

Into the New Dawn

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Thank you

I want to thank my brother and sister. They were the inspiration for the character 'Lenard Goodrich' and 'Helcy'. Yes, Lenard, I took your name and used it for this character. I also used my sister's name for a character who is part of the "beauty appreciation society".

I also want to thank my boyfriend, who has always been very supportive of my hobby and has motivated me to keep on writing.

Have you seen the amazing cover? Well, that's all thanks to the amazing Jelena Stojanovski! She's amazing and the stuff she makes is amazing, so be sure to check it out!

I cannot forget my penpals, especially Steffi, who have given me the motivation to continue writing this novel again, after I took a three and a half year break from writing.

I want to thank my parents, because I wouldn't be the person I am today without their help.

Lastly, I want to thank the best teacher I ever had, Mrs. Kleijwegt. She was the first person to recognize my writing talent. She told me:

"You have just made me cry!! I am writing this with tears in my eyes. In all my years of teaching, I have never read work from a student as touching as this! I know that you love to write –we spoke about it in class- and all that I can say: You have great talent. Pursue your dreams and use your wings to fly!!"

I also want to thank her for reading and editing my story up till chapter 7. She's been a great help and inspiration to me.

Thank you, everyone.

To my readers,

The idea for this novel was something I made up when I was only 14 years old. When Mrs. Kleijwegt pushed me to do something with my talent, I decided to work out one of the many stories I've written. I worked on the plot when I was 15, and decided to type it out. It took me a lot of time to do that.

This novel is a self-published work. I don't have money to hire editors and I don't think my story is good enough to be published by a publishing company. My first language isn't English. Therefore, you will find spelling mistakes. You will find grammatical errors riddled throughout the story. You will notice that this is done by an amateur. Please keep that in mind while you're reading this.

This novel is directed towards young females; try to keep that in mind too.

I want to thank you, for taking the time to read something I've put a lot of effort in. This is a big accomplishment for me and I hope you'll love it as much as I do. (Probably not, but oh well 😊)

- Karlene

1. Late Summer Sunset

“Hi, I’m Dawn. I’m eleven years old and from today onwards, I’ll be in your class.”

With a decent smile I stood in front of the class.

“She’s so cute!”

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

“Yes, I already have one, I’m sorry.”

All the pretty girls in the class, who were looking at me with jealousy set in their clenched fists, sighed out of relaxation after hearing my answer. I already had one...

“Seth, you came to get me.”

When I approached the school gates, I saw him standing there, his wavy blonde hair shining underneath the sun, his deep blue eyes gazing at me.

“Hello, honey.” he said with his charming voice. Instead of being swept of my feet by his lovely greeting, I could feel the eyes piercing through my back. When I turned around, I saw some of my classmates whispering to each other, loud enough so I could hear it.

“What, that’s my brother’s best friend? He’s seventeen?”

“Eh? She’s dating that popular guy from Morglas high school?”

“Ew... That’s kind of gross. A high school student dating a middle school student, that is.”

I remember the taste in my mouth turning bitter.

If they’d only give me the attention I wanted, I would never have gone to that stupid site. I would never have met Seth, who gave me the attention I wanted...

“Dawn? W-What are you doing here?” Seth approached me showing signs of discomfort.

“I came to get you, just like you came to get me the last time!” I said. My grin was so big, my cheeks hurt. But that is how happy it made me to see Seth.

“Aw, did your little sis come to get you?” One of the girls passing by stared me down ... the tone of her voice didn’t sound genuine at all. “Hmm, you don’t really look like him though. Are you his cousin?”

“Of course I don’t look like him, I’m his girlfriend!” I said. I felt so proud to have one; it felt like I was fitting in with highschoolers, even though I was only 11 years old. My pride got brushed away by the reaction of Seth’s friend. Left and right, his friends stopped doing what they were doing, to look at me with open mouths. It was as if the world stopped at that moment.

“What?” The girl, who earlier guessed I was his sister, broke the silence.

“Oh God, that’s weird.”

“Ugh, how gross!”

“Is she being serious?”

“She can’t be for real!”

Slowly, everyone’s opinions about us formed a cloud around us, suffocating me.

“An elementary schoolgirl, Seth?” one of his friends said. Seth looked like he was going to throw up. He averted his eyes from all of his friends, hiding behind his wavy, blonde hair.

“As if she would be able to please you.”

I thought about all the different meanings of “please” I knew. “Please?” I looked at her.

