

“I saw your girlfriend run by yesterday morning.”

Darius McAllister spat out the soda he'd been consuming at the evening dinner table. “What?” He sputtered.

Evan McAllister looked at the mess his son had made, and raised his brow at the reaction. “I saw your girl...”

“I know what you said. Where'd you get the whole girlfriend idea?” He asked while wiping it up.

Evan set down his drink and steepled his fingers in front of him. “She is a girl, and you appear to be friends. You run with her several mornings a week. Before you moved here you would rather walk across nails than run. You've NEVER been a morning person, but suddenly you are getting up at 5 a.m. willingly to run with a girl. What should I think?”

Dare set down his napkin and glanced at his kid brother avidly watching them. “Okay, she is a girl and she is a friend, I think, but she's definitely NOT my girlfriend. I'm not seeing anyone...”

“Well you should be.” Evan countered. “Why not her?”

Dare chuckled for a moment at the idea. “Because she'd coldcock me if I even tried to kiss her.”

Evan stared at his son in surprise. “What? You're not good enough for her?”

“No, nothing like that. Delia's just...well...hard to explain. But for one thing, her grandmother died last weekend; I don't think she's thinking about dating at the moment.” He shrugged. “I'm not exactly great dating potential anyway.”

“Sure you are! You're good looking, intelligent, kind, and thoughtful, what more could any girl want?”

Dare glared at his father for a minute. “How about a boyfriend that she can be sure will be able to take her to the dance or football game or party?”

“The right girl would understand your situation.” Evan argued.

“Even the most understanding girl will still eventually get tired of a boyfriend who breaks dates at the last minute and misses so many ‘important’ high school events.”

“But...”

“And they have a right to feel that way. Dad, it's better this way. I flirt and I enjoy myself, but I don't have to make excuses to anyone when I have to bail last minute. And Tommy doesn't have to worry about being alone at night because you got stuck at work.” He smiled at his brother. “Trust me; it is much better this way.”

“I just don't want you to miss a big part of the high school experience because of circumstances beyond your control.”

“Look, I have this idea that might be a decent compromise. Let me see how it plays out...I'll let you know.” Dare responded. “In the meantime, I need you to know that I enjoy my time with Tommy.” He grinned at his brother again. “I'm fine with watching

him. There's no hurry in trying to find someone to be here in the evenings when you're working. Me and Tommy are buds...we've got plenty to keep ourselves entertained. Right bro?" He reached his hand out to knock knuckles with the younger boy.

"Yup. We've got tons to do. I just got this new game for the xbox, 'Chaos Bleeds'..."



Hints and Allegations

By Jill Irving and Rachel Meister

Dare fell into step beside Delia at five o' five the next morning.

"Hey there. I'm glad to see you've resumed your normal schedule." He greeted quickly before falling silent to conserve his breath. Over the last month he'd added distance to his runs, but he still frequently felt a little breathless with the pace she tended to set.

"I figured you'd get lazy again if I didn't." She grinned at him, but slowed her pace a might to suit him better.

"Yeah, well I got to go back to sleep all last week. That didn't suck."

Delia turned and ran backwards. "How'd you know I'd be out here today?"

"Dad said he saw you yesterday. I figured you'd gotten back to your schedule." At her lifted brow, he finished. "If nothing else, you are a creature of habit."

She turned around. "Sometimes I think you know me too well."

"There's no such thing! And there's a lot I don't know about you, but I'm trying to learn."

"You are trying!" She quipped.

"So how are you doing?" He asked seriously.

"I'm still not completely sure. I'm trying to take it one day at a time." She shrugged.

"Trying to keep my emotions on an even keel. Sometimes it's easier than others."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"You do realize you are a sixteen year old boy, not a shrink, right?"

Dare chuckled. “I do love that sarcasm of yours. Actually, I’m seventeen. I’m not claiming to have any professional degree...I’m just offering to be an ear to listen and a shoulder...”

He stopped at the glare she sent his way. “um...Think of me as an impartial listener; someone who’s not in the middle of your group of friends; someone who isn’t going to share anything that you say.”

“I don’t know, Dare. This is still so new to me.”

“So we get coffee and maybe we talk...no pressure.” He offered as they reached the end of his endurance.

“Maybe...” she hedged.

“After school today.” He suggested as he stopped and started stretching.

“I’ll think about it.” She called back as she nudged her pace back up to normal.

