



# The Dugout

## ~Nichole~

A normal school day started as any other. One goes to school, sits through classes, and waits for school to to reassess all of its prisoners. We are those prisoners. It's just how it is. From elementary, to collage, and even to our day to day lives at work. There is never true free time, unless we make room for it in our day today lives we never—

“Hey Nicky!”

I turn from writing my essay to my friend Griffon Conners, who sat next to me.

“Sup.” I said turning my iPad off.

Griffon was tall and had some muscle to him along with his curly brown hair and blue eyes. His skin was peachy with some tan, but that was because he was seventy five percent Jewish.

Most *blood* Jewish people don't have darker tan skin. Or that's what his father told me. Me Conners was a Jewish Immigrant.

Griffon looked like his older siblings, which were valedictorians, and Griffon was soon to follow in their footsteps. I had known him sense preschool, we've been to the same school together for years, called Alexander Christian, a Private Christian School outside of Nashville Tennessee.

Griffon's whole family talked like normal people... except Griffon. Griffon had one of the strongest country accents that I'd ever heard. He always had. Nobody really knows how he got it, but he just did.

I looked at our teacher who was still ranting about her family reunion.

“When ‘you play’n today?” He asked.

I looked at the clock, and turned back to him remembering the Softball Preseason Game. Even if it was January we still had to play, and I loved it.

“2:45. I should get out in about ten minutes to warm up.” I told him. Griffon nodded and looked at the clock.

“I should be at the fields about 3:15, or sooner.” He said softly.

I nodded and copied some notes the teacher finally put up. I wrote some stuff down, and turned back to Griffon.

“I gotta race tonight. Wanna come?”

“Yeah. Lemme just text my parents.” I said hiding my phone under the table.

Griffon raced Dirt-bikes. It was a very dangerous sport— whether you think it or not— but he was pretty good. Okay, not pretty good. He was amazing at it.

The intercom called, and told everyone that Varsity Softball was dismissed. I grabbed my stuff, and said goodbye.

I caught the ball and ran at her. She turned the other direction, so I threw it to third. She came back and so did the ball, so... I tackled her.

“OUT!”

Three outs. Time to swap. I took off my catchers helmet and jogged to the dugout. I grabbed my oversized water bottle and chugged it down as the third baseman gave me a fist bump.

I loved this sport, and planned on Collage even though I was just junior. It didn't matter to me, because I didn't know then life would change.

I walked up to the plate again, and held my bat. Two strike, and three balls. Lovely. I hit a foul ball again, and stepped out and looked at coach. He nodded, and put his fists together. I had to hit no matter what. The pitch came and I swung hard.

I hit!

I broke into a sprint, as the ball went further and further. It was going over!

The left fielder jumped over the fence... and caught the ball.

I stopped running as the other team cheered. I walked back and grabbed my bat, and the coach patted my back.

“You'll get it next time.” He said softly. I nodded and tossed my helmet down in anger and sat back.

Nobody messed with me when I was mad.

Nobody.

Even if this was just another January pre season game I was mad. It was more than that to me.

The game soon ended, so I grabbed my catching gear bag and my regular rolling bag. I walked out of the dugout after we prayed, and over to Griffon who tossed his keys in his hand.

“Did you bring money?”

“Yup.”

“Cool. I did too.” He said as he pulled down the tailgate to his truck.

His dirt bike was in the back, so I put my stuff out off the way. Griffon changed his shirt into his racing jersey. We had been friends for so long it didn’t matter if he changed his shirt or took it off in the heat.

We hopped in, and he drove a few miles. We got to the track, and he got his bike out.

“Corner left.” He said putting his armor on.

“Alright.” I said with a smile.

“I mean, I think I’m always corner left.” He said with a small confused look.

I rolled my eyes and gave him a smile. Griffon shrugged his confusion off and smiled at me as he put his helmet on.

“Here.”

He walked out his truck and pulled his wallet out and handed me fourth bucks.

“Griffon I brought my own money.”

“I know, it’s just your a girl. I gotta be the nice guy for my best friend too.” He said with a smile.

I rolled my eyes and took it from his hand and shoved the money in my back pocket.

Griffon put his helmet on and kick started his bike.

“See you after the race!” He said over the engine.

With than he rode off to the starting gate. I gave a small smile and walked to the stands for my Mozzarella Sticks.

I sat in the stands, mostly watching the beauty of a cheese stick, while Griffon raced. I watched as I put that amazing cheese sticks with marinara into my mouth, while Griffon was tied for first. He was going to qualify, but I knew he wanted that metal.

I looked up and gave a smile as he kicked the speed up and took a risky move through the inside corner to the last jump.

The second he landed lightning struck as rain started to poor down. I groaned and sighed as I had to throw away my cheese sticks.

Griffon won though. That I was proud of.

“I should have—” He started to say disappointedly.

“Dude you won. I don’t wanna hear it.” I snapped as the rain drenched over us.

Griffon gave me a small smile and reached into his truck and grabbed an umbrella. He opened it up and handed it to me to hold.

He took his muddy helmet off and sighed.

“I’m not mad that I won, I’m just try’n to say I made a mistake on my fourth to last lap. I accidentally kicked my—”

“Dude.” I said getting his attention. “I don’t know this stuff, or really care to know. I just think you should be happy you won.”

“I am happy.” He said taking the umbrella back with a smirk. “I’m also get’n us dinner while we’re here, so come on.”

I rolled my eyes and smiled. Of course Griffon was. He always did.

We got to the concession area and stood under the roof as the rain poured outside. Griffon shook his mop of curly brown hair around and I held my hands up.

“Stop! Your not a dog!”

“Says who?”

“I don’t know. Says genetics, says your DNA, says God, says your parents, and says me.” I said counting on my fingers.

Griffon rolled his eyes. “Can’t you take a joke? You’ve known me long enough to know when I’m joke’n.” He said with a smile.

“I know, I just like being right.” I said with a smile.

Griffon rolled his eyes and chuckled to himself as he walked more into the line with me.

“That’s because your always right.” He said kicking his legs around like an impatient child.

“Me? You have straight A’s and your taking all AP and Honers classes!” I said firmly.

“That don’t mean I ain’t got no human skills.” He said shaking his head with a smile.

I rolled my eyes as we walked up to the concession desk. Griffon got us cheese burgers and French fries.

We walked back to his truck in the rain as we kept the umbrella over us.

I got in and Griffon out his Dirt Bike stuff in the back of his truck. He came in, smiled at, me and tapped his foot.

“So that was fun.”

“Always it.” I said with a smile.

Griffon looked down but smiled. “Good.”

He turned his truck on. We left as we joked around about school and life in general. I looked in the side mirror and smiled. I have brown eyes, and pale freckled skin. My strawberry blonde hair was tied in a messy ponytail but I didn’t care.

## ~Nichole~

Griffon dropped me off back home, and I said goodbye. The cool light air always made me feel better, even if I was fine. I walked into my house and set my softball stuff to the side. I kicked off my shoes and looked up at dad, who was smiling at me.

“Have fun?”

“Yeah.”

“Did you eat?”

“Yup! Cheeseburger and fries.” I said smiling.

Dad laughed and took off his hat. He looked back down at his Bible, and told me I can go to bed if I wanted to.

I did. I laid down, and looked up at the ceiling of my room. Life was great, and God was good.

I still didn’t know I would hate the way the Lord let it happen.

I went to church, like most others in our town, and loved it. I worked with the three year olds, and broke up fights over gummy bears.

I looked up at the clock, which told me I could go.

“Um, Mrs Joy?”

“Yeah?”

“It’s 11:15.”

Mrs Joy, the head of the three and fours turned and looked at her watch. “Oh it is, you can go! Have a great day!”

“Thank you, you too!”

I walked out of the room, and down the hallway with my stuff. I got in line of the café out church had, and ordered some coffee. I had to stay awake... those kids really drain you. I don’t know how Mrs Joy does it, but she does.

I stood waiting for my coffee, and a tingle went up my back. My shoulders were grabbed and I yelled and smacked someone across the face.

I turned to see Griffon.

“Griffon?! What are you doing here?” I impatiently. “Why did you grab me?!”

Griffon shrugged. “Came with my parents! My dad is a travel’n preacher... an evangelist.”  
He explained with wide eyes, like I was a kid.

“Dude, I think I know what an evangelist is.” I said laughing. Griffon shrugged, and laughed.

“Just for the record that slap was a ten outa ten.”

We talked for a bit before serves started, and we both walked in. He sat across the church but it didn’t bother me.

Okay maybe a little.

We were *friends*.

JUST *FRIENDS*!

After a great service, we (my family) meet up with Griffon, and his parents. We all decide to go to his place for lunch, which was always fun.

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“Another photo?”

“Um... yeah.” I said smiling. I took a photo of his Painted Horse, Shiloh, and Griffon smiled at me.

Griffon’s family lived on a big plot of land. It was a farm. Horses, cows, chickens and goats. They had a small two story house, but it was homey. Currently we were by the large barn in the backyard.

Even if I had been here so many times, I loved taking photos. It was just a beautiful place.

“So, I know what I ain’t gonna to show you.” He said shanking his head.

I turned around quickly. “You *are* going to show me!” I demanded as we walked across is large property.

We got to the barn, and I saw baby goats. My hart raised and I ran and picked one up.

“LOOK HOW CUTE!”

“Yup... sure.” He said laughing.

He got a tool, and started to work on his dirt bike, as I played with the goats.

“I think their annoying. That’s why their in here.” He said shaking his head.

“How can they be annoying?!”



“BLAH BLAH BLAH! IM A GOAT AND I GO ‘BLAH’ ALL DAY, AND EAT EVERYTHING!” He mocked.

I rolled my eyes and smiled at him. “You need to calm down. Just relax.”

“Your telling me? Huh... funny.” He said with a testing voice.

I eyed him as he started to go on about his dirt bike racing. “Anyways, States are this week, and I’m gonna to be ready.” Griffon said grabbing a clothe and wiping his bike.

“Oh, so I have heard.” I teased.

Griffon rolled his blue eyes and tossed the cloth and tool to the side, as our parents called us all to go in.

Griffon turned around, and yelled, “Wait, I’m gonna ride!”

I smiled at him as he got on, and turned it on. He looked at me, and got off. He walked to the counter and grabbed his helmet. He looked at me and tossed it and I caught it.

“What is this for?”

“I’m take’n you for a ride.” He said smiling.

“What?!”

He hopped on his dirt bike, and extended a hand. “Come on princess, lemme take you for a spin.” He said grinning wildly.

I shook my head and smiled, as he helped me on. What am I doing? I had the craziest best friend in the world.

I hopped on behind him, and he gave warnings.

“Don’t touch that, that’s really hot, and can burn your skin off.”

“Great.” I said as he started it up. Before I could say ‘wait’ he drove off. I grabbed him, and hugged tightly, praying.

“God, don’t let me die!” I prayed.

“Your fine!” Griffon hollered over the engine.

*Great*, I thought to myself.

He made a sharp turn, and I screamed. Griffon Connors was a mad man—I just knew. He was smart but had a crazy need for speed. You can go check all of his speeding tickets.

But, that’s what I liked about him. He wasn’t afraid to take risks in life. He told me that, “Life without risk means you ain’t liv’n right.”

I screamed again as he went faster and hit a jump, he and his dad made at their house.

The dirt bike came to a stop back in the barn and I got off as soon as I could. I was covered in dirt. I glared at Griffon, who shook his messy brown hair sending dirt flying.

“See, wasn’t that fun?”

“No. You scared me half to death, and I’m covered in mud!” I spat.

Griffon laughed, and took the helmet off my head, and tossed it to the side. He looked at me carefully, and his eyes twinkled.

“Um... let’s go inside.” He said softly.

“Yes! Let’s go inside away from the dirt!” I said shaking more dirt off.

“Alright princess.” Griffon said with a smile and we left the barn.

It was a nice walk from the barn to where he actually lived. The tall grass was beautiful, and I wished I lived here.

I lived somewhere near a neighborhood, but at the edge of the woods line. I kind of forgot that Tennessee was split into different parts. The woods, country, towns, and cities.

That was that.

Griffon opened the door for me, and we peered inside. Our fathers were debating on the Bible, and our mothers were talking about baking and embarrassing stuff about me and Griffon from when we were younger. You know, mom stuff like that.

We ate lunch—which was amazing—, and I looked at Griffon who kicked off his cowboy boots.

“Your done being outside?”

He nodded. “Yeah. We did the chores, and I fixed up my bike up.” He said shrugging.

“Im telling you that bike is dangerous.” His mom, Mrs Connors said looking up.

Griffon nodded. “I know. But if it was that dangerous then why do you let me ride?”

“Don’t talk to your mother like that... although you make a great point.” Mr Connors said laughing.

Mrs Connors shot the death glare and finally rolled her eyes.

“Kids gotta be kids.” My mom said shaking her head.

Griffon shook his head next and stood up. “I ain’t that much of a kid. I’m one year from a ding dang graduation, and rid’n is fun!”

“Proper grammar.” His mom said nodding.

Griffon corrected his statement before walking away. Naturally, I followed. His room was next to the stairs. It was small, had one dresser, a small bed, and a desk. He sat down at the desk and tossed his red baseball hat he had been wearing hat down.

“States are this Wednesday, and I will bring that metal home to my parents.” He said softly.

I knew it had been his dream to go to Nationals, which States led up to. Then, he would be set for Motorcross. I also knew that he wanted to impress his parents.

I looked above his desk, and he had a few Bible Verses written and pinned to the wall.

“And I bet you’ll make it.” I said smiling.

Griffon smiled and looked out at the cows. To be honest I looked at them too. “Did you round them up?” He asked softly. His accent was gone, and his face was pained.

I nodded and looked at him. “You know your mom isn’t here right now to correct your grammar right?”

“Yeah. She’s in the back of my mind though.” He said laughing. Griffon stood up and put his hat back on. “Fine then. Wanna round ‘em all up? I gotta few heifers out there that need afixen.” He said with his thick accent... that I knew was more natural for him.

“Never have but I’ll try!”

Griffon shook his head and snickered. “What ever. That’s the best one could do huh? Ain’t nobody perfect in this world.” He said.

I nodded in agreement as he took my phone from my pocket and ran outside. I chased after him, with a proud smile.

## ~Nichole~

The days passed, and I felt it. Paper airplanes went through math class Wednesday morning.

Griffon sat impatiently the whole class period before being called out so he can race. I gave him a thumbs up as he was called out. He turned and said bye, and winked at me. I smiled, and as he left my face went red.

“Oooooo.”

“Shut up.”

“You like him don’t you.” My best friend Ashlyn said.

“No.” I said angrily. Ashlyn rolled her eyes, and shook her head.

“Come on Nicky, I can see it.”

“Ashlyn—”

“The stars are shining, and you two are on his bike.” She started. I rolled my eyes as she went on. “He looks at you, and kisses you under the moonlight.”

“Ash, you really need help.”

Ashlyn rolled her eyes. “Whatever. Not my fault your to blind to see.”

“See what?”

She eyed me hard for a moment. We carried on with class, as the periods went by faster and faster.

I sat in history, and looked over to where he sat. I rolled my eyes and smiled. The need for speed was always his personality... that’s probably why he was a great racer.

I looked over at Ashlyn who was lifting and lowering her eyebrows. I rolled my eyes and threw my crumbled up test at her. She threw it back and we laughed and we got detention.

I didn’t care, because that’s how we became friends. We both got ourselves in detention for no good reason. Personal I thought the school rules made no sense, but at this point I didn’t care at all about it.

The best part of the day was Softball Practice. Ashlyn was our pitcher, and a great one! She pitched a change up and I got on my knees and caught it.

