Knitting for the Prince

Book 1 of the Royal Love Series

By Mariah Moon

1) New Jobs and Breakups

Her best friend waved her over.

As soon as she was seated, her friend began to blab.

Soon afterwards, her phone began to ring. The name scrawling across the screen made her light up. Making a quick gesture to reassure her friend she’d be back, the young girl picked up her phone and answered it.

“So did you get the job at the yarn shop?” A typical Tristan-esque response.

“I did. My first day is tomorrow, earlier than expected.”

“That’s great, Julie! I hope you enjoy it.”

“I know I will. I’ll see you tonight?”

“Of course, baby. I’ll pick you up at seven sharp.”

“See you then, Tristan. I’m looking forward to it.”

The line went dead. Tristan was driving back from a national game for high school football (though she had often heard foreign exchange students from the United States of America refer to it as “soccer”) and Julissa (Julie to her friends) had just gotten a job. She’d been searching all week (in places such as restaurants, shops, and the works) and most had come back negatively. Until this morning that was, when the call from a local yarn shop came, saying she was just the person for the open position.

“Is Tristan on his way back?” Delilah’s voice startled Julissa enough she jumped slightly. “Sorry. Didn’t mean to startle you, Julie.” Delilah giggled slightly as she handed Julissa the celebratory ice cream that had been deemed ‘necessary’ after hearing the news.

“Yea, he’s already half way here. I’m thinking about breaking it off tonight, Delilah. It’s just not working, even with all the effort we’ve been putting in since March.”

“I was about to suggest that action, Julie. I really don’t see it ending well for you two if you don’t break it off now.” Delilah’s prediction matched up fairly well with Julissa’s own. “I don’t care how cliché this sounds, Julissa, but you *deserve* a prince…but the chances of meeting one are slim to none…” Delilah sighed.

“Delilah, you never know what’s just around the corner of life.” Julissa smiled as Delilah laughed lightly.

“You have a point, Julissa,” Delilah started, “but still. A prince isn’t the kind of guy to sneak around in jeans and a tee.” Julissa nodded slowly. “Julie, please consider the odds. If not a *real* prince, then settle for someone that treats you like a princess. Tristan does *not* make the cut. Break up with him tonight or over text afterwards.”

“Delilah, I will. I promise. Tonight.” Julissa smiled. Then added with a laugh, “Besides, text break-ups are so unfeeling.”

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“Adrian…she’s dead.” The queen’s voice weighed her son down. Adrian put a hand to his chin, holding back his tears as only a prince could.

His grandmother had been one of his closest confidents. She’d been closer to him this past year than ever before. Now she was gone.

“I can’t believe she’s gone…” In Adrian’s experience, the Roman family had always been close. A death in the family would travel around fast. Someone would be visiting soon if he was right…many someones actually.

Much of the extended family lived in the country, but some did live out of the country. The only people that did the latter (living out of the country, Adrian meant) that he could think of were his cousins – Lyla, Samuel (Sam for short), and Delia – and their parents, Aunt Kiela and Uncle Adam.

“Kiela just called. She’s headed here as soon as she possibly can get here. Our mother’s death weighs heavily on her mind.” Upon seeing that he was not really in the mood to respond, his mother added, “Adrian, get some rest. We’ll have family here soon.” His mother’s voice somewhat soothed Adrian’s nerves.

He simply nodded and got up from where he sat. The death of his grandmother wore him down too.

“I will, mother. Does father know?” Adrian took a deep breath as his mother shook her head. His dad not knowing might not be a good thing.

Especially because he could tell that she needed him now more than ever in his memory.

“I’ll tell him tonight at dinner, Adrian. For now, rest. We’ll announce the death publicly tomorrow.” His mother waved her hand, a signal that meant Adrian could leave.

He did so after placing a kiss on her forehead, all the while wondering how to break the news to his right hand man. Luke would be a major support in this trial…he hoped.

Slightly shaking his head to get rid of those thoughts, he headed up to his room. He just needed a good cry.

Adrian slipped out the back gate easily. Dressed in jeans and a tee-shirt, especially with his black wig and blue contacts from a previous Halloween costume, he looked like a servant. No one knew the difference, especially since many servants knew sign language (to communicate with the head of the guard, who was deaf), as did Adrian.

Pulling the door to his beat up truck open, Adrian slid into the soft leather interior. He’d had a lot of work done on the interior, but purposefully neglected to do anything to the exterior. It looked more like a commoner car that way.

It also matched his disguise better this way.

Adrian wouldn’t have it any other way. It was actually pretty cool, searching for his car in the parking lots only to find it by looking inside at the leather, the new steering wheel, the custom painted dash… and what made it all worth it was that he had done extra chores around the palace to earn the privilege of tricking his truck out like this. That had been one of the best days he could remember from the past couple of years, and he didn’t want to trade it for anything. When asked if he would do it again, he would always answer yes.

“Where to first?” Adrian began to mutter to himself, as he did when he was upset or nervous.

A look at the clock revealed that it was almost seven in the evening. Dinner sounded good, and Adrian knew just were to go. Besides, if he were going anywhere with tear tracks on his face (as it looked like he might since he had only stopped crying about twenty minutes or so ago), he’d look more like he belonged at this particular restaurant than the fancy one his parents would prefer he go to.

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Julissa smiled at Tristan. The team had won the game, just as had been expected.

Tristan had opted *not* to go out with the team. Instead, he was here with her. Besides, the team could always get a little rowdy after a win, and he knew Julissa wouldn’t want to be there for it.

Tristan returned her smile.

“I saw the game last night, Tristan. You did well. I’m convinced you’re the reason our football team’s reputation is so well-known and upheld.” Julissa’s comment reminded Tristan why he had asked her out for the first time – a year and a half ago to the day, March 20th, 2012 being their first encounter in such an environment that asking her out on a date could’ve been possible.

She was a sweet heart then, and she was still such a sweet heart that Tristan could hardly keep his excitement in each time they went on a date.

He was always on his toes around her, especially since she was notorious for being generous with her leftovers if they had gone out to lunch or dinner. In fact, he often joked that she would attract the attention of Prince Roman himself if she kept it up, and that he’d steal her away from him. After making a comment of that nature, he’d hold his hand over his heart, fake a gag, and keel over as if he were dead. His “last words” would always be the same. Tell the prince you were mine once.

“You’re too kind, Julie.” The comment startled Julissa out of her daydream, which made him nervous. Had he interrupted something that she would’ve liked to finish?

Tristan waited for the usual blush, and a possible scolding. It never came, neither did the scolding he had almost half been looking forward to.

Ignoring this new twist in the usual proceedings of a date with Julissa, Tristan pulled the chair out for her. Julissa sat down, brushing a strand of her chestnut hair away from her face. She seemed to be hesitating with her words.

The resulting pause in the conversation made his heart pound. Had he done something wrong?

“Tristan…I need to be honest with you. I don’t think things are working out anymore. We both go off to college in a few months, and long distance relationships never work well. It’s over.” Julissa sounded like her friend, Delilah.

Delilah hated Tristan with a *passion.* To hear such a Delilah-inspired phrase from Julissa was not uncommon, but this one got on his nerves more than some of the other “Delilah-isms” that she’d use.

