Noah Frye Gets Crushed

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For Gabi, my forever crush.



1.
Things I Missed About Home
1. My bed
2. The dogs
3. Luna and Zoey

It takes twenty-seven minutes on the Saturday I get home from camp to realise that something's different.

It goes like this:

I get home at 10:22. From 10:22 until 10:32, I'm settling in. I throw the duffel bag that smells like lake and unwashed laundry into one corner of my room and collapse onto my sweet, sweet bed. My bed that doesn't smell like all the other girls who have slept on it over the years. My bed that doesn't have one weird spring that pokes me in the middle of the night. My bed that's in my own room, away from the sound of ten other people snoring. My beautiful, perfect bed.

I'm getting off-topic, but my camp bed was truly awful.

10:33 until 10:37: the doorbell rings and I launch

up. When we got our phones back at the end of camp, Luna had already texted me to say she was going to run to my house the second she saw my sister drive down our street.

Luna pounds up the stairs and bolts into my room, leaping into my arms. The problem is, she's been, like, a foot taller than me for the last year and she keeps forgetting about it. She knocks both of us over and two of the pugs spring into action to try and rescue us. Unfortunately, 'rescuing' to Liza and Minnelli means a lot of snuffling and face licking.

'Hi,' I say, once I've crawled out from under the combined chaos of Luna's weirdly long limbs and the dogs.

10:38 until 10:42: Luna and I sit on my bed and I tell her all about camp.

'It was seriously incredible,' I say. 'We need to figure out how to get you out there next summer. I know Zoey's gonna be doing her theatre thing, but—'

'Ooh, Zoey!' Luna lights up before I even have time to tell her about the best part of camp. 'I texted her when I saw your mom's car. She said she was just getting back, but she'd be here as soon as she could.'

10:43 until 10:47:

'I'm sorry you were stuck here all summer,' I tell Luna. 'Did you manage to have any fun between,

y'know, crying endlessly about the fact that your very best friend had abandoned you?'

'Yeah, it was tough not having Zoey here,' Luna says, and I stuff a pillow over her face until she grabs me.

Luna shoves me over and we both laugh. 'But seriously,' she says. 'It wasn't so bad here. In fact…'

'I have news.'

Luna and I jump up from the bed and rush over to hug Zoey. Thankfully, Luna remembers her height and, instead of jumping at Zoey, she picks her up and swings her around instead. With all three of us back in one big clump, everything feels right again. I made friends at camp who I love, but nothing beats the smell of Zoey's coconut shampoo and the softness of Luna's favourite shirt. I don't fit anywhere the way I fit into us.

Zoey usually has stories to tell us. She's what our moms call *dramatic* and what we call *fun*. My sister once told me that she's pretty sure Zoey's going to get us on the news one day, but she isn't sure yet if it'll be for a good reason.

'You have your audience,' I say, and Zoey just nods like *yeah, obviously.*

'So,' she says. 'Theatre camp.'

'Theatre camp,' Luna agrees.

'We did *13: The Musical*,' Zoey says, and I think

Luna and I are supposed to know what that is, but we both just look at each other and shrug. Zoey doesn't even notice. When she gets into a story, there's pretty much no stopping her.

'I got to be Lucy.'

I think that's supposed to mean something. I look at Luna, but she's no help. She's looking at me with the same expression.

'Congratulations?' I try.

'No!' Zoey says. 'Well, yes. Thank you, Noah. It was awesome, obviously. But don't you get what that means?'

'I really want to say yes,' Luna says. 'But that would be a lie.'

Zoey rolls her eyes at us. 'Lucy's the mean girl in the show. She tries to steal a girl's boyfriend. Which means she *kisses* a girl's boyfriend.'

10:48: Minute 27.

Luna gets it before I do.

'Oh my god,' she says. Zoey grins hugely and nods, and Luna repeats herself. 'Oh my god!'

The two of them hug, twirling each other around. It isn't until their second rotation that I actually realise what Zoey just said.

'Wait, so you kissed a guy?' I ask.

Zoey laughs. 'I kissed literally the cutest guy in the whole camp every day for two weeks.'

'Oh my *god*,' Luna says, yet again. I prickle, just a bit. Can't she say anything else?

But then she *does* say something else.

'We'll have to compare notes.'

'What do you mean compare notes?' Zoey demands. She drags Luna back to my bed and the two of them flop down on either side of me. I grin along with both of them, but there's a sinking feeling in my stomach I can't ignore.

'So y'know Blake?' Luna asks.

Do I *know* Blake? Blake who lives across the street? Blake who's hung out with us since we were all little kids? Blake who ate too much ice-cream cake at my last birthday party and threw up in a kiddie pool? *Blake*?

'Blake?' I ask in shock. Maybe it's a little rude, but, like … *Blake*?

'Hey!' Luna laughs. 'While you two were off having your best summers ever, I got bored. Blake asked if I wanted to help him out stuffing fliers for his paper route one night. We were alone in his garage, and … yup.'

I know that *and … yup* means that they kissed, but there's some part of my brain that can't fathom it. The last time we talked this much about kissing boys, it was because we were watching reality TV in Zoey's basement and this couple was making out so sloppily we couldn't stop laughing at them. This feels weirdly

similar. I'm sure Zoey and Luna weren't that slobbery and weird when they had their first kisses, but it still feels off. Just a little bit wrong.

But I can't exactly tell them that.

'What do you mean *yup*?' Zoey reaches over me to smack Luna on the arm. 'I'm going to need a heck of a lot more detail than *yup*. Are you guys still talking?'

Are Luna and Blake still *talking*? They were giving each other piggyback rides when I left for camp. I should hope they've exchanged a word or two since then.