“Are you stupid?!” Seth suddenly snapped out of his fear, grabbed my arm and gently pulled me away from those monsters. “Come Dawn, let’s go to a place where there aren’t any confusing people.”

As we walked away from the high school crowd, I kept looking at them. Disgusted. That’s how all their faces looked.

“What did they mean with she can’t please you? Because, you know, maybe I can if I know what it means.” I said.

“Don’t worry Dawn. The pleasing they mean doesn’t fit you. You please me with just being with me, okay?”

Just then, I thought I caught a glimpse of regret on his face. That must have been my imagination.

“Aah! N-no, don’t l-look! P-p-please s-stop!” My voice wasn’t the only thing trembling. My legs could barely hold my weight. I was confused. Scared. Betrayed.

“Can you see it, Dawn?” Seth asked and slammed my face against the window.

I could barely see. Tears were flowing down my cheeks, blurring my vision.

“The sun is setting. Isn’t it beautiful? It is exactly the opposite of your name. But I think the dawn is beautiful as well, just like you are... I bet your skin looks even more brilliant in the red morning glow.”

Never will I forget that day.

I came to hate the dawn because of him. I started to hate my own name. I started to hate myself. Why was I so stupid to trust him?

“What? Seth would never do such a thing!”

“But you have to believe me, he.. I..!”

My world shook underneath my feet, which made my hands tremble in an uncontrollable way. Why did no one believe me? Then I felt his eyes piercing right through me. A shiver crawled down my spine. When I turned around, he was standing there, near the school gates, his ice blonde hair shining underneath the autumn sun, his cold, mean, blue eyes glaring at me.’

The loud, annoying noise of the alarm clock echoes through Dawn’s room. With a shock she sits straight up in her bed. Her whole body is stiff. Her eyes wide open, dressed in tears.

Dawn looks over to her phone on the cupboard standing next to her bed. Seven thirty. She pushes the cancel button and burrows her face in her pillow. All of a sudden, she hears the door creak.

‘Dawny? Are you awake already?’

The door opens, and a guy sticks his head through the opening. He walks up to her teal colored curtains and opens them. The morning sun

beams through the white lace curtains, bathing her room in its light. Dawn doesn't even see the mint color on her wallpaper anymore, because of the light that blinds her.

'God, Chris, I'm still half asleep!' Dawn yawns. Now that she's awake, she notices the mess she's left on her cream colored desk last night. Cookie crumbs cover her desk and chair while an empty cup of tea hides behind the book she was reading. She remembers falling asleep to the romance novel.

She kicks her blanket away and wants to get up, when she notices Chris watching her with sunken eyebrows.

'You're crying? Have you had a nightmare?' he asks and sits down on Dawn's bed. He scratches the back of his head and stares at her floor. 'How can I leave you behind like this?'

Dawn stands up and walks towards the mirror, which is standing on the old fashioned dresser right next to her bed. She looks at her eyes. Swollen and red. She notices a strand of hair on top of her head, pointing at the ceiling. She frowns at it, but refuses to comb it. She then sighs and puts her chocolate brown hair in a messy bun.

'You have got work to do again?'

'Yeah, I have to go to Seattle for 3 weeks. Will you be okay?'

'Have I ever mentioned your eyes are really pretty? I wish I had green eyes like you have. Since we have matching hair colors, it would look great on me too.'

'Don't go avoiding my question.'

'I'll be fine, Chris. You've probably called Elisa, and don't worry, you have been looking after me since I was 12 years old, but I'm seventeen now.' Dawn says.

With a bitter look she watches herself in the mirror. She hates that number. It was his age at the time.

'How'd you know I'd call Elisa?' Chris asks, snapping Dawn out of her memory.

'Cause I know you...' Dawn's voice pitches up and down while doing the wave with her arms, trying to imitate aliens.

He looks at her and shakes his head. 'You'll be perfectly fine!'

He hastens towards the front door. 'Don't forget to always lock the door when I'm gone. Bye!' With a loud thud the front door closes, and it becomes silent.

'Yeah...' Dawn sighs, suddenly lowering her voice. 'gotta get dressed for school'

She smashes her closet doors open and searches through it. It is completely stocked with clothes.

