Oh, do we have a runningback. Do you think Mitchell is afraid of Devin Marshall? I don't think so because she ran right through him last game. We've battled the best in the state to be here. Mitchell has thirty-two touchdowns and over two thousand yards, second to only an NFL back MAYBE if anyone at all. You know what that means? It means that their 'NFL potential' means nothing. Now, are we ready to go out there and shut it down?"

"Yes, sir!" the team boomed in unison.

"Are we ready to shut it down?!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Who are we!"

"Rebels!"

"Let's go then!"

[BECA'S POV]

We lined up at the mouth of the tunnel as always, the boom of our traveling crowd washing over us. The cheerleaders as well as the volleyball team lined up outside of the visitor tunnel. Chloe gave me a smile. I then gave my battle cry, and we ran through the large poster onto the field. The sea

of powder blue was at the opposite end, having just ran through their own poster with their cheerleaders walking towards the sideline. After warm-ups and agilities, it was time for the coin toss. The seven seniors went out to midfield, and I could feel the entire stadium take in a sharp breath. I gave a quick glance up to where my aunts stood right behind our sideline, and I was so excited yet proud to see Lauren and Emily there was well. Everyone else outside of the stadium was not my concern. The large linebacker opposite me was. I knew that if I didn't beat Devin, I would never live it down. I had one shot to squash the hype. It was up to me. As the snow began to flurry down with pounding rain, I slid on my gloves, my father's old Notre Dame jersey now tucked beneath my Rebel one. It was my game, and I was going to take it.

Dawson received the ball first, and from then on, they owned the first quarter. They were up 14-0 in a matter of minutes, and Devin was sticking to me mercilessly with Donald at quarterback, insulting me each time. A few times, he reached me before the ball did, causing a fumble once and a Dawson recovery.

"You're dead, bitch," he growled at me. "I'm gonna kick your ass all over this field. MY field."

I was being hammered, and I could hear the cringe of the crowd each time I was hit. The volleyball team was still on our sideline yelling for us. Now they had not exaggerated Devin's Herculean strength or titanic size. He seemed to have gotten bigger since we last saw him. He had at least a foot on me, but still he was able to go low on my hip and spear me into the grass. By mid-second quarter, I was holding my abdomen and struggling to breathe. The guy was a monster, and my courage was dwindling. It must

have shown in my eyes because Coach Jackson was now in front of me.

“You’re not scared of him,” he said firmly. “You’re scared of yourself. You’re scared to let go and stop trying so hard. You’re afraid of being better than the hype. I know you’re not much for the spotlight, but it’s too late for that. This team needs their star because if you show fear, they follow suit. Believe it or not, they depend on you. You’re smaller than him. Let Luke guide you. The moment he’s within distance, redirect. You can get around him faster than you think. He’s quick, but his acceleration is nothing compared to yours. You can do this, kid. Just relax.”

I nodded, trying to focus on the game and not the pain in my diaphragm. We were down 21-0 at halftime, and Evan, our main senior, was trying to muster an inspirational speech to get us back in the game. The team already looked defeated, and Evan mirrored it most. It angered me to see them so down, so-beaten. I stood up without thinking and stepped to the front of the room.

“They weren’t kidding,” I hissed, slowly building in volume. “Devin Marshall is a beast. He worked hard to get here, improving himself. He’s big. He’s strong. He’s fast. He knows that, and now, he knows we know that, but what he also thinks he knows is that he already ripped the heart out of this team. Did he? Is it over for you, boys? Is this how you want to end your season? Your senior year? Are you satisfied with just being another Barden team that had a good season but couldn’t close the deal? Are you okay with going home with nothing to show for it? Are you okay with giving up and walking away? Should I have them start up the bus now and save us a bigger ass whooping? I know what you’re doing. You’re trying to prove everyone wrong, trying to impress everyone, but don’t. Don’t do it for the

fans or the people in the stands. Don't do it for the cheerleaders or the newspaper writers or any of that. Don't do it to avoid the questions. Don't do it to prove everyone out there wrong. Do it for the man sitting next to you. Do it for the seven of us playing their last game today. Don't do it to prove anything to anyone but yourself because honestly? Right now, all we have is ourselves, and we've already lost. Look at us. We look like someone just kicked our puppy. We look defeated, and if we go out there like this, that whooping is only going to get worse. Thing is, we have a choice. We can take this beating, or- we can stop living up to the Dawson hype and play Rebel football. Being scared and defeated didn't give us a district championship. It didn't get us past Lakeside or G.W. Carver. You know what that means? That means we beat the best in the state while they played nobodies. That means we've played us before, and we beat them before. They think they know us. They picked us apart the same way we picked them apart. They studied us the way we studied them. They progressed. They worked hard. They improved, but you know what? We did too. They think we're no different than the other twelve teams they beat right now, but we are. We are in the state championship for a reason. Yeah, I've been hit. I'm struggling to see through the rain. I've been taunted. I've been pushed down. I probably have maybe five yards on the day, if that, but I'm not giving up, so you tell me right now. Who's going back out there with me to pry this game back from their cold, dead fingers?"

The team roared immediately in agreement, and we huddled up for a regroup. Evan and Luke patted my shoulder, and Coach Jackson beamed from the side at me. I had done it. I had stepped up. It was time to take the talk to the field and prove good for it.

We received the ball back to start the half, and they had us pinned on our five-yard line. The first play was a counter.

“I’m coming for you, bitch!” Devin barked at me.

I took a quick step to the left then took the handoff, snaking out the right between the tight end and tackle. I could see Devin in my peripheral, but coach was right. My acceleration was unmatched. I broke into full sprint, flying right past him out of reach. Jason, the tall safety came into view, and I waited until the very last second to spin out from his arms. The cornerback was in pursuit, and it would be a race to the end zone. I crossed midfield, thanking my enhanced stamina. The cornerback was fast, closing the distance between us in just a few strides. I did the only thing I could think of as he lunged at my legs, anticipating where I would be when he reached me. I hurdled over his outstretched arms, nearly tripping over his helmet. I gained my footing and kept running until at last, I reached my destination. For the first time all night, our stands bursted into cheers. They were alive again, and they were with us. We had a lot of work to do, but I was ready for it.

21-7. Jesse intercepted the Dawson pass on their third play just over midfield. The first play was a quick pass to Luke in the flat, moving the chains after a twelve-yard gain. The next play was a pass to Jesse. He pulled it in for a fifteen-yard gain. Devin batted down the next pass and stopped Luke’s run attempt in the backfield. It was time to run the reverse. I lined up as receiver as I had done the last two plays, hoping to catch the defense off guard. The ball was pitched left to Luke, and Devin was already in the backfield. Just as he grabbed Luke’s shoulders, I was beside them, taking the handoff from Luke. I ran in the opposite direction, turning on the turbo as I turned the corner. I weaved through blocks before I was once again in

a race with the cornerback. He grabbed hold of my leg, nearly bringing me down as he hit the ground. I broke my fall with my hand, making sure my knees didn't hit the ground as I pulled away from his grasp. I was up again and running within seconds. The referee couldn't deny I had been successful in keeping the play alive, and we added another touchdown to the board. 21-14.

