



Daria – Double Down

Fanfic story by NeonHomer
AU D:1113

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Chapter One

“Snow.”, said Daria as she looked out the window. “Hell has officially frozen over.” She turned from the window and picked up the remote, turning the TV on.

“It’s going to be a beautiful winter day in Lawndale. All area schools will be closed for the rest of the week.” says the newscaster.

“So much for school, and there is no sense in even getting dressed today.” Daria turned off the TV, wondering how it was even on the news channel to begin with, and crawls back into bed. Just as she took her glasses off and pulled the blankets over her head, the phone rings, and rings, and rings. “Ugh.” She said as she reached out from under the covers and grabbed for the phone. “Lawndale cold storage...”

“Ahh, so I see you have noticed the snow too.”

“What has you awake this early, Lane?” is what was heard from under the covers.

“An opportunity to avoid a day of school and have a real lunch instead of the pseudo food that they pass off in the school cafeteria?” said Jane as she is laid across her own bed, head hanging off the foot of the bed.

“Sure. Meet you at your house?” said Daria as she pulled the covers back and sat up.

“Nah. Trent is going to give us a ride. We’ll pick you up at your house around 11 or so.”

“Nrrrgh.” Said Daria as she contemplated trying to get out of this.

Jane snickered. “Glad to be of service. See you at 11 red-face...” <click>

“Nrrrgh” said Daria again. She could feel the redness creeping up her face. Jane knew her all too well. Daria put her glasses back on, got out of bed, and walked over to her computer. She turned it on and then walked to the closet. She grabbed a pair of jeans, a shirt, and her usual green jacket. From the dresser, she grabbed a few necessary articles of clothing, and headed to the shower. She walked down the hall, and went to open the door... locked.

“Ugh. I’m in here...” came Quinn’s voice from the other side of the door.

“Do you mind hurrying up? There is no school today so you have no reason to put on your face today.”

“But Daria..... There is an emergency meeting of the Fashion Club to deal with winter fashion. Sandi will be here in 10 minutes!”

“Ugh.” Said Daria as she turned back and walked back to her room. She tossed her clothes on the bed, and sat down at the computer. She logged in to Thunderbird to check her email. The usual spam, an email reminder for the upcoming Sick Sad World marathon on Christmas Eve, and an email from an unknown person. “Probably trash.” She said to herself as she went to hit the Delete key, until she read the subject... “Looking for Daria Morgendorffer”. Looking for? Her email address WAS her name. She read on...

“Hello. My name is Matilda Seiler. I am trying to track down someone named Daria E. Morgendorffer, who was born in Highland, Texas on November 8th, 1980. (1). If this is you, please respond to this email. If not, I am sorry for bothering you.”

“Well, my name IS Daria Morgendorffer, and I was born in Highland, and that is when I was born.” Daria said to herself. She replied...

“Well, I am the person you are looking for. So what do I win?”

She sent the email, and then got up and poked her head outside of her room. The bathroom was open. She quickly grabbed her clothes, and made for the bathroom. Just as she walked in, Quinn was right behind her. “Daria.... I am not done in there.”

“You are now.” Said Daria as she closed the door in Quinn’s face. She quickly undressed, and stepped into the shower. While showering, she couldn’t help but wonder who this Matilda was that emailed her, and how in the hell did she know all that info. Weird. The only person outside her family that knew that kind of information was Jane. “Probably Jane messing with my head... not that it’s needed.” She shook her head, and quickly finished her shower, dried herself off, and went to get dressed, when she realized that she had forgotten to rinse her hair. “Damn.” She jumped back in and rinsed her hair, and then jumped back out. She grabbed the towel again, dried herself off, and quickly got dressed. She opened the door to the bathroom, to find Quinn waiting.

“About time.” Said Quinn, impatiently tapping her foot.

Daria didn’t say a word and walked past her, and right into her bedroom, closing the door behind her. She glanced over at her computer, and saw the “New Message” icon. While brushing her hair, she clicked on the icon.

“Daria – I have been searching for you for a month now. We need to talk. I currently reside in Edgewood, which is about fifty miles from Lawndale. Maybe we can get together this week. There is no school here this week due to weather. Get back to me. – Tilly”

Daria stared at the screen. She liked a good mystery, but when it involved herself, it was even more intriguing. She replied:

“Tilly – No school here either. Me and a friend always eat pizza at Pizza King in Lawndale. We could meet there. What is this all about? – Daria.”

Daria sat back in the chair. She knew a response was coming. Sure enough, a minute or so goes by, and a new message pops up.

“Daria – This would be better off discussed in person. Pizza King will do. How about today at noon? This is important to us. – Tilly.”

Daria replied, agreeing to the time and place. She sent the message, and headed downstairs. She walked into the kitchen to see her mother and father sitting at the kitchen table, along with Quinn. “Daria.. Good, I was hoping you weren’t going to stay in the house all day.” Said Helen as Daria grabbed a Sugar Tart and sat down.

“Me and Jane are treating ourselves to real food for lunch instead of the protoplasm that the school passes off as lunch.” Said Daria, unwrapping the Sugar Tart.

“Surely you are not walking in this weather?” asked Helen, looking up from her notebook.

“Yes, we are going to see how long it takes us before we turn into popsicles.” Said Daria with a smirk.

“Now Daria....” Started Helen, but Daria cut her off before she could finish.

“Relax. Trent is going to pick us up.” Daria looked at the clock and said to herself “Damn, three hours...” Just then a knock was heard at the door. Quinn jumped up and ran to the door, opening it.

“Sandi! Let’s get out of here... Bye mom!” said Quinn as she quickly walked out the door.

“Well, now that Miss Congeniality has left the building, I need to ask you about something.”

“Daria, I would *love* to stay and chat, but I really have to get to the office. We can talk later. Bye, sweetie!” Said Helen as she rushed for the door, grabbing her briefcase on the way.

“Dad?”

“Sorry kiddo. I have a big meeting with a client and I really need this one.” Said Jake as he quickly got up and made for the door as well.

“Well. Looks like I am the only one here. Why am I talking to myself? Who is going to answer me?” Daria said as she walked over to the couch, sat down, and turned on the TV. “There has to be something on this time of day.” She flipped through the channels and found nothing. She turned the TV off, picked up a book, and started reading.

A knock from the door brought Daria back to focus. She looked up at the clock. 11 AM. She looked down at the book she was reading. She started at the beginning, and was almost at the end. Wow. Time flies when you are.....

“Hey Morgendorffer... LETS GO!” came Jane’s voice from the door. Daria put the book down, grabbed her jacket, and headed out the door. She and Jane walked to the street to Trent’s car.

“Hey Daria.” Said Trent in his usual slow, low tone.

“Hey.” Said Daria shyly.

“You can sit up front Daria.” Said Jane, nudging Daria with an evil grin.

“Nrrrgh” muttered Daria as Jane climbed into the back seat. Reluctantly, Daria sat down in the front seat next to Trent and closed the door. “Let’s go...” Trent started the car, and started driving down the road. She turned to face Jane, “I got the weirdest email this morning. Some girl from Edgewood looking for me. She knew where I was born, my birthday, everything.”

“Someone’s idea of a joke?”

“At first, I thought it might have been you, but it didn’t seem your style.”

“True, but it would be funny to watch you be on edge for a while.”

“Not funny Lane...” Muttered Daria, “Something is just not right. There is only one person besides my family that knows when and where I was born, and that’s you.”

“Yeah. I remember. On the 2nd planet of the Rubicon system. Your real parents sent you to Earth as a peace offering.” Said Jane with a smirk.

“Regardless, she is going to meet us here. I figured a public place so everyone could witness the murders.”

“We’re here.” said Trent.

“Damn, that was quick.” Said Daria to herself as she climbed out of the car, and then held the seat forward so Jane could get out. “Thanks Trent.” Said Daria as she closed the door.

“You two going to need a ride home?” asked Trent.

“Nah. We’ll probably walk back. It should have warmed up by then.” Said Jane.

“Cool. See ya Janey, Daria.” Trent put the car in gear and drove off. They walked inside, found their usual table, and ordered.

“What’s on your mind Daria?” said Jane as she saw Daria picking a napkin apart.

“This email. This girl.” Said Daria, not looking up from the paper dissection.

“Could she have been a friend from Highland? Back when you were in school with *those* two.”

“Not possible. I wasn’t friends with anyone back then. You’re the, well, I, err, didn’t really associate with anyone then.”

“Are you okay?” asked Jane. Daria was just about to say something when their pizza and drinks arrived. “Have a slice. Maybe some real food will bring you back to Earth.”

They each took a slice, and put it on their plates. Jane took a bite while Daria was just picking at the toppings. “She is supposed to meet us here around noon. I don’t know who this is. This is really bugging me.”

“Well, I am sure....” Jane started, and then stopped in mid sentence as looked at the door. “Uh oh.”

“What?” asked Daria, as she turned to look at the door, and who had just entered. It was like looking in the mirror. The girl was almost a dead ringer for Daria. The glasses were smaller, but equally as thick. Her hair was a shade lighter. Her build and height were identical. She was wearing a pair of jeans, white shirt, and a blue jacket that was similar in style to Daria’s. The girl saw Jane and Daria, and walked to their table.

“Daria?” asked the girl.

“Y-y-yeah. You must be Matilda.”

“Yeah. Matilda Seiler, but please, call me Tilly. Mind if I join you?”

“Sure.” Said Jane. Tilly sat down next to Jane. “By the way, I’m Jane. Jane Lane.”

Tilly nodded at Jane, and then turned to face Daria. “Wow. You look a lot more like me than I thought you would.”

“You’ll have to pardon Daria. She is a bit speechless today.” stated Jane. “She is quite confused, as am I. If I didn’t know any better, I would say that you were Daria as well.”

Without taking her eyes off Daria, she said “You might find this hard to believe, but I am Daria’s twin sister.”