“Throw down!” Coach Kile said. I jumped up and threw the softball hard and fast. The second baseman backed up shortstop and they tagged the bag.

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I slammed my helmet on, as I walked up to the plate, for practice. I almost hit my first home run, but it was ruined.

Time to try again.

I smiled at Ashlyn who gripped the ball on the mound.

“I know your hitting weakness!” She said proudly. I shrugged and stood in the box.

“Okay, then pitch some cheese!” I said laughing. “I catch your pitching, so I know your strategies.”

Ashlyn stood up and looked at me. “Not this one. You asked for it Nicky.”

She pitched the ball, and I didn’t swing. It was down the middle, but I also knew her pitching style. She pitched again, and it was right under the strike zone. A ball. I smiled and she shrugged it off.

“Get smart Ash!” Jenna, our third baseman said.

“Yeah what ever!” Ashlyn said, as she pitched.

I swung, and tipped it off. Foul... also a strike. I took a step out and looked at Coach who was on the phone.

Odd.

Coach never had his phone out.

Must have been his day job calling again, I thought. Coach Kile was an engineer, but never talked about work. I stepped back into the box, and the pitch came. I swung as hard as I could... and missed.

I looked at a smiling Ashlyn.

“Told you!” She said smirking.

I rolled my eyes and shook my head.

I walked into the dugout and took my helmet off. I started putting on my catching gear when I heard a phone ring. I looked up to my phone.

My phone stopped in Gina as I picked it up. My eyes widened as I started at the five missed calls from my mom and Mrs Conners— who I only had her number because we both threw a surprise birthday party for Griffon.

I looked to my coach who was off of his phone.

“Hey coach? I’m getting a BUNCH of calls from my mom and someone else. Can I answer it?”

He looked up and nodded. “Go ahead. I just had a work call.”

I nodded and called the most recent person back. Mrs Conners. The phone rang for only about half a second before her voice came over in a sob.

“Hey hey,” I said sitting down. “What’s wrong?”

“Griffon.” She said through a sob.

Time. Nobody wants to know how it happened but it did. Timing was the best, but also the worst. People have been born, and taken on Time. Time is an enemy. It’s something you can’t fix or change. It just is like God. God isn’t evil, but people believe it. Why? Nobody quite knows except satan wants us to hate God. And right now, satan got his wish.

## ~Nichole~

A door opened. I looked up at a doctor who had finished talking to Griffon's parents. His mom was crying, and father was holding it in. I had driven myself to the hospital, and didn't know what was happening.

"Oh Nichole!"

Mrs Connors ran up and gave me a hug as I hugged her back.

"Griffon just woke up from a surgery." She said while a tear from her face.

"What did they do?" I asked.

She but her lipa Dan shook her head as she looked down. Mr Connors walked up and pushed his greying curly brown hair out of his face. His face was slim and shallow.

"They put some screws in his back." He said softly.

He pulled out a file and handed it to me. I looked at the X-Ray and my eyes widened. Mrs Connors took the paper back and took a deep breath.

He forced a smile and looked at me. "He wanted to talk to you."

I felt my heart drop as the doctor walked up to me.

"You can come in."

I nodded and walked with the Doctor. "Mr Connors, is only temporarily blinded. We can fix that tomorrow." She explained.

"Why not today?"

"Because we are backed up." She said softly.

Wow. That's so convenient. My best friend can't see, and they can't fix that yet? It made me wonder what else they couldn't do.

I walked in, and my heart fell.

I looked to see a heart monitor on. A nurse walked out and looked away from me.

Griffon was looking up at the ceiling, and I knew he couldn't see right now. His face was bruised, and his arm was in a sling. His arms were over the blanket that hid his lower body. I pulled a chair up. His head turned to me, but he was looking through me.

"Hey." I said softly.

"Hi... how do I look?" He said with a weak smile.

I shook my head as his dumb joke, and shrugged as I choked on my breath. “Okay... you look okay.” I lied.

“How do you look?”

“Depressed. Mad. And um... terrible to be honest.” I said as he turned his head back up facing the roof. He nodded slightly.

“What happened?” I asked shakily.

Griffon didn’t answer, which made me a little mad, I told myself this all happened yesterday, and he might have PTSD. I pushed the anger aside, and he asked me what he missed in school.

“Um... your worried about school?”

“Well... yeah.” He said looking up at the roof again. “I mean... I’m fine... right?”

My eyes teared up, and I shook my head knowing he couldn’t see.

“They won’t... tell me what wrong yet.” He said stiffly. He extended his unbroken arm to his right leg and shook his head. “I can’t feel my legs.”

I wanted to explode and just tell him, but that wasn’t my place to say.

“Yeah... your fine.” I choked out.

I left right after. I couldn’t sit in that room any longer. I left the hospital and got into my mom’s car, I had brought. I looked at the small cross she had hanging off of the mirror and glared.

“If you are so good, then why did this happen.”

A few week passed, and at school we prayed for him, and at home we did too. Griffon could see again, but he was getting some physical therapy done. His parents decided to have a welcome back party thing, and my family helped out. His older siblings from collage came back, and went to pick him up. Something was off. Things had been moved around to make more space. Not to mention, Mrs Connors would randomly start crying again.

“What did happened?” I asked again.

Mom had only told me he had an accident but never told me what happened. Everyone looked at me.

“Nichole... Griffon was in a racing accident.”

“How?”



Mom looked held back for a second. “Griffon had done his last jump and landed. The guy in second place didn’t know that Griffon what where he was jumping to. He jumped over the jump and... he landed on Griffon.” She said softly.

I looked at his parents who nodded with tears. “Griffon.. he... he’s lucky to be alive.” Dad said softly.

The door opened, and his older sister Madison Conners held it open. His brother eldest sibling, Kevin pushed him in... Griffon was in a wheel chair.

I remembered the X-Ray I was showed.

His lower back was destroyed along with the nerve.

Griffon was Paralyzed.

He looked around before putting his hands on the wheels and pushing himself forward. He looked around carefully, before leaving to go outside.

It was very awkward.

We all sat inside, and I felt more anger boil up. My best friend can’t do what he thought he was wanted to do. Griffon couldn’t even stand up if his life depend on it.

I walked outside and found him in his barn. I watched for a second, as he looked at his Dirt Bike that was carefully set up. His face read disappointment and uncertainty. I’m not a bad friend... but I walked away. He didn’t seem like he was in the talking mood... actually I didn’t want to talk to him.

What are you supposed to say?

I mean, if I was paralyzed, and my lives dream became reck, I wouldn’t want to talk to anyone either. I knew school was going to be hard on him, but my mind told me not to worry, and that he can suck it up... so I started to believe it.

I walked away and froze again. I heard crying. I turned and peered back into the barn, and watched as Griffon threw something against the wall. He put his head into his hands and cried.

I turned and ran.

## -Griffon-

I sat in my wheelchair tryna figure out what to do. I looked round my room and gave a small sigh. There was noth'n to do.

I struggled tryna figure out how to get the wheelchair to turn and I groaned.

This really sucks.

I finally figured it out and pushed myself to the bedroom door and opened it. I poked my head out and looked at the stairs that led to my siblings rooms.

The sudden thought that I can't go up anymore started to bother the liv'n daylight outa me. I pushed the wheelchair to the steps and glanced around, mak'n sure nobody was around. I slid out from the wheelchair onto the steps and started to army crawl my way up.

"What are you doing?"

I looked up to my sister Madison. Her brown curly hair was in a braid and she was wear'n her fiancé's hoodie that definitely didn't fit her. At least it had the right collage that she was going too. New York University.

"Uh... tryna... uh...."

"Come on."

Madison extended a hand and I looked down as I took it. She hoisted me up and dragged me to her room and set me down on a bing bag.

Madison was always the favorite. You could tell my her room. She had white carpets and two white bing bangs. Her walls were a light blue instead of the wood the house was made with. A chandelier was at the top of her room and by the window she had a couch bed thing. You know, a bed that looks like a fancy couch.

So confus'n.

Madison closed the door and sat down next to me and stared. I stared back, which probably made the awkward tension.

"So, why are you trying to climb the stairs like a dolphin?"

"First of all, I ain't no dolphin." I said fold'n my arms. "Second of all, I... I wanted to."

"Mhm."

"Yep."

Madison nodded and rolled her eyes and kicked her legs out. Her phone started to ring and I watched her take her hair out of the braid. She placed her hair on her shoulders and held her phone up for the FaceTime with her fiancé, José Kates.

“Why do you try and look better for José?”

“Because I don’t want to look stressed.” She said answer’n the phone.

José had curly black hair and dark tan skin. He had large round dark brown eyes, and some dark freckles.

“Hey Maddie!!!”

“Hi! Uh... Griffon is here!”

She tried to hand me the phone and I shoved it back. Madison eyed me hard and shoved the phone into my hand, and I put the fakest smile I ever had on.

“Hi.”

“Hey Griffon! How are you?”

I relayed wanted to hang up and run out, but I ain’t really able to run.

“Alive.” I said with a nod.

José nodded with understand’n to his eyes.

Man I hate it when people do that.

I glanced to Madison who seemed to see that didn’t wanna talk— finally. She gave a small sigh and took the phone back and put a smile on.

I knew it was a fake one.

“Hey, I’m going to go. How about we talk later tonight okay?”

“Fine by me. Love you.”

“Love you too.”

Madison hung up and looked at me. I looked down and gave a small sigh as Madison stared at me. Seriously, why can’t I just.

“Do you want to go see Kevin?”

“No.”

“Well, let’s go!”

Madison grabbed my arm and pulled my up and I felt like my back was ready to snap in half— as if it didn’t already happen.

My sister also kicked me out in a way. I could just tell she was done put'n up with my antics. I ain't that bad as she lets on.

Madison dragged me to Kevin's room, and set me down on the floor. I glared at my sister as she opened the door to Kevin's room.

My brother was doing pushups with his AirPods in. I could here form of the music he was listening too. That's how loud he'll blast music into his ears.

"KEVIN!"

Madison rolled her eyes and grabbed a pen from off his dresser and threw it at him. I gotta admit my sister was always good at throw'n stuff at us.

The pen hit Kevin in the head and he looked up at us. He rolled his eyes and pulled his AirPods out. He pushed his curly brown hair up and looked at me. He too looked like me, but he had some face hair. He was jacked with muscle and had a stern body language, but in all reality was a really laid back guy. He played Linebacker for 'Ole Miss— you know, that collage in Mississippi?

He was on his last year of collage, and was engaged to a girl named Katie Scot. She was a really nice girl, but I'd only seen her bout a few times.

I think they're gett'n married in June.

"What's wrong?" He asked with a huff.

"Griffon what's to spend time with you!"

"I never said that." I snapped.

Kevin folded his arms like always and looked straight at me. He then looked at Madison and gave a small sigh.

"Alright, now, can you get out of my room?"

Madison didn't even respond. She walked out and down the hall to her room and shut the door. Kevin shook his head and looked up at me.

"You didn't say anything right?"

"What makes you think I said someth'n? I don't always say anyth'n." I said pull'n myself into his room.

"Griffon, just stop. Let me help you."

Kevin grabbed me and picked me up with ease. He set me down on his bed and he sat down next to me.

“So, what’s up?”

I gave a shrug and sat there as Kevin stared at the wall. With all honesty I did too.

“Noth’n.”

“Cool.” He said simply. “Don’t be bother by Maddie. She’s just dealing with this a little differently.” Kevin said softly.

“I know. She deals with a lota stuff funny.” I mumbled, look’n down.

Kevin nodded in agreement and shook his head. “So, you really wanna go back to school early?”

I nodded and looked down. “Yeah. You’ll help me get up right?”

Kevin nodded and gave me a small smile. He nudged my shoulder and rolled his eyes. “We can talk more tomorrow, but right now if you get caught up here... whoa.”

“Whoa?”

“Yeah. Look, mom and dad are gonna kill all three of us.”

“Ain’t that the truth.” I said look’n back up at my brother.

“Come on. Let’s sneak you downstairs. I’ll help you up tomorrow okay? Just shoot me a text.”

“Gotcha.”

## -Griffon-

I opened my eyes and went to sit up, but couldn't exactly do that. I laid back down and looked up again. I didn't want to wake my parents for help... or sibl'ns that had came to see me.

I grabbed my phone that was charg'n by my bed. I sent a text to my brother, Keven, who always had his phone on vibrate.

And let me tell you it wasn't on this time.

A large *dung* sounded through the house, and my face heated up.

*Just lovely*, I thought to myself.

I heard thumps come down the stairs by my room and the door opened to a tiered Kevin. For a big strong guy he looked ready to hit the deck.

"Why are you always up so early?" He asked through a yawn.

"Why ain't you?" I asked try'n pull myself up.

Kevin rolled his eyes and helped me up, and to the wheelchair.

"Thanks." I said softly.

"No problem. I can officially call you my special needs brother." Kevin says softly. I looked up and he blinked. "I mean— I'm sorry that sounded bad!"

"Nah, it's fine." I said smile'n.

For some reason my smile always cheered him up.

I looked around my room. "Can you hand me my backpack?" I said point'n to the closet.

Kevin nodded, opened the closet, and handed it to me.

"You really want to go back to school?"

"Yeah. Better than sit'n around all day... even though thats all I can do now." I said with a hint of annoyance.

Kevin turned on the light, and looked at me. "Look dude. Be thankful your alive. Not many live through that stuff bro... it's a miracle from God."

"So-I've-been-told." I spat slowly.

Kevin opened the door and turned to leave, but looked at me. "I know I sound like dad, but it is a miracle whether you like it or not."

"I never said I didn't like it."

“You know you don’t like it.” Kevin said fold’n his arms

I nodded, but it wasn’t really in agreement as Kevin left. I pushed myself out, and got into the hallway before remember’n I needed a ride.

*Even better*, I thought.

I couldn’t drive, walk, run, ride the horses, chase the goats... or even ride my Dirt Bike. My back always hurt, no matter how much stupid therapy I had. You may be wonder’n, ‘How does it hurt if you can’t feel your lower back/Butt/Legs.

Simple.

The nerve is try’n to reach that area, but can’t get there, send’n a shock through my body.

I pushed down the feel’ns, and got to the kitchen, and saw dad study’n for his sermon in a few days. He looked up at me, put in a book mark, and closed his Bible.

“How are you feeling?” He asked carefully.

I shrugged. “Felt worse.”

“Yeah... the school said when you want, you can call us and leave. Okay?”

I nodded my head and grabbed an apple. I never did have the biggest appetite for breakfast.

“Griffon?”

I looked up at dad, who had a worried expression. “Yeah?”

He looked at me, head to my immovable feet. He took a deep breath, and placed his hand on a necklace he kept hidden in his shirt. He met my eyes and gave a small smile.

“Go try. Even though it’s hard, trying is the best thing one can do. Now, go try תָּבִי .” He says softly.

I nodded at him. He always did this odd thing where he would speak Jewish/ Hebrew. I mean, dad is pure Jewish by blood, but Christian by faith.

Makes sense right?

Ma ended up somehow wake’n up, and took me to school. The lady can *never* wake up in the morning, but somehow she did. The second I got in school, the hallway stopped talk’n, and my face drain, and filled with that dumb red stuff. (I really don’t care for what it’s called).

The school moved my locker down, but I still couldn’t reach. It was on the floor, and well... I can’t bend over and get on my knees you dumb ding dong.

I looked up and smiled. “Hey Nicky! Can you—”

She immediately hung her head, clutched her books, and sped off. For a split second it looked like she was cry’n or some’n like that.

*Huh... wonder what’s up with her,* I thought to myself.

I got to science, and ended up sit’n alone. The tables were to high, but I could see over them— look I ain’t that small without legs— I could really only poke my head above the table. (But we don’t talk about that).