One side of her closet has very colorful and pretty clothing: dresses, skirts, pretty tops and heels. On the top right corner of the closet is a tiny shelf with a pile of dull, mostly grey and white-colored clothing. Her shoulders drop as the corners of her mouth gravitate towards the floor when she looks at all the colors who invite her into wearing them. She reaches her arm out and holds the fabric of a floral dress towards her, staring at it for a while. She traces the flowery lines with her eyes, and doesn't skip a single dot or swirl. The dress screams at her, wear me! With hesitation, she holds the dress in front of her body, and turns herself to the mirror. A small sparkle appears in the corner of her brown eyes while a blush gives life to her face. She sighs and when she lowers her arms, the sparkle and the blush vanish.

She folds it and puts it back into her closet, grabs an oversized sweater, jogging pants and puts them on. Once again she looks in the mirror.

'Is it ugly enough to scare new students away? Definitely.' she tells herself with a forced smile.

She stares at herself in the mirror, and then takes one other look at the floral dress. Wear me! You know you love this style. Dawn pinches the skin of her hand with her finger nails. She can't have these thoughts.

She cleans her desk and grabs herself breakfast. She cuts her cheese in a perfect rectangle, so it doesn't stick out of the sides of her bread, and starts eating. She uses her foot to fling her bag open and takes out a small, dark brown notebook.

'Dear Diary.

I had an awful nightmare today. I suppose you can guess what it was about. The whole situation back then just... flashed by. I still do not understand why he did it. Just what made him cruel..?

Today is the first day of school again. I am a bit sad my lazy holiday is over. I enjoyed staying at home or on the balcony doing nothing. I was especially happy that no one would have to see me. That way, I could wear whatever I wanted. Just like the floral dress I took out of my closet this morning. I have just worn it once this summer. What a waste.

Right after I had woken up, Chris came barging into my room. He just does not care about other people's privacy. But that was not the most stupid thing. He immediately told me he had to go for his work again. Why could he not tell me last night? I assume something like working in another town for three weeks long is something you know long before you go. Well, at least a day before you are sent there, right? He asked me if I would be fine. I wanted to answer him: Of course! Do not worry about me! But instead, I just stared at him. The words could not get out of my mouth. Truth is, I really do not want him to go. I want him here. I am afraid to stay home alone. Any other normal child would have said: Hell yeah! Home alone for 3 weeks! No parents, party baby!! Or something like that. Too bad I am not normal.

I think Elisa will arrive in a few minutes, so I have to hurry up and finish my breakfast. I am sure she will go off about the fact I am not dressed up for my first school day.

My goal for today is to scare everyone off again, especially the first years. I do not want to have new people around me. I can never trust anyone. I don't need a hundred people I can trust. Elisa is just fine. She might be a weird and sometimes too stressed out about me, but I can trust her. I hope I do not have to do stupid things that involve working with other people this year. Let us hope my wish comes true.

Well, I really have got to hurry now.

Thank you for letting me write down my thoughts in you everyday.

Bye bye,

Dawn.'

She puts the little notebook back in her bag and lays it near the front door. With the bread still in her mouth, she grabs her plate and washes it. Right at that moment, the doorbell rings. Dawn jerks up from the sound.

'Dawny!! Open the door!' a high pitched voice yells. Dawn rushes to the door and opens it.

'My God, Elisa, how can you be this cheerful in the morning?' Dawn asks.

'Dawny!! It's our first day as seniors!'

A girl with short, ash brown hair and sparkly brown eyes barges in and leans over to give Dawn a hug. She is wearing a neat, expensive looking beige blazer with a white, ironed blouse underneath, a navy blue plaid skirt with dark brown leather shoes. The brown leather shoulder bag she just put down near Dawn's bag, matches her shoes like ice cream and chocolate sauce.

Dawn feels eyes rolling over her. When she turns around, she sees Elisa's mouth turn sour. She knows Elisa sees the stain on her pants and the hole in her oversized t-shirt.

'Dawn, is that really necessary?'

'You know it is.' Dawn locks the door and tosses the keys in her worn out backpack.

Elisa sighs, and decides to let the subject rest. When they open the front door of the apartment complex, the girls are welcomed by a nice, warm summer breeze. Bees are buzzing around the colorful flower garden of the complex. It smells like a bouquet of fresh roses. The wind brushes the leaves in the trees on the rhythm of the rumba and their shades dance on the beat. Together they head towards school, walking underneath the blanket of green leafs filled with birds hiding away from the sensual late summer sun.