Daria’s face went white. Jane dropped the slice of pizza that was in her hand. “I... I don’t have a twin sister. I have a younger sister, Quinn, but no twin.”

Tilly pulled a paper from her pocket. “Your mother is Helen Morgendorffer, and your father is Jake Morgendorffer. You were born November 8th, 1980 at Highland Memorial Hospital.”

“This is not possible.” said Daria. “I do not have a twin sister.”

“Daria. When your, err, our mother gave birth to us, you were born first. I was born a few minutes afterwards. From what I was told, I was given up for adoption.”

Daria just looked at Tilly, blinking, trying to assimilate all this information. “I have a twin sister...” said Daria, still shocked. Jane just sat quietly, looking at both Daria and Tilly.

“Daria. I know this is a shock, but I have been searching for my biological parents for some time now. My adoptive parents, Sarah and James, don’t know I am doing this. I found out a year ago when I overheard them talking about it. When I confronted them about it, they denied everything. So I decided to do a little digging on my own. That led me here, to you, Daria.”

“I just don’t believe this.” Said Daria, “I just can’t believe this. *I* have a twin sister, and mom and dad never told me.”

“Well, maybe they didn’t think you needed to know.” Said Jane.

“I think we need to go.” Said Daria. Without another word, she got up and ran out the door. Tilly went to get up to run after her.

“Don’t.” Said Jane, grabbing Tilly’s sleeve. “Let her go.”

“I didn’t mean for this to happen. I just wanted to know my sister, and apparently, I have two sisters.”

“Yeah.” Jane paused, looking over towards the door. “I better go after her.”

“Sure. Here, this is my phone # and address. Please give it to Daria. Also, tell her I apologize for all of this.” Tilly quickly jotted the info down, and handed it to Jane. She then got up, took a twenty dollar bill out of her pocket, and put it on the table, and then left. Jane watched her walk out of the door, and get into a silver Chrysler, and then drive off. Jane looked at the paper, it was a picture of Tilly (like a school picture), put it in her pocket, and hurried out the door after Daria.

Daria walked down the street, completely oblivious to her surroundings. She just couldn’t believe what she had just heard. It seemed like a dream, yet she wasn’t sure if she wanted to wake up from this dream. She started to think of the possibilities of another sister. Someone on her level, that didn’t have the intelligence of a carrot. “Hey Daria! Wait up!” came the voice that sounded distant and ghostly. “Slow down will ya!” She stopped and turned to see Jane running up to her. “Hey, are you alright?”

“Yeah. I think.” Said Daria quietly, “I am just a little thrown off.”

“You? Thrown off? That’s a first.” Said Jane as they walked down the street. “I find that kind of hard to believe.”

“It’s a good thing I have a room with padded walls. I’m going to need it.”

They walked down the street in silence until they came to Daria’s house. The blue SUV in the driveway meant Helen was home. “You want me to come in with you?” asked Jane as they walked up to the door.

“No... but thanks.” Said Daria as she opened the front door. She walked into the house, and saw her mother sitting on the couch. Jane, concerned for Daria, ignored Daria’s denial and followed her in. Daria sat on the couch opposite of Helen. “Mom... I need to ask you something.” Jane walked and stood with her hand on Daria’s shoulder. Daria looked back at Jane, as if to say “*You listen very well. Thanks.*”

“What is it Daria? I’m really busy.” Helen said as she didn’t even look up from her notepad.

“It’s about my sister...” started Daria.

“What has Quinn done now?”

“No, my *other* sister.”

“What are you talking about Daria?” said Helen, now looking up.

Jane slipped the picture she got from Tilly out of her pocket and into Daria’s hand. Daria looked at it, closed her eyes for a second, and then handed the picture to her mother. “This is what I am talking about.”

“Daria, I still...” as Helen took the picture from Daria, and then looked at it. “Oh my....” Tears started to form in Helen’s eyes. “Matilda?”

“Matilda Seiler. She lives in Edgewood.” Daria paused for a second. “Why didn’t you tell me about this?”

Helen sighed heavily, wiping her eyes. That was a name she had not heard in a long time, but the face was unmistakable. “It was a long time ago Daria. Back when me and your father found out I was pregnant, we were extremely happy. Then we found out that I was pregnant with twins. You’re father and I were just starting out, and didn’t have much. We had to make a decision. We decided that we would keep the first born, and then give the second up for adoption. It was the only way, the only fair way.”

“So I could have been the second born...” started Daria, but she stopped as a brief wave of emotion hit her.

“It was the only way, Daria. We couldn’t financially raise two children.” Said Helen.

Just then, the door opened, and Jake walked in. “Hey kiddo! Hi honey! Hi, Jane!”

“Jake, sit down.” Said Helen. Jake looked around, and sat down next to Helen

“Did Daria do something? Is she on drugs?” started Jake, but Helen handed the picture to him. He looked at it, then looked at Daria, who at this point had removed her glasses and was wiping her eyes. Jane had moved and sat down next to Daria. Jake looked back at the picture, and then back to Daria, then to Helen. “A new look for Daria?”

“No Jake. That is Daria’s....”

“Twin sister.” Said Jake, penny dropping. “Matilda... Oh my.” He said, looking at the picture. “How? Where?”

“She emailed Daria this morning, and met us at Pizza King for lunch.” Said Jane. “Daria has been pretty much speechless since then.” Daria looked up, without her glasses, trying to focus on her parents sitting across from her. She glared at them, and shot to her feet, and ran for the stairs. She ran up the stairs, and into her room, slamming the door behind her.

“Daria...” Helen started. She looked over at Jane. “We never meant for this to happen this way. We didn’t know what had happened to Daria’s sister. Jake and I had decided that one day we would tell Daria and Quinn, but we just have never gotten around to it.” Said Helen. She looked down at the picture. “Matilda....”

“Her address and phone number are on the back.” Jane said, pushing the notepad and pen towards Helen. She flipped the picture over, jotted down the info, and then flipped the picture back over. Jane reached over, and took the picture from Helen, and then headed towards Daria’s room. She reached the door, and knocked.

“Go away.”

“It’s Jane...” From the other side of the door, she heard footsteps, and the door being unlocked. “Can’t see much without these.” Said Jane as she handed Daria her glasses, and the picture. “I saved the picture from your mother. She wrote down Tilly’s address and phone number.”

“Great. A family reunion.” Said Daria as she went to turn away from the door, then a faint knocking was heard from downstairs... the front door. Both Jane and Daria looked at each other. “Who could that be?” They asked in unison. The both walk down the stairs to find Tilly standing in the doorway. Jake is sitting on the couch, silent. Helen is standing at the door, speechless.

“Daria?” said Tilly from the other side of the doorway.

“Matil, err, Tilly...” said Daria, just staring at the doorway.

“Boy, this is awkward.” Said Jane

“Come in, please.” Said Helen. Tilly cautiously stepped through the doorway, and sat down on the couch. Helen closed the door, and sat back down next to Jake. Daria turned to leave the room. “Daria, please stay.” Reluctantly, Daria sat down on the other couch across from Tilly.

“I’m going to go. Talk to you later Daria.” Said Jane as she turned to leave. She looked at Daria as she walked toward the door, and then stopped. The look on Daria’s face was expressionless, but her eyes were begging Jane to stay. She turned around, and walked back to the couch, sitting down next to Daria.

Daria took a second to regain her composure, and then spoke. “Tilly, this is my, err, our mother and father, Helen and Jake. Mom, dad, this is Matilda.”

Tilly looked at Helen and Jake. Helen was wiping a tear from her eye. Jake was just looking back and forth between Tilly and Daria. “Please, call me Tilly. I have been waiting for this moment for a long time.” Said Tilly as she sat motionless on the couch.

“How did you find us?” Asked Helen.

“I found Daria over the Internet. After she left the restaurant, I looked up ‘Morgendorffer’ in the phone book. There is only one.” Tilly said as she showed a piece of paper with the address written on it.

“I don’t know what to say. I didn’t know if we would ever see you again.” Said Helen.

“Well, like I told Daria earlier, I found out about a year ago that I was adopted. When I confronted my parents about it, they denied it, saying I was their child. However, things didn’t add up. I look nothing like them, nor do I share any of their traits. I was finally able to get my birth certificate, however the parent names were not listed. I did some more digging, and found out I was born a twin, and then I focused on finding my biological

family. I found you and Mr. Morgendorffer, and I finally stumbled upon Daria. Then it was a matter of just finding her.”

“Why me?” asked Daria, having time to regain her composure.

“I figured it would be easier for me to talk to you, than to talk to my biological parents. I knew about you, and the more I learned, the more I realized how similar we are. So talking to you first was a no-brainer.”

“Well, now what?” asked Jake, being clueless.

“Jake! That is no way to behave! Now Tilly, we are really glad to have met you. I just want you to understand that we did what we had to do. We couldn’t afford two children...” Helen began, but Tilly held up her hand, cutting Helen off.

“You don’t have to apologize. Finally meeting my biological parents, to know I have not one, but two sisters...” Tilly started, but was interrupted by the door opening.

“Mo-om.... I need you to take me to...” started Quinn as she walked through the door. She looked at Tilly, not noticing Daria and Jane. “Wow Daria, the new glasses are an improvement, and the colors are nice, but we really need to work on makeup.”

“Speaking of which, you must be Quinn.” said Tilly with a small, Mona Lisa-esque smile.

“Huh?”

“Quinn honey, this is Matilda. Daria’s twin sister.” Said Helen.

“Tilly...” corrected Tilly.

“Huh?”

“Twin sister.” Said Daria, not fully believing it herself. “As in, identical twins.”

“Quinn, when your father and I discovered I was pregnant, we realized I was having twins. We couldn’t afford two children, so we put one up for adoption.” Said Helen, trying to summarize.

“I... I.... I’ll be up in my room.” Said Quinn as she quickly left the room, running upstairs and into her room.