As much as he was loath to admit it, getting up and running in the morning gave Dare more energy during the day. He even looked better after a run. This morning he was particularly happy and it showed in his gait.

Others noticed it as well. Holly Pernod stood with a few of the cheerleaders directly in front of Dare’s locker.

“Good morning!” He greeted them with a smile.

Holly interrupted the girl who was speaking and stepped over to Dare. “Good morning, Dare.” She leaned against the locker next to his as he dialed his combination. “That’s a styling jacket.”

Dare slipped two helmets into his locker and unzipped his leather jacket. “Thanks. It protects the skin.”

“You always have the nicest clothes.” She reached over and touched the soft material of his black turtleneck sweater.

“It’s easy to dress nice when your dad is a Mall Startup Consultant.” Dare pulled away from her exploring hand by turning towards his locker to change out the books in his bag.

“I saw you ride in this morning. Your motorcycle is awesome. Maybe you can give me a ride later?” She suggested provocatively.

Dare, not missing the innuendo grabbed his backpack and shut the locker door. “Yeah, maybe.” He responded noncommittally throwing his bag over his shoulder.

“Are you coming to the game tonight?” She asked. “Maybe we can get together afterwards.” The look she gave him spoke volumes.

Dare’s smile faltered slightly at her blatant invitation. “Actually, I have to skip it tonight. I’ve got a paper to write for History. In fact, unfortunately, I need to go check a book out of the library right now. It’s good seeing you Holly.”

As he rushed away he could hear giggling from the girls and a quiet “he’s so hot!”

Delia was stepping out of her post-gym shower when Holly and her cronies approached her. Previously, Holly had had exactly zero words for Delia, at least not to her face. Delia was a bit surprised that now Holly was right in her face.

“Listen, mutant” Holly grabbed Delia’s arm and gave her the once over. “I saw you leave the Vault with Dare on Saturday. He’s mine. Go find yourself another mutant. I hear Trim Falucci is available.”

“Do you not like that hand?” Delia asked quietly examining the hand holding her arm. “I would think you’d need that for holding the pom-poms.”

“I’m not a cheerleader. Are you listening to me?” Holly shook the hand in question for emphasis.

Delia looked impassively down at the teenybopper before her. “All I’m hearing is irrational babble. Why should I listen to it?” Delia’s right fist clenched for a moment, but she displayed no other signs of her emotions.

“In case you haven’t noticed, you are a little outnumbered for one thing.” Holly informed her while the cheerleaders standing behind her stood up importantly. “We can make your life a living hell if you give me any trouble.”

Delia threw her head back and laughed. “Go ahead and try to make my life worse, cheerfreak. Just try!” She looked back at the hand still holding her arm. “But if you want to keep that hand in working order, I would suggest removing it before I do.”

“I am NOT a cheerleader!” Holly raged “Are you going to leave him alone?”

“I asked you nicely, I warned you...” Delia grabbed Holly’s wrist with her right hand, squeezed until Holly let go and then twisted the arm uncomfortably. “Now you’ll listen to me. If Dare is interested in a bubble-headed pom-pom girl, more power to you. But I actually think he might just have a little more depth than that. Either way, I can assure you that guys like Dare don’t go for girls like me.” She let go of Holly’s hand. “But if you girls are going to be getting your panties in a bunch, leave me out of your foolhardy speculation. I’ve got better things to do than worry about the mating rituals of puerile sex-addicts.” Delia slipped past the smaller girl and started to dress. “And for your 411, at the Vault, Dare and I stepped outside so we could hear while he asked how I was doing after the death of my grandmother; I wasn’t in the mood for a quickie.”

Delia exited the school amused. Holly had attempted to make good on her threats. Someone had tried to trip her in the hall; Delia had hooked her foot around the tripper’s leg and yanked them with her as she walked. Apparently someone had suggested to a few guys that she was easy; they very quickly learned otherwise with a few well placed glares and barbs. All-in-all she was reasonably sure that all their attempts to ruin her life would be easily repelled.

“Coffee?” Dare suggested from her right.

She turned to see him leaning against the school wall. He pushed off smoothly and tried to hand her a helmet.

“Where’s the coffee? You make a suggestion like that there ought to be coffee in front of me.” She complained looking at the helmet.

“It’s hard to carry coffee on a motorcycle. I guess I’ll have to bring you to the coffee instead of the coffee to you. Come on.” He grabbed her left arm and tried to tug her towards his motorcycle. Delia glanced at his hand, and then apparently making the decision not to rip it off, allowed him to pull her along.