After a Dawson field goal, we took the ball back on the kickoff. I fielded it at our thirty and ran it down to the Dawson thirty-five to everyone's delight, sliding on the soaked grass. I took a handoff down to the twenty then Donald threw a pass to Greg. The cornerback was able to tip it up in the air to our team's horror, and Jason was now running with a purpose for the high ball to catch it before it hit the ground. Without hesitating, I rushed forward, jumping at the last minute to catch the ball. Jason was in the air with me, his hands barely hanging onto the tip of the pigskin. We landed, and he did so awkwardly. His ankle rolled, and I took it as an opportunity to rip the ball from his fingers, spinning around him as he hit the ground in pain to race for the end zone. That old cornerback was on my tail, but just as he was going to grab me, I saw at the corner of my eye another scarlet helmet. I veered left towards it, leading the cornerback right into Luke's punishing block. Seconds later, the crowd erupted in cheers as I entered the end zone once more.

Our kicker, Randall Watts, tied up the game despite thrashing winds to end the third quarter, and the fourth quarter was nothing more than a back-and-forth, each team scoring time after time. We were slipping and sliding all over the place, and Coach Jackson put a tinted black visor on the my helmet to shield my eyes. The snow was coming down harder than anyone had ever seen, and we could not

believe it. It was a sight to see in Georgia as white dusted the field.

The clock ran out with the score at 45-45, and that led us into overtime. It was simple. Each team was given a chance to score. If the first team scored, the second team had a chance to tie it again. If the second team scored after the first team failed, they won. If the first team succeeded while the second didn't, they won. It was nerve-racking yet easy, and with fatigue setting in, the game was indeed left to heart. Who wanted it more?

Dawson received the ball first, scoring with just six plays. I ran the kickoff back for a touchdown. We were tied again. There was six minutes on the clock to start, and after the two scores, there was four left. Dawson scored again with a few quick passes, and I hooked up with Jesse after a defensive mismatch for yet another score. One minute and thirty seconds left. If they scored again, we may not have had enough time to counter. It was looking grim with fifty seconds now on the clock, Dawson at our two-yard line. Coach called a time out, trying to calm us knowing that this was the most important play of the game. We had to stop them, and if it came down to a field goal, we had to block it. Easier said than done of course, but the only other option was to cause a turnover. I saw a glint in Luke's eyes.

The defense ran back onto the field, the rest of us waiting in angst. Luke was right up on the line, watching the quarterback slowly as he bent beneath the center. Time seemed to stop in the moment before the ball was snapped then proceeded in slow motion. The twitch in the quarterback's leg told me he was going to try and sneak it in. Luke must have seen it too because in the second the ball was snapped, he was up over the center, tearing into the quarterback. The quarterback flung his arm back,

losing the ball. It rolled away from him far enough for anyone to get it. The first one to realize the ball was free was Donald. Their fullback was next. Luke threw a block into the fullback as Donald dove for the ball, pulling it into his body and rolling on top of it. He was immediately dog piled by various players from both teams, all fighting to rip the ball from him. The whistle blew, and they began sorting through the pile. When the last man was pulled off of him, Donald stood, the ball held over his head. Our sideline and bleachers went wild. They had recovered the fumble with just under thirty seconds left. We knew what play we were going to run. It was the only one we had ever practiced for this occasion, not willing to go to a second overtime.

I lined up as receiver. There were five receivers in position, Donald was in shotgun formation standing further back from the center for a longer snap to buy more time, alone in the backfield. Time was once again slowed. Greg went in motion from the far right to the left of the field where three of us were lined up. The ball snapped immediately following. I took one quick step forward before cutting back towards Donald. Devin was only feet away, fighting through our line. He reached Donald at the exact moment I did. No timeouts left. No other options. Donald pitched the ball out in desperation. I swiped it from the air, Luke now going off the line to lead me with our tight end close beside him. They laid blocks as I wound through the sea of players. The cornerbacks were closing in, the backup safety in their midst. I pulled from around Luke and made a break for it, flying down the sideline. Spin inside around one cornerback, narrowly running past another, ducking around the backup safety, and the one cornerback left was once again on my tail. There would be no block this time, no fancy duck and cover, no stiff arm. He was within arms' length, and all I had as a weapon now was my heart. I wanted it more. It was my game. With all of the strength

left in my body, I threw myself forward, picking up speed I had no idea I possessed. I put a bit of distance between us, just enough. The stadium had grown quiet, the sidelines as well. There was a lack of oxygen in the atmosphere. Everyone was holding their breath, including me. As the cornerback closed in, I saw the small orange post marking the entrance of the end zone, and I dove, all of my momentum jerking me forward. As I did so, I felt the cornerback impact me from the side, our bodies flying before hitting the ground and sliding across the blanket of snow, flakes flying up into my face. My eyes were shut tightly, and all I could think was that if we had to play another quarter, I was going to die. My body was drained now, and I wasn't even sure I could move from where I now lay. I soaked to the bone as were my teammates, and my heart was running at an all-time high speed. It was hard to breath with the precipitation around us. Another quarter would surely do us in, and Dawson had many more substitutes than we did. Then I heard an explosion of cheers from one side of the bleachers. I couldn't tell which one. I slowly opened my eyes as hands began grabbing at me, yanking me up and hugging me.

"State Champs, Baby!" Luke was hollering, and I smiled. "You did it, B! We did it!"

We had done the impossible. We had beat Dawson for the state championship against all odds. We were the champions, and no one could take that from us. The Devin Marshall hype was dead to our town. We had defeated a titan with nothing more left than heart. We wanted it more. We needed it, and now, we had it.

Parents and families flooded the field as Dawson vacated it, and Chloe was the first to jump into my arms. She kissed me all over before settling on my lips for a long moment.

“You did it, Baby!” she squealed. “You kicked Marshall’s ass! You brought us back. I am so proud of you!”

Before I could say anything, Chloe was releasing me to be replaced by Aunt Allie, and I grinned into her shoulder.

“I am so proud of you, bug,” she gasped into my hair as she kissed my forehead, tears in her stormy blue eyes. “You didn’t let them get you down.”

“Thanks, Aunt Allie,” I replied with a smile. “Thanks for being here. For always being here. I really do appreciate it.”

