

Always and Forever

1

ALIN

I sat on my chair taking notes as Mr. Crauser explained the details of the upcoming science project. "I want everybody to participate enthusiastically as a team and not just make your partner do all the work and as this will be added to your academic career please be punctual about it and do not miss the date of submission which will be exactly one month from today. We will discuss about the pairing up process in the next class. See you all." The bells for lunch break rings and Mr. Crause exits the class.

I stretched my back and started organizing my things when my eyes fell on the boy making his way inside the class. His blonde dyed hair looked beautiful in the sunlight screening through the window and his face literally dazzled. He walked towards the girl in the second row who stood in her seat with hands wide open to welcome him. Once near her he pulled her in for a kiss resulting in a few high pitched cheers from the background. His left hand grabbed her butt and their mouth devoured each other. Seeing this something happened inside me and I shuddered. I pulled the hood of my sweatshirt over my head and grabbing my bag got out of the class towards the cafeteria.

Being a nerd, sitting alone in the cafeteria during the lunch was pretty common for me. Another reason of me having no friends was that I really don't want to grab attention of anyone here neither do I want them to be in trouble. Yeah, anyone who will be friends with me will be in trouble as I was one of the studious, weird students of

the society. So, they maintain their distance from me and I have come to really appreciate that.

The cafeteria was bustling as usual. Kids are busy chatting, eating, throwing food on each other, gossiping, making fun of someone, etc. You can see categories of people at each table. The table to my right was acquired by a group of studious kids who were probably busy discussing about something educational. Once in a while they threw glances at me. I don't really know what those looks meant but they might be somewhere in the line of pity that I have no friends or sympathy that I was sitting alone. The table right in front of them contained the gossip girls who were hushing and giggling at every 10 seconds. They look at someone passing by and burst into fits of laughter. I never really understood these kinds of people. Don't they have anything else to do other than snickering at others, as if their own lives were so perfect? The table in front of me was taken by the group of famous kids. Seated there were Kevin Sanders, the football team captain, Natalie Kim, the cheerleading team captain, Ariana Greene, the college principal's daughter, Joe Peters, the handsome guitarist and He.

I knew him. Sebian White, that was what his name was but people knew him as Ian White, the fresh new face of the modelling world. He has not very long ago started his modelling career but is already at the heights of it. I mean why he won't be when he lacked nothing. He had a pretty face, perfect slender body and also the attitude of a dickhead, the best combination ever. He lives nearby my house with his grandmother, Mrs. Reece. I have met her a few times and she is a lovely lady. I have heard that his father is a big businessman in the city and have sent him here to take care of his grandmother while continuing his college.

You might be wondering how I had so much information about everyone when I was just a back bench nerd. Well, you see, Strastown is not a very big place and everybody knows everybody else here. I have been living here for 21 years of my life now and am pretty familiar with everyone in this town, not because I am an extrovert but because I am good at noticing things around me. I took another bite of my lunch when I felt someone's eyes on me. I looked up and almost choked on my food. Sebian White's eyes were directed straight at me and my spoon fell back on the plate when he slowly smirked at me.

2

SEBIAN

I kissed her, I kissed her hard. I don't do this because I love her, you can't really love a girl like Natalie anyways. I do this just to take my mind off of all other nonsense things around me. My father thinks that I should focus on my studies right now instead of modelling so, here I am in this place which starts and ends at a hand's length and have nothing decent what so ever to do during my stay here. After the death of my grandfather and then my mother, my grandma has started to stay ill these days. I didn't visit here very frequently before but in her last days my grandma wanted me to spend some time with her.

I don't like it here though. In the city I had a busy life, fans every here and there but unlike here they were a little more civilized who remained in their boundaries but here it is crazy. These people were seeing somebody in the real life for the first time and hence I get no time to breathe. The best example of that are the kids studying here and to narrow it, Natalie. From the day one that I have joined here she has been stuck to me like a gum. How much hard I tried to ignore

her I couldn't. So, I gave up and instead made her an object of my entertainment. Along with her she brought a few others and now I am also a part of the group of famous kids in this college.