As she approached his ride, she stopped to examine it. “What is it with everyone having motorcycles? Doesn’t anyone have a car these days?”

“I can’t speak for anyone else, but it gets better mileage. I think the selling point for my father was the idea that I couldn’t do much more than kiss on it.” Dare grinned.

“Excellent point.” She ran her hand over the sleek body. “What would something like this run?”

Dare raised both brows, “less than a new car. Let’s go.” He tried to hand her the helmet again.

“What if I don’t trust you?” She questioned as she looked around. Several kids were watching their exchange. She suspected Holly would know in a few minutes. She noticed a familiar face standing next to another motorcycle a few parking spaces down, also watching with interest. “Hi, Mychael,” she called to him “are you going to be playing again soon?”

“Yeah, next Thursday night.”

“Great, I’ll be there.”

Mychael smiled, “Cool. I’ll look for you there.” He hopped on his bike and rode away.

Delia watched after him, apparently looking for something. After a few moments, she grabbed Dare’s extra helmet. “Fine, let’s go!”

At the Double-R, Matt poked his head out of the kitchen as they were sitting at a booth drinking coffee.

“Hey, Delia.” He greeted. “Where’s the rest of the gang? Will Wylie be along?”

“It’s just us now, Matt. I can’t speak for the others. Have you met, Darius McAllister?” Delia asked.

“Hey. Nice to meet you. Um...would you like some free fries?”

Delia smiled at him. “Thanks, no. Save them for Wylie or Trim. If you want to get me something free, a free refill would be fine.” She pointed to her coffee cup.

“The refills are free.” Matt explained.

“Well, then you won’t get in trouble.”

“Yeah, sure.” Matt stepped away.

“What if I wanted free fries?” Dare challenged.

“Trust me, you don’t want anything he’s touched.” She grinned. “Besides, you don’t need it.” She patted his belly. “You’ve gone too long without exercising.”

Dare glared at her for a moment. “There’s nothing wrong with my belly. But you exercise too much and eat too little.”

“I eat well.”

He looked carefully at her. “You haven’t been.”

She sighed. “I know. Devil and Grey gave me a hard time about that too. I didn’t feel much like eating for a while. I’m trying to do better. Mom isn’t much of a cook...Trim’s grandmother has been feeding me when I go there to train.”

“Train?” Dare raised his eyebrow.

“Long story. I’ve got a more interesting one for you.”

“Really?”

“This girl, Holly”

“Holly Pernod?”

“If you say so! She tried to warn me off you today in the locker room.”

Dare leaned forward towards her grinning. “Tried? How’d that work out for her?”

“I don’t take kindly to being man-handled, or girl-handed for that matter. After I finished laughing at the implausibility of her suppositions, I politely asked her rethink her actions.”

“And?”

“She declined. I think she’s declared war on me. She told me she was going to make my life hell.”

“I bet you took that well.”

“Yeah, like she could make my life worse. I figured I’d mention it because she seems to have a thing for you.”

Dare nodded in agreement. “I discovered that today myself. I’d call her the master of the double entendre but it was more like a single entendre.”

“About as subtle as a ton of bricks, huh?”

“Pretty much.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, what are you going to do about it?”

Dare contemplated her for a moment. “Free sex? What do you think?”

Delia nodded. “Of course, what was I thinking?” She responded emotionlessly.

“Hopefully that I might have enough respect for myself and my body not to take chances with someone who would give it away so easily.” He continued watching her expression as he spoke.

“I told her that you had depth.” She murmured.

“Thanks. So I guess that means I need a way not to offend her.”

“Why not tell her to buzz off?”

“Because subtly is required to protect my position; she’s popular.”

“Of course she is” Delia muttered.

“What I need is a girlfriend.”

Delia looked up eyes wide like a deer caught in headlights. “Breathe, Delia. I’m not talking about you. I need someone who is popular...”

“Of course” she agreed caustically “there are plenty of bubble-headed choices. A bunch of them were in the locker room with Holly.”

“Are you worried about them?”

Delia stared at him. “Why would I be? What can they do to me?”

“Nothing that would matter to you, I guess. I have to be more careful.”

“Why do you care what they think?”

“Let’s just say I have a need to belong.” Dare admitted.

“So join a club.”

“That’s different.” He attended to his near empty coffee cup. “My mother left when I was ten. I spent a long time in therapy after that. My father is great, my kid brother is super...but even with all that, I like to have a place. I’m confident enough to make one for myself, but I’m not a loner by nature.”