Out of the three of us, Luna's the shy one. I always figured that, in terms of order of first kisses, it would be Zoey, me, then Luna.

I guess I missed the memo.

Luna nods. 'Like, all the time. The other day he showed me a bunch of new clothes he got for school, and I said I liked this jacket he got, and he was like *you can wear it if you ask nicely*.'

'Oh my god,' Zoey says, yet again.

I guess that means something and, logically, I guess that means something good, but I don't really see the connection. In fact, it kind of grosses me out that Blake thinks it's cute to talk to Luna like she's a little kid like that. What does he mean, *if you ask nicely*? Ew.

'Y'know, at camp, I met—'

'What are you going to do?' Zoey asks, like Luna's performing open-heart surgery. I don't think she even realises that she just cut me off, but that doesn't make it less annoying.

'What is there *to* do?' I ask, trying to elbow back into the conversation. I laugh, but it just comes out awkwardly. I never feel awkward around Luna and Zoey.

Zoey looks at me as if I'd just asked whether she wanted to bungee jump off my roof.

'You're kidding, right?' she asks. When I don't say anything, she rolls her eyes at me. It's fond, like I'm a cute little kid. I think I would have preferred it if she'd just been outright mean. 'There's so much to discuss with this! Lu, are you gonna wear his coat?'

'Not right away,' Luna says. She doesn't miss a beat and I peer at her to try and see what's changed about her that hasn't changed about me. 'I think maybe I'll wait until school starts. Like, maybe during lunch at some point?'

'Just don't wait too long,' Zoey says. 'You don't want him to lose interest.'

'Hey!' Luna laughs. 'Who says I'm so easy to get over?'

'That's the attitude I like to see!'

'Guess what?' I ask, trying to raise my voice enough to be heard over the two of them.

'What?' Luna asks, smiling at me like she's just remembered that I'm in the room.

Zoey gasps. '*Don't* tell me we went three for three this summer!'

I don't really know what happens. When I look back later, I study this exact moment over and over again, trying to figure out what I was thinking.

I think it's this: Zoey looks so excited. Luna looks *so* excited. Both of them are finally paying attention to me like I've been trying to get them to since they came into my room. Sure, they didn't seem to care about my *actual* news, but it feels so good to be back here with them, finally waiting to hear what I have to say, that the next thing just kind of … slips out.

'Not *yet,*' I say. I don't know where it comes from but suddenly my voice sounds just like theirs. That weird, teasing, *I have a very important and grown-up secret* voice.

Zoey lets out a feral screech and launches herself at me, grabbing me by the shoulders.

'Noah, *who*?' she demands. 'One of those science camp nerds actually had the guts to kiss you?'

Okay, a few reasons why I don't like that:

What would be the problem with a science camp nerd? *I'm* a science camp nerd.

Who says this non-existent science camp nerd had to have kissed *me*? I could have kissed *him*. I don't need to be waiting around for some science camp nerd.

It wasn't even technically a science camp, okay? We did a ton of stuff.

'No,' I say, digging myself even further into this hole. Zoey might be onto something with her theatre stuff; something about having everyone's eyes on you makes you want to keep it up as long as possible. 'I've just been talking to someone.'

'Someone we know?' Luna asks.

'Maybe,' I say.

Alright, so there goes that. Thanks, me. Really helpful.

Luna and Zoey both scream again, demanding I tell them who it is.

'It's not Blake, is it?' Luna asks.

I try to make my face seem neutral, even though the idea of kissing Blake kind of makes me want to gag.

'Definitely not,' I say, and Luna looks instantly relieved.

'Are you going to tell us who?' Zoey asks.

Crap. I hadn't thought this through.

'I'll tell you if I have any news to share,' I say, hoping that makes me sound cool and aloof and not way in over my head, the way I actually am.

Thankfully, the temptation to keep talking about their *real* first kisses is too powerful for Luna and Zoey to resist, so they get right back into their boy talk. I hear way more than I ever needed to know about Blake and the Cutest Guy at Zoey's Theatre Camp (honestly, I don't think I even catch his name). It's not that they're ignoring me on purpose. I get that. But that doesn't really make it feel any better when I start talking and the two of them start laughing at something else.

'Ugh,' Luna says eventually, looking down at her phone. 'My mom wants me home.'

'Boo,' Zoey says. I try to make my face look like hers but, in reality, I feel a little lighter at the idea of being left alone. That's *really* not how I normally feel around Luna and Zoey, but I can also usually keep up a conversation with them, too.

'I'll walk with you,' Zoey says, and she and Luna hug me goodbye. I hug them both limply back.

'We're *gonna* figure out who it is, by the way,' Luna tells me just before she leaves.

'You can't hide your *secret love* forever,' Zoey adds.

'Good luck,' I say, and I close my door just a little too firmly behind them. (They know their way around my house almost better than they know their own houses; I'm sure they can make it to the front

door okay.) Once they're gone, I let out a big breath and lean my forehead against my door.

I usually never want to be alone when Zoey and Luna are around. My house is full of noise, one hundred per cent of the time. The dogs running around, little nails scraping against our wood floors. My sister is usually playing music too loudly, or else she's with her boyfriend, laughing like she's going to pee her pants. When my parents are home, downstairs is all dad rock and sawdust and the rustic wood tables my mom makes. It can be hard to find a place that just feels like mine. I love hiding out alone in my room with all that chaos going on out there, but Zoey and Luna make me feel calm the same way putting on headphones while my mom's using a chainsaw in the backyard does.

Today, though, I stand in the middle of my empty room for a second. I look around, sizing it up like some kind of natural disaster just occurred.

'Why did I *do that*?' I ask no one in particular.

The only response is a little pug sneeze from outside my door.