“Did Delilah tell you to say that?” Tristan’s voice held a bit of scorn and annoyance. He’d just helped his football team win nationals and his girlfriend is telling him to get lost! *Not cool.*

“No, she didn’t. Tristan, it’s over.” Julissa’s words hit him like a train. He’d tried so hard to fix the relationship but it had just gotten worse. Now *Julissa* was calling it off. It stung Tristan’s heart.

It stung Tristan’s heart.

“But Julissa, w-” She cut him off by putting a finger to his lips.

“If you’ll excuse me, I have prior engagements to be attending.” Julissa got up and walked away. Then she stopped and added, “If you try any codswallop, I’ll tell you to belt up or I’ll box your ears.”

Then she turned on her heel and walked away.

He tried to call after her, to form her name on his lips, something, but nothing came out. All he could do was watch her walk off, refusing to look back, refusing to even say goodbye.

Tristan sighed. He’d tried so hard to keep her happy – to treat her like a princess. His efforts hadn’t been in vain, though. She’d given him so many second chances…

A memory boiled up. Her words from last May came to mind.

*“One more month, Tristan. I can’t take any more heart break.”*

“Oh, l’amour. Such a heart break, no?” The waiter caught Tristan off guard as he came to check on the table after she left.

“You have no clue.” Tristan bent down to pick up the flower he had dropped in the heat of the moment.

*Clink!*

Tristan picked the ring up.

He had meant to propose tonight. Julissa was probably right, though. She deserved someone better than him. The words she’d said were small, but she had managed to leave what would probably be a lasting impact on his heart.

It was true that he had been a jerk (something she hadn’t outright said but that he had inferred)…but he couldn’t believe she’d broken it off now. Why hadn’t she done it sooner?

If anything, he’d really deserved it after he’d forgotten her birthday. Then he remembered that she had repeatedly tried to call during her time away. Every time he’d sit down to call her back, he’d be called away to do work, chores, or homework.

She was too trusting with her heart. Too trusting, Tristan thought, for his own good.

2) New Friends Made

Julissa woke up to a shining sun…and her blaring alarm.

It sounded like a fire truck had gone through her window.

The snooze button was too far away to just reach out and hit – and that wasn’t just Julissa being lazy.

Julissa had intentionally put her alarm clock half way across the room so she’d have to get up to turn it off. Useful for first days of *anything* – school, work, play…whatever.

So it did its job that sunny Friday morning as Julissa grumpily threw the blankets off her body and hit the snooze button. *Hmm…*

“Julissa! You’ll be late if you don’t hurry.” Her mother’s voice echoed through the house. Was it already *that* close to time to starting time?

“I’m up, mom.” Julissa’s voice echoed just as well as her mother’s. A laugh came from downstairs as Julissa shut the door to her room.

She had to get dressed and ready for work!

Quickly throwing on her purple tee shirt and her jeans, she found that her mom was simply playing a trick on her and that it was seven on the dot, not almost eight.

“Not funny mom!” She yelled through the shut door, half expecting no response.

All her mom did was laugh, an almost undetectable “I’m not funny; I’m hilarious” mixed into the laughing.

As she sat down at her cluttered vanity, she found herself unusually nervous for a first day. She’d previously tackled first days that involved speaking in front of people, such as the first game of this past season.

Gently shaking her head as she picked up a rubber band, she shook the thoughts away. It was just another first day. How bad could it be?

Half an hour later, she was done in her room, and heading downstairs for breakfast. Her chestnut hair swung softly behind her in the simple ponytail she had put it in.

“Morning honey.” Her father yawned. She smiled and hugged him. The first inklings of a breakfast smell wafted in from the kitchen.

“Pancakes are almost ready.” Her mother’s voice came again. Though it was just her and her parents, she felt like it was enough.

Sure, they weren’t the richest family around (really, any who could compete with the Roman family moneywise was in another country), but they were happy. They were healthy. Surely, they were more humble, Julissa believed.

All of this added up to make the Jennings home cozy and tight knit. It gave her a sense of security and a sense of safety. The family was as big as it’d get and she was all right with that. If it got any bigger, in her opinion, they’d lose the closeness being an only child had fostered in her.

“Thanks mom.” Julissa smiled and sat down at the table. Her dad hugged back lightly as she did so.

“Have fun on your first day, honey.” He smiled at her, his soft face crinkling up to form the familiar and comforting smile that often graced her father’s face at this time in the morning.

Her mother popped her head out just then. In her hand sat two plates of pancakes. Her father got up and brought the pancakes over after being kissed on the cheek by his wife.

“You two are too cute.” Julissa mused. Her mother laughed and her father just shook his head.

“I’m a grown man. I am not cute.” He protested, but she insisted and won out in the end.

By the end of breakfast, her nerves had been distilled from her mind and she felt ready to face the first day of work. Thankfully it was spring break, so missing school was no issue. Yet.

“Cheerio honey. See you when you get home.” Her mother gently wished her a goodbye as she began to walk into town.

Julissa clocked into work for the first day. The work was fairly simple for minimum wage – help customers, teach a knitting class once a week, and earn some extra money from the auctions of knitted items each month.

The thought of possibly making something the queen’s mother (who frequented the auctions at First Stitch Yarns) liked hyped up all the employees. Even Julissa, who was brand new to the scene, was a little giddy.

“Alright! I have just received a letter from his majesty King Bradley Roman himself to read before we open today.” Julissa’s boss, Camila Finch, gathered everyone in the small room that Julissa had been told she could use for the classes.

There was Camila herself, her sister (Lavender), the Waters boys (Ronan, Tyler, and Ulysses), Keith Olsen, and Brooklyn Glass. Then, of course, there was Julissa. The newbie, as everyone called her, but she didn’t mind that.

“What’s it say?” This came from Ulysses.

The rest of the coworkers chattered too. Camila whispered loudly for attention once more.

“It says, and I quote, ‘My dear subjects, I regret to inform you that my mother in law, Lady Quinn Winters, passed away yesterday, September 20th, 2013, at five thirty nine in the evening. All yarn and craft shops are to be closed in her honor on Friday, September 29th, 2013. Any that run auctions, particularly those that Lady Quinn frequented, will be honoring her with items she bought. I will personally be dropping off these items, along with some of her knitted items that she made. Expect these items on the 29th. Good day to all. Humblest regards, King Bradley Roman.’ Unquote.” Camila read the last word and a moment of stunned silence came from the room.

Then, all at once, a general gasp went up from the workers, Julissa as well. Lady Quinn Winters is dead?

“Lady Quinn, dead?” Even Ulysses, who usually didn’t get surprised so easily, sound surprised. *This must be new. To have Ulysses so surprised, I mean.* “This has to be from her heart condition.”

As far as Julissa could tell, Ulysses was the voice of reason in the group.

“Details have not been released yet, Ulysses,” Camila began again, “but that’s not far-fetched. On the 29th, we will close as asked. Lavender and I will wait for the king’s delivery. Look lively, people! Doors open in ten.” Camila dismissed the group. Julissa stood awkwardly to the side as everyone else left. “What’s up Julissa?”

“Where am I supposed to be at the moment?” Julissa felt a hand on her shoulder. Turning around, Ronan’s deep green eyes met hers.