“Is that why you psychoanalyze me?”

“You are so different from me. Honestly, you amaze me most of the time. I can’t imagine doing the things I’ve seen you do. But at the funeral, I saw something different in you. Something I recognized in myself. I’m sorry if it bothers you to talk about it.”

Delia placed her hand over his on the coffee cup. “You were right. I’m not comfortable with this yet. I’ve always kept a journal, but I’m not the type to talk stuff through with other people.”

“Keeping a journal is healthy too. At least you aren’t keeping it all inside.”

“Just most of it” she snickered.

Dare looked at the clock on the wall. “I need to get home for my brother. Do you need a ride?”

“Can you drop me off at Trim’s grandmother’s house?”

“Anywhere you want to go.”

Trim was sitting on the doorstep. He had a pair of earphones on, but he was clearly watching the road.

When Dare pulled up in front of the house, Trim tugged his headphones off.

“You’re late!” He immediately yelled at Delia. “Grans has been waiting.”

“Sorry!” She turned back to Dare. “Thanks, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“You bet!” He replied tying down the extra helmet. “I’ll see you at the Vault...assuming Dad doesn’t have to work late, that is.”

“Okay.” As Delia rushed into the house, Dare could hear her profuse apologies.

Trim still stood on the stoop glaring.

“Hey Trim. How’s it going?” Dare greeted him.

“Don’t you think she’s been through enough lately?” Trim accused.

“Yes. She’s had a rough time. I’ve been trying to help her through it...just like you.”

Trim looked down at his clenched fist for a moment, “maybe you should just leave that to her friends.”

“I thought I was one.”

“Maybe Deal doesn’t need you.”

Dare tossed his own helmet on. “Well if that’s the case, I’m sure she’ll tell me that.” He gunned his engine and drove off with a roar.

“Maybe I’ll show you that.” Trim contemplated his rival’s back for a few moments before heading back in to the house to Delia.

On Friday Delia smiled and crumpled the nasty little note that had been waiting in her locker. She’d been waiting to see what Holly’s next attempt at making her life miserable would be. So far nothing had impressed her. For this one, she’d really have to give Holly points for imagination. Too bad it wasn’t paired with intelligence, she thought.

She was contemplating whether it was worth messing with her when she saw Dare heading towards the cafeteria. Every girl around was stealing surreptitious glances his way. He had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

“Hey Dare!” She called.

Dare did a double-take before walking back to her. “Hey yourself. What can I do for you?”

“Are you going to the Vault Thursday?” Dare raised his brows. “That remains to be seen.”

Delia looked around then slid the crumpled paper into his hand. "I'll save you a seat, just in case." She winked and turned back towards the cafeteria where the gang was meeting after spending the night in the hospital with Maryann.

As Dare watched her stride away, he muttered. "Sometimes she baffles me."

Dare sat in the lunch room with a couple of guys from the baseball team. He had perused the note Holly had left Delia and figured he was running out of time. Delia was amused right now, but he figured her patience wasn't endless, especially recently. It was time for Dare to act upon his plan to get Delia out of Holly's crosshairs. True Holly couldn't hurt her, but if Delia got pissed enough, she could end up fighting. Fighting right now would get her expelled. That would hurt her and by extension all her friends.

Dare had only been nominally paying attention to the sports talk around him, but conversation had shifted to the other topic that had been on his mind. Wylie had just walked across the cafeteria to talk with Raine.

"Man is she hot." Roger enthused watching Wylie as well.

"I like to get me some of that Wylie-action." Doug responded.

"She hasn't seen anyone since Brandon died." Roger offered.

Doug nodded. "Well, maybe it's about time she had the option. I've got exactly what she needs to get over that." His grin widened with his internal vision. "A half-hour in the back of my car and she'll be saying 'Brandon, who?'"

"It wouldn't hurt your social standing either." Roger added slapping his friend's hand in a high-five.

"What about you, Dare? You got your eyes on any prime meat?" Doug asked. "Or are you really into the Deadly Delia action like they whisper? Maybe you don't like real girls?"

Dare turned his attention back to the two of them. "I like real girls just fine." Dare shook his head at the insanity. "I just like to investigate carefully; I've got my image to think about."

"Well, the D.D. won't help it, dude!" Roger exclaimed.

"Delia's not my date, she's my training partner. I can't think of anyone in the school more up to the task. And I never settle for less than the best." Dare got up and collected his things.