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world, Baby. Any of it, and neither would your father. He’s up there right now going crazy and bragging to everyone. Your mother is right there beside him. You tore that team apart. You didn’t give up, and I have never been so proud in my life. You’re gonna be the talk of the town, kid. You’re a living legend now. Seven touchdowns! That’s crazy! A record!”

Aunt Allie, Aunt Sarah, Aunt Michelle, and I were soon being congratulated by the team and parents now. They were yelling about how proud they were of their baby, and I was beaming because my aunts’ pride in me was all that I strived for above all else now. Their opinion meant most to me. It always had aside from my dad’s, and I knew he was up there glowing now. They boomed over everyone as Aubrey embraced me. Soon, Lauren and Emily were hugging me and telling me how proud they were to see so much heart displayed out there. I couldn’t help but blush, and I was so happy that they had come to see me. The last to embrace me was Penny, little old Penny that had grown on me since I had entered Barden and Chloe had taken me

to that cafe, and she had the look of all the pride in the world in her teary eyes.

“Oh, Baby!” she shrieked as she squeezed me. “You are my hero! You didn’t let anyone get you down, and now everyone can stop talking so much because you proved them all wrong. All of those people in the stands putting you guys down are the same ones taking credit now, but no. This was your game, Beca. Yours.”

I smiled, kissing her forehead as the team began migrating towards midfield. Dawson was sadly receiving their red trophy as we gathered. My helmet hung in my hand at my side, and Coach Jackson pulled me with him towards the front. Each one of us received a gold medal around our necks. I was awarded with a special Player of the Game award then the Georgia Athletic Association president himself handed over to us the coveted Blue Trophy signaling our championship victory as news crews and newspaper photographers swarmed around us. The team roared as I held it up, everyone reaching to touch it around me. The joy in the air was palpable as everyone chanted and cheered. Sure, our town was now acting as if they had never lost hope in us, but we knew. We didn’t care though. This was our game as Penny had said. We had won this with no help from spectators, and we would bathe in the victory ourselves. Tonight, I wasn’t thinking about school or the two men at Luciano’s or Tom or Bumper or Will or anything of the sort. I was indulging in the feeling of being a hero, and I didn’t mind it tonight as I usually did. It couldn’t be bad to enjoy it this once. Tonight, I made my mark on Georgia for far more than getting kicked out of every school I was sent to. I was Rebel through and through, but I had found a new definition for it.

A/N: So we are finally wrapping it up here soon! There will be a few more short epilogue-like chapters after this one, and after that, I have not one but TWO fics in the works plus the one-shots that follow up "The Fall of Olympus" so make sure you check that one out if you haven't already. I was told I should take a vacation lol and I would if I could but I cant stop writing. If Im not writing, the story is zooming through my head, but thank you to everyone who stuck with me. I promise Im not going anywhere.

Song: We Are The Champions-Queen

I've paid my dues

Time after time.

I've done my sentence

But committed no crime.

And bad mistakes –

I've made a few.

I've had my share of sand kicked in my face

But I've come through.

And I need just go on and on, and on, and on

I've taken my bows

And my curtain calls

You brought me fame and fortune and everything that goes with it

I thank you all

But it's been no bed of roses,

No pleasure cruise.

I consider it a challenge before the whole human race

And I ain't gonna lose

And I need just go on and on, and on, and on

We are the champions, my friends,

And we'll keep on fighting 'til the end.

We are the champions.

We are the champions.

No time for losers

'Cause we are the champions of the world.

We are the champions, my friends,

And we'll keep on fighting 'til the end.

We are the champions.

We are the champions.

No time for losers

'Cause we are the champions

They boys were chanting the age-old song of champions as they waltz into Penny's, the volleyball girls right behind them along with most of the town. Beca held the large blue state championship trophy over her head, and she seemed ten feet taller tonight. Penny's staff already had burgers and fries and hot chocolate and milkshakes waiting for them. Chloe was latched to her little DJ's back, her fist thrust in the air. News crews had been swarming Barden to talk to fans, families and players alike. Beca Mitchell had scored seven touchdowns, the most in any game by one player including championship games. Between running the ball, throwing it and running back kicks, Beca accounted for three hundred sixty-two of Barden's four hundred thirty-three all-purpose yards. The whole nation wanted to know Beca Mitchell, and Barden University's head coach was already talking about two years from now when he would hand her a full scholarship if she kept it up. He was even willing to bring Luke, Donald and Jesse in if they continued their progression, and it was the first time that Beca had ever considered college football. It scared her, but she would think about that later. Now, she just wanted to celebrate their state championship win and eat some burgers before heading to the lake.

The team had been escorted into Barden by police after a riot broke out at Dawson. Beca and the team were shut in the locker room as fans from both sides duked it out. A few were detained, and one boy from Dawson was severely injured, but all in all, everything was sorted out. Beca knew that Dawson never took losing well, and her team was a bit concerned about the lake party tonight as Dawson did tend to show up since the lake was the medium between the two communities, but she knew they would be okay. They had each other.

“Everyone!” Coach Jackson boomed as the town stuffed into the diner, the doors propped open for others to at least feel attached to the crowd with in. “Let’s raise a toast to Smash Mitchell!”

Everyone roared with pride. Smash. It was the nickname that the news and Coach Jackson had adopted for her, and she beamed with pride as Chloe kissed her cheek. It was new being the center of attention. In the time between Will leaving and Darren arriving, Beca had not been exposed to such attention. She had the occasional visits from Aunt Allie although she was in school at that time, and she had the few hours a week when her mother wasn’t working and she wasn’t tearing up schools. Being so loved for nothing more than a jersey was surreal to her, but she didn’t mind only being known for her role on the field. What she did know was that the people that loved her outside of that jersey now sat around her. That love. That pure unadulterated love. It was in Jesse’s goofy grin, in Chloe’s megawatt smile, in Aubrey’s curling lips, in Aunt Allie’s glowing eyes, in Stacie’s excited squealing, in Cynthia Rose’s sly smirk, in Amy’s endless joking. It was in Aunt Sarah’s joyous giggle and Aunt Michelle’s gentle ruffle of her hair. It was in Benji’s toothy grin and Luke’s proud expression. It was everywhere, and Beca had never felt so amazing in her life. In less than a year, she had become so much more than just a no-good hard-headed kid from east Atlanta. She had become so much more than just a player, an awkward alternative girl with daddy issues that was sure to cause trouble. She was no longer just another child of a broken home or a sad orphan on the path to prison. She had bettered herself in ways that she never could have imagined, and it had everything to do with the people sitting around her, especially the hyperactive redhead beside her that had never given up on her, never retreated, never stopped battling for her heart. She was whole again,

and with Chloe beside her, she could do anything she put her mind to.