'And, do you have anything you want to improve on this year? I mean, this is our last year of high school, next year we will head into the big world of adults, first college and after that we will have to

work.’ She slaps herself on her cheeks. ‘I can’t believe there’s only one year left to find myself a high school romance!’

‘I want to look even more lifeless than I did last year! How ‘bout you?’

‘You’re so typical. I,’ she begins, ‘hope to get chosen for the student council. Then I can finally do something with the time I usually spend doing nothing. I’m actually hoping you will join me in the student council! You are one of the smartest kids I know from all the seniors... Who knows.’

Dawn looks at her with a pinched expression. ‘Why the heck would I want that?’

‘Because then we have the privilege to relax on the rooftop, duh!’

In the meanwhile, they’ve arrived at their high school. When they enter the schoolyard, the smell of flowers welcomes them. Near the stone walls, surrounding the school and its territory, a gardening man was busy planting pretty purple and beautiful blue flowers. The iron gates, which are attached to the stone walls that surround the yard, are decorated with paper chains in all colors of the rainbow.

All the students, freshman to juniors, are gathered near the big tree in the middle of the schoolyard. Its leaves are half green, half yellow, showing the first signs of the autumn, which is just a month away. There is a lot of hugging and catching up with each other going on. When the two make their entrance, the happy first-day-of-school feeling disappears.

Dawn’s eyes are fire, and everyone that looks her in the eye won’t make that same mistake again. Others lean back and refuse to look. Even the parents of the first years avoid her gaze and stumble aside when she and Elisa pass them.

That’s her first small victory for the school year, but her heart aches when she considers that this is a victory in her life.

Elisa heads towards the hall of the school and Dawn follows her. Elisa is the first to look on the information board, since Dawn is still busy observing the reactions of everyone around her. She suddenly freezes onto her spot, and Dawn bumps into her.

‘What’s wrong?’

‘You’re in class 3-a.’ Elisa says.

‘So..?’

‘And I’m.. I’m.. I’m in class 3-c!!’ She yells and loses control of her voice. It causes her to sound a bit like a goose. Her face expresses pure pain and she pretends to faint afterwards.

‘That...sucks...’ Dawn mumbles and heads towards the auditorium, leaving her friend behind.

‘Hey!’ Elisa voice grumbles. She follows Dawn with a quick pace. ‘Can you at least show some sympathy towards your best friend!’ She then catches a glimpse of Dawn heavyhearted face. She puts her hand on her mouth, and regrets what she said seconds earlier.

‘Dawn...’ she whispers worried.

The auditorium is decorated too. Dawn and Elisa keep walking until they reach a row with empty seats in the far right back of the auditorium. Together, they sit down and Dawn starts to observe the crowd in front of her. Behind them are only four more rows, half filled, for most of the students, especially the new ones, have taken a seat at the very front of the auditorium. That way, parents assume, they will hear the principal better. That’s a stupid assumption though, since the principal speaks through a microphone.

The auditorium is filled with a lot of students already. Principal Green stands on the stage, and looks through her notes and sorts them out, obviously to prepare her speech. When she has sorted them out, she puts them on the desk in front of her and looks at the filled auditorium. She’s wearing a grey two-piece suit and her eyes pierce through her oval shaped glasses. Dawn knows Principal Green well. Never has she met someone who looks like an uptight person, like Principal Green does, but is actually like a surfer hippie; relaxed, not bothered and super chill.

On the right side of the auditorium the teachers are lined up and they hand out the new school guide to every student that is walking in. They peer outside and wait for the last couple of students to hurry in.

‘I’m so jealous.’ Elisa suddenly says. Dawn sees her browsing through the school guide. It contains all the information you would like to know. Including class lists and homeroom teachers, the only thing students care about. ‘You’ve got Miss Cherry as homeroom teacher. She’s so awesome!’

Dawn searches through the teacher line up. At the very right end, she finds Miss Cherry. She looks kind. Dawn guesses she’s just reached her thirties because she has a couple of fine wrinkles showing

near her eyes but other than that, looks quite young. She always wears pastel colored clothes, Dawn knows because she is very popular with a lot of boys. Her youthful look and cool attitude makes her a much desired homeroom teacher by every student. Her heartbeat relaxes when she thinks she can slack during classes and not get in trouble for it. Another small victory, though it's not a self-accomplished one.