Classes went by, and to be honest I felt alone. Nobody talked to me, and if they decide not to be a bug ona pickle then they would be all like,

‘Oh, how are you?’

or

‘What is it like with no legs?’

or

‘Hey, how are you gonna race again?!’

That one hurt the most. I couldn’t ever race again... no matter what them people told me. On tv they show these people who are paralyzed like me, doing cool stuff, which is half true. Race’n on a Dirt Bike is different. You physically need your legs, no matter how it looks on tv, or what people tell you. Well... sorta.

My family couldn’t afford the stuff needed for me to race.

I got to GYM class, but couldn’t do anyth’n. I sat in my stupid wheelchair off to the side and watched everyone play Swamps and Gators. (Which is dodge ball). I ended up tossing the dodgeballs, that got out of bounds back in.

It was really down right boring. The worst part was, Nicky didn’t talk to me. You see, I’ve known the crazy softball catch’n lady from preschool, and well, I caught some sorta feel’n for her in fifth grade. (Long time to have a crush right? I’m a Junior).

*It don’t matter right now,* I told myself on repeat, no matter how much it did to me. Ma didn’t help much either. She called me a lot throughout the day ask’n if I wanted to go home.

I did.

I really did want to leave, but told her I was fine.

My back started to hurt again, but I didn’t want to tell a soul. Getting stuff out of my locker made it worse. All I want to do is—



“Mate!”

I turned my head and looked at Austin. He was blonde with silver like eyes, and the best wing man/friend in history.

“How you been mate?” He asked running over.

“Been better. My back is kill’n me.” I said simply.

Oops.

I practically did a face plant into my hand, and Austin raised an eyebrow. Austin Baker was from Australia. He had no clue why his parents decided to move to Tennessee but, he was here.

“You want the nurse dude? What’s wrong?”

“Well... I don’t wanna be tell’n people I’m in pain. I don’t want them people to know, or ask. I don’t want to be here, but I missed my friends. I don’t wanna sit around. I want to ride again and I WANT TO WALK AND—!” I stopped talking.

I didn’t think I wanted all of that much....

Austin gave a small kind smile. “Mate... you’ve been through enough recently. I’m just glad your here, and well... half way alright?”

I nodded, and shook my head with an embarrassed smile. Austin gave a chuckle, and offered to give my arms a rest from pushing the wheelchair all day. I told the lunatic no, but I physically didn’t know how to stop him.

He pushed me, towards history class, and we talked. “You know that trip to Germany is still up for us. I’m going. What about you?”

“You mean the holocaust one?”

“Um... sure? I don’t really know mate.”

I shrugged. I was seventy five percent Jewish and twenty fiver percent Polish, (from Ma. She’s half and half.) so I didn’t know how it would work out.

Well, mostly because I didn’t know how the wheelchair could get around places.

“Sure. I don’t know how Ma would like it, but I wanna go somewhere.” I said simply.

“Good! I think Nicky is going to.”

“REALLY?! I mean... really?” I said with a red face of excitement.

Austin burst out laugh’n like a horse. “Mate, I don’t get why you won’t just ask the girl out! Just because you don’t have legs, doesn’t mean you don’t have game!”

My face fell. I looked at my dumb legs. Austin got silent as we got to history class. “I’m sorry... I didn’t mean to...”

“No... it’s fine. To be honest... I couldn’t bring myself to do it with legs... what makes you think I can without? God does things for reasons... this I hate, but still. I gotta get over the girl.” I said softly, looking up at her.

She looked pretty with her strawberry blonde hair covering her face, while she was on her phone.

“Or, my favorite option. You ask her out! Oooooo ask her in Germany!!!” He said energetically.

I turned my country head to her. *Huh... maybe I could.*

She didn’t say a word to me the rest of the day.

## ~Nichole~

I turned around and chucked the softball at Ashlyn. Luckily, she caught it, but I was still mad... sad. Sad-mad? I DON'T KNOW

“Nichole!”

I turned to the coaches who didn't know whether to be mad, or not. “Why are you throwing so hard? She's right there, and we're warming up!”

I turned my head to Ashlyn, who was a few yards away. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

Practice didn't go well. I made great throws to second base, but they jumped out of the way. I wasn't throwing that hard... fine, I lied.

I was throwing as hard as I could.

We all split up into groups, and I was put into the batting cages with Ashlyn. I slapped my helmet on, as Katie went into the cage to hit.

“Hey... are you okay?”

I looked at Ashlyn. “I'm fine.” I said rolling my eyes.

Ashlyn raised an eyebrow, and looked at me. “Okay... I saw Griffon was back today! I mean he's not looking all that great, but—”

“Shut up. Just shut up... please.”

Ashlyn looked at me carefully. Her brown eyes were soft and warm, but I literally didn't care. I didn't want to.

“Nichole... are you... okay?”

“I told you I'm fine.” I snapped bitterly.

Ashlyn looked hurt, but gave a slight nod, and started pulling at her hair.

“Next.”

I got into the batting cage, where my batting coach, Coach Jakes, smiled at me. He always did not matter what.

“How was your day Nicky?” He asked kindly.

Sometimes I really want to grab kindness and throw it out of a window. It can make or break you. That day, it broke me.

I burst into tears, and dropped my bat. I don't know why I did though... or I didn't want to admit why. Coach Jakes stood up and hugged me, as I balled my eyes out.

Someone else hugged me too, but I was blinded from my tears. "Do you want to talk?"

I shook my head, and pulled away. I whipped my face, and Coach told me not to hit yet. Ashlyn went in instead of me, but I placed a hand on my back.

"It's gonna be okay... trust me. I know." She said softly.

I didn't say or do anything but just sat down. I was done... I was done seeing Griffon like that. I felt empty as a bottomless pit, that wanted something.

I hung my head, and whipped my eyes again.

I got home, and went to my room, and sat down on my bed. I looked down, and wanted to rip all of my hair out. I looked up, at my wall full of photos. I looked at one of me and Griffon. He had just won a trophy from racing... which won't ever happen again.

I looked at my Bible... I don't know why, but I got mad. I walked over, and stuffed it in the back of the closet. I sat back down and glared at the floor. The door opened but I kept my head down.

"Hey... how was school?"

"I... I don't want to talk about it." I said softly.

Mom looked at me carefully. "Well... I made some chicken and rice. Come and eat." She said softly.

I nodded and walked past her, and closed my bedroom door.

## -Griffon-

“Ain’t all that bad.” I said as Ma helped me out of the car. We decided to go out to eat as a family before Madison and Kevin head’d back to collage. We went to go for Mexican food, and to be honest when we got in the smell of amaz’nness filled my nose.

“Well I’m glad it was an okay day.” Ma said give’n a relaxed smile.

I nodded, and dunked my tortilla chip into the salsa.

“So... did anyone say anything?” Madison asked.

“About what?”

“Your um...” She nodded to the wheelchair I was in.

“Oh... no. Not really. Only Austin when he decided to take me on a rollercoaster ride.” I said laugh’n.

I soon stopped, when nobody else laughed. Man, my family really *needs* some humor in their sad boring humorless life— I’m not trying to be disrespectful!

Austin had filled some of that void in me for my need for speed. What’s wrong with that?

“Well... that’s... good?” Kevin said getting some water. I nodded, and got some more chips, and salsa. It started to get awkward, but I know their try’n. I mean, I’d feel the same if it was Kevin or Madison.

“So was Austin the only one talking to you?” Madison asked carefully.

“Maddie, I don’t think that’s what Griffon meant.” Ma said with a scowl.

I shrugged and nodded. “Yeah. Pretty much.”

My family looked at me. I felt my face flush with more of that dumb red stuff.

“Not even Nicky?” Dad asked, with full attention.

I scratched the back of my neck, and nodded slightly. It really did hurt. Her not talk’n to me was the weirdest thing.

“Not even a ‘hi’?”

I shook my head, and hung it as my family continued to stare at me. “Well... that’s stupid, just like her.” Kevin said folding his arms.

“She’s not stupid!” I snapped looking back up.

Madison looked at me carefully, but then I figured out she was trying to make me feel better. You see, it was one of those weird girl things.

“Sorry...” I said softly.

“No... it’s fine bro.” Kevin said giving a smile.

I nodded and picked at the chips again. We ordered some food, and I just got some cheese quesadillas, with guacamole. (What a bore’n food choice, look’n back on it).

“Um... I want to go on the Germany trip.” I said softly looking at Ma and Dad. Ma gave me the ‘Really?!’ look, and dad just looked at me.

“Well, I thought we’d give you more time but—.”

“That’s great! I’ll tell the school about it. Frea, sorry I cut you off, but this is great! Going out of his comfort zone.” Dad said with a wide smile.

Ma looked at him funky, and forced a smile. “Wauty... can I speak with you... outside?” She said firmly with that fake smile.

“Sure אהבה.” He said with the same tone. They stood up and walked out together, and left me, Kevin, and Madison.

“Oh no.” Madison said hanging her head.

“I read lips.” Kevin said poking his head up to watch.

“Don’t... I think we might get twenty bucks.” I said smiling.

In my family, if you said a bad word, we all got twenty bucks from the person who said the word. My dad says it’s “Paying the price.”

Well... I already can tell tonight is gonna be a special, odd, night. To be honest... all of them were going to be different.

## -Griffon-

Great news! I'm go'n to Germany! But with great good news, bad news comes. I have to pick people to help me out, because apparently I can't do anything on my own. That was the stupid part.

I definitely wanted Austin to help.

Ma can't go on the trip, because of 'Adult Stuff', but I don't care. Dad agreed to come, to look after me.

Look, I got a month till the trip. I got a month to make a plan to... y'all understand at this point.

I woke up and completely forgot I was paralyzed, which is great until to try and get up from bed. I fell flat onto my still bruised face. I did an army crawl to my wheelchair and attempted to pull myself up. That didn't work. I just kind of sat there for a while, glad it was Sunday.

ITS SUNDAY?!

Wow, my first day back to church and I'm on the ground half dead like a lame horse... literally.

I sat their and waited for the sun to at least come up. (What? I wake up with the rooster). I looked around my room, and army crawled over to my nightstand, and grabbed my phone. I went ahead and texted Austin ask'n if he would mind help'n me in Germany.

I laid back and looked at my legs. My pants started to look baggy, and I didn't really know why. A few minutes passed and I heard someone walk down the hall.

"Um... hello?"

Footsteps came to my room, and dad opened the door and looked at me. I gave an awkward smile, and waved. Dad gave me the same smile and waved back.

"Boy, what are you doing on the floor?"

"Um... sleeping."

Dad shook his head and helped me up into the wheelchair. He helped me get my clothes for church on, and I couldn't help but look at my legs. They were getting thin, and I got nervous. Dad must have seen the look on my face 'cause he kept saying that it's fine.

I got eggs, and headed out to the barn, and fed the goats and chickens. I got to the horses and mine looked at me. It was the look of, *'Well are you gonna ride or not?'*

I shook my head, and looked down again. "It ain't happen'n." I said softly, head'n back to the barn.

I got the cows fed... sort of. It was hard and I dropped the bag into the pen. I got back to the barn and stopped at my bike. It looked amazing... and I wanted to ride.

*God made people walk...*

I went to stand up, but hit the ground hard. I sat their and looked at my bike as stupid weak tears filled my eyes. I looked up at the light.

I looked up immediately at dad. I whipped my face, and he helped me up. His eyes were soft, but I avoided them.

"Griffon... I... I know your mad."

"Really? Really?! IM MAD?! WOW I HAD NO IDEA!"

"Griffon... I know your mad. Me and your mom have been fighting about it, but you HAVE TO believe and trust." He said looking at me.

I scoffed. "Really? Wow, easy for you to say. Your out preach'n all over Tennessee, what next? Go'n to Florida?!" I spat.

"Griffon—"

"I hear they got killer gators down there!" I said with an eye roll. "Then they got snakes that eat the gators!"

"Griffon let me just—"

"It's hit and muggy and I swear that Florida is weirder than Ohio."

"GRIFFON!"

I looked up to dad as he took a deep breath. We were silent for a bit but he took a deep breath and looked down.

"Do you know what your name means?"

"Unclean bird in Hebrew, hooked nose in Latin." I said eye'n him.

My dad was Jewish... he should have named be better than 'Unclean Bird'.



“Do you know the Irish version?”

“Um... no. I’m not Irish.” I said shrugging with sarcasm.

Dad gave a smile, but shook his head. “Your named after the Irish version, which means, prince.”

I raised an eyebrow. I’m the furthest thing from a prince! Has he even met me?! I mean, I’m the definition of Cowboy! (Or I was).

Dad stayed silent for a while before talking again. “Here... take this.”

I looked up at him, and he took off his necklace he always wore. He handed it to me, and I looked at it carefully. A brown thick string made a loop, and wrapped around a wooden cross.

“That wood is from Bethlehem. You know what’s so special about that place right.”

I gave a slight smile. “Yeah yeah. Jesus was born there. Wasn’t he kicked out of there too?” Dad smiled and laughed.

“Yes he was, ironically. But... remember grandma and grandpa?”

“Barley.”

“I was born in Bethlehem, before moving here to the US. I was able to get a small tree branch. When we got here my mother made it into a necklace for me, so I’d always remember home. Now this is my home, and I’m giving it to you.” He said pushing his shaggy greying brown hair up.

I looked at Dad carefully. “Are you serious?”

“Am I?” Dad said standing up and walking out. I looked at the necklace in my hand, and back at my dad, I put the necklace on, and chased after my dad in the wheelchair.

“Dad wait!” I yelled after him.

Dad turned and stopped for me to catch up.

“Yeah?” He asked smiling. I looked at him, lost for words. Dad chuckled and said something in Hebrew. He looked at me and smiled. “Read. It helps.” He said tossing me a pocket Bible. I tossed it back.

“I already got one. Plus that one is old like you.”

“Old like me?! Ha! I’d like to see you when your my age and say that.” He said laughing. I shook my head and smiled again. “Come on, we got church.”

“I thought you were going to GRL’Church.”

“No, I’m coming back to home base. I’m preaching at our church today.” He said smiling.

## ~Nichole~

I went down to the three year olds again, and still felt empty with their cheerful personalities. Sometimes it annoyed me when they talked about stuff and I wanted to leave.

“Nichole, are you alright?”

I looked at Ms Joy and nodded slightly. “Yeah... I’m okay.” I said passing out papers.

We didn’t talk for a little before I finish passing out papers. I part of me feels like she knows how empty I feel.

“I heard about your friend... I’m sorry.” She said softly.

I felt anger boil, and I looked down. “It’s fine.” I said through clenched teeth.

I didn’t want to snap... not at church at least.

I walked out the second I could, and drove myself home. I obviously told my parents, so they didn’t worry, and just told them I didn’t feel well... which was a half truth. I felt terrible on the inside, which made my stomach hurt.

I sat down in my dark room, and continued to bottle up more and more feelings. I just felt so betrayed it hurt. I couldn’t even bring myself to talk to Griffon about it. I couldn’t stop imagining how it happened. Somehow, the rider behind him came over the jump and landed on him. The rider behind to him was okay?!

It was unfair.

I looked down and felt a silent sob start. I pushed it back... I have to be tough. *I’m a catcher. I have to be hard*, I told myself. That’s what catchers are supposed to be... right?

I ended up leaving my dark room, and got an apple.

Practice.

That’s all I wanted to do. *If I can practice... I can forget about everything for a little bit*, I thought to myself. It convinced me, so I went outside and did squats, and threw a ball against the wall and caught it repeatedly.

“Nichole?”

I looked up, then at my watch. I had been doing this for an hour... and still felt terrible inside. “Yeah?”