“Everyone but Camila, Ulysses, and Keith work the aisles and answer questions. Except for when Brooklyn and you are teaching the knitting classes each Monday, of course.” Ronan’s explanation helped Julissa understand her job much more, particularly because his tone exuded confidence, wisdom, and a hint of comfort.

“Thanks, Ronan.” Julissa smiled when the doors opened then. Ronan nodded, and walked off.

Julissa slowly wandered over to the knitting books and magazines this store, called First Stitch Yarns, carried and picked up a random one. Lace knits and ones inspired from a movie. *An interesting mix.*

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Adrian sighed. Despite his grandmother only having passed the day before, he felt a hole in his life from his grandmother’s passing the day before.

What could he do?

Thoughts reeled as Adrian picked up a sweater his grandmother had knitted for him for this past Christmas.

Feeling the hand-knitted fabric brought a tear to Adrian’s eye. He had wanted to – that was it!

Adrian knew that fulfilling his promise to learn to knit would keep his grandmother close.

Looking to the clock, Adrian realized that every yarn shop would just be opening. There was one not too far from the large shopping center. First Stitch Yarns, if he remembered the name right.

Adrian stood up. First Stitch Yarns was awaiting, and a promise was to be fulfilled today…or, at least, begun to be fulfilled.

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Julissa pulled the small cart behind her. Brand 1 went there, needles beside them, crochet hooks on the other side.

Such was the organization of the aisle.

Julissa hummed to herself to keep from losing focus. Each new skein in each color or pattern (pink camo or cotton candy for examples) caught Julissa’s imagination.

Employees got one free skein of yarn a month and they had to choose the color and brand carefully. She kept this in mind as she restocked the aisles.

“Excuse me, but are knitting classes available here?” The voice was feminine, as Julissa expected.

She looked up and saw Delilah. She smiled with a laugh.

“There are. The sign-up sheet can be found by the classroom. End of this aisle, take a left, and it’s at the end of the hall.” Julissa watched happily as Delilah flounced off. Her best friend learning to knit…that was sweeter than any money she’d make.

Grasping the cart’s handle, Julissa moved further up the aisle. The novelty yarn always caught her eyes, and a skein of sapphire yarn did so then.

It was thick, much thicker than the usual bulky yarn. Slowly the yarn unfolded. It was the same yarn that made the scarfs at the end of the aisle.

The next moment, Julissa was on the floor, with a customer on top of her. *Crikey. First day and I’m already tripping customers!*

“I’m sorry, miss. I wasn’t looking at where I was going. Are you alright?” This time the voice was masculine.

“Yes, I’m alright. Are you?” Julissa took the outstretched hard. The man nodded as he helped her up. “Do you need some help? You look a bit lost.” Julissa smiled as he sheepishly nodded.

“A friend of mine recently passed, and she knew how to knit. I had promised to learn to knit as soon as she could teach.” The man sheepishly admitted that he wished to learn to knit.

She frowned, knowing that having a passing close to the family or even in the family was hard.

“I’m sorry to hear that, sir. Well, do you plan to teach yourself or take a class?” As she attempted to take his mind off the unfortunate passing of his friend, he stalled. “Why don’t you try a class here? We supply the yarn and needles for class, and coupons are given out I believe. I’m new to the staff here, so I apologize in advance for any false information I may have given you.” The customer laughed at her stumbling apology at the end.

“I take it you’ve been knitting for a while?” He pointed slightly to the bracelets. Julissa nodded, turning her black one around. “Fandom inspired. I like it.” Julissa watched as he smiled.

“Thanks.” Julissa bent down to pick up a skein of yarn that had fallen off her cart. “The sign-ups for the classes are at the door to the room – end of the aisle, take a left, can’t miss it.”

“Thank you, Miss…uh…”

“Julissa. Julissa Jennings.” She introduced herself and held her hand out. He took and then shook it.

“Nice to meet you, Julissa. My name is Adrian. Adrian Ro – Gold. Adrian Gold.” Adrian lightly kissed her hand after shaking it.

“You don’t see many guys act like Prince Roman. It’s always nice to see such kindness.” Julissa smiled as Adrian nodded a farewell and left the aisle.

Continuing to restock the shelves, her mind turned back to the customer, Adrian.

He had the same facial structure as the prince, but… no. *He can’t be. Prince Adrian has brown hair and green eyes.*

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Adrian watched from the end of the aisle as Julissa continued to restock the shelves. She moved with a grace that reminded him of his grandmother. He’d always thought that he’d like to marry someone like that – kind, loving, crafty.

“New employee’s quite a looker, huh, Ulysses?”

“Oh, stop it, Ronan. If not for Tyler, she wouldn’t have this job. I heard she just broke up with someone.”

Adrian blew the bit of conversation out of his concern. Julissa was just a new friend.

One who…who reminded him of his grandmother. *I can’t believe I’ve never met her before.*

The room was hard to miss – just like Julissa said.

Upon a closer look, there were two classes being offered. One was to make knitted lace (taught by a Miss Brooklyn Glass), and the other was for newbies such as himself (taught by Miss Julissa Jennings).

Gently picking up the pen, Adrian signed up for Julissa’s beginners’ class. Hopefully she’d be as good a teacher as his grandmother.

His mind continued to turn to his grandmother as he headed home after finding a book of patterns that he liked and paying for it.

His grandmother had been such a role model to him. Her charitable nature made her a favorite by orphans and homeless alike. A beautiful, soft voice made no one afraid to approach the palace in a rain storm. Her craftiness made her a favorite of craft shows and of various fairs.

Adrian held in a tear or two as he sat down in his truck again.

3) Knitting Lessons (& First Dates)

Saturday and Sunday seem to crawl to Adrian. His parents had encouraged the idea to learn his grandmother’s craft – knitting. First Stitch Yarns had been his grandmother’s favorite yarn shop according to his parents.

And Brooklyn Glass was a good friend of hers. His grandmother, he meant.

Monday finally arrived, and Adrian groggily brushed his teeth, standing in the lavish water closet of his chambers.

Standard thoughts ran through his head, until he realized that it’s Monday.

Adrian stopped a nearby servant, and said around his toothpaste, “What time is it?”

“It’s eight in the morning, sire. Your knitting class isn’t for another hour.” The servant’s answer made Adrian feel better.

He hadn’t overslept! In fact, he had about an hour. That meant he could shower this morning since he hadn’t the night before.

Grabbing some spare clothes from his room, he managed to finish brushing his teeth and then spit into the sink.

Turning on the water and shutting the door behind him, he began to get ready to shower. Grabbing a flannel, he turned on the sink to wash his face while the shower water got hot.

When he had finished his shower, he put on the jeans and tee-shirt with all the usual under fluff. He knew that the jeans were a little too loose for his waist, but a belt fixed the problem quickly and he was good to go. With a quick bite of breakfast, tea and scones, he was off.

Julissa’s class awaited him in First Stitch Yarns. What a feeling it was to find himself so close, and already feeling a strong attraction to her upon one encounter. *As my dad might say, I’m taking a fancy to her for sure…*

Adrian rushed to the yarn shop. His breakfast had run a little overtime and he’d had to change pants because he spilt tea on the other pairs of pants.

“Crap.” Adrian rushed to the classroom. He stopped another employee. “Has the beginners’ class started yet?”