The lights are dimmed throughout the whole auditorium except for the stage, and everyone focuses themselves on the principal. Uninterested in the blabbering words of the principal, Dawn decides to scan the auditorium from the sixth row in an unobtrusive way. It only takes seconds before she notices a boy with glasses and black hair, who is staring at her two rows in front of her. His eyes pierce right through her.

She first turns around to see if he might be looking to someone behind her, but quickly comes to the conclusion no one is sitting behind her. What the heck is his deal?

Dawn stares back at him and tries to look intimidating by making her shoulders big and frowning like an old man. He doesn't get scared like Dawn hopes, but still has his eyes glued on her while he whispers something to the honey blonde haired boy next to him. Not a second later he turns around to look at her too. Not the reaction she expected. Then she sees his eyes grow big and a big smile appears. He throws a high five to his friend, makes a fist and jerks it down as if he has won the lottery. What a weirdo's. She decides to pay no more attention to them. Until, all of a sudden, the honey-colored hair guy stands up.

'Hey lady on the right side from the sixth row,' He yells right through the auditorium and interrupts the principal. Dawn hides herself behind the school guide she hadn't opened until then. She knows he is talking about her, since she and Elisa are the only ones on that row and Elisa has her hair perfectly combed. She wishes with all her might that no one knows he's talking to her. 'Could you be..!'

'Vince Goodrich!' Dawn sees that Principal Green is looking at him. She frowns a bit but not too much, probably because she knows the embarrassment he feels right now is enough of a punishment. Everyone's attention has shifted to Vince now. His ears turn red and he starts shuffling his feet uncomfortably, trying to hide his face behind his honey-blond hair. He starts fidgeting with a strand of hair in front of his eyes and has an apologetic look on his face.

‘I really hope you refrain from this kind of behavior when you’re busy with the student council.’

‘I’m in the student council? That is way too awesome!’

Elisa’s face turns grim. ‘Dang it! I want to be in there too!’ she whispers.

‘Continuing with the other members, for class 3-c, it’ll be Elisa Rosenqueen.’ Her grim face turns into an ecstatic one and she turns over to Dawn and hugs her out of joy. Her smile is so overpowering, it makes Dawn forget that awkward guy from just now. Only for a fraction of a second, because the next member seems to be his friend.

‘Class 3-b, Raven Smith.’ the principle continues. Dawn sees Vince give the black-haired glasses-guy next to him another high five.

‘So their names are Vince and Raven, huh?’ she mumbles to herself. Why the hell were staring at her?

‘And for class 3-a... Dawn Rainsworth!’ She looks up and her mouth falls open.

‘Did she just say..?’

‘Yeah, she did!’ Elisa smiles. Dawn sees Elisa’s feelings are overflowing with happiness. She herself, on the other hand, gasps and her posture stiffens. A sudden coldness hits her core. Her worst nightmare has come true.

‘Congratulations, the four of you will be in the student council of this year. I have chosen you because you each are the highest graded students in all the different senior classes. I’m sure you’ll have no problem handling all the activities the student council will have to do next to your normal schoolwork... You will have to meet each other after school in the student council club room. That was the last thing I wanted to tell. Please proceed to your class room.’

‘Dawn, we’re in the student council, together!’ Elisa exclaims. After finding out the devastating news that she and Elisa wouldn’t be together in the same class like they have for the past two years, this news is like missing the moon in an already starless sky.

‘Yeah, great.’ Unlike herself, Dawn seems to be less ecstatic about that news. Elisa looks at Dawn while she bites her lip and draws her eyebrows together.

‘What’s wro-‘

‘I’m going to my classroom. See you after school.’

‘Dawn...’ She watches her friend leave with a bitter feeling in her gut. She already knows what is the matter. The same thing Dawn has been trying to avoid throughout her whole high school period. People.

‘You!’ Elisa gets pulled out of her worries by some guy’s voice.

‘What’s with me?’ Elisa turns around, not amused by his tone. In front of her, she finds the guy with the glasses and the honey blonde haired boy. She rolls her eyes and tilts her head away.

‘Where did the girl with the messy bun go? I hurried so much to get over here! I really need to speak to her!’

‘Hmm, you’re that stupid guy that went yelling through the auditorium. What do you want from Dawn?’

‘Dawn? Dawn Rainsworth?’

‘Yeah..?’

‘Oh, never mind in that case!’ She hears him sigh and sees the tense muscles in his face relax. She lifts her shoulders and leaves the simpletons behind.

‘What do you actually want from Dawn? Even yelling like that...’ Raven sighs.