Mostly because of these reasons I don't attend college frequently. I like staying at home with grandma and helping her around. The time that I get free I paint or listen to music or finish up my college homework. However I may come as I can assure you that I am actually good in studies, the reason that I don't get into trouble even if I bunk classes.

Me and Natalie walk into the cafeteria for lunch and were greeted by the other three at our usual table. We all get seated with our lunch trays and I can't avoid noticing the hushed talks, the giggles and eye movements pointed at us in the background. I am used to these now so I dig into my lunch instead. Natalie is irritating me today, she is being too clingy and I feel suffocated. She is sitting beside me with her left hand hooked into my right and her chin rested on my shoulder. I felt her breath on my face which annoyed me.

"What happened Nat? You look so dull today," Ariana asked, looking genuinely worried about Natalie. Natalie instantly removed her chin off of my shoulder as if she was waiting for someone to ask her about her mood. "What do I do Ana? I don't think I will ever get that scholarship I want." She said sulkily, letting out an exasperating sigh. "Why do you say that Nat? You are academically doing well already, with a little more effort you'll be able to get it," she said with an assuring smile. "You think that will happen as long as Miss Nerd is in the race," she pointed at the person sitting at our front table with a subtle movement of her brows. "I really did not expect this peasant to continue her studies. I thought she will just drop it and help her father with earning money for her brother's studies but she's just not

letting it go. Is she doing this just to mess with me?" I can feel the anger emanating from her in the form of shiver of her body.

Before she loses herself and creates a scene here I thought of calming her. "Why are you worrying about that Nat? I can give you private tuitions if you want" I teased her getting my face near the nook of her neck. She giggled, her anger dissipating a little and said, "Will you baby? That would make me happy but you know what would make me more happy- it's if you can do something about that girl instead," she shamelessly pointed her finger at the lone figure sitting with her head down having her lunch. "It's not like I am bad at studies, I am just bad than her. If she is out of my way I can easily grab the scholarship," she sighed and pushed me lightly.

I glanced at Joe who was looking at me with a silly smile on his face. He knows my hardships; in fact he is the only one in the group I actually can say is my friend. I averted my eyes from him and looked at the girl who was the topic of our conversation. No, I don't see anything special in her. She wore a grey sweatshirt that was covering her like a turtle with only her head moving in and out to take in the food. She was eating at an unbelievable speed, looked like she just wanted to get out of here. After a few seconds she suddenly got her head up and looked at me. I barely noticed her dark green eyes when she suddenly choked on her food. This made me smile at her and within a fragment of second her spoon fell out of her hand on to her tray. Wait! What was happening here? Was she scared of me or was it something else. Hmm... This seems interesting. A sudden surge of excitement ran through my body and a plan started formulating in my head. I think I might have a way for letting Nat get what she wants and in the meanwhile it will be fun for me too.

WRITER'S THANKS

Hello and welcome to everyone who took out a little time from their busy schedule to come here and give my book a try. I would like to heartily thank all of you guys for doing that. This small gesture of yours means a lot to me. It gives me the motivation to keep on writing and making myself better with every attempt.

This is my first book, actually my first book I had the guts to post for people to read. I have ideas in my head and I write them but I never solidly believed in them and so they remained as ideas in my diary. Hopefully this time I will do justice to them and myself by getting them out there to the world.

I enjoy writing. It's an amazing outlet for all the emotions that walk through me all day long, every day. Through my stories I hope to create a small world of dreams where everybody can find themselves to fit as someone, some characters they can relate themselves as.

I would really love to hear from you guys, what you think about my writing while you read the story. If you have any suggestions about the story's development and any complaints or appreciation about my writing, feel free to let me know and I will make sure to work on them to the best of my capability.

Thank you all once again. Now go and enjoy the next part of the story.