“No. Miss Jennings is running late. She’ll be here soon though.”  
 “Thank you.” Adrian sat down in a chair in the class room. Only a young woman, who looked to be about a year younger than he was sat in the room, flipping through her texts.

“Tristan, I told you, you blew your last chance when you celebrated her birthday almost a month late. Then there was the Spain incident when you didn’t call her until her last day there. Don’t forget when you missed her cheer competition.” The voice sounded familiar to Adrian.

But why couldn’t he place the voice?

“Dude, belt up. I just wish I could show her how sorry I am. What do I do?” The door opened.

“Adrian? Is that you? I thought you ha-” Adrian cut his right hand man off there when he realized who it was.

Luke got the message and nodded.

“So who’s the one that dumped you, Tristan?” Adrian’s comment caught the woman’s attention.

His voice sounded almost too much like his own.

But…what could he do? A voice was a voice, no matter how much he did or did not look like himself.

She looked up, first at Adrian. Then she looked to Tristan and Luke.

“I didn’t think you’d take Julissa dumping you so well.” The woman smirked slightly at him. Tristan’s fringe fell into his face as he seemed to search for an appropriate way to respond to her inquiry.

“I saw it coming, Delilah. Our relationship was floundering for months.”

Luke sat beside Adrian. A raised eyebrow met his eyes. Adrian pulled his phone out and typed the response. He was just Adrian for the moment, and not in any way related to Prince Roman. Adrian Gold was to be his name – with no affiliations with Adrian Roman whatsoever.

“Alright. Four eager to learn peo- Tristan, I didn’t expect to see you here. Anyway, we have Delilah Hunter, Adrian Gold, Tristan Jemmingway, and Luke Jemmingway. Brothers?” Adrian looked at Julissa, whom had just finished speaking.

“Yea. Two year difference.” Luke spoke up to keep Tristan from questioning Adrian about the last name mix-up. “Can we learn now?”

“Yes, of course. I had to pick up four kits and ran a bit later than I thought I’d be. Anyway, there are three kinds of needles: regular, circular, and double pointed.” Julissa held up three sets of needles. “For now, we will focus on these: single point, straight knitting needles. These are the most common needles for a beginner.” She handed everyone a pair, Adrian last. “One for the right hand and one for the left. But at the moment, since we’re about to cast on, put one needle aside. It doesn’t matter which.” Julissa set one of her own needles down.

Adrian watched her hands move. When he was little, he’d watch his grandmother knit. Her voice was in his head.

“*Slip knot. Stick the needle through. It makes a figure eight, Adrian. See it?” His grandmother held up the new stitch on the needle for him to see.*

*“But grandmother, why do you knit?” He voiced a simple question. Well, as simple as an eight year old could voice it.*

*His grandmother just laughed a little, and sat down beside him.*

*“It makes a figure eight because that’s an easy shape to remember when you’re knitting. Do you want to see it again?” As his grandmother spoke, he looked fascinated at the knitting that she held in her arms.*

*The yarn for that project had been a peacock blue, and she had told him that if he would sit and be quiet and attentive, he could use the yarn to learn.*

“And make a simple figure eight.” Adrian blinked. That was the same thing his grandmother said. *Man. Julissa Jennings, you are a younger Quinn Winters, minus the whole being engaged to a duke bit.* “For this project, you’ll need a ball of any color yarn. We’ll be making a bracelet.” Julissa pulled one of her many knitted bracelets off of her arm. It was the black one Adrian had pointed out earlier. “Guys, this is a great present for that special lady.”

A few minutes later, Julissa stopped talking and let them try it out for themselves. Adrian looked her over once, and then picked his blue yarn from the kit. She would most likely like it.

“Don’t feel like knitting has to be a quiet activity. I often put music on while I knit.” Julissa smiled and started a conversation with Delilah.

Adrian turned to Luke and Tristan, who were probably reading the zoned out look on his face as something different than what it really had been.

“Dude, you’re crushing! Ask her out, Adrian. Let her get to know you, and then surprise her with your identity. Adrian R can disappear. Be Adrian Gold. You’re already off to a good start with this disguise.” Tristan’s remark surprised Adrian. Hadn’t the Delilah girl made a comment on something about being dumped earlier?

“Weren’t you just *dumped* by her, Tristan?” Adrian’s question was answered by Luke with a simple nod. “Aren’t you going to try to fix it?”

“She gave me many chances to fix it, but uncontrollable circumstances made her doubt it all. I was ready to make that move many times. Even my plans for that date couldn’t have fixed it. She would’ve turned me down flatter than her pancakes.” Had Tristan been planning to *propose*? His explanation of why he was so chill now that the break up had happened (Adrian was sure he hadn’t been so chill in the moment) made it seem that way.

“Were you going to p-r-o-p-o-s-e, Tristan?” Luke’s question received a nod from Tristan. “Dude, you’re whack.” Luke chuckled as Tristan sighed.

He knew it! But they had to have been together for a long time if…

“How long were they together?” Adrian looked over at Julissa after directing his question to Luke before he got an answer.

“We were together for a year and a half. It really went downhill six months ago.” Tristan’s response impressed Adrian. A year and a half. *No wonder he wanted to propose...*

“Let’s see if I can mend that heart a little, then, shall we?” Adrian looked down at his knitting. It was already three inches long.

How he had managed to do that all without really looking at his knitting surpassed his knowledge of the craft, but he had reasons to believe that sitting there watching his grandmother knit was why he could do it so well now. If that was why, then maybe he should’ve signed up for the lace course.

Adrian chuckled to himself at the thought of him knitting lace. What purpose would a prince have to knit his own lace?

Then again, he didn’t wear lace nor have a need or want to at that moment, so the lace course was irrelevant to his situation. Besides, his grandmother had never knitted lace and that was a territory he wished to leave for another time.

“Ready to bind off, Adrian?” Julissa’s voice startled him, but he nodded. “It’s simple, really. Knit two stitches as if you were doing another row, but you’ll only have one or two stitches on the right hand needle.” Adrian did as she instructed. “Lift the first one with the left hand needle-tip, and off of both needles. That’s the key to getting it off your needles- that stitch can’t remain on either needle.”

“And continue to the last stitch?” Adrian repeated it with the next stitch.

She nodded slowly, her surprise evident.

“When you get to the last stitch, cut a tail and pull it through the last stitch. Sew up the sides, and Bob’s your uncle!” With those words, she left him a pair of scissors, a small plastic needle, and then left to aid Delilah.

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“Don’t forget to sign up for next week’s tutorial in the purl stitch and yarn-overs. Keep knitting!” Julissa inhaled deeply. Her first knitting course was over. As she turned to go help other customers, someone tapped her shoulder. “Yes?” She turned around and saw Adrian.

“I was wondering if you’d like to go to lunch on Saturday. At noon?” He looked down sheepishly, as if he had been talked into this by Luke or Tristan.

Julissa almost instantly glared at Tristan before catching herself and then turning back to Adrian to answer his question.

“Are you asking me out?” As Julissa got ready to lock up the classroom and picked up her bag, she looked up at Adrian.

He looked serious now, as if her looking away had given him time to also recompose.

“That’s one way to look at it. So, what do you say?” He smiled at her, making her belly fill with butterflies.