Mom looked at me carefully with her soft eyes. I hated that about her... her eyes could see through anyone. “Nicky... are you feeling better?”

“No.”

Mom raised an eyebrow. “Okay then. If your feeling ‘sick’ then why are your practicing?” She said with a small tone. I wanted to roll my eyes, but with my mom you’d be making your own grave.

I shrugged. “I can’t sit still.” I explained softly. Mom nodded slightly.

“Oh how I know that. You wouldn’t happen to be feeling... anxious, nervous, and broken... would you?”

There it is. She saw right through me. Skin and bone... this is what I get for having a therapist for a mom isn’t it? It really sucks because she wants to ‘Talk It Out’.

She looked at me carefully. I was the odd one after all. My parents had brown hair and eyes, and I was a strawberry blonde.

“Nichole... you will go to Germany—”

“WHAT?!”

“And you will talk to someone—”

“I’m sorry what?!”

“And you WILL be friends with him again, and stop bottling up what happened.”

I raised an eyebrow. How did she know I was avoiding Griffon?! I swear, moms have some sort of psychic thing going on. I wanted to yell back, but I didn’t have a choice. What mom said went, and what I said only would make mom want to send me more.

I groaned and walked inside.

“Love you.” She said in a playful tone. Dad walked up beside her.

“Your gonna break that kid.”

“You can’t break what’s broken. Germany is going to fix her. She’s like a puzzle, Mike. They start broken, but but back together they are beautiful.”

“Don’t they break again?” My father had asked my mother.

“Don’t say that.”

## ~Nichole~

School was depressing as normal. Classes went by, and I didn't talk to Griffon... well I didn't have classes with him yet. I walked down the hall when I heard someone.

"Hey Nicky!"

I started to walk a little faster, not wanting to talk.

"Youhoooooooo NICKYYYYYYY!"

I picked up the pace, as Griffon started coming after me. I stopped walking as he sailed forward. He yelped, and I couldn't help but give a slight smile. He got control after a minute or two and came back.

"Hello! Today is a great day and I—"

"Hate it?"

He looked at me curiously. He then eyed me. "Good to see your not mute." He said softly, with some anger.

Wow... that hurt, talk about dagger to the heart right?

I shrugged, and looked at the ground.

"What? Is it not cool to talk to me or something?" He said softly.

I shook my head, and pushed back tears. I glanced at him in his wheelchair, and looked down again.

"I... I just... I... can't talk about it now." I said softly.

"About what? What happened? I don't wanna talk about it either." He said pointing to the wheelchair. I looked into his blue eyes that showed pain. "So... what's up?" He said looking down.

I shrugged. "Nothing really... how's life?"

"Um... my siblings went back to collage. Still getting used to the whole... 'Your Paralyzed' thing." He said softly.

I looked down as well, and silence started for a bit.

"We should... we should get to class." I said softly.

He nodded in agreement, and I ended up walking with him to history.

"How about we forget this ever happened? Alright?" Griffon said with a small smile.

I gave a small smile back and nodded. “Whatever you say.”

I held the door open for Griffon as she got into the classroom. I sat down, and looked at Ashlyn who had a broad smile.

“What?” I asked hiding a small smile.

“See you two are talking again.” She said giving a devious smirk.

I rolled my eyes, and smiled. “Yeah, and?”

Ashlyn raised her eyebrows up and down, with the devious smirk.

“No! I don’t like him.” I hissed, knowing Griffon sat near.

Ashlyn rolled her eyes at me. “Sure, and it’s not like he likes you back.”

“He does?!”

She smiled at me, and shook her head. “You are so blind.” She said laughing.

My face got red, because it seemed like she said that out loud.

“Anyways, I also got a date.” She said turning red.

“With who?”

“Austin Baker.” She said turning more red.

“You mean the goalkeeper for the soccer team?” I said giving her the same smirk she gave me.

She nodded and glanced at Austin. “Face it Nicky. The guy is hot. He’s the hottest kid in the grade! He even likes me back!” She said excitedly.

“That’s because you’ve liked him since last year. Trust me, he may be ‘hot’, but he’s not cute.” I pointed out.

She nodded and laughed. To be honest, I had never seen her so happy.

“Then who is cute?” She asked with a smirk.

I felt my face heat up, and I found myself glancing to Griffon.

“Uh-huh. So, you think the guy who, you ‘totally don’t like’ is cute?” Ash taunted.

My face heated up, and I looked down.

We both glanced back at the boys, who we’re talking about something. Austin was a small shade of pink, while Griffon was red as a tomato.

“Isn’t Austin from Florida?”

“And Australia!!!”

I raised an eyebrow. Maybe it was because I never talk to him much, but I didn't think he had an accent. I looked at them, and my eyes fell on Griffon.

"Austin's may be hit, but Griffon is adorable."

"Because you like him." Ashlyn said smiling.

"Yeah...— what?! Nope! No way."

The girl had tricked me. She tricked me into confessing everything I didn't want to admit. I had to say, Ashlyn was a great pitcher, but she would make a great detective or spy.

Ashlyn smirked. "It's been obvious since ninth grade Nicky. I'm not that dumb."

(Griffon)

I looked up at Nicky who was shrug'n, and talk'n to Ashlyn about someth'n. I turned to Austin, who was drawing on his paper.

"Why do girls always huddle when they talk?"

Austin looked up at the girls and shrugged. "Great question. I um... I dunno know!" He said with fake energy.

I laughed and we watched them a little bit longer. "I asked Ashlyn out."

"What did she say?" He went pink and smiled. My eyes widened. "She said yes!? To you!?"

He nodded and sat back.

I leaned back in the wheelchair and shook my head. "She said yes because your good look'n huh?"

"No, she actually likes me back for who I am. So take that you dry little dingo." Austin snapped with a grin. He then pointed to Nicky. "Saw you two talking. She's right up your ally mate." He said putting a hand on my shoulder.

"I don't know. It was kinda awkward, and—"

"You bother, she was blushing."

"She wasn't... holy tatdor tot she was!"

"EXACTLY MATE!" Austin said shaking my shoulder. "She gave you a green light! She likes you dude!"

My face went red, and we both looked away when the girls looked over. "Stop talk'n so loud." I hissed at him.

Austin gave a smile and shook his head. "I can talk as loud as I want. Look, we got three weeks until Germany. Three weeks for you to plan, and three weeks for me to be your wing man!" He said smartly.

I nodded in agreement with him. I looked down at my wheelchair and my stuck as the muck legs. "You think I gotta chance?"

"Think?" Austin said breathlessly. "THINK?! MATE, YOUR SET UP FOR—!"

I turned around and covered his mouth. "Shut up!" I hissed at him. I glanced at Nicky who was talk'n to Ashlyn Kertcher about someth'n.

Austin licked my hand and I pulled it off of his mouth. "THATS DISGUST'N!"

"And you let me go. Listen mate, if we're going to do this, we plan now. Period." He said pointing a finger. "I read it in a book. I'm practically a genius on this stuff."

I nodded and whipped my hand on his uniform. He looked disgusted at first then shrugged.

"Alright. What's the plan?" I said nervously.

The bell rang for class to start, and Austin looked at me. "Tell you later." He then looked at me. "Take what you can mate."

"And give noth'n back."

## ~Nichole~

I walked out of the school, and started heading over to the aftercare stuff. If I didn't go, I'd get Saturday School. Simple. Mom or Dad couldn't pick me up, because they were busy with something, and I didn't have a car yet. I always drove mom's.

"Hey Nicky!"

"Yeah?"

I turned and looked down at Griffon, who was coming up behind me in his wheelchair.

"Wanna come back with me and Austin? He's com'n with me." He asked nervously. I shrugged. It was better than staying at school.

"Yeah! Thanks..."

"Anytime." He said looking down. I looked at him carefully, and his shaggy brown hair covered a red in his face. We met up with Austin, and he flung his backpack over his arm.

"How's Ashlyn?" I asked smiling.

"She's fine... I think. WAIT IS SOMETHING WRONG?!"

The guy got so nervous, and freaked out. I burst out laughing with Griffon, who patted his friend.

We helped Griffon into his mom's car, and me and Austin hopped into the back, as I texted my parent telling them where I was going.

The drive was fun. We all played 'Spot the Animal' which was something Austin said he played with his younger brother in Australia. Now that I talked to him, it was kind of clear he had a small accent.

We got out, and helped Griffon out, and set our stuff inside. We headed out, and all walked headed to the barn. I looked at Griffon who looked tired.

"Hey... I can push the wheelchair for you if you want." I offered.

"No. I'm fine." He said softly. I raised an eyebrow and glanced at Austin, who was mouthing 'Just Push it'. I walked up, and started to push and Griffon went silent.

"Thanks." He finally said.



“No problem.” I said softly. He scratched the back of his neck again, and his ears went red. I looked over to see a smirking Austin, and my face went red.

“Anyways... we’re *all* going to Germany right?” Austin asked.

“Yup.”

“Uh-huh!”

I smiled, knowing Griffon got to go. We got to the barn, and I ran to the baby goats. I started to play with them, and wrestled the elder boy of them.

“Be careful. That guys gets crazy.” Griffon warned coming over to me.

“It’s a baby goat. I think I’m fine.” I said laughing. Austin followed Griffon and watched. I smiled but then the goat did go bonkers. It started jumping everywhere, and head butting everything including me.

I turned around and jumped out of the small enclosed area. I sat on my butt and watched the goat stop going kookoo Cocoa Puffs.

“Told you.”

I looked up at Griffon, who was laughing. “That is not a goat! If it is then that thing is possessed!” I said staring wide eye.

The boys bursted out laughing, and started to mock me. I shook my head.

“Whatever!” I snapped.

I stood up and walked out as the boys followed. I leaned against the fence to the cows pen. Austin and Griffon came over.

“Hey can I ride one?” Austin asked.

Griffon looked up, and I raised an eyebrow. “I’m sorry, ride one of the cows?”

“Um... yeah. Thought it was clear enough.” Austin said nodding. I wanted to say, ‘um no’, but Griffon had a different idea.

“Of course! Ride that one right there.” He said pointing across the field to a big bull.

“Thanks mate!” Austin said hopping the fence. Griffon and I watched s he raised through the cows.

“He’s going to get himself killed.” I said with a singsongy voice.

“I know.” Griffon said with a smirk.

## -Griffon-

We burst out laugh'n as Austin got bull dozed. I looked up at Nicky who was dying laugh'n. If I'm be'n honest... she was really pretty while laugh'n. I couldn't help but watch her, and when she looked over I looked up.

My face got hot, as I felt her stare at me.

*Come on... just ask her!*

"So here's an idea... I um... need two friends to help me around in Germany. Austin is um... one but I wanted to know if uh... u'd want to eh... help?"

She looked at me. Her brown eyes stared through me. I cleared my throat and looked up as my face went more of that stupid color.

"Um... yeah. That would be nice."

I looked up at her. "Huh?"

She started to laugh again and my face got more and more of the stupid feeling like color.

Austin came running back and me and Nicky pulled my wheelchair back. I flung out of the chair, as Austin hopped the fence (and luckily, he hopped over me).

It hurt a bit, but I didn't show it.

"I'm sorry!" She said instantly.

"It's fine. Happens a lot." I said roll'n to my back.

I winced in pain and felt the screws in my back press against whatever they were press'n against.

Austin and Nicky helped me into the wheelchair again. I looked at Nicky who seemed to feel bad.

"It's fine." I told her softly.

She looked up and nodded slightly. I couldn't help but smile at her before my cheeks filled with red chlorophyll.

I scratched my neck, (that's what I seem to do when I'm embarrassed or nervous. I don't know why I do it thought) and looked down again.

"So uh... I say we all get some drinks. The bull did not like me." Austin said.

I agreed and we headed back.

Ma seemed to already had fresh orange juice made for us— which tastes amaze’n! I choked down my juice and looked at Nicky. Her head was hung and see seemed like a bump on a pickle. She stood up and walked towards the bathroom.

“Nicky wait!”

“Dude... she probably wants to go to the bathroom.” Austin said put’n a hand on my shoulder. I looked at Austin, who smiled slightly. I shrugged and looked down.

“I don’t want her to feel bad. I mean, it happens when you take me for a ‘joy spin’.” I said softly.

“True mate. You are fine right?”

“Yeah. Just my back.” I said rubbing it.

Austin sat up and got more juice. He was quite for a second, before looking up. “Look, think about it. The plane to Germany is like 12 hours. I’ll set you up in a seat with her, okay?”

I nodded. “Okay. I’ll get you and Ashlyn—”

“Already happening Mate. I’ll hit an old lady with a book if I have to.” Austin said picking up one of Dad’s books.

“That got real dark, real quick.” I said laugh’n.

Austin gave the ‘I’m the smartest man alive’ face and chuckled.

“All it is, is a leap of faith mate.” He said smiling. I nodded, and for some reason glanced at our family Bible. I looked down at my legs, then back at the Bible.

“Yeah... a leap of faith.”

## ~Nichole~

“We understand that you are in high school, but you will not.”

Groans exploded in the room. All of the Juniors were gathered to talk about Germany, which is just a few days away. I looked over at Ashlyn who looked at me. We already made arrangements to be roomies. All of the countless sleep overs— from this year—finally led to this. She smirked at me and we did a handshake.

“Softball gals back together for another sleepover, baby!” She whispered.

I laughed, and looked at her watch. “You gotta a text from the Australian Shepherd Boy.” I told her.

She looked at her Apple Watch, and smiled. I grabbed her wrist, and texted back to Austin.

Ashlyn bursted out giggling with me, as we looked up. Austin after a minute looked back at us with his eyebrows raised. Griffon grabbed his wrist and looked at what I sent. His face held back a laugh, and he looked at us.

“What did you send?”

“ ‘Your mamma is so fat her weight is her phone number.’ ”

Ashlyn’s eyes widened as she turned her watch on. Austin had texted back.

*At least my ma has a number. Your ma so ugly I see the resemblance in you. Griffybiffy-bruski ;4)’*

We looked up at the boys again who looked ready to die of laughter. I rolled my eyes as Ashlyn turned her watch off.

Why are boys dumb? Even Griffon! He’s smarter than the grade but acts like an idiot.

I found myself staring at him before Ashlyn nudged me. I looked up and sat up straight with a red face.

“Uh... I don’t know.” I said pulling out my phone.

I looked at the weather forecast for Germany, and it was going to be nice.

“Probably some sweaters would be good.” I told mom, standing up.

She nodded and tossed me a jacket. It was really nice Tan Leather Jacket, and it was moms.

“You can use it in Germany.” She said smiling.

I smiled and packed the suitcase and possibly packed my catching glove. For the first time my parents weren't going to come, and I'd bunk with Ashlyn and her mom. I have high expectations that we are gonna have the best five-night sleepover ever.

I zipped up my suitcase for now, and set it to the side. What? I like to pack early. You never know what to expect.

I walked out of my room and sat back on the couch, and turned on the TV.

"What are you gonna watch?" Dad asked walking up behind me.

"Good question... I was going to put on a documentary."

"Oooo like the animal ones?"

I looked at my dad and raised an eyebrow. "No! Those suck. I was thinking about watching the DB Cooper one." I said pointing it out.

Dad nodded. He had thinking brown hair and a beard. He had tree brown eyes with green sparks, that made me feel like I was in a forest—not to mention the dad bod—it always made me laugh.

"I'll watch it with you. I'll get the chips and cheese."

"And guac?"

Dad turned and looked at me. "Of course... let's just make sure your mother didn't get to it first." He said smiling.

I smiled and pulled out my phone. Man, my dad is awesome. I texted Ashlyn, who said she wasn't going to pack till the night before.

I almost texted Griffon, but decided not to—and not because of his 'your mamma joke'—it was a solid not-so-solid joke to be honest.