3

ALIN

His dark brown eyes were fixated on me and that smile grew even more evil. I wanted to get up and run out of here but my body froze. My mind was working at the speed of light but my body did not oblige. I closed my eyes and took deep breaths slowly trying to move the fingers of my hands. Why was he looking at me? He never looked at me before. I don't think he ever even noticed my presence, then why now? I sat there with all this thoughts running in my head and my throat still itched due to the food I chocked. After a few calming breaths I finally was able to move my body. Thus, I took my plate and grabbed my bag and was out of the cafeteria in a dash.

The rest of the day was pretty usual but I was worried that I might bump into Sebian anytime which didn't happen. Thank God, he is not the type who attends classes very often because right now I do not want to face him. Actually, I don't think I want to face him anytime at all. I knew he was trouble. I attended the rest of the classes but nothing was going inside my head, looks like I got badly panicked. The bell rang; I sighed and got out of the class.

I didn't have to go home early today as I had my part time job at the town's daily services store. We have only this store at our town where people find their daily groceries, vegetables and other household needs. It's not very big but it does provide most of the essential items. I have been working here since I started college. The owner Poppy was a single lady. Her husband and son both died in a car accident about six years ago. She manages the store and lives here on the above floor. Poppy takes care of the billing at the reception desk. Me and Gina work inside the store guiding the customers through different sections and then there is Keith. He is the errand boy and takes care of providing us the supplies and taking them to other places if orders are placed.

I entered the store and greeted Poppy with a smile while rushed to the backroom to get changed and start on today's work. I came out wearing a blue shirt with 'Poppy's Mart' labelled on its chest pocket in white. "If that is all then you can go to the front desk for your bill sir", I heard Gina speaking to someone. The man went away with a basket in his hand and Gina turned around to see me. "You always look better with that hood out of your head," she told with a smile. She was three years older than me but was an amazing friend. She always loved my hair. She says she likes my soft brown curls; they suit me unlike her dark black straight hair which she preferred to tie in a high pony. She worked full shift here and always dropped me at home on her way back.

I wanted to talk to her for a few more minutes but as this was the peak time of the day for business, customers started pouring in. After an hour and half of busy work, Gina went off for her break and I was left alone to help the customers. It was almost 7 in the evening when the shop started to get a little empty. The people came in randomly every 15 minutes or so. There was still an hour left for me to get off work though. "Come on girls, it's already 8, you should head back home now," Miss Poppy reminded us. She does that daily. She is very concerned about our security and lets us go home while the roads were still busy.

I changed and hopped into Gina's car. After about a 20 minutes ride we reached in front of my house. "Good night Gina, be safe," I closed the door of the car. "Good night honey," she told and drove off. I rang the bell and my mother opened the door. "Welcome back Aly. How was your day?" she asked with a smile heading to the kitchen. "It was okay, usual." "Get changed honey, dinner will be ready soon." I headed upstairs to my room and took a quick shower, got changed and came down to join everyone for dinner. My father and younger

brother Ronin were already at the table. "How was your day kiddo?" my father asked with a tense less expression. "It was good daddy." I high-fived my brother and rubbed his hair. "What did you do today champ?" "Just studies," he replied nonchalantly. He was 18 already but unlike other kids was very serious about his studies and career. He understands the importance of it.

After a peaceful family dinner and helping my mother with the dishes I went to my room and since I had no home work to finish I lied on my bed. I grabbed my phone and typed 'SEBIAN WHITE' initiating the search. Images and fan clubs started popping up on the screen. Sebian this, Sebin that, people just worshipped him. I went through the images of him and remembered those dark brown eyes which bored into mine at lunch. I felt my breath hitching and without being able to take anymore kept my phone aside and closed my eyes. I calmed myself down and with steady breaths fell asleep.