‘Hey, that’s because you said it at that moment. Isn’t it obvious what I want from her?’

Raven looks at him.

Vince sighs. ‘Never mind, you’ll notice soon enough. But isn’t it exciting?’ he continues. ‘We’re in the student council!’

'Dear diary,

I am simply stupefied. That applies to a few things today. One, I'm not in the same class as Elisa. I thought Chris went to the principle to make sure I'd be with Elisa every year. I surely have to visit her soon and ask her what the heck is up with this stupidity.

Which brings me to my second awful happening.

I got chosen for the student council. This student council is a thing ran by the four smartest seniors. Or less. It really depends on how many senior classes there are, and this year that's four. Apparently, I'm one of them.

What's the big deal about this, you might think. Well, I shall tell you now. I have to get involved with the school and its students, because the student council is like the manager of all the creative, sportive clubs. They check their budgets, if they want to do a fundraising they go to us and much more. Next to that, we also organize the school parties, like proms and such. More things we do include organizing sports days, looking for students to volunteer in town activities and much more.

I think you understand where I'm going. I'm surrounded by people the WHOLE, FRIGGIN TIME. Also, I have to get along with my student council mates. One of them is Elisa, luckily. But the others...

That brings me to my third weird happening today.

I deliberately choose a place at the end of the row, so I would not stand out too much. And guess what, this weird, four-eyed guy was staring at me from two rows in front of me. His glasses magnified his stalker eyes. Even after I threw him my delinquent look, which says: Now you God damn it look/go away, or you will be in trouble, he kept looking at me.

People tend to mistake my look for the look of a delinquent, so I might as well use it sometimes, right?

But that guy seriously did mind me. And then, after he said something to his blonde-haired friend, the blonde-haired dork stood up and went yelling at me in the middle of the principle's speech. Like, why the hell

would you yell to someone during the oh-so important speech of the year? Luckily the principal stopped him before people knew he was talking about me.

Only to find out the forth bad point.

He is also part of the student council. Just like his stalker-eyes friend. Just great. Ugh.

Well, at least I have Miss Cherry as my homeroom teacher. Which means chilling all the time. Schoolwork is way too easy for me anyway.

Dawn.'

Later that day, Raven and Vince find themselves in the student council room. It is a large, modern looking room. The wall parallel to the door has four large windows, which makes the room very bright. The beautiful, late-summer sun is still shining brightly through the windows, and gives the walls inside a pretty peach colored tint. Three of the windows are opened, and they allow a refreshing breeze to blow through the room, until it tickles Raven's face. It lets the beige-colored curtains move around near the window. The wall on the right has, like every classroom, a blackboard, and a bookcase at the left side of the blackboard, next to the window. Across the blackboard, on the other side of the room, is a wall with a lot of posters and lists. It is so full; Raven doesn't see the white paint of the walls anymore. There are also two cupboards packed with a rainbow of folders. Next to the cupboards, stands a large, brand new, black LED television. Raven notices a cable hidden behind the TV that connects a computer in the same color next to it. In the middle of the room are four large, rectangular, cream colored tables surrounded by fifteen chairs which had a similar color. He observes the dust that the tables have collected during the holidays. It makes his stomach turn and he wipes the dust of the table with a handkerchief he has taken out of his pocket.

'We even have a massive TV in our clubroom!' Vince says. His eyes are glowing and he is muttering so fast, his words are only half understandable. Raven chuckles as he watches his best friend pace around the room. He touches everything he sees with a wide grin.

Vince is writing down the words “student council” on the blackboard, while Raven looks through one of the folders he has taken out of the cupboard a few seconds ago.

‘He he! Now I’m going to show them the most brilliant student they’ve ever seen!’ Elisa whispers to herself and closes her eyes. Not a second later the door flies open and Elisa barges inside.

‘I am Elisa Rosenqueen, seventeen years old, class 3-c.’ she says with her chest forward. Her chin is tilted towards the sky and her eyes fierce. She sees Vince and Raven staring at her like a dead fish in a frying pan.

‘Hey, you’re that girl who was sitting next to Dawn!’ Vince exclaims as he looks up from the blackboard.

‘Eh? I’m in the student council with you dorks? I hoped someone who matched my intelligence level would be in here too...’

‘And thank you Vince, now she thinks I’m a dork too, thanks to you.’ Raven says, puts his hand over his eyes and shakes his head.