To even more be honest, I had been wanting to be 'flirty' but I don't know how. When I try, I roll my eyes and pick on him, although I was wondering what he was doing.

## -Griffon-

I sat down... or well set myself on my bed and sat there. I smiled all day... I smiled to hide the pain. I let my face ease to what I felt, and looked at myself in the mirror Ma put in a few years ago... when I could race.

I looked terrify'nly dreadful. More like a dead horse. I looked down and took a deep breath, an bit my lip. Angry tears filled my eyes and I sniffed them back.

For some reason my head turned and I looked at my personal Bible. I looked down and back up. I put myself back into the wheelchair and got to my desk. I sat there and fiddled my Bible in my hand.

*Hey God... haven't done this in a while, and um... please show me... I guess?* I wanted to throw up at my own prayer.

Oh well. I fiddled with the pages and opened up. I glanced over then my eyes froze.

*“And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.”*

I read more.

*“And when he saw their faith, he said unto them, **Man, thy sins have forgiven thee.**”*

And my eyes opened. I couldn't stop reading... no matter what. I found myself writing verses down, and I flipped pages to different books.

*“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*

I looked back at the verse in Luke 5 that said,

*‘And when he saw their faith, he said unto them, **Man, thy sins have forgiven thee.**’*

*‘...So he said to the paralyzed man, **I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.** Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.’*

Darkness came and Wauty headed in for the night. He walked in the hallway, and froze. Light shone from under Griffon's room, and he rolled his eyes.

*That boy's lost his mind,* He thought.

H opened the door to find Griffon asleep on the desk in his room. Papers were everywhere, and his pen was loosing ink on a paper he seemed to be writing on before he fell sleep.

Wauty lifted his son's head, and got the paper and pen. He read he paper, and looked up at the wall.

Scripture was taped or stapled onto the wall. He found one that Griffon had made edit to, by underlining.

*‘The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.’*

He looked at his son, and his Bible was still opened, shining in the light of his lamp. Wauty looked at the light of the Bible as verses were underlined or circled, and it filled his heart with joy.

“The lost boy, has found home again.” He said quietly. He turned off the lamp, and smiled again.

And then, Wauty closed the door.

Night came, but the Bible seemed to hold its glow.

It's Holy and Righteous Glow.

## ~Nichole~

Monday morning came, and we were up at 3 am. I put in some nice sweaters and boots, and got changed into a cute outfit. It's the one time I don't have to wear a uniform, and I want to look good.

I got out, at about fourish, and mom and dad drove to the airport. It was about an hour drive, because we lived in the woods, but it was okay.

We got their, and dad handed me my backpack and suitcase. He gave me a hug and smiled at me. "Have fun. Learn... and take photos." He said laughing.

I smiled and nodded. "Alright." I said as mom joined the little hug.

"Have fun!"

"Okay okay." I said, pulling away. "Sheese." I added. Mom and dad smiled at me and said goodbye, as I ran inside.

It was huge! I had been to an airport before, but this one shocked me. I didn't think the school would pay so much to come to a nice airport!

I got lost, before I found the ticket section. I ran in, and found Ashlyn and her mom. She turn and ran up to me, and practically was jumping up and down.

"It's a 12 hour flight!"

My eyes widened. "What?!"

"I know right?! I'm getting my energy out now!" She said jumping. "I attend on sleeping on that plane!" Ashlyn stopped and smiled. "I also brought portable chargers."

I laughed, and Ms Kechter greeted me, and handed me my ticket. Lucky me, my bags could be a carry on, so I didn't need to get them checked— which meant we could go to the gate. We started our walk, and I said 'Hi' to some of my classmates— even the ones I hated— I was to tired to talk to them.

We got to the gate and all that good stuff, when I saw Griffon, his dad, and Austin. I guess their were all bunking for the trip. It made since that Mr Connors was with Griffon, being the guy just got paralyzed a few months ago.

Wow. It was the beginning of April. I guess time flies faster when your friend gets paralyzed and put into a hospital for a bit.



We put our tickets to the scanner, and joined them. Ashlyn walked up to Austin, and they both smiled.

“It’s too early for this.” Griffon said behind me.

I chuckled and turned to him. “I guess that’s cool.” I said earning a startled expression.

“Um it’s not. It sucks. I ain’t ever do’n that again. Two thirty is *not* when I wanna wake up.” He said yawning.

I smiled, and the tram came. We all got on, and I sat down in the front window seat thing. It was nice, and Griffon came over too. Austin held his wheelchair from zooming back, while Griffon put it in ‘park’ mode.

It was a quick trip, and we talked a little.

We got to the airport, main area—by the planes. I can never remember what the area is called. (Is it main gates? I really don’t know). I set my stuff down, and grabbed my wallet for food, and headed to the bagel place in the airport.

“Mind if I join?”

“Sure.” I said smiling.

Griffon smiled, and came over. He was wearing baggy blue jeans, his old racing jersey, and a motorcross hat, as he sped ahead of me.

“Your hat is gonna fly off!” I yelled chasing him.

He slowed down, and looked at me as I caught up. “Okay. I’ll be as slow as a tortoise for you red.”

“Are you calling me a turtle?” I asked raising an eyebrow. He shook his head and laughed, as I knocked his hat off of his shaggy hair.

“Jerk!”

“Moron!”

We go in line, and ordered the same thing—I swear it wasn’t on purpose! For some reason he was just so happy. I smiled, and the guy behind us walked over. He glanced at Griffon, and asked, “You like Motorcross?”

Griffon looked up. “Heck yeah! I used to race before... um... well I think you can tell.” He said softly.

The man nodded slowly. “I understand kid. I couldn’t imagine not racing.”

Griffon nodded and looked up. I had no idea what the heck they were talking about to be honest.

“Wait... your that kid that had that accident in states, aren't you?!”

Griffon nodded, and scratched his neck. “Yeah... that's me.” He said nervously.

The man smiled, and stuck out his hand. “Eli, Eli Tomac.”

Griffon's eyes lit up, and he shook his hand quickly with the biggest smile I'd ever seen him wear.

“What's your name kid?”

“Griffon Conners!”

“Nice to meet you... lemme guess,” Tomac said looking at Griffon who had his hat in his hand. “You want me to sign the hat?” Eli said laughing.

Griffon's face went red, but he nodded.

Griffon, Austin, Mr. Conners, and I got on the plane first, because we were accompanying Griffon. I sat down behind Griffon and Austin, and started to get comfortable, as Ashlyn sat down with me a good five minutes later.

Austin immediately turned around and faced me, from the crack in the seat in front. “Can I switch with you?”

“Why?”

He looked at me then Ashlyn. “So I can sit with my girlfriend.” He said smiling.

I raised an eyebrow, and glanced at Ashlyn, who's face was a bright pink. I rolled my eyes. “Fine, but it's not like I don't know what happening here.” I said standing up.

I moved over and sat down next to Griffon. I froze and my face went pink. I looked back at Austin and Ashlyn who were smirking. I had been played; set up.

“Oh... hi.” He said with a red face.

“Hey... um... where did your hat go?”

“Gave it to dad. I didn't want anyth'n happen'en to it.” He said laughing.

I smiled and looked out the window at the darkness. I got window seat, which wasn't bad.

“So, when are we take'n off? How do we take off?” He asked.

I looked at him carefully for a second. “Have you ever been on a plane before?” I asked carefully.

Griffon shook his head. Oh gosh, he hadn't been on a plane.

"Um well—"

The plane started to rumble and we moved forward. Griffon grabbed the seat's armchair, and his eyes widened. I started to laugh, and Griffon's face went pink again.

"Shut up Nicky! This is terrify'n!" He snapped. I started to laugh again, and was glad we were there very front of the plane.

"It's fine mate!" Austin said squishing his face through the crack behind us.

"Shut up Austin! I'll have your ding dang throat if I live!" Griffon said through clenched teeth.

I heard Ashlyn burst out laughing, and I did too. After a few moments Griffon started to relax, but I knew it was about to get bad again.

The plane bursted into its fiery speed, and Griffon's face went whiter than snow. He grabbed the necklace he seemed to have on recently and started praying on repeat, "Lord let me live, and if I die, please no fly'n in heaven!"

The plane did its upward slant into the sky, and Griffon grabbed the seats, and clung on, still praying his mouth off. To my shock he grabbed my hand, and my face went a bright red.

The next ten minutes were a blur because I was so tired— and a little 'love sick' from holding Griffon's hand. Eventually, Griffon realized he was fine, and looked at me. We both let go of each other's hands, and I looked away with a red face.

Twelve hours on a plane sitting next to your crush. Can't be that bad... sitting their for Twelve hours.

## -Griffon-

I opened my eyes, and sat there for a second. I looked down at my watch. It was 9 am. I had been out for two and a half hours... I think. I wasn't pay'n much attention when this metal death tube took off.

I glanced over at Nichole who was sleep'n on the window, with the thingy down so no light could get in. I looked back at Austin and Ashlyn, who were sleep'n with their heads on each others... and I felt jealous for a moment.

I shook it off and glanced again at Nicky who was out cold as dust. I looked over, and a few rows back, dad was sleep's too. Man, everyone is out cold, and I'm awake... just like home.

I pulled out my phone, and started to play some good 'ole Wordle, which is where you try to make words, out of random letters.

I didn't realize how long I was playing, till my phone did a 'out of time' thing my parents put on it, for games. Two and a half hours... dang. At least I know I got ding dang seven and a half hours left on this metal tube of death.

I looked back to dad who was up, and he just so happened to look up when I looked over. I pointed to my phone and he nodded and gave me a finger of 'just a sec'.

I looked over at Nicky, who was awake and watching something on her phone. I looked over and started to secretly watch too. It seemed interesting even though I couldn't hear it. Nicky looked up at me, and I tried to fumble out my phone in time. She started to snicker as my face went red.

"Do you want to watch too?" She said softly.

"Yeah... what is it?" I asked looking at the animation.

"South Park. It's very... special... but I find it funny." She explained, with a hint of good 'ole hesitation.

"Sure... can't be that bad."

"It can." She said handing me one of her AirPods.

I looked at her, and apparently what ever expression I had make that girl laugh again.

"Okay... I'm scared now."

"You should." She laughed, and pressed unpause.

How to explain the episode I just finished watch'n. Well let's just I say I quit watch'n. Um... highly inappropriate, but hilarious.

Let's just say, I ain't ever watch'n this show again. We both agreed to watch something else so, I got to pick... well was decid'n.

"What about Bambi?" Nicky said in an annoyed voice.

"With that wimpy deer that should 'ave died? No." I said. (Face it. The deer should have died—I want option to be the one to skin that deer!)

Nicky rolled her eyes. We had been at this for about ten minutes now. I snatched her phone and looked at her. "Have you ever seen the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe?"

Nicky raised an eyebrow. "No... I haven't."

"Well today is your lucky day! I ain't leave'n this tube of death till you watch it with me." I said smiling.

It took me a second to process what my mouth had said, and my face went red. I literally asked her to do someth'n with me.

Nicky shrugged, and snatched her phone back, and started the movie. She set up her phone on the tray thingy and we started to watch.

We got to the part where dear 'ole Lucy brought Edmund into the wardrobe, when a flight attendant lady walked up.

"What drink would you want? We have water, lemonade, apple juice, orange juice, Sprite, coke, Diet Coke, and—"

"Can I get some water?" I asked.

She nodded, and I saw her glance at the folded up wheelchair in front of me. She rolled her eyes, and took Nicky's order and left. Sheese lady, you don't gotta be rude about it. We got our drinks, and went back to watching the movie.

Someone tapped my back, and I looked at Austin who was leaned over the row to me.

"How's it going mate?"

"Okay... why?"

Austin shrugged and flipped his beach blonde hair. "I dunno... because this was the plan." He said smirk'n. The plan... I had forgotten.

I felt my face go red, and I looked at Nicky who was watching the movie, carefully, but hav'n a great time.

“Okay okay okay. This is great! It's flat out amaz'n, and we've been watch'n stuff.” I said trying not to say anyth'n to loud.

“Good.” Austin said smiling. “Me and Ashlyn, have been watching Titanic on repeat.” He said.

“Did she cry?”

Ashlyn poked her head around. “No, you should ask the Australian brat himself.” Ashlyn said smirk'n. I looked at Austin who's face went red.

“It was sad! I was shipping it! And then that ship sank and—.” His voice broke and his eyes got glassy.

I should have known.

Austin was always the emotional movie guy. I bursted out laughing, as Ashlyn wrapped an arm around Austin. She signaled for me to go back to what I was doing. I did before turning back to her.

“Wait, how did you know about the plan?!”

She got a smile. “Good cop bad cop. I'm the bad cop.” She explained softly. It was true. You were either on Ashlyn's good side or bad side.

I turned back and looked at Nicky who was still watching the movie. I smiled.

“Now, if you excuse me, I have a not so secret plan to continue with.” I said softly.

I turned around and watched the movie with her.

## ~Nichole~

The plane flew through the air, and it was nice, looking down at the world. For a long time, we were over the ocean, and I mean a *long* time. Like, the first six hours of the flight. Griffon and I ended up running out on battery on our phones, so we took turns charging them from the little chargers in the seats, and Ashlyn's Portable Charger.

I looked up at Griffon who was reading a book. How do people read? We have movies for a reason. I'm not a reader, so if your reading all of this, well your able to do something I can't.

I tried to peek at the cover, and Griffon put the book down.

"What 'you do'n?" He asked.

"Um... looking at the cover." I said flatly.

Griffon raised an eyebrow and handed me the book. "Try and read it. It's good." He said smiling. I raised and eyebrow at him. He must be nuts.

"Um... I don't read."

"Really?" He said sarcastically. "Just try chapter one. It ain't that bad." He said looking at me carefully.

I rolled my eyes and opened the book called, *A Land Remembered*. I glanced at Griffon, and he gave me a look that said, 'um... read.' I rolled my eyes and opened the book.

I guess time passed for a while. Griffon tapped my shoulder and smiled. "Not that bad huh?" He said softly. I shrugged. I looked down at the book, and I was on chapter six already.

"I... I guess not." I said handing the book back. He smiled at me and pointed out the window. I looked over at the setting sun, and had to take a photo. We were over land, and as far as I could tell, we had been for a while.

"Where are we?"

"We're over France." He said looking on the map on his phone.

"Oh, okay... so we're almost there!"

He shrugged, and nodded. He took back his book and put a mark in for where I was at.

"I'm glad you like it." He said smiling.

I couldn't help but smile back, and I felt my face go a little red.

"Thanks." I said looking down at the earth.

“Anytime really.” He said softly.

Time passed, as it always did. The seconds ticked, and hours chimed. Clearly me and Griffon missed the ‘the plane is starting its decent’ message. Griffon must have looked out the window because he grabbed the seat again, as his face flushed.

“What?” I asked.

“Why are we go’n down?!”

I looked outside as we went down. “Because thats how you get down...you know, to Germany.” I said plainly.

“Okay okay... Why so quick?!” He asked. I looked down as we were heading quickly down. I shrugged.

“I don’t know... because we are.” I explained.

Griffon nodded and gripped the seats tighter as the plane fell. The sun had set, and I looked at Griffon who looked more terrified then on our way up.

“What’s up mate?” Austin said appearing behind us.

“Shut up!” Griffon snapped.

Austin roared with laughter, and shook his head. “You scared mate?”

“I will have your ding dang throat if I live!” He said, like he had said earlier.

I looked at Ashlyn who winked at me. I rolled my eyes and looked at Griffon.

I grabbed his hand.

I looked away, with a red face.