4

SEBIAN

I am trying to reach college a little early today. "Bye grandma" I shout on my way out grabbing a sandwich from the plate while she was busy in the kitchen. Kevin and Natalie are busy due to the upcoming football game so, today I just have to pick Joe on my way. I started the car and drove towards Joe's home, calling him and letting him know that I will be there soon. In about 3 minutes I was in front of his house honking and after about 8 to 9 more minutes Joe came out with a disapproving look on his face and dishevelled hair. "What happened to you dude? Why are you so early today?" "Nothing, just wanted to be at college early for a change." I winked at him.

We both settled and headed towards the college. I didn't drive fast as reaching earlier at college was not my motive; it was that I didn't want to miss someone on the road. I knew she walked to college, I have seen her a few times. I knew that if I started a little earlier there was a huge chance that I will bump into her on the way, hence, all this. Joe looked at me "brother shouldn't you drive a little faster if you want to reach college on time? This speed will not let you get anywhere." I kept my eyes on the road scanning it while I replied to him, "Driving faster might cause accident, so... No." He just rolled his eyes and gave up on talking with me.

After about another half kilometre drive I found what i was looking for. A figure with grey sweatshirt covering its head with the hoodie. Yep, I found the turtle. With a big sly smile on my face, I turned the car to her side and slowed down. Before Joe could utter anything I honked the horn but she thought maybe I was trying to make her get out of the way but when I kept on with the horn she abruptly turned her head and her eyes slowly noticed us. She couldn't keep up the eye contact though and kept on looking back and forth at the same place. Shock was written all over her face and not knowing what to do she stopped there and put her head down, her pupils were deliberately shaking.

I can't help but smile at her dumbness. "Come on in, we can drop you in college." She still did not dare to look at me straight but fiddled with her sweatshirt. Really though, what was her problem? Being shy was something I can understand but can't she just open her mouth and tell 'yes' or 'no' or can't she at least look at me. "We study in the same college, actually in the same class. I am pretty sure you have seen us before. I can assure you that we are not dangerous, you can trust us." I tried again, the smile still intact on my face. "No,

thank you. I can walk.” She finally spat and pulling the straps of her bag started walking again.

My smile faltered and my expression turned dark. I wanted to get out of the car and talk sense into her but Joe interrupted. “Dude, what was that all about? Why did you want her to come with us? Is this the reason you wanted to go early today, to mess with her?” Joe kept on blabbering. “Mess with her? When did I ever mess with her dude? I just asked her to come with us because she was walking and we had empty seats. If Kevin and Nat were here I wouldn’t even had bothered.” Joe seemed like he understood and with a sigh told, “Still, it was not necessary you know.” “Yeah, my fault, I know.” Giving her a last glance I drove the car with one thing going inside my mind- this is not the end, I will get back to her.

You should have seen her face when she entered the class and saw me and Joe sitting together on chairs behind which she was supposed to sit. Our eyes met for a fraction of second and before I could notice anything else other than her fair complexion and dark green eyes she hurriedly walked to her seat. The classes started and the whole time I could feel her nervous breath behind me but I didn’t get the reason for it. Was she that scared of me? Of course I didn’t have a reputation of a good or friendly person but I have never hurt anyone. This might be the first time I have even thought of doing something to someone and it was nothing that would harm her, I was doing this just to help Natalie.

The lunch break was fully occupied by Kevin and Natalie. They were acting as if they were the busiest person in the world these days. Post lunch class was science where we were going to be partnered today. I really hoped that I would be partnered with her, which would make my plan real easier to execute but no, I got partnered

with Damon and she got paired with Ruth. Damon was a block head; I knew he wouldn't change partners if I tell him. Looks like I need to have a word with Ruth instead.

5

ALIN

No, I will not be able to sleep tonight. Lying on my bed I was busy going through the scene of today morning in my mind. I would have never, not even in my dreams expected that Sebian White, the Sebian White will ever ask me to hop into his car for a ride to the college. What was he thinking talking to me like that? Wasn't he one of those famous, arrogant types who don't give a damn about anyone else but themselves? Then why would he talk to me, the kind whom anybody would want to avoid in their right mind? Don't tell me he is starting to change his personality now, being good and all.