“I can’t. We’ve got a football game and I have to be there.” Julissa half felt bad about telling him that, but the compensation was that she wasn’t lying. There was indeed a game on Saturday, and she wouldn’t miss it for the world.

“Oh. If it gets cancelled, feel free to reconsider.” This time his phrasing came across as particularly formal, as if he were hiding something under his appearance that could be picked up by his tone and diction.

He handed her a slip of paper and left. Luke and Tristan followed him.

Delilah giggled once the whole scene was over and the men were out of the room. *What was so funny about that?*

“He’s totally crushing, Julie! Why does it have to be the end of spring break?” Delilah laughed as Julissa shook her head.

“Delilah, you’re such a mug...Tristan totally set me up for that. He just wants me back.” She laughed and went back out to the aisles to see if she could help other customers.

“Well, I’ll see you tomorrow at school, Julie.” Delilah waved as she disappeared through the front door of the store.

“How’d your first course go, Julissa?” Brooklyn’s voice startled Julissa slightly just after she had begun to turn around to lock the classroom door. “Sorry to startle you. I’ve seen the girl and two of the guys. Who was Prince Mystery?”

“Adrian Gold. Asked me out but schedule conflicts occurred. I had to turn him down. The football team for Sea Crest high has a game and the time was smack-dab in the middle of half time.” Julissa pocketed the paper as she spoke. She’d look at it on her lunch break.

Brooklyn nodded and left her to her business. She took this time to lock the classroom door then go to a random aisle and begin to restock were someone had begun in a fashion that caused the aisle to be almost inaccessible.

Julissa went through the rest of her shift with a bit of curiosity. Why had Mr. Gold asked her out? Was Tristan only trying to ploy her back into getting with him, or was Adrian doing it out of his own intentions…?

There were too many unknowns in the situation for her. If Adrian was doing this of his own free will, why had Luke and Tristan stuck around to watch? If Tristan had coerced Adrian into asking her out to set her up with him again, why would he do that to begin with?

The second question made another prevalent point. Adrian would be an amazing friend to take the risk involved in setting her up with Tristan again.

Her lunch break finally came, and she gratefully pulled her purse onto her shoulder. Julissa was just ready for a little alone time.

“Hey, Julissa, would you like some homemade jammie dodgers?” Adrian had caught her on her way out, just leaving the shop for a nearby fast food place.

His voice shocked Julissa and she almost dropped her purse.

And there went her alone time.

Begrudgingly, she picked up her purse and began to walk beside him, as only she could since he was closer to the street and refused to leave her alone.

“Are you trying to make a move on me, Adrian?” The curiosity of earlier was digging into her. Could she figure out why he had asked her out?

“Rumor is that you broke up with Tristan.” He sounded as if he was a private investigator and she had committed a crime. If it hadn’t been incredibly intriguing, she would’ve stopped right there and insist he leave her alone.

“What did you do, grill him about me?” Julissa suddenly felt defensive for some reason. Other than having a sort of invasion of her privacy, she felt rather alright with having him ask her this kind of question.

“I was curious. Luke, Tristan, and I are all best friends, but I never met his last girl. It’s usually triple dates between the three of us.” Adrian’s response seemed…curiously unusual. It was a welcome change from Tristan’s usual excuses. Not only welcome, but oddly enough, this response was wildly full of truth.

Tristan would sometimes lie to her to get off the hook, only to land in the fire later on.

“So you’re already cashing that rain check, huh?” She tried to make it a laughing matter, but something in her head said that this was a one in a million chance, something she shouldn’t laugh at…something she had to take advantage of.

“You could say that. Where are you headed?” Adrian continued to walk beside her as she headed for lunch.

Her plans for alone time would just have to wait.

“Down the street for some fast food. Before you ask, feel free to join me.” Julissa hoped her sarcastic tone was apparent to Adrian. Either it was and he was ignoring it or he had totally missed it as he proceeded to ask her if he could join her.

She nodded slowly. Alone time would have to happen at home today.

“Cool. Jammie dodger?” He smiled widely as he pulled a jammie dodger out of the bag, then Adrian held it out to her.

The smell taunted her nose. Her mouth watered.

“After lunch?” Julissa smiled shyly as Adrian put the bag in her purse. “Don’t you want any?” She looked at the bag. It was almost chockfull of the homemade biscuits, and it made her kind of curious.

“I’ve got more where those came from. A batch of these does almost five dozen.” Adrian chuckled at what Julissa could only guess was her expression. That was a *lot*.

“Dang. That’s a lot of dough, Adrian.” She started towards the fast food place a little faster.

Adrian followed her eagerly, like a puppy following its owner to the food dish.

“Lunch is on me?” It was more like a question. Adrian fidgeted in his pocket, and then proceeded to pull out a twenty. “And some ice cream?” He waited for a response from Julissa.

“Why not? Shall we?” Julissa held her hand out. Adrian took it gently, kissing it. “As I said on Friday, Adrian, it’s nice to see such kindness.” He smiled and motioned her to continue walking.

What was it about him that made her curious about his personality all of a sudden instead of his intents?

“We shall. I’ve only got twenty dollars in my wallet at the moment, but it should be enough to get lunch and dessert.” He again smiled as he spoke, letting his voice take him away.

“Should be. I usually order from the value menu.” For some reason, she felt bad saying that, but it was the truth. Why should she be ashamed of telling him the truth?

“A lady who saves.” Adrian’s voice gave away that he was more surprised about that than anything else she’d already told him.

“Actually, money’s tight in my family. I don’t go out often. I had a little money from Friday and thought about getting lunch.” Adrian seemed to ponder this as they entered the fast food place.

“Well, now you can get lunch tomorrow.” He smiled again as he stopped pondering her answer.

“Spring break ends tomorrow. Today’s the last day. I’m going to be working weekends. They all know the football schedule. I’m a Sea Crest high cheerleader.” Julissa felt her cheeks become hot as she confided this to him.

“Ah. How long?” Adrian’s interest shifted from her financial status to her status as the cheer captain, though she had not told him this yet.

“All four years. I’m captain this year, and I need to be at all the games. There aren’t many left.” He opened the door as she spoke, and held it open for her.

“How many games are left?” Adrian picked a seat and pulled the seat out for her as he asked this particular question.

“Three that I know of, all home games. Even the one on Saturday.” As she sat down, she tried to think of the away games. How many were left? “I don’t know about the away games, though.”

“Now I see why you turned me down. Luke goes to all the games, actually. Does Tristan-” With that, she interrupted him abruptly as she got up to follow him to the cash register since the line had now died down.

“I thought he looked familiar. Supporting his star center forward brother, no doubt.” She turned to the cashier after interrupting Adrian, though it had been an unintentional interruption. “One burger, a large fry, and a large soda.”

“Same for me, just downsize the fries to a medium, please.” Adrian pulled his twenty out and paid before turning to Julissa again. “Alright, I will admit that I never knew about the center forward bit. Luke and Tristan gave me the football schedule. I’ve been to a couple of the games. Are you the one that’s always riling the crowd?” Now Julissa couldn’t believe that she’d never seen him in the crowds before. Then again, she could never really discern a face from the field.

“Yup. Every goal. I actually started that my freshman year.” She smiled a little and thought back to when she had first started that cheer.