(Griffon)

*I’m gonna die, I’m gonna die, I’m gonna die, I’m gonna—!*

My hand was grabbed and I looked to see Nicky. She held my hand, and looked out the window. My face burned red, but it was sort of comfort’n oddly enough. I closed my eyes, as the plane hit the ground hard.

I’m dead.

I peaked my eyes open... I was still in the plane. I was still alive! I’m breathing, and my heart was beating. My chest started to hurt some, but it always did when my heart was beating fast.

That’s normal right?



I looked around and smiled. I then looked at my hand. My face burned up, and Nicky let go of my hand.

“Congratulations. You lived.” She said sarcastically, but I saw a hint of red in her cheeks. Maybe I had a chance.

## ~Nichole~

We all got our bags and, two busses picked us up. There was a girls and boys buss, and I was a little disappointed. I sat down next to Ashlyn, who seemed very red.

“What’s wrong?”

She looked up me, but shook her head, and bit back a smile.

“Ashlyn! What happened....”

She shook her head again. It took me a good second to realize her mom was sitting near by.

“Oh... OH!” I suddenly got the message. “Did you guys like... you know...”

She nodded her head, as the buss started on its way to dinner. “It happened so fast, but time slowed down like a movie and—.” She cut herself off and looked at her mom. “Mom doesn’t like the idea of me dating. Ever since dad left... I don’t even talk about Austin with her.” She explained softly.

I nodded and looked down. “Was it enjoyable?” I said trying to lighten the mood. Ashlyn’s face went red, and she smiled.

“You could say it was— because it was.” She said talking about the kiss she had just had. “How was holding hands with Griffon?”

My face burned up, as the buss came to a stop. She smiled and patted my back. “I know you and Austin set me up.” I finally said.

She shrugged and nodded. “Okay and? I’ve been waiting since eighth grade, AKA when I got to this school.”

I rolled my eyes, and got off the buss with her. “I already told you, I don’t think he does. Plus I started liking him in ninth.” I said with annoyance.

“Gurl... your blind!”

“Gurl?”

“Yes gurl. I’m gonna call you that until you can see again.” She said

I rolled my eyes and watched as the boys buss parked next at this restaurant. Our buss parked behind it as we all got off.

The boys go off, and Austin was carrying an angered Griffon over his shoulder.

“I could have gotten off by my self!” He hissed.

Austin smiled and walked over. “Hey ladies.”

“PUT ME DOWN!”

“We have a code seven, which is angry paralyzed man,”

“DUDE!”

“And he seems to hate his best mate at the moment.”

“I DO, PUT ME DOWN!”

Griffon’s father came over, and smiled at us all. He shook his head and chuckled to himself.

“You *all* are crazy.” He said unfolding Griffon’s wheelchair.

Austin flipped Griffon over into the chair, and when he tried to help him, Griffon smacked him away.

“Go away!” He said pushing him away.

We all went inside, and I was surprised it was a sausage restaurant. I looked over at Austin, who seemed really excited.

“Is sausage German?”

He nodded his head violently, with a grin. “They invited the best food on the planet mate!” He said running to a table.

We all followed, and Ashlyn sat next to him. I sat down, and helped Griffon into the seat next to me. I looked at Ashlyn who smirked at me, and I rolled my eyes.

## -Griffon-

We ended up order'n, and you won't believe what we ordered. Sausage. Oh my gosh! No way! Wow, I had no idea they sold sausage at a sausage place!

To be honest, we all ordered different sausage. I got honey, Ashlyn got mint, Austin got jalapeño, and Nicky got maple. Honestly, I don't think this place needs all that many flavors. It ain't necessary.

I looked at Austin who pulled out his phone. I raised an eyebrow as he glanced at me suspiciously. My phone buzzed and I looked at his text.

*Aw. You got honey and Nicky got maple. How cute. Use a pickup line!*

I looked up at the smirk'n guy and shook my head. The guy wanted me to use a pickup line on her. He was crazy.

"Anyways, how was the plane ride?" Ashlyn asked.

I shrugged. "I can't feel anyth'n from my waist down, so I can't say if the seats were bad." I said softly.

My face soon went red, as Nicky chuckled. Soon, we all found ourselves gigg'l'n.

"The seats were fine, I just wished they had a tv." Nicky said smile'n.

Ashlyn and Austin nodded their heads in agreement.

"How many times did y'all watch titanic?" I asked watch'n them carefully like a hawk.

"Like four." Ashlyn said looking at Austin. His face went red, and I laughed.

"How many times did you cry?" I asked, as his face went purple from blush'n so much.

"To many. It was really funny." Ashlyn said give'n her mischievous grin. Austin glared at her for a second before roll'n his eyes.

"Why did you guys watch titanic?" Nicky asked taking a bite of her sausage.

"Because we can." Austin said shrugg'n.

"Nah, it's because you ain't gonna say no to Ashlyn over there. You don't have the guts, and if you did, y'all two would've been fight's the whole metal tube of death ride."

Everyone looked at me as Nicky bursted out laugh'n. Ugh! Why did the girl have to have a great laugh?! It made me go red, and I hated it.

Austin looked at me, and nodded his head with a smirk as Ashlyn wacked the back of his big head.

“You guys suck.” Nicky said hold’n back a smile.

“How so?” I asked with a small smile.

“Because you do.” She said return’n it.

## ~Nichole~

We woke up early the next morning. I put on a cute sweater, boots, and Ms Kertcher said I can go get breakfast down at the hotel lobby early.

I got down, and got some scrambled eggs and an apple. I could tell the hotel wanted us to have more of an ‘American’ breakfast, but at the same time, still had its German food. I tried some of it, and liked it. Don’t ask me what some of it was called, because I really don’t know.

Soon the boys came down, and got some food. I moved a seat for Griffon so he could just roll himself over. Austin carried his food and set it down for Griffon, who followed behind with his filled cup in his mouth.

“What are you doing?”

He looked up, set the cup down, and grabbed his food. “Well, I ain’t able to hold the cup and get myself around. So, I improvised. It’s real simple.” He said smiling.

I shook my head, and Austin laughed. “Why can’t you be normal mate?”

Griffon shrugged. “I guess I’m just special.”

“Guess?!” I said laughing now.

Griffon rolled his eyes, then glared at me, but his eyes were full of love and laughter, even if his face said otherwise.

Soon, Ashlyn came down, and her hair was in a messy ponytail. She sat down, after grabbing an apple and coffee and laid down on the table. Austin laughed, and shook her.

“Go away.” She said angrily.

Austin laughed and I was shocked. “Come on sheila, it’s a g’morning, and you ain’t gonna ruin it.” He said with a thick Australian accent.

I glanced at Griffon who’s eyes were wide. “Where in God’s green ding dang earth did that come from?!” He said putting his fork down.

“I have to agree with the country bumpkin but—”

“Country bumpkin?”

“Yes you are Griffon— don’t fight me on it— where did that come from?” I said to Austin. He shrugged and Ashlyn sat up.

“Country bumpkin?!” Griffon asked more to himself.

“Yes you are— go on.” I said to Ashlyn.

“He does it a lot. You guys just don’t notice?” She said taking some sips of her coffee.

I nodded with Griffon.

“You gonna finish that?” He asked pointing to my eggs.

“Nah, take it.”

I handed Griffon my plate and he put more salt and pepper on the eggs and ketchup. Why did he do that?!

“I do what I do mate, and it’s not hard to understand.” Austin said folding his arms.

I looked at Griffon who seemed to have a very smart mouthed thing to say.

“Don’t.” I said reading his mind.

He looked at me and rolled his eyes. We locked eyes for a moment, and he gave a small smile, and my face went red. I looked away quickly.

“So, where are we going today?” Ashlyn asked sitting up finally.

“Um... we’re going to Cologne Cathedral. The gothic church that’s not far from here. Then the Gutenberg Museum.” Mr. Conners said walking over. “It’s about a two hour drive from the cathedral to the museum, so afterwards, Mrs Johnson (the principal) has a ‘Free time’ for you kids.” He said pulling over a chair. “Which is a surprise stuff she makes that helps you all relax. It’s not really free time.” He explained simply

“Thank you for your input father.” Griffon said, finishing my eggs.

“Anytime son.” He said shaking Griffon’s shoulder.

Within ten minutes we all were told to get on the busses. We did roll call, and our history teacher, Mrs. Stephens, said she was going to stay on the girls buss, and I quote, “Those boys are annoying, they literally are in second grade still. That’s stupid because you all are juniors— much like the boys. That’s why Mrs Johnson is with them to give *them* detention when we go back to the states. I will not put up with those boys.”

I laughed to myself as the buss started up, and drove behind the boys buss. I knew some people were excited but, Griffon and his dad were ecstatic to see the Gutenberg Bible. I wasn’t as effected, but I looked out the window at this beautiful country I was in.

Ashlyn leaned onto my shoulder and I shoved her off. She pulled her phone out and shoved it in my face.

“What?!”

“Look!”

It took my eyes to focus but it was a video from Austin. Griffon was blowing a bubble with his gum and it popped and got into his shaggy dark brown hair.

“What an idiot.” I said with a smile. “Send that to me.”

“Already on it.” Ashlyn said with a smile.

I looked out the window and saw Ashlyn’s reflection on the glass.

“What now?” I asked with annoyance.

She gave a smirk and nudged me. “You and Griffon. So cute! Honestly I don’t get why he ask’s you out ever.” She said smiling.

I felt my face heat up and I looked down.

“Because he has better things to do. He’s taking all AP classes. He studies.”

“You *know* he doesn’t.”

I felt my face heat up and I kicked my legs out under the seat in front of me.

“He can’t drive, or any of that.”

“Yeah he can. His truck would need some stuff to put on it, then bam. He can drive again.”

Ashlyn said simply.

“His family can’t afford that.” I mumbled under my breath.

We got to the cathedral, which was huge! Beautiful stain glass covered the walls, as large stones kept it all in place. Everything was so beautiful and amazing, and I couldn’t believe it was real. I got a photo and sent it to my dad, and told him I want one for Christmas. He replied with ‘No’, which made me laugh. I looked over at Griffon who was in a blue polo, and black pants that looked baggy on him. He looked over at me, and came over on his wheelchair. I walked over, and met him in the middle of the giant hallway.

“This place is—”

“Weird. Girly.” Griffon interrupted, looking around skeptically. I glared at him, and rolled my eyes.

“Idiot.” I said folding my arms. “It’s beautiful, and girls like this stuff.”

“It’s literally a castle.”



“I DON’T CARE!” I yelled at him. I turned around and smacked his arm, and he pushed my arm away.

“Jerk.”

“Moron.”

We glared at each other for a moment before we both cracked up. He leaned over and dug his face in his numb legs, and kept laughing. He looked up and shook his head, and strapped his legs down to the wheelchair.

“You... are crazy.” He said laughing.

“It takes a crazy person to know a crazy person.” I said smiling, as we went forward.

He looked up and eyed me hard for a moment. “Touché ginger. Touché.” He said softly eyeing me. I rolled my eyes and scoffed as we walked around for another thirty minutes— well I guess Griffon didn’t walk— but still.

I looked around some more, and got photos and posted them online, mostly for a ‘be real’. Soon, to my dislike, we had to go. We all flooded onto our busses, and I got one last photo, before Ashlyn dragged me inside the buss. I wanted to stay, but I got the photos... right?

## -Griffon-

I unstrapped my legs, and to my anger Austin grabbed me and picked me up, and tossed me into the buss. He sat down next to me, and pulled out some gum.

“You ain’t gonna be do’n that for the rest of this trip.” I said angrily.

He shrugged. “I don’t care mate. Anyways, I saw you flirting back there.” He said winking at me.

My face went hot, and I looked out the window. “Okay and?” I said looking back at him. He smiled at me and laid back in the buss chair.

“Look mate, it’s all up hill from here. I got your legs.”

I glared at him. “Ha. Ha. So funny.”

He rolled his eyes and snickered. “Whatever. We have three more days here in this country, and three more days for you to get that girl. Understand? It’s going to be g’days this week.” He said looking at me calmly. I rolled my eyes, and took some of his gum.

“Okay okay. Not today... or tomorrow... or well— what flavor is this?!”

“Blue sour patch.” He said proudly

I looked at him. “This is amaz’n.” I said grabbing the container from his hand.

“HEY!”

“You can find another at the gas station. These are like three bucks.” I said putting another in my mouth. Austin rolled his eyes and shook his head, but smiled. The buss drove, and to be honest all of us boys went a little... special after about five minutes of being in the bus.

“DAAAAAAA WHEELS ON THE BUSS GO ROUND AND ROUND...!”

I caught dad eyeing me, from the back of the buss, and I raised an eyebrow at him. He gave a smile, looked down, and shook his head chuckl’n to himself.

About an hour of sing’n went by, and I loved every bit of it.

We all headed out of the buss, and once again Austin threw me over his shoulder. I sighed as he put me into my wheelchair.

“You know, I am capable of gett’n out myself right?” I said strapping my legs down to the chair. It helped, because my legs didn’t dangle, but if I fell out, the whole chair would be come’n down with me.

Austin raised an eyebrow at me, and shook his head. “You are so hard headed mate.” He said kneeling down to help me.

“No!”

He looked up, before he could even help.

“I... I got it.” I said backing up the wheelchair. I got my left leg down to finish the job, as he looked puzzled at me.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing... I just um... wanted to finish it myself.” I lied. I got the pain in my spirit from fibb’n and I think Austin could tell it was a lie. He still gave a smile, and said ‘alright’. I pushed myself forward to our principal, Mrs. Kelly, who handed us our tickets. The girls came over soon, and got their tickets too. I pushed myself on the wheelchair over to Nicky, and she looked over.

“Hey.” She said smile’n.

My face went red again. “Hi... I um... how was the buss ride?” I asked hope’n my red ears were covered by my hair.

She shrugged and thought for a moment. “The girls were singing Descendants, and High School Musical songs. I had to remind them that High School musical was a lie, and that High School is completely different.” She said with a plain smile.

I didn’t know if this was the time to laugh or not, until she laughed. “AhAhaha!”

She looked at me, like I had the world’s stupidest face, but laughed. My face went red—  
FINE I’LL ADMIT IM BLUSH’N OKAY?!

“Griffon, ready to head in?”

I turned to dad and nodded, as Austin ran over with Ashlyn and her mom. We all headed in as a group, and skipped through the ‘early life’ stuff. My dad got photos to read later, but I wanted to see the Bible. One of the remaining five from the print’n press in this museum. We made it to a large room, where an old wooden post look’ th’n was. My dad found some sort of energy in his old prehistoric body, and sprinted off right to it, and took photos. I was right behind him with my phone, and we both went crazy. I pushed myself around the room, and soon found myself face to face with a three year old boy. I waved, and thought he was German.

“Hello!” He said.

“Hi.”

The toddler had golden blond curly hair, blue eyes, and a white smile. He looked at my wheelchair, and I watched as curiosity filled him.

“What’s that for?” He asked, pointing to my wheelchair.

“Oh... on it’s called a wheelchair. It’s for people who ain’t able to walk.” I explained to him.

He looked at me, and more curiosity filled him. “Why can’t you walk?” He asked in an adorable voice.

“Jonas!”

I looked up at a very tall skinny man, who ran up. He had dirty blond curly hair, and wore sunglasses, long pants, and a hoodie.

“Daddy look, he can’t walk!”

“Jonas... that’s... t-t-that’s rude.” The father said glanc’n at me.

“It’s fine. I don’t blame a kid for ask’n really.” I said hope’n the boy wasn’t gonna get in trouble.

The father looked at me, and nodded. “I... I’m s-sorry. He’s normally n-n-not like...this.” He said picking up the boy. I could tell the father had a stuttering issue, but it was all cool with me be’n paralyzed.