Morning came on me in a flash. I tossed and turned the whole night and as was about to close my eyes, my alarm went off. Now I just feel dizzy and tumbled from here to there. "Why are you not eating breakfast Aly?" seeing me in taking only crumbs and pieces, my mother asked out of concern. "Nothing mom, I am not very hungry today," I assured her. Ready to go to the college, I was standing at my door with a silly fear rising up inside me. What if I bump into him again today? I slapped myself internally and gave out a nervous laugh. Yeah, like that would happen. I opened the door and with a high held head got on the road.

'Phew.' I made it to the college without any unexpected obstacles on the way. Like really what were the chances that Sebian White will make the same mistake two times, right? For right now I don't have to worry about him and my headache due to not sleeping properly

yesterday is subsiding slowly. I walk into the class and there was no sign of him. Great! Looks like he is back to his habit of missing classes.

At lunch break also I didn't see any of Sebian's friends or him. Looks like they were all busy cheering for their friend and spending time with his girl friend instead. As the cafeteria was not very crowded, I happily finished my lunch, taking my time. After lunch I did not have any class so I wanted to go through the science project with Ruth but she was nowhere to be found. So, I went to the library and grabbing some books started on the project. Hmm... Feels like I have to do all the work by myself.

After about an hour when I was fully engrossed in my topic, I felt a slight nudge on my shoulder. Turning back I saw a girl standing there. "Mr. Crauser asked you to go and meet him in his office," she told me and went off. I got up and after returning back all the books went towards Mr. Crauser's office. I knocked and went inside. "Take a seat Miss Jones, Mr. Crauser directed me, adjusting his glasses and keeping the book he was reading aside.

"Miss Grams came to me today regarding her pairing up with you for the science project," he started talking with often jovial tone which seemed a little concerned today. "She told me that if she has to be your partner she will have problem with staying in contact with you other than the college hours as both your houses are pretty far from each other. I already had this thought pass by me but since I expected myself to do most of the work, I didn't care much about it. "It's okay sir, she doesn't have to come to my house, I can go to her place instead, it will be easier for her and other than that we will work here at the college in our free time." Mr. Crauser took off his specs and with a smile told, "That's great Miss Jones but as Miss Grams was okay with changing her partner, I did that for her and for

you as well. I have paired you up with Mr. Sebian White. I heard he lives near your house and as he is good with his studies I don't think you will have any problem with that either. I have already notified him regarding the changes so now you can do the further discussions about the project with him. That is all, you may leave now."

He told me to leave but can I move, No, I literally can't. My body has stopped functioning and I remained glued to the chair. I forced myself and hanging my bag pack on my shoulder almost ran out of the room. Once outside I started trembling and felt moisture gathering up in my eyes. Why was this happening to me? My headache started resurfacing. Somehow controlling myself I came out of the college. I just want to go home and after a good shower I wanted to sleep and then maybe I will get up to realize that this was all a dream. Rubbing my eyes I suddenly noticed a car standing a few feet away from me, it felt pretty familiar. I raised my head and as my view cleared my heart started thudding in my chest. Sebian stood there, outside the car with his hands crossed at his chest. He saw me and held one of his hands up waving at me. "Hi there, partner," he yelled while the familiar evil grin returned to his face.

6

SEBIAN

Here she comes. I raised my right hand and waved at her. "Hi there, partner," I spoke with a raised tone so that it's audible to her. I just love how her expression changes from anything to dread the moment she sees me. My grin widened at her reaction, her steps slowed down and again she was at a loss as to what she should do. "I have been assigned as your project partner, I am pretty sure Mr. Crauser has already told you that." As expected no answer from her.

She stopped for a second as if she was discussing whether to stay and answer my question or walk away.

She decided against answering me and taking a turn started walking away. I sighed. This girl is just too much. I got in my car and started driving. I drove near her and shouted, "Come on in. I know you live nearby my house, I can drop you and you don't need to walk." Still no answer, she just kept on walking briskly. That's it; I just can't take it anymore. That day because of Joe I couldn't but today I am going to make sure she talks with me.