‘Hey. If she would’ve paid attention during the principal’s speech, she would’ve known I was a member before she came in. I mean, thanks to my action everyone knew. Not that I mind that, but it proves you’re inattentive. There goes your intelligence level.’

‘Well, I hope you can be productive, then you guys won’t be a total waste.’ she says. She pouts her lips and frowns and sits down with her arms crossed over her body.

‘So, Dawn is coming too, right?’ Vince changes the subject with a 180 degree turn.

‘Geez, what’s wrong with you? You have a crush on her or something?’ Elisa asks.

‘U-uh, n-n-no. Just heard some rumors. I want to ask her something, that’s all.’ He turns himself back to the blackboard, away from everyone while scribbling down some random words to ease his nervousness and hide the flashy shade of red that dresses his cheeks. He feels Raven’s eyes in his back. Little drops of sweat cover his forehead and he scribbles faster than before.

‘Oh, that’s good then. What a situation would it be...if...’ Elisa’s body relaxes as she sighs of relief. Raven turns his head to her and raises his right eyebrow.

‘Why would it be a situation?’

‘Huh?’ Elisa jerks up, caught off-guard. ‘W-well, you have to know that Dawn is mine! So don’t go touching her or something!’

Right at that moment the door is slammed open and Dawn comes barging into the room. She throws her bag onto the brown tiled floor and kicks back the chair next to Elisa.

‘Sorry I’m late.’ she says and drops herself into the chair. ‘I’m Dawn Rainsworth from class 3-a’

‘Dawny!!’ Elisa yells and throws herself in Dawn’s lap.

‘I was so lonely without you! These jerks are picking on me!!!’

Raven walks up to Dawn and ignores Elisa’s comment.

‘I’m Raven Smith from your neighboring class 3-b. Nice to meet you.’ he says, shakes her hand and then takes a seat across Elisa.

‘Ah, nice to meet you...’ Dawn says. His voice sounds super formal. It’s something she’s heard before, but she’s not sure where she’s heard it. When she turns her head to observe the one she’s most interested in, she sees Vince looking at her with big eyes. She remembers him writing at the blackboard a few seconds ago, but he has appeared in front of her like a magic trick. His eyes, as big as a crystal ball from a fortuneteller, stare at her.

‘W-what?’ Dawn asks.

‘You really are it!’

‘It?’

‘Dawn,’ he begins and grabs her hands. ‘How about hanging out at my place? We could play some video games?’

Everyone looks at Vince with their mouths open while Raven shakes his head.

‘What the hell was that about?!’ Elisa jumps up. ‘You looked like you were about to freaking propose to her!’

Vince releases Dawn’s hand, flushing. Raven gives his best friend an amused look.

‘Well, uhm..’ he stammers. ‘Y-you are the girl they call Gaming Queen, right?’

Elisa looks like she’s about to hit herself with a book.

‘Oh,’ Dawn sighs. ‘you’re talking about that!’

‘Well, I really like gaming too, and you’re like the only girl in this school who likes gaming too, so I want to try and game with you. M-maybe we can become friends too!’

A slight red color appears on her cheeks. She looks at her hand with her mouth open in awe. It tingles from Vince's warm touch. She shakes her head to brush off her feelings and then looks at him again.

'Sure, let's game sometime.' she says.

Raven can't take his eyes off Dawn. The interest he has in her is something written on his forehead. That has something to do with all the different rumors about Dawn floating around the school ground, and the chess competition last year. It was easy for him to beat anyone, but in the finale, he had to go up against this girl who was looking like a bag of potatoes. He had never seen her before. Her face didn't speak any emotion, yet within a matter of minutes, she beat him. Him, the chess champion. He couldn't believe it. How did he never hear of her before? After that, he started paying attention to her. Also because his best friend Vince had this sudden urge to game with her. He isn't a guy who believes all the rumors about her, but when he thinks about all the different rumors he's heard, his interest in her only deepens.

He has watched her so many times. The way she packs her lunch, it is perfect. Nothing sticks out, she never drops a crumb. The way she has her bag organized, is even neater than he does his own bag. Even her handwriting: small, round and delicate letters. It screams perfectionist, yet she looks like a hobo. He just doesn't understand.

'So', Elisa says as a way to change the subject, 'we make student council this year.'