“It’s fine dude!” I said remind’n the guy. He

nodded, as a woman walked over with a baby in her arms. She had auburn hair— I know the difference because of Nicky—, brown eyes, and so did the baby girl who was wear’s pink clothes.

“Newt, there you are!” She said happily.

The father looked up and smiled at her. I could tell he didn’t say much at all, but oh well. The woman looked at me, then the man named Newt.

“We’re you having a talk?” She said with some surprise.

The man named Newt shrugged, and said someth’n to her.

“JONAS!”

“It’s fine!” I said knowing what they were talk’n about. “It ain’t that bad. I’m okay with it.” I said reassur’n them.

“Oh okay... I was afraid he might need the good old belt... you never know with kids these days.” She said rolling her eyes.

I understood that, and nodded in agreement.

“GRIFFON I FOUND IT!” I heard my dad yell. He found the Bible. I looked up at the young couple.

“Um... good talk! Gotta go!” I said spinn’n my wheelchair away. I looked back and waved to the boy, and I noticed something. It was hidden very well, but on the man named Newt, I saw a black vein behind his sunglasses.

Must have been the light’n I told myself, as I hurried to see one of the first printed Bibles.

## ~Nichole~

Griffon and his dad took thousands of photos of the Bible, and soon we had to go to the ‘Kelly Surprise’. She took Griffon aside, as we were getting onto the bus’s and I saw his face brighten from inside the buss.

The buss took off, and we were all contemplating what the surprise would be.

“Maybe ice cream... or Chick-fil-A?!” Elli Gardener proposed.

“No, the school doesn’t have enough in the budget for that.” Dennis Kayak joked. We all nodded in agreement as the buss stoped behind a building.

“Alright gals! Right behind those doors is a championship team, ready to pick.” Our buss tour guide said. We all jumped out, and ran inside to... locker rooms with our names on the cubby lockers. I opened mine, and pulled out a Jersey, and shin guards. Oh... this is what we are doing... Soccer.

All of the girls had different color jerseys to match the two teams. I found Ashlyn who was in a red Jersey instead of white like mine. She looked at me and gave a grin.

“Oh how the tables have turned my dear friend.” She said darkly.

“Correct, but that doesn’t mean anything my dear ex friend.”

“Ex friend?!”

“This is war darling, and I attend to win.” I said smirking. Her face gave a wicked grin, and she held up her hand. I grabbed it, and we both smirked.

“Beat up boys.” I said.

“Hate them to death.” She grinned.

We all made it outside, where the boys were in similar jerseys. Oh no... my team was done. Austin wore a green jersey, but was on Ashlyn’s team. He was their goalkeeper, and ours was poor Bart, who was five two, and stayed inside for most of his life. We all huddled, and picked out more possessions.

“Diana, your striker.” Mia, a girls soccer player said. Diana nodded, and pushed her braided hair with feathers in it back.

“Jeffry, you can be... center guard.” She said pointing to him.

He nodded and glanced up. “Austin is picking for the other team.”

Mia swore quietly but we all heard it. “Nicky... your...” She got a smile. “Nicky, your sweeper, and our Team Representative.”

“I’m what?”

“Your job is to halt any breakaways by the opponent, including any long passes towards the goal. You know what a representat—”

“Yes I do.” I said nodding, and laughing. We all nodded, at the game plan, and did our ‘ra ra who ha’ thing. As a representative, I had to shake hands with our referee in the circle. Austin walked up as the other team’s representative.

“Your going down.”

“That’s the only way to go up.” I said shaking his hand. We waited for our referee and I wasn’t shocked with who it was.

Griffon came over blowing his whistle off pitch, and in a huge referee shirt, that they obviously found.

“Hey guys! They gave me a whistle! I’m surprised they trust me with one!” He said smiling. Me and Austin laughed, and shook his hand. Let the game begin.

My team had a high advantage. Mia kicked the ball, but to all of our annoyance, Austin blocked it. This was the fifth time. He gave a grin, and kicked it down the field. I ran, and kicked it up... like straight. I jumped up and kicked it forward. It most have looked cool, because my team went wild. I landed on my back, and Bart ran up and helped me up.

“Thanks.”

“No problem, great shot!” He sad running back to the goal. A whistle went off, and we all looked at Griffon who was point at the other team, with a yellow card.

“WHAT DID I DO?!” I heard Austin yell.

“I saw that! You can’t just hit a girl’s butt dude.” Griffon yelled. I could see from across the field that Austin’s face went red, and Ashlyn laughed, but had a pink face.

Austin rolled his eyes, and shrugged as we kept playing.

Another whistle. We all looked at Griffon, who look bored. He was just blowing it because he could.

Mia turned around and kicked the ball like a bullet, but Austin blocked it with his face. He picked it up, and signaled for people to run. His team was slow, except Ashlyn who was running at me. He kicked the ball across the field... and it kept going. He hit the building behind our goal, and someone yelled in German. A guy came running over holding his head and the ball.

He handed it to Bart, and the whistle blew at Austin.

“Mate, what the heck!” Austin yelled.

“You hit a pedestrian. That’s a time out.” Griffon said with a smirk.

“WHAT?!”

Griffon fumbled a red card out and gave a evil smirk to Austin.

Austin walked off in a pout, and shaking his head. I caught, ‘worst ref ever’. They had to put in a temporary goalie who let some go in. Ashlyn ran down with the ball, and I was ready to sort of take her out. She ran at me like a bullet and hit me hard. I went flying, and hit the ground again.

I looked up at poor Bart, who was scared to death, and ran out of the goal and ducked in fear. Ashlyn stopped running and stood there for a second. She gently kicked it in.

“YAH!” Austin cheered from the sideline.

“NO!” Mia yelled.

The whistle blew and I turned to see Griffon blowing it at Austin. “HOW ARE WE FRIENDS MATE?!” Austin yelled covering his ears.

Griffon bursted out laughing, and I had to admit he looked adorable while he did.



## -Griffon-

Look, I liked annoy'n Austin to death. I like call'n random stuff on the poor guy, and make'n him miserable. He was to good, especially compared to poor little Bart. We all got changed back into our clothes and headed back on the bus to dinner. It wasn't a long drive, but it felt forever with Austin yell'n at me. I laughed at him, and shrugged repeatedly and he finally gave up. We went for Italian food tonight... don't ask, I know we're in Germany. I ain't that dumb.

I got good ol'e pizza, with Austin and Ashlyn, but Nicky got pasta. She's always been weird so I didn't mind that much. Austin thought it would be funny that I'd sit next to her again, which I loved... but hated.

"No! Mate, you were targeting me!" Austin said angrily.

"And? It was funny." I said laugh'n. He rolled his eyes, and Ashlyn shook her head, and covered her face. "Oh yeah, and y'all lucky the teachers didn't care what I called." I added.

"Man, you were being biased... is it because your crush was on the other team." Austin said with a smirk. My face went red, and I didn't even glance at Nichole.

"Oh yeah mate, she was watch'n you."

"Shut up!" I said stuffing my mouth with pizza.

"Ah, hiding your feeling mate?" He said with a wicked grin. I hid my face, and moved my hair to help hide it. Man, and we are roommates... I ain't gonna hear the end of this till... ever.

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There are reasons why we don't talk about our second day in Germany. Let's just say we went to a bor'n museum where everything was in German, and... we were forced to read it. How? I don't know, or wanna know, although, I got a nice photo with Nicky... I even put my arm around her. (I don't think she noticed though). Anyways, today is our last day in here... full day and night. Worst part is, it's a depress'n day. We are going to Dachau, a museum, also an old Concentration Camp from the holocaust.

“Griffon... you do know that this will be hard right?” Dad asked me on the buss. Today, he sat with me, but I didn’t know why yet.

“Um... I think.” I said pushing up my hair.

He looked at me carefully and scratched his brown and greying beard. “You do know the story of my fathers parents right?”

“You told me last night. Greatgramps was sent to the gas chambers, and Greatgram was... shot?”

“Yes.”

I nodded and looked as the buss drove. I turned to my dad who seemed held back. “What?” I asked. He looked up at me and smiled.

“Remember... just remember.” He said giving a smile.

He pointed to the cross necklace I was wear’n. I looked at it. It was made form a tree in Bethlehem, where my dad’s family was from... oh... now I got it. It was a warnk’n. I would have been one of those million jews killed, because I am one. I looked up at dad, and he nodded reading my face.

“It’s hard. I’ve been here on a trip too. I’ll fall behind or ahead of you, because I want you to experience it by yourself. You’ll see the evil satan has brought into this world... and if you have questions I’m here.” He said softly. I nodded, and looked forward. I held my necklace, and looked down at it. This day would be interesting, but I didn’t know how much it would mean to me.

After a long time, we got out of the buss. I was jok’n around to distract myself from what my dad told me. We got out, and we were handed our tickets. I looked at the walls, and old barb-wired fences, and felt an odd presence.

“Hey.”

I looked up at Nicky, who had a similar facial expression.

“Hi.”

“You ready?”

“I... that’s a great question.” I said softly. She nodded, and we were let in. The first thing that caught my eye was a large sign that read ‘*Arbeit macht frei*’. ‘*Work sets you free*’. I looked around and noticed how Austin and Ashlyn had disappeared into the camp already, and my dad was gone.

“Um... you don’t mind if I’m slow right?”

“No. I don’t care.” Nicky said gently giving me a smile, that warmed my heart.

We went in, and I looked around, as green grass grew... but I knew what was under that grass. Bodies of the thousands of people killed.

We walked inside, and it was dark. Dim lights made everything visible to us. I looked over, and saw a photo... there was no holding back here. The man was dead, skin and bone, and his face was frozen in a horrific state of fear. I looked away, then back again, and decided to keep go’n. A teddy bear, which bead eyes, was in glass. I read a little bio about it, and instantly regretted it.

I looked at round more and more as feelings took over: regret, sorrow, anger, and sadness in general. I moved along, and found a little video station. I froze and watched it... I really should put have. I couldn’t look away, as the soundless video played.

(Nichole)

I looked around, and felt worse than this place made me feel. I must have left Griffon behind on accident, and I knew he wasn’t going to keep up. I turned around and ran back, and did find him... but not how I wanted to. He sat there in his wheelchair, and was watching a video. I walked over, and squatted down like a catcher next to him. He didn’t look at me, but I saw he was shaking a little. He held his necklace gently, and watched the video. I looked up and froze.

Bulldozers were shoving hundreds of skin and boned bodies into giant holes. Soldiers, throwing more bodies in, and breaking the dead person’s bones.

“Why?”

I looked up at a trembling Griffon, who’s eyes were red. I looked back up at the video.

“Because... humans are evil.” I said softly. What a cheesy thing to say. No duh people are evil! I looked carefully at Griffon, and wrapped an arm around him. He trembled more, bit his lip, and closed his eyes tightly.

“There’s more of this place. We have to keep going.” I said patting his arm. He nodded, and looked up with tears in his eyes.

“You got it?” I asked.

He nodded and whipped his eyes. “Yeah... let’s go.” He said softly against his will. I gave him a small smile, and held his hand for a second. I had already seen more than he had, and it was definitely going to go downhill from here.

“Tell me if you need someone to cry on.”

“Ha ha... funny.” He said giving a embraced smile. I let go of his hand, and decided to push the wheelchair for him. We walked through the museum, and stopped when he wanted to look at stuff... which was everything. He did cry, but I was to depressed to cry. Not a single tear. We continued to walk, and walk as he tried to hold back more tears, but couldn’t when we got to the train car. The gas chambers were the worst for him, and he physically couldn’t hold back tears.

We finally reached the end after a depressing two hours. It was a room, covered in names of victims, the missing, and the dead. I looked around, and saw Griffons dad with some paper and pencil, shading some names onto the paper. Oh... dang. I didn’t think about it till now, but Griffon’s family must have been survivors... or victims. Griffon’s dad looked over, and gave a small smile at me, and signaled to get Griffon’s attention.

“Griffon, your dad wants you.”

His head poked around, and he looked at his father, who signaled him over. “I’m um... dad want—”

“It’s fine.” I said giving him a smile. He nodded and went off.

(Griffon)

I went over to my dad, and he looked at me carefully. “How are you.” He asked finish’n shading his paper. I shrugged, not want’n to talk. He nodded, and finished the paper.

“You know your great grandparents were killed, but not everyone was.” He said point’n to a name. I looked up to see my grandfather’s name.

“He was born here at this camp. The nurse for the Natzies let him live. A few days later, his mom tried to escape, but you know that part. Dad went back to Israel even though he had never been there... or old enough to remember. He met my mom and bla bla bla. Point is, there is light in the dark. Freedom in the slavery. And a kept promise that God will always save his people.”

I nodded, and held back tears in my eyes. *Then why would God let this happen*, I thought to myself. Dad seemed to read my mind. “There’s more to our family story. Dad’s father was sent to

the gas chambers for freeing people. He left his wife clues to escape but the Nazis found out. Your name means more.” He pointed to a name.

משפחת גריפון

I looked at dad, who smiled at me. “You can imagine what it was like getting to America, when Hebrew is read right to left. Your name means more. Let me translate, his name is Griffon. גריפון. Your name.”

## ~Nichole~

The buss ride to dinner was quite. Some girls were trying to lighten the mood, but one just couldn't in this moment. Ashlyn, who never was down about anything, was down and out. She looked on the verge of tears. Our last day in Germany, and it was rough. The 'Kelly Surprise' is bowling, and fried food. We got to the place, and it definitely lightened the mood for all of us. Ashlyn and Austin met up, and I looked around for Griffon. He was watching everything, with his head down.

"Is he okay?"

Austin looked at me and shrugged. "He's been down and out since the museum. Tried to give a joke, but didn't get much of a reaction." Austin said softly. I looked up and watched Griffon say something to his dad, and leave.

"I'm going to talk to him." I said standing up.

Austin looked up, and gave a smile. "You're a good friend Nichole, and don't ever let the world change that." He said nodding. Ashlyn nodded in agreement. I gave a slight smile, and walked out.

He wasn't far, but was sitting on a half wall. He gave up with the wheelchair, or just didn't want to be stuck in it anymore.

"Hey." I said walking over.

He looked up and gave a slight wave, and looked back down. I sighed and jumped up onto the half wall next to him.

"Are you okay?"

He nodded and looked up. "Yeah... it's just... hard know'n what happened... to them." He said softly. I nodded in agreement and sighed.

"Just think about your favorite color. It helped me." I suggested. Griffin looked up and nodded. "Lemme guess, blue?" I said looking at his blue sweatshirt. He always was wearing blue.

"No, red. I just like wear'n blue." He said giving a slight laugh. I smiled, and couldn't help but bounce my legs off the wall, over and over. Griffon watched, and I instantly felt bad.

"Oh I'm sorry."

“No no no! It’s fine. I was just think’n of someth’n else.” He said softly with a smile. I smiled back and nudged him.

“Like what?”

He got red, and shook his head. “I ain’t tell’n you. It’s complicated.”

“It’s complicated! Bla bla bla! I ain’t tell’n you!” I mocked in the worst country accent. He poked his head up and rolled his eyes.

“I don’t sound like that!”

“I don’t sOWnd lIke that!” I mocked more. He scoffed, and laughed. A real laugh. I looked over at him, and before I could think his hands pulled me in, and he kissed me.

My eyes widened, and a second later he let go quickly.

(Griffon)

I don’t know what on God’s green earth took over me, but I just kissed her. It took me a second to realize what I did, and when I did I pulled away. I was so embarrassed, and I ducked my head down. My hair wouldn’t cover my face like it normally did to my dislike.

“I... I’m—what?” Nichole said softly.

“I... am... so sorry.” I said not look’n at her.

“Griffon I—”

“That was dumb. I’m sorry.”