“So you’re a senior then? Graduating this June?” As the cashier handed them the food, he asked this question. If she’s old enough to work, isn’t she automatically old enough to be at least a senior, or was she just making up something?

“Yea, Tristan too. I actually met him freshman year. He made the team. All four years, like me. I’ve cheered him on for four years. Only during spring break our sophomore year did he begin to show an interest.” She now realized that if he hung out more with Luke, he may not know that Tristan had a history with her.

“I see. Keep talking, please. I don’t mind if there’s more you need to get out.” The readiness to hear Julissa’s problems that came out of Adrian’s mouth startled her as she picked up the tray of food.

“I met you on Friday. Delilah’s been my back-” This time it was Adrian that interrupted her.

“I feel there’s more than what you’ve told her, Julissa.” He gently patted her shoulder as he sat down, as if to tell her that he was someone she could trust.

“And will you stop using my name like that?” The unusual addition of her name to almost every sentence he said made her a bit…uncomfortable.

“I’ll try. I’ve been told it’s my…quirk.” He smiled softly, as if he were revealing something about himself through that statement.

“Alright. For spring break last year, I went to Spain. He promised to call. We left the last day of school before it started. He called that night. I didn’t hear from him again until the day we left.” She bit her lip a little, trying not to let him know that she may still have feelings for Tristan.

“That was almost six months ago, and from what they told me, you broke it off on Thursday. Why the delay?” He picked up his burger and began to put some mustard on it.

“He took me to a really nice restaurant the following weekend. I completely forgave him – at the time. Three great months passed. Then my birthday came around. This would’ve been in May. That’s when our relationship *really* went downhill. He started cancelling our dates. The cheer squad practices helped with that, I’ll admit that.” She picked up a fry and ate it as she waited for his answer.

“Then what?” Adrian stuck a fry into his mouth as he waited for her to reply, just as she had a moment ago.

He was almost patient beyond belief and Julissa didn’t know what to think about that right off the bat.

“I thought nothing of it until I saw him talking with Delilah.” She took a deep breath as he swallowed his fry.

“Did he like her too?” As an answer formulated in Julissa’s head, she checked the time, only to find her watch had stopped. *Great. Another thing I can’t replace until I earn some money.*

“They had dated shortly before we got together. She never told me why it ended between them. After that, she couldn’t be with him alone.” Adrian pondered this a moment, his burger in his hand and in mid-bite. Once he was done, he spoke again. Meanwhile, Julissa began to take a bite of her burger.

Then he opened his mouth as she bit into her burger.

“I see. Any idea why he was talking to her?” She set her burger down on the wrapper and held up her finger to indicate that she would answer as soon as she swallowed.

Adrian seemed to understand and simply nodded, taking another bite of his own burger while she swallowed.

“No. His birthday was a month ago to the day, and I had wanted to surprise him. I know it was his birthday, but I couldn’t help but feel…but feel like I had been lied to.” As this came out of her mouth, she realized that she hadn’t even realized that was how she felt about it.

She didn’t have much time to ponder on why she felt like this before Adrian swallowed and began to speak again.

“Weren’t you aware of his *very* strong feelings for you?” His question conveyed a sense of confusion, and to some degree, a sense of surprise.

“How couldn’t I be? I gave him another month, but it continued. Only one date ended without an argument.” This almost seemed to surprise Adrian as much as her financial information that she’d given him earlier. She could understand why that’s surprising, but what surprised her in return was his response.

She had just stuck a fry in her mouth as he opened his to add on to her explanation.

“Julissa, he confessed to Luke and me during the knitting class that he had been planning to propose.” Julissa almost choked on her fries in shock. Swallowing, she managed to recall her response that she had given to Delilah when she got home after breaking up with Tristan.

“I’m only eighteen. I would’ve turned him down flatter than a soda left open all night, then proceeded to break up with him.” This response seemed to leave Adrian in a bit of a gob smacked position, but he managed to find the words he wanted to say.

“He said that same thing, only he used your pancakes instead of soda.” With a smile, he took a fry, dipped it into the mustard cup he had, and then stuck it in his mouth and began to chew. Having just noticed this, Julissa wondered why he used mustard instead of ketchup.

“Then he shouldn’t have been planning to propose. Why do you dip your fries in mustard, out of curiosity?” Again, she looked at her watch. It hadn’t been her imagination. The hands were stopped on twelve twenty. *Great. How do I know what time I’m supposed to leave?*

“My dad says that was the only way I would eat potatoes, in any form, as a younger child. It’s just kind of…stuck, I guess. I don’t even realize I’m doing it.” With that, he turned to her again, burger done and last fry in hand. “What desert do you want?”

The topic change was swift, but she had gotten the answer she wanted.

Julissa now looked to the desert menu. Adrian had caught her off guard with the question. She’d not been planning to get dessert, and she’d forgotten that he’d offered to pay for dessert when he said he’d pay for lunch.

“A simple cone will do. Thanks, Adrian.” She smiled as he got up, popping the last fry into his mouth and swallowing it quickly.

“No problem, Julissa. Eat it on the way back to the yarn store?” Adrian’s question worried her. What time was it?

“What the-! It’s already twelve thirty! I’ve got five minutes.” A clock in the restaurant had caught her attention.

Adrian forced a small laugh as he went to order the ice cream. How had the time gotten away from them so quickly?

“To go it is then. Let’s go. Here’s your cone.” He handed her the vanilla cone as he helped her clean up. Nothing was left of her burger (she’d somehow managed to finish it despite the lengthy conversation they’d had), and the few fries she had left she could finish later. Her soda was finished, and she didn’t need any more for the day.

“Thank you. Not only for lunch, but for listening. Not many guys-” Adrian put a hand up to interrupt her. It was an interesting gesture, one she often saw the king do when he needed quiet at a press conference.

“Listen? I’m not like many guys you’d see in school. You’ll never hear me tell you to belt up.” He quickly finished her sentence for her, leaving her half surprised. The addition he made just added to her surprise on that issue.

“I can tell from that ten minute chin wag we just had over lunch. What was on that slip of paper you gave me?” He held the door open for her again as she spoke.

This was becoming a theme with him, the chivalry he was showing.

“A warning I’d be treating you to lunch today. Did you not-” Julissa decided to have a little fun and put a hand up to interrupt him, just like he had to do the same to her. It warranted a laugh from him.

“I’ve had a busy morning, Adrian. I had no chance to read it.” They were now licking up the cold ice cream from their separate cones, trying to keep them from melting onto their hands

“That would explain your surprise earlier.” Adrian was a few steps ahead of her, but not quite enough to leave her in the dust.

“Yup. Um, just as a head’s up, homecoming is in about a month. It might be hard to catch me when I’m free.” Thinking about it, wasn’t that an American term for the dance? Then again, with her parents studying American English…

“I completely understand Julissa. I’m usually busy too.” With that answer, it seemed more and more likely that Adrian was hiding something to her.

“What about today?” Julissa decided to take a page out of his book and got interested in his schedule, despite what she’d been hoping to do. It got a chuckle from him, but not much else until he actually answered.

“Business meeting at two. There’s a second meeting at five.” Two meetings back to back? Julissa whistled in what could have been called a state of disbelief.

“Tough. What do you do?” She couldn’t contain her curiosity at this point. Why was he making her so curious in affairs that weren’t even hers?