“Well, I really want to stay and learn more, but I really need to get home. My parents don’t know I have the car.” Said Tilly as she got up.

“We must get together and get better acquainted.” Said Helen as she got up as well. Jake just sat on the couch, still staring blanking into space.

Daria also stood up. “I’ll walk you to your car.”

Tilly turned to Helen, and said “I am glad to have met you, and I look forward to seeing you again.”

Daria shot a glance at Helen, and walked behind Tilly as they went out the door. "So, now you have met my, err, our, parents."

"Yeah. Reminds me a lot of my par, err, Sarah and James."

"Yeah, well, Helen and Jake are okay." Said Daria.

"I am glad to have met you Daria." Said Tilly as she was opening the car.

"I am glad to have met you too..... sis." Said Daria. With that, Tilly turned, and got into the car.

"Keep in touch." Daria half muttered.

"I will. You can count on it." Tilly closed the door, started the car, backed out of the driveway, and drove away.

After a few seconds of watching the car drive away, Daria turned to walk back into the house, saying to no one in particular, "What in the hell just happened?"

Daria walked back into the house, to see Helen and Jake just sitting on the couch, staring into space. Jane was focused on the door, as if she was waiting for Daria to come back in. Daria didn't say a word, and just went straight to the stairs. A few seconds later, you hear a door slam. "Jane," said Helen, "Please go talk to Daria. You are her best friend, her *only* friend. She needs you."

Jane looked at Helen like she had two heads. She said to herself, "I guess you are not as clueless as you seem." Out loud, she said "I think she made it pretty clear she wants to be alone."

"Jane..." started Helen, but Jane was already on her feet heading for the stairs.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Morgendorffer... I'll see what I can do." Said Jane as she slowly walked up the stairs. She tried to work out in her mind what she was going to say and how she was going to say it. She walked down the hall. She stood in front of Daria's door. Jane said to herself "Okay Lane..." She raised her hand to knock on the door, when she heard a door opening behind her.

"Jane? Can I talk to you?" Jane turned to see Quinn standing behind her. Quinn's voice was lower, and not its usual bubbly tone.

Jane said to herself "Damn.....". She looked at Quinn, she was only a year and a half younger than Daria, but a couple of inches taller. "What's up?"

"Jane, you have family that is always in and out. How do you know you don't have any brothers or sisters that you don't know about? How do you deal with not seeing them for a long time, and then they all of a sudden show up?"

Jane looked at Quinn carefully. She thought to herself, "This *can't* be Daria's sister. This girl is somewhat intelligent." She sighed. "I just deal with it. It doesn't matter if they're here or on the other side of the world, they are family."

Quinn just looked at Jane. "Thanks... I guess." With that, she turned back around, and went back into her room. She closed the door, and then leaned against it. "Daria is lucky to have a friend like Jane. Daria... Daria... Two Darias...." Quinn just shook her head, and went to lay on her bed, picked up the phone, and started to call Sandi. "The Fashion Club will take my mind off this..."

Jane could hear sounds from the other side of Quinn's door, but turned her focus to Daria's room. She reached up, sighed heavily, and knocked on the door. She waited for the coming sarcastic answer. Nothing was heard. She knocked again. Still nothing was heard. She put her hand on the doorknob, and gently turned it. The door opened, to reveal Daria, face down on the bed, with one of her arms hanging off the side. Her boots were at the foot of the bed, and her glasses were on floor, next to the table by the bed. Apparently she had thrown them onto the table, and missed. She walked up beside Daria, and stood for a second. "She's asleep..." Jane said to herself. From the looks of the pillow, it looked like Daria had been crying. "Daria doesn't cry. Daria doesn't show *any* emotions." Jane continued to herself. She picked the blanket up from off the floor, and covered Daria up. She picked up her glasses, cleaned them using a cloth that was on the table, and folded them up and set them on the table. She took Daria's hand into hers, and held onto it for a second. She noticed how small it seemed in comparison to her own. "I am here for you Amiga... when you wake up, I will be here." Jane let go of Daria's hand, placing her arm at a more comfortable position. She walked over to the bookshelf and browsed Daria's collection. "Need to get her some art books." Jane said half aloud. She selected a book from Daria's collection, drug the computer chair over by the bed, sat down, and started to read.

The Morgendorffer house was mostly silent for the rest of the day. Jane heard the occasional door close, or the phone ringing. Occasionally, Daria would mutter something in her sleep, but for the most time, it was quiet.

"Nrrgh."

"Sounds like sleeping beauty is awake." Said Jane as she put the book down.

Daria sat up in bed, rubbing her forehead. "Ugh... Nrrgh..." She squinted her eyes, trying to see. She reached for her glasses, noting they were not where they landed earlier, and put them on. "Jane? How long?"

"How long have you been asleep? Or how long have I been here?"

"Both."

"Well, it's now 9pm. You came up here shortly after Tilly left. I came up to check on you, got stopped by Quinn, and then I've been here ever since. Reading, watching you sleep."

"You were watching me sleep?" asked Daria, as she swung her legs over the side of the bed.

"Not really. I've been reading. Figured you would need someone when you woke up, and since Trent is at a gig tonight, I figured it should be me." Jane said with a smirk.

"So I really do have a twin sister." Stated Daria, not as much to Jane, but to herself.

"Yeah."

"I remember coming up here, slamming the door, laying on the bed, throwing my glasses, and then next thing I know, I was covered up and asleep. You?"

Jane nods. "I have to take care of my best friend. You would have done the same for me." She walked across the room and placed the book back on the shelf, and then back to where Daria was sitting.

Daria got up from the bed, walked over to Jane. "Thank you."

Jane looked at Daria, and before she could react, pulled Daria into a hug. "I'm always here for my amiga." Daria was tense for a second, and then returned the gesture.

"I'm glad." Daria told her. "I'm really glad." They stayed like this for a second, and then stepped back.

"Do you want me to stay, or go home for the night?" Asked Jane.

"I could use the company." Said Daria.

"Fine. I'll stay here for tonight. You still have that spare set of clothes of mine?"

"Yes. Bottom drawer." Motioned Daria towards the dresser. "If you need a sleeping shirt, I think there is one in the closet."

"I need food."

"There is a two day old pizza in the fridge. I'll heat it up and bring it up here with some drinks." Said Daria as she walked towards the door.

"I'll go." Said Jane. "Just in case your parents are still awake."

"Thanks." Said Daria. "I'll find you a shirt while you're down there."

Jane walked out of Daria's room, and down the hall and down the stairs. She looked cautiously around, didn't see anyone, and walked into the kitchen. There she saw Helen sitting at the table. "Hey Mrs. Morgendorffer." as she opened the fridge and found the pizza and drinks. She put the pizza in the microwave, and then realized that Helen hadn't said anything. "I'mmmmm... going to be staying the night tonight. Is that okay?"

"Sure Jane." Said Helen, not looking up from her notebook.

"Whatcha writing?"

"Catching up on work. Trying not to think." Said Helen.

"Ahh..." said Jane. Just then the microwave stopped. "Saved by the bell." Muttered Jane as she grabbed the pizza, the drinks, and headed up the stairs. She walked into Daria's room, and closed the door behind her.

"Found you something to wear." said Daria. She had already changed into her night clothes. "I'll go get the rollaway bed. You can change while I am gone." Daria headed out the door. Jane quickly changed clothes. Daria came in a few minutes later pushing a rollaway bed.

“Thanks. Eat something. I’ll set this up.” Jane pushed the bed by the window next to the table by Daria’s bed. She unfolded it and set it up. After she was done with that, she walked back over to where Daria was sitting on the floor, and sat down across from her, and grabbed a slice.

“Ahh, fresh from the micro-nuker.”

They sat and ate, not saying a word. Once they were done, they got up, and put the box and cans in the trash. “I’m ready for bed. Long day.” Said Daria.

“Yep.” Said Jane. She walked over to her bed, and laid down, pulling the blanket over her.

Daria did the same, except she took the time to take her glasses off, and set them on the table. She turned off the light, laid down, and rolled over facing the wall. After a minute, she rolled back over to face Jane. “Hey Lane...”

“Yeah Morgendorffer?”

“I may not say this enough, but thanks for being my friend.”

“Glad to be of service.” Said Jane.

“And if you ever repeat that I said that, I’ll deny everything.” Daria said as she rolled back over to face the wall. She was comforted by the fact that Jane had decided to stay to keep her company for the night. She drifted off to sleep, knowing that her life had been forever changed by a simple email.

Chapter Two

Tilly glanced in the side mirror, noticing Daria watch her drive away. Tilly looked back up to the task at hand... driving. She normally didn’t take her parents car out of town. For that matter, she normally didn’t drive her parent’s car at all. She came to a stop, and turned and started heading for the highway. As she drove, she was running a lot of different scenarios in her mind. “What if mom and dad find out I went to find my sister? What if they ask where I have been? What if they ask about the mileage on the car? Naaarrgh!” She slammed her fist onto the steering wheel. “Ouch... Ugh, I’ll just play it by ear.” She drove down the highway, trying to comprehend the events of the day. “I met my long lost sister and parents.” She said to herself. “God how cliché...” She looked in the rearview mirror. “Damn, we *are* twins. I *am* Daria’s sister, she *is* my sister.” As she looked in the mirror, she noticed how much she *really* looked like Daria, or how much Daria looked like her. She continued to drive in silence, with Daria’s voice still rolling through her mind. “Damn, we even sound alike.” Before she knew it, she was turning down her home street. “Wow... time flies when you mind is in overdrive.” She pulled into the driveway, got out of the car, and walked into the house.

“Tilly? Is that you?” came the voice from somewhere in the house.

“No. It’s the tooth fairy.” Said Tilly. She paused for a second, then continued “Yeah, it’s me.”

“Where did you wander off too?”

"I went to see an, uh, err, friend, I met online." Said Tilly. Well, she wasn't *entirely* lying.