"So who's your date?"

"I never curse myself by talking out of turn...you'll know when I have one." Dare walked away from them, dumping his tray along the way.

Wylie stopped outside the Double-R after a Scooby meeting to watch the boarding up of the shop fronts from the vandalism of the night before. Today Farmingham

sported itself a shiny, new Hellmouth, and everything that she thought she new about the job of the Slayer had changed. Instinct was telling her life was about to get more complicated.

“Wylie!” a voice behind her called out.

She turned quickly, “yeah?”

“Weird about this whole earthquake and school getting cancelled, isn’t it? I thought the east coast was supposed to be earthquake free.”

“You have no idea!” Wylie agreed wholeheartedly.

Dare tilted his head slightly, “And you aren’t going to enlighten me, are you?” he asked.

Wylie sighed and shook her head.

Dare leaned against the wall. “Things aren’t easy on any of you, are they?”

“You could say that again. Sometimes it makes me want to hit something or someone.”

Dare pushed away from the wall. “I have a better idea. Let’s take a walk.”

“What’s on your mind?” She asked almost happy for the distraction.

“It’s funny you should ask...” Dare tucked her hand on the crook of his arm as they walked. “In part I’ve been thinking about you.”

“Me?” She queried.

“Things have been rough on you lately.” He swung his arm out encompassing the town. “All this, what happened with Brandon, the rift between Delia and Raine, and I think I’ve even picked up something about the night Delia’s grandmother died.”

“Yeah, there’s a lot going on...most of it not good.”

“They are starting to talk about you.” He led her into an empty corridor.

“Who?”

“I was sitting with a couple members of the baseball team on Friday.” He let her go and turned to face her. “They were saying its time for you to start dating again...one of them had his own ideas on that. Not pretty ones, by the way. I’m rather ashamed to admit to being the same species, let alone sex, as him.”

Wylie sighed deeply, then looked back at him, determined. “I can handle him, and the others.”

“I know. You can handle a lot. But maybe we can help each other.” Dare suggested.

“How?” Wylie folded her arms in front of her.

“I have a proposition for you.”

Wylie leaned against the wall looking around her quickly. “I thought you were gay?”

Dare shook his head. “It’s just a rumor, probably started by someone jealous and pathetic.” He raised it hand as she started to balk. “Will you hear me out? It’s not what you think.”

She nodded slowly and crossed her arms in front of her. "Proceed."

Dare hadn't seen Delia's jeep in the parking lot, but she was seated with a cup of coffee when he looked around the Vault. Wylie had apparently not arrived.

"You are early" he commented to Delia as he sat down next to her.

"I guess I wanted to get a good seat. Besides, there's not a lot else to do with classes being unexpectedly ended." Delia commented as she watched the happenings on the stage. "Glad you were able to make it."

"Dad got home about ten minutes ago with a briefcase full of work. He was quizzing Tommy for a spelling test as I left."

"It's cool that he makes time for the kid even if he's busy."

"Yeah, he's always been that way." Dare agreed.

"I guess I should tell you...There's a rumour circulating that you are gay."

"Yeah, I've heard. I've got it covered." Dare glanced at the stage. "So who's this Michael guy? Any good?"

"He goes to our school, works in the kitchen here and is really good. At least I think so."

Dare watched her face for a couple minutes. "I'm sensing some history..."

Delia shook her head. "How do you do that?"

"I knew it; I'm right."

"Long story..."

"I'm not going anywhere." Dare leaned over the table to listen.

"And I'm not telling it. Suffice to say that some weird stuff happened the last time he played." Delia offered.

"Do you like him?"

"Sure, he's nice enough." Delia answered.

"Are you dating him?"

"Get serious!" Delia sneered. "Do I look like I'm dating anyone? Do I look like I want to?" She gestured to her fatigues and unmade-up face.

"So Delia, tell me what you really think." He grinned at her as Trim sat down on Delia's other side.

"Hi, Deal" Trim smiled at her, before sending a glare Dare's way.

"How you doin', Trim?" Dare asked, amused by the other boy's reaction.

"I'm fine, but you may want to watch out for yourself." Trim responded aggressively.

"I'll keep that in mind." He stood up. "Delia, you need another coffee?"

As he waited for a response, he noticed Wylie making her entrance. As she approached the table, many people spoke to her and quite a few sets of eyes followed her. Her dress was stylish and striking. Her smile was genuine as she saw him.

“You look stunning!” He extoled as she came up behind Delia.