“I’m a note keeper for my dad. Like a secretary.” That made her almost laugh. Him? A secretary? It didn’t seem quite right.

“Even tougher. Have fun. I have to go now.” Somehow they had managed to walk to the yarn store in less time they had taken to get there.

“Of course. I’ll be in touch, Julissa. Most likely through Tristan.” He laughed a little, and smiled softly as Julissa pulled the door open.

“Fun. Well, I’ll see you for the next course?” She smiled as well, propping herself up slowly against the door.

“Of course, Julissa. Cheerio, for now.” He held his hand out for her again.

“Cheerio.” She went to shake his hand in a good old fashioned cheerio.

Adrian took her hand and kissed it again. Then he walked off.

Julissa slowly walked into the shop again. What a lunch break!

“I see Adrian treated you to lunch. A date?” Brooklyn’s voice startled her again. “Sorry. Again. So?”

“Yes. He was quick to cash his rain check. Paid for lunch, a treat, and gave me some cookies. Tristan was never as classy.” She smiled dreamily at Brooklyn.

Brooklyn laughed and left to help a customer, leaving Julissa to herself. *Adrian Gold…could he be…no. Prince Adrian Roman is mourning in the palace. He wouldn’t be learning to knit. Adrian Gold is not the prince in disguise. Besides, they don’t even look alike!*

The struggle to figure Adrian Gold out weighed on her mind all day. It didn’t leave her head as she left First Stitch Yarns, but instead only got stronger as she got closer to home.

Once there, she managed to put thoughts of him aside for long enough to work for a few minutes on the project she had due the next day, when school was back in session.

After about ten minutes, Julissa sat down at the dinner table, lost in thought.

“How was your day, Julie?” Her dad sat down beside her. She looked up from her lap, half startled out of her stupor of thought.

“It was interesting. Delilah *and* Tristan showed up for the class. I met Tristan’s brother, Luke. And… there was a guy I hadn’t met before; his name is Adrian Gold.” Julissa smiled while her dad laughed. It was a good natured laugh, one that he used often when he was almost unsure that she was telling the truth.

“I see. How’d it go?” Now her dad (Ashton Jennings) smiled as she laughed. There was just something about being around her dad after being at work for a long day that made her easy and light…that made her laugh aloud.

“He asked me out for a date on Saturday, right when I’m supposed to be cheering at half time. Adrian was quick to cash his rain check. He treated me to lunch and ice cream. And gave me some homemade jammie dodgers.”

“He’s anxious to take you out then, huh?” Her father smiled at her again.

“Took Tristan forever to ask me out. It’s a nice change in pace.” Funnily enough, her words rang true. Tristan had taken forever to get the courage to ask her out to begin with, and he had gotten nervous when he asked her out on every subsequent date.

“Just be careful, Julie. He might be all mouth and no trousers.” Her father laughed after a few moments of silence.

“I know.” She managed a small smile at her dad’s phrasing. He was still British at heart.

Her dad patted her leg and walked off. What was Adrian hiding, if anything at all?

4) Football Hijinks

“And let’s hear it for your home team, the Crests!” The loud announcer voice came through the loudspeakers.

Cheers arose loudly from the crowd as the team ran onto the field. It was music to Tristan’s ears. Seeing Julissa all week at school had been a strain.

Tristan raised his hand in excitement as he ran out first. Three more wins and the Crests would have a perfect streak. All wins for the first time in Sea Crest high history…and Tristan was the center forward this year.

“Tristan!” His brother called from the stands. He waved. Tristan smiled. Luke had been to *all* of his games, even when he had been a freshman and Luke’s junior friends blew him off for it.

“Let’s get ready to play some football!” Julissa’s voice led the cheer team. “One we are Sea Crest! Two a little bit louder please! Three we can’t hear you! Four more more more!” The crowd went wild. Julissa repeated it at a bit of a faster rate. The crowd got louder.

It was a process that ended with a loud roar in support of the Crest team.

Tristan took his position on the field. The game would be beginning soon. This was one of the biggest rivalries in England, and the victory was riding on him.

“And in the biggest rivalry yet we have Sea Crest high center forward Tristan Jemmingway on the field. Pressure is high tonight.” The voice was typical of a tele reporter. The voice made his nerves spike.

Pushing the voice away from his mind, he took a deep breath and focused on the ref.

The whistle blew and the pressure was released as he got to the ball first, kicking it strongly towards the opposite side of the field.

He ran to keep up with the ball, continually kicking it towards the goal. The opposing team had no chance as he kicked it hard one last time and the ball flew through the air. Ten feet until goal…five feet…

“Goal for Sea Crest High, curtsey of center forward Tristan Jemmingway!” The announcer’s voice came loud and clear over the loudspeaker. “And Sea Crest High takes an early lead over the Eagles of Sir Noah Byrd Academy.”

Cheers from his team came up through the adrenaline of his run, and Tristan threw his arms up victoriously. The biggest rivalry yet…and they had a leading point on them in the first five minutes of the game.

The ref blew his whistle, signaling the reset of the field. As he ran back to his position, Tristan could hear the cheering of the crowd, and out of the corner of his eye, he could see Julissa.

Her cheer costume outlined her form perfectly, causing her to seem thinner than she really was. The blue and white pleated skirt flowed to her knees, and he knew there were some shorts under that skirt to keep her modest while she was doing flips and lifts.

Her shirt consisted of a tank top with the Crests logo in gold, a white long sleeve top underneath, and the body of the tank top in the same blue color that the skirt was in.

The colors worked on her really well in Tristan’s opinion.

Then he was in position and the whistle was getting ready to be blown by the referee. The last thing he saw before the whistle was blown, signaling the beginning of play, was Adrian sitting down beside Luke, where he knew Julissa would end up sitting sooner or later.

Shaking that off as he began to play, he realized that his split second zone out had allowed the rival to gain possession of the ball. In a split second, he was off and running to gain possession of the ball from the center forward of the opposite team.

Another player overtook him just yards from the goal. The center forward kicked, and the other player stopped the ball.

“OFFSIDE!” The ref called it. He blew his whistle.

“Oh, looks like the Eagles are having a bad start. They’ve been called for being offside.” The announcer painstakingly then began to explain what the offside was.

Essentially, the team was offside because of Tristan’s position in relevance to the other team member of the Eagles. Since the opposing team was both in front of and behind (and the kick was directed towards the second player) Tristan, the ref called it. If Tristan had intercepted or been level (meaning beside or at least near and slightly behind), it would’ve been fine.

“You should’ve intercepted that Tristan!” The call came from another team member, Riley. He just shrugged, as if to tell Riley that he hadn’t realized the center forward would do that.

Riley simply threw his hands up in frustration. For a goalie, he was quite verbal when playing and was the one most likely to get the yellow warning card flagged for them.

As the game continued, the Crests kept the lead. Tristan scored three more goals, giving them four points. The Eagles scored once. With a four to one score, Tristan pulled ahead again and scored two goals in the last fifteen minutes or so of the first half of the game.

“Half time!” The ref yelled, then blew his whistle.

Sweaty, happy, and ready to sit for a few moments, Tristan walked off the field, arms raised triumphantly.