"Really? Where at?"

"Lawndale." Said Tilly, walking into the kitchen where her mother was.

"Really? I know a few people in Lawndale. Who was it?"

"No one important." Tilly lied. Why would she drive to go see Daria if she didn't find it important. "Just a person I met online."

"A guy?" said Sarah with a smirk.

"No mom... a girl."

"Best friend candidate?" Sarah said. She looked up to see the small smile on Tilly's face melt away. "I'm sorry Tilly. It's just you don't really have any friends. It would do you good to find someone you can hang out with."

"You're not mad about me taking the car?"

"No. Just next time let me know so I don't worry." Said Sarah. The smile crept back onto Tilly's face. "So, when do we get to meet this girl?"

"I don't know. I just met her tonight. She reminds me a lot of myself." Tilly stopped, and looked at her mother, who had herself stopped and looked up.

"Really..." Said Sarah, her voice trailing off.

"Yeah. Listen mom, I'm really tired. I am going to go to bed. Good night."

"Good night Tilly."

Tilly walked down the hall, and into her room. She turned on the light, closed the door, and walked over to her computer, turning it on. She walked to her closet, hung her jacket up, and then turned to the dresser, and took out her night clothes. She quickly changed, and then turned back to the computer. It had finished booting by this time, so she checked her email. No new messages. "Nrrgh." She sat down, and bashed out a quick email.

Daria – I was really glad to have been able to meet you today, and to have met our mom and dad. I just got home, and my mother was waiting for me. She asked where I was and I told her I went to see a friend I met online. Now she wants to meet "my friend". Eventually she is going to have to know. Talk to you later. – Tilly

Tilly sent the email, and then just shut the computer down. "Wonder how long it will be until Daria gets back to me... if she even gets back to me... if she even wants to get back to me." She shook her head, walked over by the door, and picked up an old tennis ball. She then walked to the bed, and laid down. She took the tennis ball, and skillfully hit the light switch, turning off the light. She set her glasses on the table, and pulled the covers over her head. "Tilly Seiler..... Tilly Morgendorffer... Tilly Seiler-Morgendorffer... Dammit, just go to sleep Matilda."

“Arrrgh!” shouted Daria as she sat straight up in bed. She looked at the clock. 3:30am. She turned to look at Jane, who was laying flat on her back, arms draped off the side of the bed. “Just like Trent. Could sleep through a tornado.” Daria paused.... Trent.... Her best friend’s brother, her crush. “Dammit, Lane...”

Jane rolled over, still asleep. “Sure.... I’ll take the last slice....”

“Great... when did she start talking in her sleep? Must be the paint fumes. Dammit, you’re talking to yourself again Morgendorffer. Go back to sleep.” Daria pulled the blanket over her head, and tried to go back to sleep. She could hear the ticking of the clock, the sound of the snow falling on the roof, and the rhythmic breathing of her friend. She tried to empty her mind, but she kept thinking of Tilly and the day’s events.

“Daria Lane.... Has a nice ring...” muttered Jane in her sleep.

Daria resisted the urge to pick up something hard and throw it at Jane. She sometimes wondered what Jane dreamed about. Then again, sometimes she didn’t want to know. She balled herself up in her blankets, and thought about her friend. A minute later, Daria was fast asleep.

Jane’s eyes slowly opened.... “Daria Lane” said Jane with a smile. “That’ll get her mind off her sister for a while.” Jane closed her eyes and went back to sleep.

Jake and Helen were sitting at the table. Helen was flipping through her planner, and Jake was reading the newspaper. Helen took a sip from her coffee, and set down her planner. “Jake, don’t you think we need to talk about this?”

“Talk about what?”

“Daria and Matilda...” said Helen with a hint of aggravation.

“Oh, uhh, err...” Jake stammered out, trying to hide behind his paper.

Helen reached across the table and snatched the paper out of Jake’s hands. “Jake! This is something we have to deal with.”

“I don’t know...”

“Jake, the kids are going to have questions and concerns. We need to address them.” Helen said. “The girls are going....”

“Hi mom!” came Quinn’s cheerful voice from around the corner.

“Morning Quinn.” Said Helen, shifting her focus from Jake to Quinn.

“I had this odd dream. Daria had a twin sister and she was here.” Quinn said as she poured herself a bowl of cereal.

“Quinn honey, it wasn’t a dream.” Said Helen.

“Gahhh!” said Quinn, who stopped pouring her cereal. “What?”

“Quinn. She is your sister too. You should have stayed and said hello.”

“M-om.... One Daria is bad enough, but two?” said Quinn.

“Quinn! There is nothing wrong with Daria.”

“Whatever.” Said Quinn, as she finished making her bowl of cereal, and sat down at the table.

“Quinn, your sister, err, sisters, are unique people. Daria just doesn’t make friends as easy as you.” Helen told Quinn.

“Ugh. I think I will just eat in the living room.” Said Quinn as she picked up her bowl and walked to the living room.

“Quinn....” Started Helen, but Quinn was already out of earshot. She shot a look of irritation to Jake, and then got up and went into the living room. She sat on the couch across from Quinn. “Quinn. We *need* to talk about this.”

“Look mom, you had twins, and you couldn’t afford to raise both of them. I can deal with that, but two Darias....”

“Quinn, it is quite possible Matilda is nothing like Daria.”

“M-om... She looks exactly like Daria. Same lack of fashion, and that name... Ugh!”

“Quinn, look...” but Helen just stopped. “Just promise me if you have any questions, you will come talk to me, okay?”

“Yeah, sure mom.” Said Quinn, without really looking at her mother.

Helen sighed, and stood up from the couch and walked back into the kitchen and sat down at the table. Jake was sitting with his head in his hands. “Jake?”

“Helen, what did we do?”

“We did what we had to do Jake. We made this decision over seventeen years ago. What has been done is done. We can’t change that. We can only help Daria, Quinn, *and* Matilda with any questions or concerns they have.” Said Helen.

“I guess so.” Said Jake.

“Nrrrgh.” Said Daria as she rolled over in bed. She looked over to Jane, who was now on the opposite end of the bed from where she started. “Traveler.” said Daria to herself as she put her feet on the floor. She rubbed

her forehead, put on her glasses, and got up. She went over to turn her computer on, and sat down, waiting for it to boot up.

“Ugh, morning already?” came Jane’s voice from behind her.

“Yeah.” Said Daria as she sat in front of the computer. “Remind me later to have you deported back to Mexico.”

“What are you talking about?” said Jane, not quite awake.

“Daria Lane?”

“Oh. Heh heh. Well, it was to get your mind off of your new sister.” Said Jane with a slight smirk.

“Yeah. It did. I had this strange dream where Trent and I were married. I was pregnant, and we were finding out what the baby was. The doctor was just about to tell us when I woke up.”

“Sorry.” Said Jane.

“It’s okay. I’ll let you live.” Daria paused. “So, what do you think of her?”

“I don’t know. She seems to be a lot like you. You two look so much alike, we could probably pass her off as you in school.”

“Wouldn’t *that* be funny. Both of us to show up in Mrs. Li’s office.” Said Daria as she opened her email program.

“I think she would have a coronary.” Jane paused for a second. “That could be good for school morale.”

“Yeah...” said Daria as she looked at her screen.

“What?”

“Tilly. She emailed me. Her mother caught her coming home, and asked where she was. She said she was visiting a friend she met online.”

“Not a complete lie.” Said Jane.

“Yeah. Do you think her parent’s know the truth?”

“Hard to say. Tilly did say that she overheard her parents talking about her being adopted. Would they know who her biological parents are?” Jane said.

“I don’t know.” Daria kept reading, “She says that her mother wants to meet her friend.”

“Think about the shock you just went through.” Said Jane.

Daria looked at the screen, thinking to herself, “Do I reply? Do I just ignore this and hope it goes away?” She hovered over the delete button, and then quickly selected “Reply”

Tilly – One day at a time. Don't think I am ignoring you if I don't get back to you right away, or keep in constant contact. If you are me as much as you look like me, you will understand why. – Daria

Daria quickly re-read the message to herself, and before she sent it, she attached a picture of herself to the email. She then sent the message.

"A reply?" asked Jane, now laying back down on the bed.

"Yeah. Nothing fancy."

"I wonder why she decided to look for you?"

"Wanted to find her sister, I guess." Said Daria.

"Maybe, but I am beginning to agree with you. Something just don't seem right. There is something she is not telling you." Said Jane.

"You've watched too much X-Files." Said Daria. Jane didn't say anything. She just laid on the bed, staring out the window. "Jane?"

"Breakfast?"

"Uhh, yeah. Breakfast." Said Daria. She was going to ask something else, but was relieved that Jane changed the subject. Jane and Daria walked downstairs and into the kitchen. By this time, Jake was the only one at the table.

"Morning kiddo!" said Jake looking up from his newspaper.

"Uhh, eh, yeah." Said Daria as she went searching through the cabinets for her usual Sugar Tarts. She turned to Jane. "We're out of Sugar Tarts."

"Cereal?" asked Jane.

"All we have is the 'Model Krunch' cereal that Quinn eats."

"I could make you girls something." Said Jake as he set his paper down.

"Uhh, thanks, but no thanks. I don't think I could handle breakfast reinvented." Said Daria. "Cereal it is." She poured Jane and herself a bowl, added milk, and they both sat at the table.

"Anything you want to talk about, Daria?" asked Jake, trying his hand at the parenting thing, again.

"No." said Daria, poking at her cereal.

"Actually, I do." Said Jane.

"Uhhh, sure, okay Jane." Said Jake, a bit puzzled.

“Daria is still weirded out over the whole sister thing.” Said Jane. Daria glared at Jane, as if looks could kill.

“Well, uhhh, I guess, well. We had to do what we had to do.” Said Jake finally.

“That still doesn’t explain it.” Said Jane. This time Daria reached under the table and kicked Jane.