'I looked in this earlier, and it says what we have to do. And the first thing is helping clubs. We have to find out what they want to do with their club budget.' Raven shows them the folder. 'I suggest we ask Principal Green to make an announcement before we head home, since this is something we have to do before the end of the month, which is in two weeks already.'

'And, what's more?' Vince asks.

'The autumn festival of course!' Elisa's eyes sparkles with joy as she dances through the room, imagining herself in a big ball gown, waltzing underneath the colorful LED lights.

'Say, can we concentrate on the clubs first? I suggest we make teams of two; one for the sport clubs, one for the other clubs.' Raven says to wake Elisa up from her daydream.

‘I want to go with Dawn!’ Vince requests and tries to get dibs on his partnership with Dawn.

‘What are you saying?!’ Elisa stands up. It is as if she turns into the hulk. Her eyes glow with fierce anger. Dawn tugs Elisa’s arm, pulling her out of her stormy emotions. She sees her best friend, who looks at her with empty eyes. She then realizes what she just did.

‘Ah... sorry Dawn.’ Elisa apologizes. Her face and emotions have gone back to normal. She puts her hand before her mouth, as a tiny tear appears in the corner of the left eye. She blames herself for forgetting that Dawn doesn’t like it when she get’s like that. Even though Dawn doesn’t like it, Elisa can’t help but be over-protective of her. If she doesn’t protect Dawn, that same thing from 10 years ago will happen again. She shakes her head and tries to think about the autumn festival again. Positive thoughts, positive thoughts, she repeats in her head.

Raven and Vince look at her with wide eyes, unable to understand what they’ve just seen, while Dawn caresses Elisa’s back, to calm her down.

‘Dawn will go with Elisa, and I will go with Vince...’ Raven says as a reaction to what just happened. Elisa wipes away her tear and stands up.

‘It’s okay, I’m fine. I’ll go with you Raven. I’m sorry for what just happened.’

‘If Dawn and Vince will go to the principal, Elisa and I will rearrange the room a little bit so the club presidents can give us their requests. Make sure the principal makes the announcement tomorrow during the lessons, so we can get this over with and plan the autumn ball which is obviously much more fun.’ Raven says.

Both Dawn and Vince nod, stand up and are headed towards the door. While Vince heads out first, Dawn looks back one more time to give Elisa a thumb up. Elisa feels her spirit is lifted when she sees Dawn sweet gesture.

She closes the door behind her and follows Vince through the hallways. Act normal, she thinks. Act human.

‘So,’ he suddenly says and jerks her out of her chants. ‘Are you really as good as they say with gaming?’

‘Uhm, I honestly have no idea.’ Dawn says. ‘Can I ask you where the heck you’ve heard I sometimes game? Because you know, I

always game with Elisa. She's actually pretty good as well, but I tend to win from her!

'Elisa games too? Well, I used to be part of the gaming club.' he says and starts fidgeting with the same strand of hair Dawn saw him fidget with in the auditorium earlier. 'I know that's pretty lame but hey, I was still young back then.'

Dawn giggles, which makes Vince flush once again. 'Anyway, that's where I heard about your gaming skills. Actually, everyone in that club wanted to invite you over to game with us, but to be honest... No one really dared to come near you...'

Dawn stops walking. She feels her smile fade away, just like the twinkle in her eyes. She gazes through the hallway and feels a thickness forming in her throat. A cloud of despair forms around her. It's like two dragons are fighting inside of her. This is what you want, whispers the red dragon. But you don't actually like being alone and being disgusted by everyone, the blue dragon says. Vince looks at her, hesitant, but then puts his hand on her shoulder.

'Turns out you aren't intimidating at all!' he says and winks at her. The cloud disappears and the dragons fade into the background. Dawn looks at him.

'You know, I have this internal intimidation-radar! It doesn't go off when I'm near you. I may look totally confident and stuff, but actually I'm really afraid of big bald guys and chicks with lots of muscles, tattoos and piercings!' he admits to her. Dawn chuckles.

'Haha, you're actually pretty funny!' She smiles and they continue their walk. His heart warms up when he sees her kind smile.

'Are you free this Saturday?' he asks.

Dawn nods.

'Want to come over to my house?' he asks with a gentle smile on his face.

A sudden wave of hesitation hits her. She fidgets with her fingers and thinks hard about Vince's proposal.

'O-okay...'

In the meanwhile, they have arrived at the principal's office. The large, black door at the end of the hallway looks daunting. Compared to the normal doors of the classrooms, this one looks like there is an office for