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“Great cheering, ladies. Take a five.” Julissa sat next to Luke, who had arrived with Tristan. “I like cheering, but sometimes you need a break, you know?” She wasn’t asking Luke in particular, but he smiled and answered anyway.

“Yup.” Luke looked out to the field. Tristan had the ball with ten minutes to go in the first half.

“I haven’t missed anything, have I?” That voice was familiar to Julissa.

“Adrian?” Looking towards the voice, she saw his face, blue eyes, and hair. It seemed half weighed down with something today.

“I told you I’d be in touch.” Adrian sat on the other side of Julissa, fidgeting with something in his pocket. “That, and I have something for you.” He pulled out the blue bracelet he’d made on Monday.

The stitch work was simple, but the embroidery amazed Julissa. It said (in white lettering and simple English) Adrian’s girl.

He gently handed it to her. Then he proceeded to ease it onto her wrist, as if he really wanted her to wear it.

“Thanks, Adrian. There’s a goal.” Julissa stood up. “One we are Sea Crest! Two a little bit louder please! Three we can’t hear you! Four more more more!” Julissa smiled as the crowds roared with her as she cheered. She did it again as the announcer told of the point, and this time her voice disappeared in the sea of voices proclaiming that they are Sea Crest.

“Wow. One cheer riles everyone this much?” Adrian chuckled as Julissa nodded. “That’s cool. You’ve got to be one of the most down to Earth people I’ve met. And I’ve met a *lot* of people.” He smiled as Julissa giggled.

“I don’t think you’re here to support Tristan today. Care to explain?” At this comment, Adrian smiled. Had he expected her to catch on to the fact that he wasn’t here to support Tristan?

“I wanted to give you the bracelet, get a phone number, and I need to talk to Luke, privately. I hope that’s not a bother, Julissa.” The quirk of using her name was coming back. That would get annoying...fast. Especially since Julissa was beginning to think that he wasn’t going to let up on seeing her anytime soon if he had his way.

“Not at all, Adrian. I’ll put my number in your phone and you put yours in mine?” She pulled her phone out of her bag, keeping a close watch on the field as they reset to continue playing for eight minutes.

“Of course. Here you go.” With that, he handed her his phone. She began to look at his contacts as his “Add contact” option was most likely at the end of the list.

“You have a lot of contacts. Very well connected, I see.” She had to scroll faster. He was almost done with her phone.

There was no distinct patterning to the names. Some were Spanish. Some were French. Others were German. While others still were of Polynesian origin.

“Not bad yourself, Julissa. Since I’m the only Adrian, that’s all I’m going to put for name. Feel free to do the same.” He had probably seen some of hers, and she didn’t mind that too much. There wasn’t anyone on there she wouldn’t be ashamed of if her parents saw their name on her phone. That was her rule of thumb pretty much.

“It’ll be Julie Jennings. You’re a friend now, so you can call me Julie.” As she spoke, she finally found the add contact button.

After the screen popped up, it was smooth sailing from there to add in her number and name.

“I think I prefer Julissa. Luke?” He handed her phone back to her in exchange for his and looked over to Luke.

Once Adrian had his phone, and she had hers, he motioned to Luke to get up and follow him.

Luke and Adrian walked away as Tristan scored another goal in the last few seconds of the game.

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“What do you need, Adrian?” It was highly unusual for Adrian to talk royal business outside of the palace, especially when he wore a wig and contacts. This had to be serious business, or he just wanted to ask about Julissa without her hearing it.

Luke wasn’t quite sure what to think of that particular thought.

“When’s the homecoming? Surely Tristan’s talked about it by now; he loves going to these things.” Adrian’s question only half surprised Luke. *How did I see that one coming?*

With a soft sigh to himself, Luke quickly thought. Tristan had indeed talked

“It’s October 20th. Tristan was ready to ask Julissa. Obviously that’s not happening now.” Adrian’s question concerned Luke a little bit. There were a few things going on in his…personal life that might make the average Joe squirm.

“Right. Think she would go with me?” He obviously meant Julissa by she. Had Adrian begun to fall for her? If this question was any indicator, Luke almost saw trouble in their future.

“What about the sniper rumor?” He hated to have to bring it up, but the sniper rumor was a concern of both him and Adrian’s dad. If there really was a sniper out to get Adrian, he couldn’t be going on dates with anyone!

Technically, he really shouldn’t even be out of the palace!

“Luke, I can handle it. I’ll have Uncle Lucas come. And she hasn’t made the connection yet. Has she?” Adrian was half worried that she had figured out that he wasn’t really who he said he was.

Luke could understand that stress. Having to bring someone innocent in on his sniper possible life was not going to be fun, by any means.

“Not to my knowledge.” Luke had to tell him the truth. He honestly didn’t know.

“I can do it then. Just keep her from finding out. Do what you can to see if there’s any truth to the sniper rumor.” Adrian’s two commands were a bit contrary to each other, but Luke was sure he could make it work out without blowing his cover…somehow.

“Of course, Adrian.” He smiled. Working with him at times was a royal pain, but it always paid off in ways that he never would’ve imagined. Adrian had shown him that as long as you put your mind to it, you could do anything.

“Thanks Luke. You make one heck of a right hand man.”

Luke pondered the question again as Adrian walked away. A sniper after Adrian sounded ridiculous, even to the king and queen.

He sighed. Right hand man to the prince was pretty much a right hand man in training, and learning to deal with situations like this one would come in quite handy when Adrian actually did take the throne.

Adrian had chosen him to be the right hand man almost five years ago, when Luke had inadvertently saved Adrian’s life by simply walking into the gun holder. The gun went off, but the bullet hit the building behind Adrian and just barely missed his shoulder.

Shaking the thought of the meeting away, he went to do as Adrian had asked. The sooner he did it, the sooner this problem would go away.

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“Do you have a shot?”

“No. He moves too quickly.”

“What about the Jennings girl?”

“The same. She cheers.” His earpiece buzzed softly as he waited for a reply from his consort.

“The right hand man?”

“Nowhere in sight.”

“Take a break. I’ll let you know about his next outing with her.”

“Alright. If I get a shot, should I take it?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I just got a visual on Luke Jemmingway. Should I take it?”

“Will you attract attention?”

“No. He’s alone.”

“Take it.”

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Luke sat down. A sniper? The odds were *highly* unlikely.

“How am I going to do this?” Luke looked around.

Something felt off. Wrong off, not off balance off. *But…wait…*

Luke dove to the ground after hearing something almost completely silent.

Something whizzed past his head. He discreetly followed the path with his eyes as the item flew past him. *Well then. There is a sniper. I have to tell Adrian.*

The feeling that was going through Luke’s veins had to be none other than his old friend adrenaline. It just couldn’t leave him alone.

But he didn’t blame it. He couldn’t. There were just some situations that would cause an adrenaline rush that were all part of the right hand man job. He’d have to get used to it if he wanted to continue to be Adrian’s right hand man in the future.

For the moment, however, he just had to warn Adrian and hope it all went well from there. After Adrian knew…Luke could do little more to help him control the situation unless he was given instructions.

With a sigh, Luke began to walk back to the football field. He’d heard the half time whistle while Adrian had been talking to him. That was just a few moments ago.

Shaking hard from the adrenaline, Luke sat down for a moment on the bleachers, out of sight of the trees. He had to calm down before he told Adrian.