Jake faced both Daria and Jane, but directed more to Daria. “Well, your mother and I were just starting out in our careers. We didn’t have much money, and we knew we would have student loans, mortgages, car loans, and other bills. When we heard that your mother was pregnant, we were both happy. That all changed when we found out she was having twins. Finally, we had to make a decision, and your mother and I decided that adoption was the best choice.”

Daria was surprised at her father’s response. “Almost sounds rehearsed.” She said to herself. She quit poking at her cereal, and looked up, saying “Were you and mom ever going to tell me, or Quinn for that matter?”

“We had decided afterwards that we were going to tell you, when you were older. Then your mother had Quinn, and then with everything else....”

“My long lost sister was swept under the rug.” Said Daria.

“Eat your cereal.” Said Jane, pushing the bowl towards Daria.

“I don’t feel like eating.” Said Daria, as she started to get up.

“Daria, sit down.” Said Jake, with a firmness in his voice she hadn’t heard before. Daria looked even more puzzled than before, but sat back down. “Daria, what has happened has happened. You have a twin sister, and you have met her. I can only apologize, I can’t change things.”

Daria shook her head. “Is he being fed this from mom somewhere else in the house?” she asked herself. She looked to see if he was wearing a hidden ear plug. She shrugged. “Thanks dad, I guess.” She said.

“No problem kiddo.” Said Jake, smiling. He picked up his newspaper and returned to reading. Daria and Jane sat in silence, eating their breakfast. They quickly finished, and then headed back upstairs to Daria’s room. A minute later, Helen came from around the corner.

“Jakey... I’m so proud of you.” Said Helen, hugging Jake.

“Thanks! I think...” said Jake, smiling.

The light managed to find a way through the curtains, and just happened to be in the right position to shine into Tilly’s face. “Nrrrgh.” She mumbled as she pulled the blankets over her head. “It’s morning. Might as well get up and face the world.” She threw the blankets off, and grabbed her glasses from the nightstand and put them on. She walked to the computer, turning it on, and then headed to the kitchen.

“Good morning, Tilly.” Said Sarah as she read the newspaper.

“Have a nice time in Lawndale yesterday?” asked James as he looked up from his datebook.

“Yeah, I did. Including the grand theft auto.” Said Tilly, as she rummaged through the cabinets looking for breakfast.

“There is a new box of raspberry Sugar Tarts on the top shelf.” Said James, not looking up.

“Thanks.” Tilly found the box, opened it, and pulled out a package. She put the box back in the cabinet, and sat down at the table. “How did you know where I went yesterday?”

“You’re mother told me. Said you met a friend that you had been talking to online.” Said James.

“Ahh. So you’re not mad that I took the car?”

“Tilly, I told you yesterday we were not mad. Just next time let us know so we don’t worry. We would hate for something to happen to you.” Said Sarah, putting her paper down.

“Hrmmmm.” Said Tilly as she took a bite from her breakfast.

“Did you meet anyone else in, where was it you went... Oh, Lawndale?” asked James.

“Yeah, my friend had a friend with her when I met her. She seemed pretty cool.” Said Tilly.

“So, what’s this girl’s name?” asked Sarah.

Tilly paused for a second. “Do mom and dad know about the Morgendorffers? Do they know Daria?” she said to herself. “Now would not be a good time to get into an argument about what I overheard.”

“Tilly?” said James, realizing that Tilly had not said anything.

“Oh, sorry. Yeah... Her name is... uhh, Daria.”

Both James and Sarah looked at each other. “Daria? What a beautiful name.” said Sarah looking at James.

“Yeah, beautiful.” Said James, seemingly lost in space.

“I think they know....” Said Tilly to herself. “As long as they don’t ask me...”

“What’s her last name?” asked Sarah.

“Damn.” Said Tilly to herself. She gathered her thoughts for a second. “I don’t remember right off. I would have to look.” Said Tilly aloud, hoping they bought the lie.

“You don’t know her last name? You went all the way to Lawndale and don’t know this girl’s last name?” Said Sarah.

“I know it, I have it upstairs. I just don’t remember it right now. I just woke up.” Said Tilly.

“Oh. Sorry Tilly... We just worry...” started James.

“Yeah, I know.” Said Tilly. She hurriedly finished her breakfast. “I’m going to go take a shower and get dressed, then I have to figure out what I am going to do for the day. Oh, can I borrow the car again?” she asked with a small smile.

“Sure honey. You going to go to see, uhh, Daria again?” asked Sarah.

“I dunno. I might just go down to get something to eat for lunch.” Said Tilly.

“Okay. Well, if you do go to see Daria, see if she wants to come over one day. Me and your father would like to meet her.”

“Uhh, okay.” Said Tilly. She got up from the table, and walked down the hall to her room. She closed the door behind her. “Yeah. The second they see Daria, they will know.” She checked her computer, and she had an email. It was from Daria. She read it, and a small ‘Mona Lisa’ smile crept onto her face. She hit reply...

Daria – I understand. Let me see if I get this right. You are having trouble dealing with the fact that you realized you have a twin sister, and you are mad that your parents never told you. I know how you feel. I just found out I have TWO sisters, and my parents didn’t tell me, I had to find out on my own.

Tilly thought about what her mother had said.

Maybe one day you and your friend... Jane (I think) can come up to Edgewood. Talk to you later, and please keep in touch. – Tilly

She sent the email, and then grabbed some clothes, and headed for the bathroom for a shower.

Jane and Daria had gotten showered, dressed, and headed out of the house, and were walking to Jane’s house, when a car passed by them, stopped, and backed up. It was Trent.

“Hey Janey... Hey Daria...”

“Hey Trent.” Said Jane, as they walked over to the car.

“Hey....” Said Daria, as she looked away.

“Where were you last night? I got home around 4 am and you weren’t there.”

“I stayed at Daria’s.” said Jane, not giving Trent any more info than he needed.

“Ahhh. Thought so.” Said Trent. “Hey, where you two going?”

“We were heading to the house, and then from there we don’t know.” Said Jane, motioning toward town with her arm.

“Ahhh. You want a ride?”

“Nrrgh...” started Daria as she turned to walk away, but Jane grabbed her before she was out of arm’s reach.

“Sure, WE would love a ride.” Said Jane. She opened the door, and halfway pushed Daria into the back seat, and then climbed in the front. “To `La Casa Lane’!” After a second, Trent turned around, and started heading back toward their house. Within a short time, they were pulling into the driveway. They all got out of the car, and went inside. Jane and Daria headed up the stairs to Jane’s room, while Trent just sat down on the couch. Jane took her dirty clothes and tossed them in the basket, and put a fresh set in her bag. “Have to replenish my emergency stash at your house.”

“Ahh. Planning on staying again soon?” said Daria, as she studied a painting on the wall.

“Nothing is ever planned...” said Jane. She thought about that for a second, and shoved a second set of clothes into her bag.

“Yeah... planned.” Said Daria, not fully paying attention.

“Hey Janey....” Came the voice from the hallway.

“Yeah Trent?” said Jane. Daria spun around and faced the doorway.

“Did you and Daria want to go with me into town? I have to get a pack of guitar strings.”

“Sure... I’ll go. Daria?”

“Nrrgh... yeah, sure.” Muttered Daria.

“Cool.. I’ll be downstairs.” Said Trent. He turned and walked away.

“Daria?” asked Jane. Daria just looked at the empty doorway “DARIA!”

“Aaaagh! What!”

“What is wrong with you?” asked Jane, as she walked up beside Daria.

“Nothing. Just nothing.” Said Daria. “Let’s go.” They walked downstairs, and found Trent, sitting on the couch, asleep.

“Trent!” said Jane as she shook his shoulder.

“Huh?” said Trent.

“Were you going to town or going to just take a nap?”

“Oh, yeah...” said Trent. He got up, grabbed his keys from off the table, and headed out the door, with Jane and Daria following behind. Trent climbed into the driver’s seat, while Jane tried to get into the back seat, but then she stopped, and then motioned for Daria to get in back.

"Thanks." muttered Daria just loud enough for Jane to hear her. Trent started the car, and they drove down the street. A few miles, a few turns, and no words were said. Trent pulled into a parking spot off of Dega Street, and shut the car off.

"We're here. You wanna come in?" asked Trent.

"Sure. I could use some inspiration." Said Jane, "Daria?"

"Yeah...." Said Daria, "I'll go."

They get out of the car, and walk into the music shop. Jane and Daria stopped close to the door, looking at some of the instruments for sale. Trent walked up to the counter. "Hey man... I need some strings. Ernie Ball Nickel Wound, light gauge."

"We're out man. It will be next Wednesday before I get more." Said the guy behind the counter.

"Damn. I need them for this weekend. We have a gig at The Zon on Saturday." Said Trent.

"Uhhh, lemme check something. Be back in a second." The guy behind the counter goes into the back of the store. You hear him talking on the phone, but really can't make out what he is saying. After a few minutes, he comes back out. "Hey man, they have some at our other store."

"Where's that at?" asked Trent.

"Edgewood." Said the guy behind the counter. "He's holding them for you. He's gonna cut you a deal on them cause you buy so many from me. Just tell them Alan sent ya."

"Cool. Thanks man. Uh, how do I get there?" asked Trent. The guy behind the counter sketched out a rough map, and gave it to Trent. "Cool man." He turned and walked toward the door. "Hey Janey, Daria, we have to go to a different store. They don't have what I need." They turned and walked out the door, and got back into the car, with Daria getting into the back seat. They turned off of Dega Street, and started heading for the highway.

"Hey Trent, where is this place?" asked Jane.

"Some town called Edgewood." Said Trent. Daria's face went pale. Trent looked up into the rearview mirror at Daria, "Daria.... You okay?"

"Uhh, yeah."

Jane turned around to Daria "The odds are slim to none we will even come across her." Muttered Jane to Daria.