The football team and volleyball team flooded the lake despite the chill weather, ready to have themselves a proper celebration. There would be an awards ceremony, Parade of Champions and banquet the following week for them. Tonight, they just wanted to love each other because that was what had brought them to this point of success, of great accomplishment. Drinks were passed around as the bonfire was lit, and Chloe snuggled into Beca's side beside the flames.

"I am so proud of you, baby," she sighed in content.

"I know," the DJ chuckled. "You've said it like thirty times now, Baby."

Chloe instantly shot up to glare at her girlfriend. "Uh uh, rudeness!"

"You're banned from Atlanta for awhile talking like that already."

"Yeah, we were sitting next to some pretty interesting people."

Beca grinned. "Thanks for being there."

"Oh I was only there because I had nothing else to do, so-" Beca shoved her playfully. "Kidding. Of course I would be there, Babe. You know that."

"Still, you deserve a thanks."

"Well, you're welcome. I did get to do a dance at halftime like you did at our game, but..."

“Oh, please tell me you’re kidding.”

“No, we did ‘Jump On It’ on the sideline. Seriously.”

“Dammit, and I missed it?”

“I’m sure someone taped it. Aunt Michelle did record the entire game. Your little groupies kept yelling down at us, and I was about ready to cut a bitch, but Aubrey was the good conscience.”

Beca giggled. “Of course she was. Watch out, everybody! I’m dating a badass!”

“Hey, that’s my line.”

“What’s mine is yours and what’s yours is mine, Babe. That’s how this works.”

“Oh, I must have overlooked that clause in the agreement.”

Chloe snuggled back into Beca’s side, cradling the drink in her hand.

“Hey, Short Stack!” Amy suddenly called from across the fire. “Prepare to unleash the kracken.”

Beca gave her a quizzical look before following her gaze behind herself, and she sighed when she did see another large group of people coming down the beach. Dawson. They settled only about thirty yards away from Beca’s group, but they were loud as all can be. Luke smirked, returning to beneath the canopy housing the sound system and turning it higher, putting on the Queen song they had been chanting earlier on the way home. Beca chuckled at him, and he flashed a wink. Amy came over to the DJ now.

“We’ll be okay if it gets dirty,” she hissed conspiratorially. “I’ve wrestled dingoes and crocodiles simultaneously.”

“That’s good to know,” Beca laughed.

Aubrey came over now with Luke, and they sat beside Chloe. The Dawson group had put music on in one of their vehicles, but it wasn’t even close to as loud as the equipment Eli had lent them. Beca smiled and slammed down her third drink before tossing the can into the trash can. Luke handed her another. Then they heard a booming voice from behind them.

“Hey, can you pussies lower it?” it barked.

Beca looked back to see none other than a seething Devin Marshall, and her anger instantly boiled. She stood up now, Luke standing beside her.

“You don’t like it?” she growled. “Deal with it or move the fuck on.”

“I’ll come over there and-”

“And do what, Marshall? Choke again? Fuck you.”

“Yeah, you think you’re hot shit, don’t you, Mitchell?”

She hoisted her hands, lifting one then the other as if weighing something. “Eh, maybe a little.”

“Fuck you, and fuck your team.”

“Talk what you want, dude. You didn’t just take it up the ass tonight. You bent over and spread you cheeks.”

The entire Barden group was in a fit of laughter now as Marshall growled, his eyes locked on the brunette’s. More

of his teammates were making their way towards the altercation now.

“We’re trying to enjoy our state championship,” Beca went on nonchalantly. “I know you wouldn’t understand the meaning of that, but would you please vacate my premises? You’re killing my buzz.”

Soon, six other Dawson boys and a few girls were behind Devin, and Beca snorted a laugh as she took in the sight of Kelly grabbing Devin’s arm.

“Come on, D,” she coaxed. “Leave it alone.”

“Fuck this bitch,” he snarled. “There’s no referees here, Mitchell.”

“She isn’t worth it.”

Now Chloe snorted a laugh. “Oh, really, Kelly? Was she worth it when you waited for her by the bus? Was she worth it when you showed up at her house trying to get back together with her.”

“You’re a dyke, Kelly?” one boy snorted.

“Fuck you!” Kelly now screeched at Chloe.

“Cute,” Chloe returned. “If anyone wanted to, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

Now it was Kelly running at the redhead, and Beca was about to throw her out of the way, but she was surprised when Chloe stepped in front of her and swung right as Kelly was in range. The redhead’s fist smashed into Kelly’s nose, and she crumpled to the ground in tears. Everyone was in awe, and Beca was frozen where she stood. Then

she was doubled over in laughter before slinging an arm around a smug Chloe's shoulders.

"Chill out, Rocky!' she chuckled before turning back to Devin and his goons."Now, the smell of your loss is actually affectioning my vocal cords, so I'm gonna need you to scoot. Scidaddle."

"Yeah, it makes my beer taste bad," Luke added, making a sour face.

"Yeah, so I'm only asking you guys one more time. Take your trash," She looked down at Kelly, "and get back to your little second place party. Please."

Two of the boys helped Kelly up, but Devin's eyes stayed locked on Beca as Jesse now stood beside her followed by Amy and Cynthia Rose.

"And if we don't?" he growled.

"Well, if starting a giant riot makes you feel better, I can't really stop you, but I guarantee you that it wouldn't be too fun for you. I mean, obviously our girls hit harder than yours."

"They hit harder than your boys do too," Jesse chuckled, a hand on Beca's shoulder.

"You're nothing, Mitchell," Devin growled. "You won't be a stud halfback forever."

Beca looked over at her friends before flexing a bicep and looking at it, lip jutted out. She then lifted her shirt up to reveal her fine chiseled abs. Then she looked up.

"I think I'm good," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

“She’s good,” Chloe agreed, nodding viciously then she looked at her girlfriend. “You’re good.”

“So the chest match continues,” Jesse hissed to Devin.

“Can you just please tell me what we’re doing here because I have a cold beer and a pretty redhead to attend to, buddy,” Beca prompted.

At last, Devin became exhausted with the snark and turned around, trudging away.

“Smart man!” Amy bellowed. “Yeah!”

“He can’t mess with us,” CR assured them.

“Oh totes,” Chloe beamed. “We’re the tits.”

“What does that even mean?” Jesse asked, squinting his eyes.

Chloe only shrugged before grabbing Beca’s hand and pulling her back to their seats beside the fire. Beca stopped her before they reached those seats however, jerking her back to face the brunette and into her arms. Chloe let out a gasp.

“That was...” Beca breathed, trailing off as Chloe’s hand wrapped around her neck.

Chloe smirked. “Wanna know a secret?” she whispered in a husky voice beside Beca’s ear, and the brunette could only hum a response. “My hand fuckin’ hurts.”

Beca burst into laughter before pulling the redhead in for a deep kiss. She then took Chloe’s hand gingerly and pressed her lips to the bruised knuckles.