I stopped my car and got out of it, ran after her and stood in front of her, blocking her way. She crashed onto me and stopped but never looked up. This image has become so familiar to me in these few days. "Hey, listen to me, seeing that we are teamed up for the project I think we will need to talk to each other, right?" There was nothing close to sarcasm in my tone, I was being pure angry and rude here. I hope she gets that.

She remained silent in the same position. Wow, this girl is really something, isn't she? I got hold of both her shoulders and shook them. "Look at me when I am talking to you. Get your head up and look at me, tell me that you understood what I am talking about." Slowly, very slowly her head rose up. She looked at me and nodded. I noticed her, this time actually noticed her. A few strands of her brown curls were peeking out of her hood. I never imagined her having curls. I reckoned that like anyone categorised into introvert she will be having messy black hair which might be tied but I was definitely not expecting this.

Her eyes looked a little puffy and glassy. Was she crying because I spoke harshly? "Come on now, get into the car, I will drop you home." I started walking towards my car and looked back to see her

following me with wobbly steps like a kid. I smiled. I drove and she sat uncomfortably beside me. I can't be choosy right now you know, this is at least a start and I really do not want to scare her off.

"So, I heard your name is Alin, is that right?" she nodded. "I am Sebian, you know me right?" another nod came from her. Hmm... This conversation is going pretty smoothly, better than I expected actually. I ask and she nods and this process repeats, great! After about 15 minutes I parked my car in front of my grandma's house. "You can go to your house from here, right?" I pointed towards her house; she nodded again and got out of the car. "And if you have anything to talk with me, you know where to find me," I pointed towards the house at my left with a smile. With a last glance towards me she walked away.

"I saw Alin with you today, were you dropping her home?" my grandma said with a smile tugging on her wrinkly face. "She's just a friend grandma" I smiled back at her. "I know, I know, I am just glad that you are making new friends." "Yeah." I couldn't speak anymore after that and just finished my dinner instead.

I sat on the bed in my room listening to music. My phone was in my hand and I was going through random stuff in it but my mind was busy thinking about what my grandma told during dinner. 'Friend', was Alin really a friend of mine. I don't think I have ever considered that. I wanted to be closer to her so that I can mess up her project and that will stop her from getting the scholarship, that's it.

My phone rang, it was Natalie. "Hi baby. You're going to pick me up tomorrow, right?" like I had any other choice, won't you chew my ear up if I don't. "Of course, I will." "Thank you baby, bye" The call was disconnected. I really don't want to think about anything right now. If I have to spend tomorrow with Natalie then I better get some

sleep and replenish my energy. Turning off the lights I lied down and fell asleep but I do remember seeing a pair of beautiful green eyes at some point of the night in my dreams.

7

ALIN

I closed the door behind me and without even listening to what my mother was saying went upstairs into my room. Once inside in the safety of my loneliness, I let myself go weak and with a thud sat on the floor. What the hell just happened? Sebian dropped me home, not only that, now I have to see him regularly for a whole month. I know it's not mine or his fault that any of this was happening but it does not mean that I will go unnoticed by anyone, everyone. No one will say anything to him but they will start picking on me, especially Natalie. She will never tolerate that her boyfriend talk with someone like, she is going to make my life hell. Thinking about all the upcoming consequences gave me a headache and because my legs felt like jelly, I couldn't get up anymore. So, I kept seated on the floor for a long time.

"Is everything okay in college Aly?" my mother asked and that brought me out of my thoughts. "Yeah, everything's good." "Then why are you not eating anything kiddo?" it was my father this time. "Nothing daddy, I was just thinking about a project that I have to complete in a month, that's it." "You don't have to worry about anything kiddo, I know you'll do great so don't take stress." I smiled and got back to finishing my dinner.

I sat in my room working on my homework. After this I am thinking about working on the project and dividing the parts between me and Sebian so that we can finish it without having to meet each other

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