"Yeah... sure." Said Daria, slumping back into the seat.

"Whoa... what's going on Janey?" asked Trent.

"Nothing... just keep driving." Said Jane. They rode in silence as they drove down the road. "Are you sure your car will even make it there?"

“Yeah. It’s cool.” Said Trent. “I’ve been to Edgewood before. Small town.”

“Not too small, I hope.” Said Daria to herself.

Jane looked up into the rearview mirror to see Daria, slumped down in the seat, arms crossed with an expressionless look on her face, and eyes closed. She looked back over to Trent, who was constantly looking up in the mirror himself checking on Daria. “Worried?” asked Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Trent.

“It’s not you, Trent.” Said Jane. “Daria is just trying to deal with some... family issues.”

“Whoa. Things bad at home?”

“Not really. I don’t think Daria wants me to talk about it.” Said Jane, glancing back to see what Daria was doing. She still in the same position, still with eyes closed.

“She asleep?” asked Trent.

“Probably not. Just in deep thought.” Said Jane. She glanced back at Daria again, to see her slowly, but slightly, nod her head.

“Well, it’s a good thing she has you for a best friend.” Said Trent.

Jane looked at Trent. “And I’m glad I have her for a best friend.” Said Jane to herself. She folded her arms across her chest, and tried to relax.

Tilly was finishing brushing her hair when she walked out of her room, and into the kitchen. No one was home, but there was a note on the table letting Tilly know that it was okay for her to use the car, but to please not to go to Lawndale without calling her and letting her know first. Tilly grabbed her bag, grabbed the keys to the car, and headed out the door. “I need to get out.” She got into the car, and drove into town. After a few minutes, she was there. She drove around for a while, trying to figure out what she wanted to do. Finally, she decided to go to the local PayDay store, and wander around. She walked around there for a little while until she decided “I’m hungry.” She walked out of the store, and drove over to the local pizza place. She walked in, sat down, and ordered. She pulled out a book, and started to read.

“Hey, we’re here.” Said Trent as he shut the car off.

“Huh wha?” said Jane. “Ugh... must have dozed off. Daria?”

“Nrrgh.. yeah?” said Daria, half asleep.

“We’re here.” Said Jane, “You coming in?”

“Huh? Oh... yeah.” Said Daria. They all got out of the car, and walked into the music shop.

Trent walked up to the guy at the counter. "Hey. Alan sent me from Lawndale."

"Cool." Said the guy behind the counter. He reached under the counter and pulled out a package with a Post-It note with "Trent" written on it. "Here ya go, man. Six bucks."

Trent pulled six, one dollar bills from his pocket and put them on the counter. "Thanks, man."

"No problem. Tell Alan I said hey."

Trent nodded, and walked back out the door with Daria and Jane behind him. "Hey, I'm hungry. Wanna go get something to eat?"

"Yeah. Food sounds good." Said Jane.

"Sure. I could go for some pizza." Said Daria. They walked along the strip mall, and found a pizza shop.

"Looks good. Let's try it." Said Jane as she walked in. Trent held the door open for Daria, and she followed Jane in, with Trent following Daria. Jane took two steps in, looked around, and something caught her eye. "Oh no." said Jane half aloud. Since Jane stopped short, Daria bumped into her, and then Trent bumped into Daria.

"What's the..." Daria started, then she saw her. "Damn." She said to herself.

"Janey?" said Trent, then he saw her. "Whoa.... *two* Darias?"

"No." Said Daria. She sighed. "Might as well get used to it." Said Daria to herself. "Let's go see if she wants company."

"Ooookay." Said Jane. They all walked over to the table where Tilly was sitting.

"Hey Tilly." Said Daria dryly.

"Daria!" said Tilly, jumping out of the booth and hugging Daria. Daria at first wanted to push her away, but changed her mind at the last minute, and hugged her back.

"Hi sis." Said Daria.

"Sis?" asked Trent.

"Long story. Tell you later." Whispered Jane to Trent. "Hi Tilly." Said Jane aloud.

"Hey Jane." Said Tilly. "Who's your friend?"

"This is my brother Trent. Trent, this is Tilly, Daria's long lost twin sister."

"Whoa." Said Trent. He studied Tilly for a minute. "Whoa.... They are twins." Said Trent to himself.

They all sat down. Daria and Tilly sat on one side, and Trent and Jane sat on the other side, with Jane sitting across from Tilly. Daria collected herself, and asked "Did you order yet?"

“Yeah, a pepperoni double cheese, hold the grease.” Said Tilly with a small smile. Daria couldn’t help but smile. She would have said the same thing.

“Cool. I’ll go get us some drinks.” Said Trent. He smiled at Daria, and then headed to the counter.

“Nice guy.” Said Tilly, as she turned her head to watch Trent walk away. She turned back and looked over at Daria, who’s face went from slightly red from embarrassment to deeper red with a bit of anger.

“Yeah, he is.” Said Jane. “I think he would probably take a bullet for Daria if she asked him to.” Daria shot a glaring look to Jane.

Tilly looked over at Daria and saw the look on her face. “She’s getting pissed.” She said to herself, “I know I would be.” She quickly changed the subject. “So, what brings you all to Edgewood?”

Daria took a couple of deep breaths. “Trent had to come get some guitar strings. He has a gig this weekend in Lawndale.”

“He’s in a band?” asked Tilly.

“Yeah, they call themselves ‘Mystik Spiral’”, said Jane.

“But they are thinking about changing the name.” said Daria without thinking. She was starting to get a little more comfortable around Tilly.

“Here’s our drinks.” Said Trent, approaching the table.

“And here’s the pizza.” Said Tilly. They each took a slice, and started eating.

Jane glanced at Daria, trying not to be obvious. She was actually eating this time, not picking the pizza apart. Jane smiled, glad that her friend was settling down a little. “Not bad. Reminds me of Pizza King.”

“Yeah, except less grease.” Said Daria. They all laughed.

They sat and finished the slice they had. “My parents want to meet you.” Said Tilly flatly.

“The real question is, do YOU want them to meet me?” asked Daria.

“No.” said Tilly. “They still don’t know that I know yet.” Said Tilly.

“They don’t know what?” asked Trent.

“Tilly was adopted.” Said Daria. Trent didn’t say anything, and just picked up another slice.

“Ever going to tell them?” asked Jane.

“Yeah, eventually. To be honest, I didn’t even know if Daria would have wanted to see me again.” Said Tilly.

Daria looked at Tilly, and they across the table at Jane and Trent. "What the hell." She said to herself, "It's my sister, my best friend, and my.... Best friend's brother." She turned to face Tilly, "I wasn't sure at first, but I am beginning to accept it."

"I'm glad." Said Tilly. With a small smile on her face, she picked up another slice.

"Well, that wasn't that bad." Said Daria to herself, as she smiled a little, and picked up another slice as well. They all sat, eating and chatting about various things, mostly pizza related.

After about 45 minutes, and no more pizza, Jane stretched and said "Well, I think we need to go."

"Yeah." Said Trent. "We need to get home. "

"Okay." Said Tilly. They all got up and walked outside. Tilly turned to Daria. "It was good to see you again."

"Yes. Yes it was." Said Daria.

"Maybe we can spend the day together one day." Said Tilly.

"Ehhhh." Started Daria.

"Okay... One day at a time." Said Tilly with a smile.

"Okay. See you later." Said Daria. She turned and walked toward Trent's car, with Jane and Trent following close behind. Tilly watched them walk away, get into Trent's car, and drive away. She smiled, and then walked to her own car, got in it, and drove away, heading home herself.

"She seemed pretty cool, Daria." Said Trent after they were back on the highway.

"Yeah. She's okay." Said Daria.

"She's a lot like Daria, but she isn't Daria." Said Jane.

"Yeah. I like, err, uhh, I think, uhh... Nevermind." Said Trent.

"You were saying?" said Jane.

"Nothing Janey." Said Trent, turning a bit red himself.

"You think Daria is a cool girl." Said Jane. Now Daria was turning red.

"Yeah. Daria is a cool *person*." Said Trent.

"What about Tilly?" asked Jane.

"Not as cool as Daria." Said Trent. They continued to drive down the road, making their way home from their adventure of the day. Daria sat in the back seat, arms folded, and closed her eyes again.

Chapter Three

“Daria....” Came Tilly’s voice from the dark. Daria looked around. She didn’t know where she was. She felt cold. She went to pull her jacket tighter to herself, when she realized she wasn’t wearing anything except her glasses. She tried to turn to run, but couldn’t. She felt like she was suspended in mid-air. She brought up one arm to cover her chest, and used her other arm to cover her privates. “Daria... there is no sense in hiding yourself. I am you, and you are me.”

“Where am I?” asked Daria.

“There is no real name for this place.” Came Tilly’s voice from the darkness, “However, you can call it limbo, or a deep dark recess of your mind.”

“Why am I naked?”

“Your mind is the generating force.” Said Tilly’s voice.

“I am not comfortable being naked in the shower, much less in ‘limbo’ with my, err, uhh....”

“Sister, Daria. The word you are looking for is sister.” Came Tilly’s voice.

“I am not comfortable...”

“Daria...” said Tilly as she appeared from the darkness, also not wearing anything except her glasses. “We are a lot alike.”

Daria eyed the female form in front of her. “Physically, yes.”

“Daria, you are me, and I am you. *We are the same.*”, said Tilly.

“No. Each person is an individual. Physically, we are similar.”

“You’re mind is trying to sort this out. Me and you.” Said Tilly as she stepped closer to Daria. “Until the other day, your only sister was Quinn. Now I am here. Your mind is trying to deal with this.”

“Still doesn’t explain my, err, our nudity.” said Daria.

Tilly sighed. “Daria. It represents your vulnerability, your fears.” Tilly reached forward, and took Daria’s hand into hers.

“Tilly please...” started Daria.