“My own Hilary Swank from Million Dollar Baby,” Beca cooed.

“You know you just have to say ‘my own Million Dollar Baby’. You don’t have to reference a specific actress,” Chloe scoffed.

Beca eyes widened, moving back a bit. “Damn. Kicking ass changed you.”

Chloe giggled, pulling the shorter girl into her arms and pressing a kiss to her forehead.

“Okay, everybody,” Luke announced into the microphone, and even many from Dawson’s group looked over. “Let’s raise our cups to our star champion, who came from that ragtag school over yonder to take us all the way and get the blue, our favorite DJ and halfback, Beca Smash Mighty Midget Mitchell!”

“To Beca Smash Mighty Midget Mitchell!” everyone on the Barden side cheered, raising their cups before taking a large swig, and Beca chuckled.

“So now we have a new mix from the champ herself. Here we go!”

The song began, and everyone was riled up then. Chloe grinned as The Script’s “Hall of Fame” began, holding her girlfriend even tighter. Beca grinned into her neck. Soon, the song fused into Queen’s “Champion” once more with a tinge of “Titanium”. Beca had constructed it on the way home from Dawson, and she had surprisingly been satisfied with it by the time they left Penny’s.

Everyone was dancing and singing

"You're definitely a legend now," Chloe whispered into her ear.

"You, ma'am, have _everything _to do with it."

"Yeah, sure."

"Baby, you know you did. If it wasn't for you, Barden would be my bitch."

"It kind of is anyway."

"Yeah, but in a good way."

"Well, I've never seen you so...optimistic. I like it."

"Good, because it looks like it'll be around a lot more."

Chloe pressed her lips against Beca's now, and they were lost in one another for that moment, Beca's mix now background music to their moment. The stories and tales of true love had always been Chloe's favorite while they had also always been Beca's pet peeve. She never pictured it this way. She had never believed in true love or love at all really aside from her relatives. When she lost her parents, she had vowed never to love again, but the bubbly redhead in her arms had never taken that for an answer, and she was glad. When she was sure that the world had given up on her, it only took one high school classmate to take a chance on her in order for her to see that though life was short and time was borrowed, it was never too late to change. It was never too late to be better than the day, hour, minute, second before. She was here now, and she was happy. The smile was not forced. The sarcasm was no longer used in defense. The walls had come crumbling down, and she had real friends and a girl she was hopelessly in love with.

The Birth of a Legacy

Barden's star halfback Beca "Smash" Mitchell leads Rebels to first state championship in school's seventy-year history with seven touchdowns and three hundred sixty-two all-purpose yards, critics projecting college career.

This was the headline of Thursday's Barden Weekly that came out following the Parade of Champions and awards ceremony.

Barden Houses Future NFL Prospect

Barden High School is now nationally acknowledged as the home of rising star, sophomore halfback, Beca "Smash" Mitchell. Mitchell led Barden to first state championship in school history with seven touchdowns, and Barden University is vying for the sophomore to commit in two years. Can Beca Mitchell be the first female to actually have a pro football career?

This was the headline of every national sports paper and magazine in the country, and it had caught Beca completely off guard. She sat now in the den, staring up at the mantle where her various awards of that single season alone now sat together. There was first team All-State honors, All-District honors, Georgia Athletic Association Player of the Year, Georgia All-State offensive player of the year, district player of the year, a trophy for breaking the state record for most touchdowns in a season, another for most yards in a season, Rebel of the year and a few others including her varsity letter award. She looked at all of them in awe, clad in her father's Notre Dame jersey with the national newspaper grasped in her hands. Her eyes were unmoving

as she took it all in, letting the realization sink into her skin.

“You’ve been staring at them for an hour now,” a soft voice came, tearing her from her thoughts.

Beca looked up to see Chloe leaning against the entrance frame with a lazy smile.

“What are you doing awake?” Beca asked now.

“I could ask you the same question. It’s two in the morning. I woke up alone, and I came to find my cuddle buddy.”

“I was just-wow. I can’t believe it.”

She looked back up at the mantle piece as Chloe strode over and sat beside her. The redhead ducked under her arm and curled into her side.

“What is it, babe?” Chloe asked now, a hand on Beca’s thigh.

“I-I don’t know,” the DJ breathed. “I just-what if I-do you really think I can play college ball?”

“Baby, you’ve taken on a hell of a lot tougher obstacles than shoulder pads and helmets. You have two more years to train and prepare yourself. I know you can do it.”

“I just-my dad blew his knee out.”

“How?”

“He was hit really hard in a game. He was halfback too, and it tore his knee apart.”

“Baby, injuries happen all of the time. No one is safe from them, but if we let those fears run us, we will never get anywhere in life. I’m not gonna tell you it’s impossible, but I’m not going to tell you playing college ball is either. At least you’ll be getting a degree as well.”

“Yeah, my dad dropped out after he blew his knee out because he lost his scholarship.”

“Well, I know that you have a lot of help if in fact you can no longer play. There are a lot more options now to help you, and even then, I know that because of your dad, you became tougher than even him. That was his job, to make you better than him, so that you didn’t make the same mistake. Barden just moved up to Division I, so you’ll be playing schools like Notre Dame and LSU, but you know what? Those men on those teams are human too. They aren’t immortal, and you’re titanium. You were molded by every trial in life but never broken.”

“I swear you and my dad have telepathy or something. That’s what he said.”

“You know what it is, Babe?” Chloe sat up now, cupping her girlfriend’s cheeks. “It’s because we were the two people that looked as close as we possibly could at you and saw everything that everyone else missed. We studied you, learned you, memorized you. We know you, and we know what’s inside of you. I promise you that I will always be beside you. I’m sure by your senior year, you’ll have the choice of any school you please. Even Notre Dame will probably be looking, so you’ll have a choice.”

“Thanks, Red, for believing in me.”

“I told you many times, and I’ll tell you again. I’ll always believe in you, Baby.”

Beca leaned in, capturing Chloe's lips in a soft kiss, their lips molding together.

"I love you."

"I love you too."

21. The Icing on the Cake

A/N: Okay, so I apologize I haven't had time to reply to everyone's messages and reviews, but know I appreciate each and every single one. I love you all so much, and I'm just working hard for you guys as well as on my actual job lol. There will be a sequel as well as another AU where Beca is a certified badass, but it's a secret as to what it's about. I received a prompt I really liked, so just trust me. I think I've earned it so far lol. If you also want an idea of the mashup that happens in this chapter, check "We Love Mashup Feb 2013" by "PonTiR3c0rds".

Song: Montell Jordan-This Is How We Do It

This is how we do it.

It's Friday night, and I feel all right

The party is here on the West side

So I reach for my 40 and I turn it up

Designated driver take the keys to my truck

Hit the shore 'cause I'm faded

Honeys in the street say, "Monty, yo we made it!"