“Griffon listen—!”

“And I’m sorry I never told you! But—”

She wrapped her arms around me and kissed me. My eyes widened quickly and I forgot where I was. I couldn’t help but kiss her back.

## -Griffon-

We got back to the hotel, and I was still red. I couldn't believe what had just happened a hour earlier. Dad FaceTimed Ma, and snuck away to the bathroom to talk alone to her. Austin took his shirt off, hopped onto dad and I's bed, and looked at me with a smirk. (We decided to share a bed so Austin didn't have to share one with me).

"So... your in a good mood."

I looked at him carefully and nodded. "Yeah... why?"

He shrugged. "I don't know, you were all depressed then Nicky talked to you."

"And?"

"You came in smiling, and couldn't take your eyes off of her when we bowled, and ate mate." He explained simply.

I sat there in the bed for a minute before need'n to hold down color to my face. Austin gave a smirk and nodded.

"I see how it is mate, you don't want to tell your mate. That's fiiiiiiiiinnnnneeee." He said jump'n up, and over to his bed.

"You ain't gotta guilt trip me. I'm perfectly fine, thank you very much." I said with annunciation. (Wow, thats a five dollar word right there. Annunciation. HA! So wired huh?). I shook my head and sat back, as dad came out.

"Talk to your mom." He said hand'n the phone. Her face appeared on the screen and she smiled at me.

"How was today?"

"Terrible. But tonight was different."

"Oh... tonight then?"

"Amaz'n."

She looked at me like I was a psychopath for a moment. She started to laugh, and shook her head at me.



## ~Nichole~

They let us sleep in a little, before packing up. We all grabbed breakfast, and headed to the buss. We made one last stop at gift shops, and I ended up getting a cute sweater and baseball cap (which is a type hat). We were there for about two hours, then we went to lunch, which took a while. The drive to the airport was fun, and our Buss Tour guide gave us the last bit of information. He was really awesome, he sang karaoke with us (tried to sing), and laughed at his own jokes.

“It is my time to say goodbye, and I hope to see you all again some day.” He said, as he helped us off the bus at the airport.

We got past the ticket stuff, and to that area with the planes. (I don’t know what it’s called still). I set my stuff down, and wen to go get food with Griffon. I walked around, found a place, and got a chicken sandwich. Griffon ditched me to go get food. I walked back to the boarding area, and sat down. We were all going to board soon, and I grabbed my stuff. Something about going home seemed nice, and funky. I was happy, but scared. Worst of all it was an over night flight, and I had a softball game in the morning.

“Now boarding flight 543.” A speaker said. I looked at my ticket, and grabbed my stuff. I looked around for Griffon, and saw him rushing over with a sandwich in his mouth. He started to try and stop, but... he kept going.

“Griffon!” Austin jumped in front of the speeding wheelchair. He stopped the chair, but got ran over. Griffon was still stalled down, and fell with the wheelchair. I couldn’t help but laugh, and I helped the boys up.

“Come on, we got a plane to catch.”

I got onto the plane, and Griffon called window seat. I helped him sit down, and sat down next to him. Austin came on, and looked at us.

“I wanted you to sit with my mate, mate!” He said angrily.

“And? To slow.” I said smirking.

Austin eyed me and rolled his eyes. He sat down across from us, and Ashlyn sat down next to him. The plane took off (as usual), and Griffon didn't even make a face. It was odd— you know, sitting next to him.

“Hi.” He said softly.

“Hey.”

We both looked down, and our faces were red.

“I um... I'm sorry about—you know— last night.” He said blushing. I looked up at him, and he scratched his neck nervously.

“It's fine. I um... I'm not really sorry.” I said with a red face. I looked at him and knew his thoughts with seeing his face. ‘Dang that girl ain't never back’. He smiled at me, and looked down again. He pulled out his phone, and up to Wordal.

“Wanna play?” He asked scratching his neck.

I lifted the armrest between us, and nodded. I scooted closer, and he tried his best to do the same. We must have played for a long time, because I felt my energy slip away. The last thing I remembered was keeping my head up, then it falling.

(Griffon)

We played for a while I guess. To be honest, I don't know when the plane took off, because I was so gosh dang scared to death. I didn't show it— you know, to be cool and all— but I was terrified, pray'n in my mind.

Nicky was one woman, who didn't take no for an answer (even if it was one for wordal). She started getting tired, but kept herself awake. I put some more words on the game, but got the bonus stuff.

Something fell onto my shoulder.

Tingles went down my back— well the part of my back that could feel.

I glanced over as Nichole was sound asleep on my shoulder. I put my phone back in my pocket and looked forward with wide eyes. My face was red for a hot minute, and it flushed back to my normal color. I poked my head up and looked around, and most of the plane was asleep. I glanced at Austin and Ashlyn who were out cold too. I looked out the window as civilization left, and the darkness of the sky and sea took over. I put my head back and looked at Nicky again. I

somehow wrapped my arm around her. Luckily, she didn't fall off my shoulder, and bonk her head onto the plane.

I kissed her forehead softly, and leaned back in the seat. The plane engines went, and I found it oddly satisfying. The last thing I remember, was closing my eyes and saying a little thank you prayer.

(Wauty)

Wauty had a rough time trying to sleep. The plane engine was annoying, and he had to pee. He was sitting in the middle of two people, which was always the worst. He looked around, and undid the seat belt across his lap, and stood up. *Why can't all American seat belts be Like this?* He wondered. He got to the front of the plane, and was very pleased that there was no line.

He went and came out, and stood in the middle of the area and stretched some. Wauty didn't really want to go back and sit down. The back of the plane, in between two people sucked. *I mean, it is tight time. Everyone is sleeping,* he told himself calmly. He started to walk back to his seat, but stopped at the front row. He smiled at Griffon, who was always dead when he slept. This time he had an arm around Nichole, and slept with a small smile. Wauty knew that smile. It was the one last night. He knew Griffon was one dirty little liar when he said nothing happened. Wauty shook his head and smiled. He wasn't going to tell the kid he figured out the whole Nichole and Griffon thing. He had known for a while, and attended to keep it that way.

## ~Nichole~

The plane landed and we all said goodbye. It was about seven in the morning and my game was at ten. Mom and dad picked me up, and told me I can sleep in, so that's what I did.

I opened my eyes, and closed them again. It was so nice to be in my own bed. I laid there for a while, before my eyes popped open. I looked at the alarm clock next to my bed and jumped up. I quickly put my uniform on, and ran to leave.

"Nicky? What on earth are you doing?!" Mom called.

"My softball game! I slept in!"

"No you didn't." She called back.

I raised an eyebrow, and realized there was a loud sound on the roof. Thunder cracked, and lighting went everywhere. Saved by grace. I smiled a tired smile, and went back to my room to sleep.

Mom and dad woke me up again, and we talked about Germany for a while. They asked about a lot of stuff, and I told them everything—except you know—kissing Griffon. Everything was great, and I was home in Tennessee.

"Do you want to stay here, or go to Griffon's?" Mom asked.

I looked up, and raised an eyebrow. "Huh? Why?"

Mom looked at me for a second. "Remember, your father and I planned a double date with the Conners." Mom said to me.

"I don't remember but um... yeah, I'll go!" I said jumping up. I really didn't remember, but hey, I get to go see Griffon. The sun had came out, but the clouds still sprinkled water. I bolted into their house.

"Oh Nicky!"

"Hello. Is Griffon here?"

"Yes, he's in his room." His mom said smiling.

I nodded, and ran to his room. I knocked on the door, and he answered with a, "Who's that?"

"Me bozo, now open up." I said crossing my arms.

He did, and gave me an awkward smile. His room was a mess, and looked like he was looking desperately for a pair of clothes, and threw everything around. I was surprised how he could get around in his wheelchair so quickly. He threw stuff under his bed, and into his closet, and slammed the doors shut. He looked at me, with a tired smile.

“Just woke up?”

“Yup.” He said rubbing his eyes. His messy brown hair was worse, and he must have slept in his jeans, and the only thing he did was just throw off his shirt. He scratched his chest, and grabbed a blue hoodie and put it on.

“This gosh dang Germany time change ain’t help’n me.” He complained.

I smiled, and his mom called. “Griffon, are you up?!”

“Yeah! I’m come’n I’m come’n!” He yelled back. I moved out of his way of his wheelchair, and he raised an eyebrow.

“Ladies first.”

“Pain before beauty.”

“What pain?”

I whacked the back of his head, and he yelled.

“YOU WIN! OW!”

I smiled, and followed after him. We were given the usual rules, but naturally, Griffon had more.

The parents left, and we stood there. I looked at Griffon, who looked exhausted, but up. He looked up at me, and scratched his chin.

“What do you wanna do?”

I shrugged. “Wanna watch something?” I asked. Griffon nodded, but we kept watching each other. I think we both had the same thought, ‘so... two nights ago?’. Griffon turned something random on and he pushed himself out of the wheelchair and onto his couch.

“Want help?”

“Nah, I got it... thanks.” He said softly.

I sat down next to him awkwardly, and looked down. Griffon pulled his legs up, and laid back, like he was going to sleep, but didn’t.

“I uh... wanted to know someth’n.” He said softly.

“Know what?” I asked.

“Oh, you know what.” He said. “Germany... the bowl’n night.” He added. I nodded and my face went red. His did too. “I wanted to know if... you know...”

“Liked it?”

“No... but yeah.” He said awkwardly smiling.

I snickered and nodded. “Yeah, you could say.” I said smiling.

Griffon put his hands behind his neck, and looked at me. “I mean, what about the plane ride?” He asked.

I had woken up on his shoulder, and it was sort of embarrassing. I did stay there till we landed though.

“Nice.” I said looking down, spinning my thumbs around. I glanced at Griffon who smiled, and his face was red.

“Oh shut your gosh dang mouth, and come here red.” He said. I scooted over, and laid down on his lap, kicking my legs up onto the couch like him. “See, better.” He said smiling.

I laughed, and tilted my head. “Can you even feel my head?”

His face drained. “I wish. I mean I can like this.” He said liking my face. I smacked his hands away, and he beamed at me. I sat up, and scooted back more, kicking my legs over his lap.

“I mean... do we want anyone to know?” I asked softly.

“No. I mean, Austin and Ashlyn will probably figure it out, be’n them and all.” He said shrugging. “Ma and dad might get all funny about it, and you might not come over much.” He added.

“But your family like me.”

“True....” His voice trailed off, and he looked at his legs. “I... I don’t think I want anyone to know... be’n paralyzed and stuff. It’s only been like four-five months, and— oh I don’t know.” He complained, throwing his head back.

I nodded. It was probably really weird for him. He looked up, and wrapped an arm around me. “If I’m be’n honest, I don’t know much about girls and stuff.”

I laughed, and he smiled at me. We sat there for a minute and watched TV, not really knowing what to talk about.

“Um... are you feeling better?” I asked softly.

Griffon looked at me, and raised an eyebrow in confusion. “About... what?” He asked carefully.

“You know... the Concentration Camp....”

“Oh! Um... yeah I’m fine.” He said shrugging. I nodded, and he was stiff... really stiff. “I mean, it’s hard and all, but it ain’t the end of the world.” He said softly.

I nodded, and smiled at him. I kissed his cheek, and he smiled wildly. He turned around and kissed me back.

We sat on the couch together for a while— after we ate—, and we watched a movie. The door started to open, and I jumped off his lap and sat next to him in an instant.

Our parents walked in, and were talking about, only God knows what. They looked over at us, and smiled.

“Have fun?” Mrs Connors asked.

Griffon and I nodded.

“Yeah, we had fun.” I said smiling.

“What did you two do? The house is really clean.” Mr Connors said folding his arms and eyeing Griffon.

“We didn’t do noth’n! We sat here, watched tv, ate, watched more tv, and now we’re here.” Griffon said shrugging.

My mom laughed, and Griffon’s parents rolled their eyes with a smile. I got up, and Griffon assisted that he didn’t want or need help getting back into his wheelchair. I walked over and dad gave me a side hug. Griffon made his way over by his parents and smirked at me. He then looked back at his parents.

“Where did y’all go? Any leftovers?”

“We went for Greek food. Want some—”

“NOPE! That food is terrible!” He said making a gagging noise.

“I like it.” I said smiling.

“Well of course you do. You like that fancy stuff.” Griffon said rolling his eyes.

I eyed him hard, and he just smiled a goofy smile. I rolled my eyes, and folded my arms as Griffon gave the quickest wink to me in history. My face heated up, and it left as quick as Griffon winked.

“Anyways, it’s getting late. We should head on out.” Mom said softly.

Dad and Mr Conners—who were deep in a conversation—looked up. “What?!” Dad blurted.

“Babe, we’re talking about—”

“I don’t care what! It’s getting late, and the kids need to get back on USA time change.” Mom complained.

Gosh. She was always shutting down the fun.

Dad rolled his eyes, and we all said bye. We walked out of the house, and I heard Mr Conners say something to Griffon, “Hey, I want you to do something for me on one Wednesday after your birthday.”



## -Griffon-

I smacked my head against the desk in my room and groaned. Of course dad wanted me to do this. Plus, what... my birthday is in a week or two?

I don't know or really care.

Okay well, fine. I do care.

I'm terrified.

Happy?

I spun around in chair I had in my room with wheels. Not my wheelchair, the chair t the little desk I had.

I kept spin'n around till I felt ready to hurl, and I ain't gonna lie. I grabbed the trash can and hurled.

My chest felt tight and my heart kept pound'n.

I took a deep breath and opened up my computer— or iPad with keyboard. Whatever you wanna call it. I started googl'n stuff before my door opened.

I looked up at dad and he gave me his small smile. Mom said I had his smile.

“Hey buddy,” He said walk'n in. “How's it going?”

“Terrible.” I said slump'n into my seat.

Dad nodded and leaned back on the wall. He looked at me carefully and I watched thoughts flash in his eyes.

“What?”

“How do you spin around in the chair?” He asked carefully.

“Oh.”

I grabbed the table and pushed myself around for my dad, and he nodded. I my phone buzzed on the table and I looked at it. I gave a small smile and put my phone back. Nicky asked me if I'd be at a district game for softball.

“Who was that?”

I looked at dad and gave a small shrug.

“Nicky.”

Dad gave a smile and sat down on my bed and looked at me.

“I haven’t seen you smile like that in a bit.” He said with a small wink.

I felt my face heat up and I forced a nod. “I guess.” I mumbled to myself.

“You guess?! Griffon you must think I’m stupid!” Dad said jump’n up and close’n the door.

“I didn’t say that.” I groaned.

“Yo didn’t have to. Your like Kevin, you just don’t say it.” Dad said sitt’n back down.

I raised an eyebrow to my dad. Seriously, why are parents like this? It makes no sense. I need an explanation.

“Uh what?”

“Griffon, son, I talked to you right?”

“Dad I— well yeah— DAD!”

“Griffon is she a yay or a nay?!”

“Dad... please stop.” I said putting my head in my hands.

“I mean— oh how would Madison say it?”

“DAD STOP!”

“Is it called the ‘tea’? Your sister is better at this stuff.” Dad said pulling his phon out.

“Dad stop! Madison don’t need to know! Keven don’t need to know!”

“Know what?”

I felt my face heat up. My dad was a genius. He knows how to play the right cards. Seriously, he should be a lawyer.

I looked at dad as he smiled at me.

“I’m not dumb Griffon John Conners. I saw you two on the plane ride back from Germany.”

“Dad do we really need to talk about this?”

“Yes we do.”

“Do we?!” I asked with my voice squeak’n.

My dad raised an eyebrow at me as the room got hot. I fixed my shirt and dad shook his head.

“Dad, can we not talk about my relationship status?”