“Fine...” snapped Tilly. She let go of Daria’s hand. Tilly then took a step forward, and with one finger, pushed Daria back. Daria went into freefall. She opened her mouth to scream, but no sounds came out. She tried to grab for anything to stop her fall, but there was nothing there. She could feel an impending impact.

“AAAAAAARRRRGGHHHHH!” screamed Daria as she up in bed. She took a moment to catch her breath. She then patted herself down to see if she was wearing clothes. She was... she was wearing her night clothes.

Quinn came busting through the door a second later. “DARIA!” She ran to Daria’s bedside and grabbed her sister by the shoulders. “Daria, are you okay?”

“Me, Tilly, freefall, no clothes.” Mumbled Daria.

Helen came through the door a few seconds later. “Daria, are you alright?” asked Helen as she rushed to Daria’s side.

“Me, Tilly, freefall, no clothes.” Mumbled Daria again.

Quinn looked at her mother, and then back at Daria. “Daria. It was just a dream.” Said Helen. “Go back to sleep.”

“I... I can’t.” said Daria, settling down.

“Go back to bed mom, I’ll stay with Daria.” Said Quinn.

“That’s not necess...” started Daria, but Quinn interrupted her.

“I don’t mind.” Said Quinn.

“Okay sweetie.” Said Helen. She looked at Daria, “Try to get some sleep. Good night.” Helen walked out of the room, stopping at the doorway to take another glance at Daria before she walked out and down the hall.

Quinn looked at the doorway for a second, and then turned back to Daria, who was still shaking. “Daria, do you want to talk about it?”

Daria collected herself a little, enough to stammer out “Who are you and what did you do with Quinn?”

Quinn looked at Daria, puzzled. “Oh, sarcasm.” Said Quinn. “You’re defense mechanism.”

“Quinn..... I... don’t.... know...” muttered Daria.

“Daria? Would you like a glass of water or something.” Asked Quinn. Daria just nodded her head, not saying a word. “Okay. I’ll be right back. I promise.” Daria just nodded again. Quinn walked out of the room, and quickly ran down the hall and downstairs and into the kitchen. She opened the cabinet, and pulled out a glass. “What am I doing? I can’t help her. I don’t know how to help her.” Said Quinn. She put some ice in the glass, and added some water. She turned to go back upstairs, and then stopped, looking at the phone. “Maybe....” Quinn picked up the phone and dialed.

Jane was sprawled out on her bed, buried under the covers. The phone rang, and rang, and rang. She reached and felt around for the phone, and it stopped ringing before she could pick it up. A minute later, Trent appeared in the doorway to Jane’s room. “Hey Janey, Daria’s sister Quinn is on the phone.”

“Quinn?” said Jane as she sat up. She reached over and grabbed the phone. “Hello?”

“Jane? This is Quinn, Daria’s sister.”

“Yeah...” said Jane.

“Uhh, can you get over here. There is something wrong with Daria. She woke up screaming a few minutes ago, and now she refuses to go to sleep.”

“Huh? Y...y...yeah, yeah! I’ll be right over. I’ll get Trent to bring me over now.” Said Jane.

“Thanks Jane. I’ll wait for you downstairs.” Said Quinn.

“Okay, bye.” Said Jane, slamming the phone down. Jane didn’t bother to change out of her night clothes, and just slipped her boots on, grabbed her bag, and ran down the hall. “TRENT! TRENT! Let’s go! I need to get to Daria’s NOW!”

Trent was sitting on his bed, putting a shirt on. “Okay. Let me get my keys.” He stood up, grabbed his wallet and keys. As he walked out of the room, Jane reached over and picked up clean shirt from Trent’s bed, and shoved it in her bag. She turned, and ran down the hall, catching up to Trent. They both walked out of the house, and got into Trent’s car.

“Something is wrong with Daria.” Muttered Jane. Trent didn’t say anything. He started the car, and didn’t wait for Jane to close the door good before he was backing out of the driveway. He backed into the street, and then floored the gas, heading down the street. In no time, they were pulling up in front of the Morgendorffer’s house. “Thanks Trent. I’m going to stay the night with Daria.”

“Okay Janey. Let... Let me know how, well, uhh...” stammered Trent.

Jane paused a second. “You *really* do care for her, don’t you?” Trent said nothing, his face turning slightly red. “I’ll call you later.” She closed the door, and ran up to the Morgendorffer’s house. She tapped on the front door with a finger, as to not make too much noise. A couple of seconds later, the door opened, revealing Quinn, holding a glass of ice water.

“Thank you.” Said Quinn.

Jane stepped in the house. “What happened?”

“She kept muttering something about her and that Tilly girl, freefall and nudity.” Said Quinn as she closed and locked the front door. She turned and headed up the stairs, with Jane following close behind. They walked up the stairs, but were met by Helen at the top.

“Jane? What are you doing here?” Asked Helen.

“Quinn called me. She is worried about Daria.”, said Jane.

“No, I just want to get back to sleep.” Said Quinn, avoiding eye contact with anyone.

“Liar.” Muttered both Helen and Jane at the same time. They heard each other, and looked at each other. Quinn didn’t hear them, and turned back towards Daria’s room.

"I promised her water." Said Quinn, walking to Daria's room.

"Jane will be there in a second, Quinn." Said Helen. She waiting until Quinn had walked into Daria's room.
"Jane... "

"I'm worried about her too, Mrs. Morgendorffer. Don't worry, I won't let anything happen to *mi amiga*." Said Jane. She turned and walked down the hall to Daria's room. She placed her hand on the door handle...

Quinn walked into Daria's room. Daria was sitting up in bed, knees drawn up, and her arms wrapped around them. She was gently rocking back and forth. Daria looked up as Quinn walked in. "Here's your water. Sorry it took so long." Quinn looked away, continuing, "I had to find a clean glass. Dad hasn't done dishes yet."

Daria took the water, took a sip, and then handled the glass back to Quinn. A noise was heard from the door as it opened, with Jane walking in. Quinn looked up, but Daria didn't move. "Oh my god." Whispered Jane. She set her bag down, and walked to the bed, sitting next to Daria. She put her hand on Daria's. Daria looked up, seeing her friend.

"Jane...." Whispered Daria as she recognized her friend.

"Yeah, it's me."

"Jane..." whispered Daria again, looking back down.

Jane turned to Quinn. "It's okay. Go ahead and go back to bed." Quinn gave a last look at Daria, and then to Jane, handed Jane the glass, and then walked out of the room, closing the door behind her. Jane waited a second, and then said to Daria "She's gone."

Daria looked up at Jane, eyes red like she was about to cry. "Jane... I can't go back to sleep."

"Tell me what happened." Jane said as she put the glass on the table next to the bed.

"I was in a black void, nothing there. Tilly was there, and we were nude. We talked, and then she pushed me, and I went into freefall. Then I woke up." Said Daria, a tear falling down her face.

"It's okay *mi amiga*. It was just a dream. You've been under a lot of stress."

"I can't go back to sleep." Said Daria, shaking.

"I'm here. I will be here." Said Jane. She extended her hand towards Daria. Daria looked at it, and took her hand. She grasped it firmly, and pulled Jane to her, wrapping her arms around her.

"What is happening to me?"

"Stress." Said Jane. "Been there, done that, got the T-shirt. I'll stay here with you."

"Thank you." Said Daria, pulling away. She wiped her eyes, and then looked at Jane. "How did you get here so quickly?"

“Trent drove me.” Said Jane. “Believe it or not, he cares about you more than you think.”

“Please.... Too much right now.” Said Daria.

“Let’s just go to sleep, and we can talk about it in the morning.”

“Okay.” Said Daria. She arranged the blankets a little, and laid back down. Within a few moments, Daria was asleep.

Jane reached into her bag, and pulled out the shirt she swiped from Trent’s room. She laid it on Daria’s bed, next to her hand. After a few moments, Daria clutched it and held the shirt tightly. “Aroma therapy.” Chuckled Jane to herself. She looked over by the window, where the roll away bed was still set up. She turned off the light, and then crawled into bed herself.

Tilly pulled into the driveway, and got out of the car. She walked into the house, to see her mother and father at the table. They didn’t notice her come in, so she gently closed the door behind her, and slipped down the hallway to where she could overhear what was being said.

“Tilly said Lawndale. Isn’t that where the, uhh, what’s their name...” said Sarah looking up at the ceiling trying to remember the name she was looking for.

“Morgendorffers.” Said James, “Helen and Jake Morgendorffer.”

“Yeah, that’s it. But I thought they were in Highland still.”

“No, they moved to Lawndale about a year ago. Helen was offered a job with a huge law firm. She would have been stupid to have turned it down.” Said James.

“And you would know this because?” asked Sarah pointedly, then she thought about it. “Ahhh, lawyers keep track of each other.”

“Not really. Just tried to keep up with them, just in case.” Said James.

“In case what?”

“Well, if anything ever happened to Tilly, it would be helpful to know....” Said James, but he was cut off by Tilly appearing around the corner.

“Know what?” asked Tilly.

“Nothing dear.” Said Sarah, trying to cover up.

“No, what were you two talking about?” Tilly asked again.

“We saw that you took off for the day. Did you go to Lawndale again?”

“No.... went bumming around town, ended up at the pizza place over by the PayDay.” Said Tilly.

“We’re just concerned.” Said James.

“Ooookay.” Said Tilly. She then turned and walked away, heading to her room.

The light shone through the gaps in the curtains, and right into Jane’s eyes. She muttered something unintelligible, and pulled the blankets over her head. That didn’t work, as the light was still coming through. She sat up, and looked over at Daria’s bed. It was there, but Daria was not. Jane looked over at the clock, it was noon. “Damn. Where is she?” Jane walked downstairs, to find Jake and Helen sitting on the couch in the living room. “Where’s Daria?”

“Thought she was still asleep.” Said Jake.