*It feels so good in my hood tonight
The summertime skirts and the guys in Kani
All the gang bangers forgot about the drive-by
You gotta get your groove on, before you go get paid
So tip up your cup and throw your hands up
And let me hear the party say
I'm kinda buzzed and it's all because
(This is how we do it)
South Central does it like nobody does
(This is how we do it)
To all my neighbors you got much flavor
(This is how we do it)
Let's flip the track, bring the old school back
(This is how we do it)
This is how we do it, all hands are in the air
And wave them from here to there
If you're an O.G. mack or a wanna-be player
You see the hood's been good to me
Ever since I was a lower-case G*

But now I'm a big G. The girls see I got the money

A hundred-dollar bills y'all

If you were from where I'm from then you would know

That I gotta get mine in a big black truck

You can get yours in a '64

Whatever it is, the party's underway

So tip up your cup and throw your hands up

And let me hear the party say

[repeat 1]

I'm kinda buzzed and it's all because

(This is how we do it)

South Central does it like nobody does

(This is how we do it)

YNV, SCC, all my homies

(This is how we do it)

I'll never come wack on an old school track

Check it out!

Once upon a time in '94

Montell made no money and life sure was slow

All they said was 6'8" he stood

And people thought the music that he made was good

There lived a D.J. and Paul was his name

He came up to Monty, this is what he said

You and OG are gonna make some cash

Sell a million records and we'll make in a dash

Beca led her group onto the stage, each holding a microphone. The Georgia Dome was packed with spectators for the event. They stood on the stage in the middle where the Atlanta Falcons usually played, where Beca, Chloe and her aunts had watched the Niners defeat said Falcons right before Christmas. She had never expected to be here again, not so soon, but here they were. Jesse and Donald lined up to her left, Aubrey and Chloe to her right. The crowd had grown silent after clapping them onto the stage. Beca took a deep breath, looking around at the girls and few boys with them. Aubrey was at her right, closer to the front of the stage, and she would take the first solo. She began to count to three as her stepsister took a deep breath. The blonde had been stress vomiting all day, but she seemed fine now. Chloe was just about glowing that day, and Beca grinned at the sight. Once again, they had made it further against all odds than anyone had expected. Then again, no one ever expected their star halfback badass to be in Glee club. Beca could have quit after Will went to jail, after the season or semester, even after the judge found him guilty of molestation and child abuse. She stayed beside her team however as they had done for her. She had created the perfect mashup, Stacie handling

choreography. They had decided to use one simple four-chord beat, allowing Lily and Donald to beatbox and create a more fluent one. Aubrey began to sing as she hit one.

Aubrey:

***High dive into frozen waves where the past comes
back to life***

***Fight fear for the selfish pain, it was worth it every
time***

Jesse:

***Hold still right before we crash 'cause we both know
how this ends***

***A clock ticks 'til it breaks your glass and I drown in
you again***

Beca:

You loved me and I froze in time

Hungry for that flesh of mine

***But I can't compete with the she-wolf, who has
brought me to my knees***

What do you see in those yellow eyes?

'Cause I'm falling to pieces

The beat began now as well as the choreography, the group moving in perfect synchronization as the crowd cheered immediately.

Donald and Jesse:

Got a gang of cash and it's going all on the bar (now work it out)

And it's going fast cause I feel like a superstar (now work it out)

And you may not have it, I might have just broke the law (now work it out)

It's your turn to grab it, now make this whole thing yours (now work it out)

Benji and the girls:

Work hard, play hard

Work hard, play hard.

We work hard, play hard

Keep partyin' like it's your job

Beca had mixed the three songs perfectly, and they each took turns on their part, Beca and Chloe harmonizing beautifully to bring "Titanium" into the mix. The crowd was on it's feet moving as they did so. Their dance moves were impeccable, the other competitors keeping it simple. No, Barden had a slew of state champions on their roster. They never did simple, and they never did average anymore. At one point, a dubstep beat came on with Donald and Lily doing a flawless beatbox routine, Chloe moving up front as the lights went off. She began a show of glow-sticking, and the audience was enchanted. When the lights came back on, Beca and Donald did backflips across the stage before sliding to the front and harmonizing in Maroon 5's

“Payphone” as Chloe and CR came together for “Wild One” and Jesse and Benji had Flo Ride’s “Whistle”. The music then broke down and everyone came into the center to do “I Can Only Imagine” by David Guetta and Chris Brown. They created a pyramid, Jessica at the top before they threw her up for a flip then caught her in their arms. The music then stopped, every one of them freezing as Beca disappeared then reappeared on stage with sunglasses on. She looked around with a confused expression at her frozen teammates then broke out with “Gangnum Style”, and everyone did the dance before CR and Stacie came together for Rihanna’s “Diamonds” then Amy was singing Nicki Minaj’s “Starships”. It was a monster mashup, and the audience was completely enthralled. Everyone’s parents were front row, Allie, Michelle, Sarah, Emily and Lauren dancing and screaming for their girls. They had come closer than anything in the past few months, and it was a sight. Beca did a flip up in the air, and Jesse jumped over her when she landed. They began doing a dubstep dance as Chloe came to the front singing “Give Your Heart a Break” by Demi Lovato. Beca reached out, grabbing her shoulder and jerking her back as she sang Gotye’s “Somebody I Used to Know”. Then they began an entire re-enactment of “One More Night”, an amended version of course, but it was brilliant mixed with Montell Jordan’s “This is How We Do It”, Beca rapping that before also rapping and singing “No Diggity”. They transitioned perfectly into Katy Perry’s “Hot and Cold”. They mixed the songs seamlessly before ending it with “Sorry for Party Rocking.” When they ended in the center together, the crowd went wild, jumping around and yelling for them. It was perfect.

Beca dropped her microphone, throwing her hands up before her group tackled her in a hug. The roar of the crowd was deafening, and they didn’t have to wait long

before the announcer came back onto the stage with the judges' decision of the winners. They rushed down the stairs of the stage and over to the stands, hugging parents over the railing.

"And this year's winners of the National High School Choir competition..." the man said slowly, building up the anticipation. Beca and her group joined hands, heads bowed and eyes closed. "The Barden High Bella Rebels!"

They all opened their eyes at once, joining together in another hug as they jumped around. They had done it once more, pulling out a win against all odds. They had won the coveted first place trophy at the competition that had haunted them as much as volleyball and football had. Aubrey just about tackled her sister in a bone-crushing hug.

"You did it!" she squealed. "You did it, Beca!"

"_We _did it!" Beca corrected her, wrapping her arms around the blonde.