“Thank you.” She smiled taking his outstretched hand. “Just a little dress I’d put aside for the right occasion. I’m glad you like it.”

He pulled out the chair next to his and guided her into it. “How could I not?” He kissed her hand before releasing it. “Delia says the band is good. I hope you enjoy it.”

“I’m sure I will. Hi Trim, Delia.”

Trim’s eyes were round with trying to absorb things.

Delia smiled at Wylie. “So, you two?”

“Looks that way.” Wylie responded.

“Looks right.” Delia nodded.

Dare smiled, “Thanks. So what was your answer on the coffee?”

“Please.”

“I’ll take a cappuccino.” Wylie suggested as Dare turned to her.

“Sure. Please excuse me, ladies.” He turned back for a second. “Trim?”

“Ah...pepsi”

“Sure. Be right back.” Dare strolled away toward the bar.

“You sure you’re okay with this?” She asked Delia.

“Why wouldn’t I be? While I don’t understand what you are about with this whole popularity kick, it’s clear you both want it. And despite that you are both good people. You two make sense together. It keeps you both away from the cretins.”

Wylie laughed for a second, before responding. “I don’t think you give them enough credit.”

“Funny, I was thinking I gave them more than they deserved.” Delia shrugged.

Dare delivered the drinks to the others. Then he sat next to Wylie while the band’s announcement happened. As the opening notes of a slow song started, he offered his hand to Wylie.

“Shall we dance?”

Wylie smiled and rose. As they walked to the dance floor, many eyes noticed and admired.

Holly Pernod watched Wylie and Dare circle the dance floor again. He could really dance. Damned if they didn’t look really good together. She contemplated what

she could do to break them up for a few minutes, but figured she'd leave it be for a while, find herself a willing guy. "At least Deadly Delia doesn't have him."

"I heard Dare didn't like girls!" Roger commented in shock. "What the hell?"

"Guess Dare really isn't gay." Doug observed. "Still, I wish he'd picked a different hottie."

"He said he never settled for less than the best." Roger reminded. "Me, I like the available myself."

With a last peek at the couple, she stepped into the milieu surrounding the baseball team. Roger smiled and turned his attention to her immediately....

Trim was waiting outside the door to the Vault as Dare stepped out.

"You were just messing with her feelings!" Trim accused.

"I think I missed part of this conversation. How 'bout starting from the beginning?"

"Delia. You were just using her to get closer to Wylie!"

Dare folded his arms across his chest. "That's quite an imagination you've got. I'm having difficulty connecting the dots."

"If connecting the dots is too hard, try to color by numbers. How could you do that to her? She's been through enough!"

Dare sighed. "Trim, I think it's great that you are so protective of Delia. She wouldn't appreciate it though. Delia and I understand each other; we're friends. She says she's cool with me and Wylie being together. I believe her."

"So she knew you were interested in Wylie not her?" Trim asked.

"She knew she was in no danger of me asking her out. And she was happy about that, I assure you. She didn't know about Wylie because until I talked to Wylie it was no one else's business. Truthfully, it still isn't."

Trim clenched his fists. "You can't control what others feel, what they think."

"No one can. I didn't use Delia to get close to Wylie. Wylie was more receptive to getting to know me than Delia was in the beginning. One has nothing to do with the other."

"But..."

"Trim, Delia isn't interested in me. Unfortunately for you, she's not interested in you either. She's not in a place right now that she's interested in anyone. Too much bad stuff has gone on. She's needed to shut down part of her...it may be a long while before she feels differently." He spread his arms to his side. "You need to be her friend and/or you need to get over her."

"Don't you think I know that. I'm not stupid." Trim argued.

Dare shook his head sadly. He patted Trim's shoulder before striding towards his bike.

“Do I detect the scent of perfume?” Evan McAllister noted as Dare walked in the front door. “Good evening?”

“You could say that.” Dare grinned. “Remind me to introduce you to Wylie at some point.”

“Wylie?”

“The girl whose perfume you smell.” Dare answered.

“Details, my boy.” Evan prompted, dropping his arm around his son.

Dare laughed. “A gentleman never kisses and tells.”

“So there’s kissing involved?”

Dare lifted his brow. “You’ll like her.” He patted his father’s shoulder before pulling away. “Good night.”

Evan watched his son head upstairs. They wore identical smiles. “That’s my boy!” He said to the air.

*** Title credited to lyrics from **You Can Call Me Al** by Paul Simon