They rushed up to the stage then, taking the trophy in their hands and thrusting it in the air. Beca definitely felt like a badass despite being in glee club, and everyone was shouting praise for them. She felt like Judd Nelson in "The Breakfast Club" walking away from an amazing year. They had done the impossible, the unthinkable, the probably-not. They had made it, and the year had ended on a great note. Tom was in a juvenile detention facility until he was eighteen and moved to prison. Will was away for at least fifteen years. Aunt Allie and Aunt Sarah had actually become an item far more than just adopted sisters. Aunt Michelle had been transferred to Barden University Medical Center. Beca had lasted the entire year, and her

and Chloe's relationship was stronger than ever. Her bond with her stepsister was titanium as well, and her, Luke and Jesse were almost inseparable. It had been the best year ever, and as she stood there holding the trophy, every memory flooded back. Her cheeks were soaked with tears of joy, and she looked up at the sky.

"We did it, Dad!" she roared. "We did it!"

Then Chloe was in her arms, their lips sealed together, and she was happier than she had ever been. She held the redhead tightly as cameras flashed and the crowd cheered. She had made it. She was no ordinary rebel anymore. She was a rebel with a voice.

22. Don't Forget to Remember Me

A/N: So here it is. The final chapter. dun dun dun! Oh, did I scare you? Don't worry because guess who's already planning on a sequel? This guy haha. Hope you guys have enjoyed this ride as much as I have, but we are not done. Oh no. I'm still here working hard, so bare with me because like I said, I'm working on two fics now. I guess ADHD mixed with insomnia will do that to you. It does to me lol. Well SHOULD I DO THE SEQUEL? WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK? YOU WANNA SEE BECA PLAY SOME COLLEGE BALL? SOME GOOD OLD BELLA ACAPELLA? SOME NEW OBSTACLES, GROUPIES, DRAMA AND LOVE? LET ME KNOW!

Song: Without You-David Guetta ft. Usher

I can't win, I can't reign

I will never win this game

Without you, without you

I am lost, I am vain,

I will never be the same

Without you, without you

I won't run, I won't fly

I will never make it by

Without you, without you

I can't rest, I can't fight

All I need is you and I,

Without you, without you

Oh oh oh!

You! You! You!

Without...

You! You! You!

Without...you

Can't erase, so I'll take blame

But I can't accept that we're estranged

Without you, without you

I can't quit now, this can't be right

I can't take one more sleepless night

Without you, without you

I won't soar, I won't climb

If you're not here, I'm paralyzed

Without you, without you

I can't look, I'm so blind

I lost my heart, I lost my mind

Without you, without you

Oh oh oh!

You! You! You!

Without...

You! You! You!

Without...you

I am lost, I am vain,

I will never be the same

Without you, without you

Without...you

The day had at last come. The stadium was overflowing with spectators. Three state football championships, ten thousand yards, two hundred five touchdowns, sixty-three awards, twenty-five full scholarship offers and three years on the honor roll later, Beca “Smash” Mitchell, the all-american halfback, was graduating high school. With honors. Allie, Sarah, their infant daughter Leah, and Michelle sat on the field in the special seats reserved for family. Beside them sat Lauren and Emily. They cheered as Chloe came up to the stage to say her salutatorian speech before Aubrey did the same as valedictorian. The crowd was packing in because it wasn’t just graduation night. There was a special surprise in store for everyone.

“We made it,” the redhead sighed. “We’re here. It’s been a long four years, but in those years, we’ve accomplished some pretty big things. I know that as we leave this school, my closest friends and I will be remembered for three volleyball state championships or three football state championships. Maybe even three choir state championships. We’ll be remembered for our senior ditch day when our parents found us at six flags, and we hid inside of the rock climbing wall. We’ll be remembered for our homecoming weeks when Beca won Homecoming King three years running, and the seniors weren’t too happy the first two times.” Everyone was in giggles by now. “We’ll be remembered for the senior prank of loading up every single locker as well as Principal Kendrick’s desk with confetti, and he couldn’t even be mad because the man loves his confetti.” He chuckled beside her. “He could however be mad for us taking apart Mr. Wheeler’s motorcycle and hiding the parts in a scavenger hunt as senior prank level felony, but hey. We left him a well detailed map and clues.” Another laugh. Yeah, they were pretty horrible but somehow dodged expulsion. “We’ll be remembered for all dying our hair pink for breast cancer awareness, for

repainting Penny's diner as a class bonding project, for going against all odds to bring this town back to life on the court and on the field. That, however, is not all we want to be remembered for. We don't just want to be remembered for Amy's jokes or Beca's awkwardness in front of cameras or Jesse running naked through the field when Luke took his clothes or Benji's magic tricks or our epic water slide in the main hall with cooking oil. No, we want to be remembered for the characteristics we portrayed in doing those things. For our youth, for our jubilee, for our persistence, for our ability to test limits, for our determination to do the impossible. We want to be remembered for our perseverance, our passion, our love for one another as well as this community. We want to be remembered for our unadulterated childish beliefs that dreams can come true, that state championships can be won, that girls can play football. We don't want to be remembered for the accolades but for the journey that we took to earn them. When you hear 2014 Barden High School graduate, I want you to think 'Yeah, that was the most talented and passionate class to ever attend Barden High'. I don't want you to remember the number on my volleyball jersey. I want you to remember the blood, sweat and tears stained into it. I want you to not remember "number 6" but Chloe Elise Beale. Thank you."

Everyone hollared and cheered then as Chloe walked off of the stage, and Beca threw her a thumbs up. Chloe blew her a kiss before taking her spot beside Luke, and Aubrey stepped up to the stage. She smiled tentatively as the crowd calmed down.

"Leave it up to my best friend to outdo my speech," the blonde sighed, and everyone giggled. "I shouldn't have let her proofread it. Now, I know it wasn't an easy road here for any of us. We went through a lot in our high school

careers, more than some adults go through in their entire lives. We endured things that would surely discourage a weaker person. We saw things we didn't understand but were forced to cope with them. We loved, and we lost. We fought, and we fell. We stumbled many times. Coming into our sophomore year, we were just a bunch of students divided by hobbies, clubs, monetary status among other things. Then, some little alt girl with her mad lib beats who's barely been in any competitions shows up and turns everything on its head." Everyone chuckles once more. "But you see, you know her as the star halfback. Our class knows her as our leader, our sister, our friend. She taught us unity amongst ourselves. That is what I talk about. It's unity. We rose from the ashes of ruined pasts and many mistakes, and we overcame all odds to be here tonight. We came together, and though there aren't many of us, we formed a bond that will continue on from this point forward. That is what high school became for us. It was a bond. It was where we were molded. It wasn't just the school. We didn't just graduate from our academic programs. We graduated into adulthood, into the real world, and we did it together. We moved mountains and cross rivers. We trekked through valleys and trudged through mud to be here, and we held hands all along the way. We will move forward as one. Some of us may be doctors, lawyers, movie scorers, professional athletes, business owners, mechanics, chefs or something completely different, but no matter what we decide to do in our lives, we will always come home after a long day and be able to pick up the phone or knock on the door and find each other to talk to, to hang out with, to study with or to just shoot the breeze and complain about dreadful finals or horrible bosses. If you remember us for anything, I hope that you remember our unity, our ability to look adversity in the eye and step forward as one, to overcome it. We are not individuals graduating today but a class. We had study

groups and impromptu celebrations and random flash mobs in the halls each first day of school. We became not only a class but a family, so remember us as so because that is what we have formed here. We became more than a high school graduate. We became part of a real team, and that will forever stay with us.”

There was more cheering as Aubrey smiled and walked off of the stage. Lauren smiled wide at her daughter, and Beca once again threw a thumbs up. Principal Kendrick walked up to the podium now, clearing his throat while the crowd quieted.

“Now, as you have heard, we have a special surprise in store,” he began. “We actually had another student tied grade point for grade point with Miss Beale for Salutatorian, but this student allowed Miss Beale the speech because, as she says, ‘she’s socially awkward and horrible at public speaking’.” The stadium roared with laughter. “Well, what she can do is put her emotions into music, and we decided a special performance by a hometown hero can’t be too bad, so without further ado, I give you Beca ‘Smash’ Mitchell with a tribute to her parents, the late Leah and Darren Cale.”

Everyone cheered as a blushing Beca stepped onto the stage. The choir team followed to provide backup, and they were passed microphones by the A/V club members. Beca cleared her throat, taking a deep breath as the music started.

(Oh if you could see me now)

(Oh if you could see me now)

It was February 14 Valentine’s Day

*The roses came but they took you away
Tattooed on my arm is a charm to disarm all the harm
Gotta keep myself calm but the truth is you're gone
And I'll never get to show you these songs
Dad you should see the tours that I'm on
I see you standing there next to Mom
Both singing along, yeah arm in arm
And there are days when I'm losing my faith
Because the man wasn't good he was great
He'd say "Music was the home for your pain"
And explained I was young, he would say
Take that rage, put it on a page
Take the page to the stage
Blow the roof off the place
I'm trying to make you proud
Do everything you did
I hope you're up there with God saying "That's my
kid!"
I still look for your face in the crowd*

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Would you stand in disgrace or take a bow

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

(Oh if you could see me now)

If you could see me now would you recognize me?

Would you pat me on the back or would you criticize me?

Would you follow every line on my tear-stained face

Put your hand on a heart that was cold

As the day you were taken away?

I know it's been a while but I can see you clear as day

Right now, I wish I could hear you say

I drink too much, and I smoke too much dutch

But if you can't see me now that shit's a must

You used to say I wont know a wind until it crossed me

Like I wont know real love 'til I've loved and I've lost it

So if you've lost a sister, someone's lost a mom

And if you've lost a dad then someone's lost a son

And they're all missing out, yeah they're all missing out

So if you get a second to look down on me now

Mom, Dad I'm just missing you now

I still look for your face in the crowd

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Would you stand in disgrace or take a bow

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Oh, oh

Would you call me a saint or a sinner?

Would you love me a loser or winner?

Oh, oh

When I see my face in the mirror

We look so alike that it makes me shiver

I still look for your face in the crowd

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Would you stand in disgrace or take a bow

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Yeah I'm just missing you now

I still look for your face in the crowd

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

Would you stand in disgrace or take a bow

Oh if you could see me now (Oh if you could see me now)

If you could see, you could see me now

Once again, the crowd roared, and it became deafening. Beca felt great however, and she loved the buzz and energy of her final time stepping in Barden Stadium as a student. It would be named after her soon, and a statue of her in action sat in front of the field house now. She wore all three of her state champion rings tonight, and she thrust up the fist with them gleaming in the lights, her last dose of Friday Night Lights.

"Benjamin Andrew Applebaum...Chloe Elise Beale...Luke Artemis Bryant...Ashley Elizabeth Carter...Stacie Alaina Conrad...Cynthia Rose Dean...Denise Rene Eldridge...Donald Maurice Grey...Rebeca Jade Mitchell...Lily Lynn Onakuramara...Aubrey Gabrielle Posen...Jessica Danielle Richards...Jesse Joseph Swanson...Amy Patricia Wilson."

The crowd went wild as each of them went up for their diploma, each of them as always doing the signature thrust of the fist in the air.

"I give you your 2014 Barden High School graduates!" Principal Kendrick, who was lucky to still have his job, boomed. With that, said graduates tossed their hats into the cool May night air before hugging each other. Parents descended onto the field as the pictures began. Before her aunts could reach her, Beca rushed to the north end of the field and kneeled beneath the goal post, her head bowed. Chloe and her aunts watched with smiles. They knew what she was doing.

"I did it, Mom and Dad. Are you proud of me? I hope you are. I know you're up there on a cloud watching right now, and I'm glad that you're safe up there. I'll be okay now. Guess what, Dad? You probably already know, but I'm gonna tell you again anyway. I'm gonna play college ball. Luke, Jesse, Donald and I are gonna play together. Chloe and the girls are coming with us to Barden. I hope it's okay that I turned down Notre Dame, but my friends are what I will always have even when the final buzzer sounds, you know. I wanna be with them and Aunt Allie and Aunt Sarah and Aunt Michelle and baby Leah. We're gonna be okay, I promise. I love you guys, and we'll be together soon."

Beca kissed her fist before pointing up in the air, her eyes cast up at the sky with tears in her eyes and a smile on her face. She then stood up and turned, rushing back to her aunts and Chloe. She picked Chloe up in her arms and spun her around.

"We did it," she said, pulling Chloe in, their foreheads pressed together.

"I am so proud of you, Baby," Chloe breathed. "You did it."

"I could never have done it without you, Baby."

“Remember that when you’re crying and yelling at me because I’m making you actually study in college.”

“Oh, no worries. I already have some study techniques I pulled up on the internet for couples that we can try.” She wriggled her eyebrows.

“Even now, you still act like a teenage boy.”

“Eh, it’s a forever sort of thing.”

“Great. Now I know what to expect from our sons.”

Beca only chuckled as she pressed her lips to the redhead’s, reveling in this moment and stowing it away in her mind. This was her future, her eternity, her everything, and in that very moment, she was infinite. There were no worries about college courses, SAT scores, finals, college football practice or any of that. They were here. They had already made it, and everything that followed was just icing on the cake. Forever. That was what they had promised. They would stick together forever as a family, and they were. Barden University was surely in for it.

23. Sequel

For those unaware, the sequel to this fic “If You Could See Me Now” is already up. To the guests that asked, I cant write you back, so I set this.

End file.