“She’s not in bed?” asked Helen, getting up from the couch. They turned to go back upstairs, but noticed the sliding glass door in the kitchen was unlocked. “Out back.” Said Helen. They both walked outside, with Jake following them close behind. Jane looked down as soon as they walked out, and found footprints in the light snow.

“Follow the tracks.” Said Jane, as she walked, keeping her head down. They followed them across the yard to a tree. There, sitting at the base of the tree, was Daria.

Helen and Jane knelt down on either side of Daria. “Daria sweetie, are you okay?” asked Helen. Daria looked over at her mother, not saying a word.

“Daria.” Said Jane, taking her hand and placing it on Daria’s shoulder.

Daria turned to look at Jane. “Hey.”

“What are you doing out here?” asked Helen.

“Thinking.” Said Daria, looking back at the ground.

“About Tilly?” asked Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Daria.

Jake had left, went inside, and came back out with a jacket. He gave it to Daria. She looked at it, and set it on the ground beside her. “Daria, it’s cold out here. Please put it on.”

“I’m fine.” Said Daria.

“Young lady...” started Helen, but it was too late. Jake, in a surge of adrenalin, bent down, picked up Daria, holding her in his arms like a child. Her skin was cold to the touch. Daria didn’t put up a fight as Jake carried her into the house, up the stairs and into her room, laying her onto the bed. “Now. What in the hell is wrong with you? Are you on some kind of drugs?”

Helen and Jane came in right behind Jake. "Jake, settle down."

Jane walked over to Daria, sitting on the edge of the bed. Daria just looked up at her. Jane turned to Helen and Jake. "Let me talk to her."

"I don't know, Jane. Maybe we need to..." started Helen, but Jane cut her off.

"Daria wants to be alone." Said Jane.

"So then you would need to go, too." Said Helen.

"Okay... Daria wants you two out of here." Jane said flatly.

"Oh.... Okay." Said Helen. "We'll be downstairs if you need us." Her and Jake turned and walked out of the room, and closed the door behind them.

"They're gone." Said Jane.

Daria sat up in bed. "That was a trip."

"How long have you been out there?" asked Jane.

"Since about 6:30." Said Daria, wrapping the blankets around herself.

"You were only wearing your night clothes." Said Jane. Daria pulled up her shirt, to reveal Trent's shirt that Jane had brought over the night before. "Ahh.. but still, that is not clothing for being out in the snow. Were you.... Were...."

"Trying to commit suicide?" asked Daria. Jane nodded. "No. I was just hoping the cold would shock me into thinking straight."

"Did it work?"

"Actually, yeah. A little." Said Daria. "As I started to get chills, my mind started clearing. The longer I sat, the more clear my thoughts became."

"But you didn't take into account that the colder you got, the more you wouldn't be able to move."

"No, I did. But the longer I sat, the clearer my thoughts became. I guess I forgot about being cold." Said Daria.

"About six hours in the cold? I'm surprised you didn't freeze to death." Said Jane. "You need to go take a hot shower."

"Yeah. I guess I should." Said Daria. She grabbed some clothes, and then headed to the bathroom.

Jane waited until Daria was out of the room, and picked up the phone, and called Trent. After a few rings, Trent answered. "Heh----Hello?"

"Trent, it's Jane."

“Jane? No, Jane’s not here...” said Trent.

“No Trent... this IS Jane.”

“Oh.... Hey Janey.” Said Trent, “How’s Daria?”

“She’s fine. She’s in the shower right now.”

“When you coming home?” asked Trent.

“I don’t know Trent. I wanna stay with Daria to make sure she is okay. I will probably come home Sunday sometime, to either stay or get more clothes.”

“Cool. Okay Janey. See you later.” Said Trent as he hung up the phone.

Jane hung the phone up, and then proceeded to take clothes out of her bag so she could take a shower as soon as Daria got out. She sat on the bed, waiting for Daria, as Quinn walked in.

“Oh, hey Jane.” Said Quinn. “Where’s Daria?”

“Shower. Your mom, dad and I found her outside this morning sitting in the snow.”

A horrified but puzzled look came across Quinn’s face. “Out in the snow?”

“She’s fine. She said she went outside to think, and the colder she got, the more clear her mind became.”

“Matches her heart.” Said Quinn.

Jane shook her head. “Quinn, come here.” Jane patted the bed next to where she was sitting. Quinn gave Jane a puzzled look, and slowly walked over and sat down next to Jane. “Daria is a very sweet, caring person. She just doesn’t like expressing her feelings to everyone. So she puts up this front to keep people out. The less people you let in, the less there is to hurt when they go away.”

“But why her family?”

“I’m sure it doesn’t help you keep telling everyone in school that she is your cousin, or whatever. She is your sister.” Said Jane. “Be glad your sister is here for you, and that you are here for her. If you didn’t care, you wouldn’t have called me last night.”

“If everyone knew I was sister’s with a brain, then I’d be kicked out of the Fashion Club.” Said Quinn. “My popularity would go into freefall!”

“Keep in mind, you have TWO sisters, and Tilly is likely to be as intelligent as Daria. Quinn, look, just take it easy on Daria for a while.” Jane said. “I’m sure in a few weeks, she will be back to her old, cynical self.”

“Thanks Jane. By the way, we never talked.” Said Quinn, as she jumped up and walked out of the room. “Oh, Hi Daria.” Came Quinn’s voice from the hallway.

Daria walked in, drying her hair. "Makeover session?"

"Fashion advice." Said Jane with a smile. "I'm going to take a shower." Jane got up, grabbed her clothes, and walked out the door.

Daria sat down on the bed. She finished drying her hair, then brushed it out. She made the bed, then made Jane's bed. She looked over onto the table by the bed, and she saw the glass of water that Quinn had brought to her last night, and her glasses. "No wonder I can't see a damn thing." Said Daria to herself. She put her glasses on, and walked across the hall to Quinn's room. The door was open, and she could hear Quinn on the phone.

"Yeah Sandi. I know..... No, freezing to death is not fashionable. The new issue of 'Waif' shows the best ways to keep warm and to look good at the same time. Yes Sandi... No Sandi..." said Quinn on the phone. Daria stepped in, and looked at Quinn, and then turned around to walk out. "Look Sandi, I need to go. My sister is here.... Yes, my sister, SIS-TER, Daria is my sister... whatever Sandi. Bye." Quinn slammed down the phone. "Ugh. Why do I even hang out with her. Daria?"

Daria turned around, "It's because you waiting for the right moment to overthrow the Fashion Club and take over as Grand Poobah..."

Quinn chuckled softly. "It's coming. I think between me and Stacy, we are going to have Sandi impeached."

Daria had to smile on that one. "Look, I wanted to say thank you, for.. well, for everything. I saw a side of you last night that I didn't know existed."

"You're my sister. I got worried." Said Quinn, trying to shrug it off.

"At least until Monday, then I am your cousin again."

"No. Not anymore. I'm done with that." Quinn stands up, and walks over to the mirror. Flipping her hair back, she says "Hi, I'm Quinn Morgendorffer..." she reaches over and drags Daria to her side, putting her arm around her, "And this is my sister Daria."

Daria smiled, and pulled Quinn into a hug. "Thank you Quinn."

"No problem, sis." Said Quinn. She walked back over to the bed, and sat down. Daria sat down in a chair at the desk. "So, what about this Tilly girl. What's she like?"

"She's my twin. She looks like me, talks like me, and I even believe she thinks like me."

Quinn sat looking at Daria for a second. She was trying to imagine another Daria. She had only seen Tilly really briefly last time. After a second, Quinn said "I'd like to meet her."

"I think that can be arranged." Said Daria, with a small smile.

"Daria... DARIA!" yelled Jane.

"In Quinn's room!" said Daria loud enough for Jane to hear her.

Jane walked into Quinn's room. "Having a facial?"

"No, just some sisterly bonding." Said Quinn.

"Yeah, and the duct tape isn't holding." Said Daria with a smile. Quinn laughed.

"What are we going to do today?" asked Jane, as she sat on the bed next to Quinn.

"Same thing we do every day Jane... Try to take over the world." Said Daria. Quinn had to stifle a loud laugh. Jane smiled.

"Let's go see if Sick Sad World is on." Said Jane. Her and Daria got up, and walked out of the room. Daria took one more glance at Quinn, smiled, and followed Jane down the hall.

Tilly rolled out of bed, literally, hitting the floor. "Ouch, dammit." She picked herself up off the floor, and fumbled around for her glasses. She put them on, and then looked at the clock across the room. "Damn... It's noon already." She walked out of her room, and down the hall. She heard her parents talking again. She stopped short so they wouldn't see her.

"We need to find out for sure." Said Sarah.

"I put a couple of calls in," said James, "and found out a couple of things."

"Like?"

"Well, the Morgendorffer's have two daughters. Daria and Quinn. They both go to Lawndale High." Said James.

"Tilly said her friend's name was Daria." Said Sarah.

"Yes... Her name is Daria." Said Tilly, coming from around the corner.

"Tilly, honey... err.." said James. "Uhh, how long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough, but I've known about this for about a year now." Said Tilly.

"Know about what?" asked Sarah, faking innocence.

"Adoption." Said Tilly flatly.

"Tilly honey..." Started Sarah, but she was cut off by Tilly.

"So, did you give me that name, or did Helen and Jake give me that name?" asked Tilly.

James and Sarah looked at each other. "We did." Said James.

"Well, let's have it." Said Tilly, sitting down at the table with them.

“Well, we met Helen and Jake in Highland. We were in the doctor’s office when they told us that I couldn’t have kids. They were in the office at the same time, Helen had just found out she was having twins. We got to talking. She found out your father was in law school, and Helen had just graduated.” Said Sarah. She took a sip from her coffee. She looked over at James.

“As part of Helen’s fulfillment for law school, she had to have so many hours of volunteer work to qualify for certification. She used to come to the house to tutor me. We started to talk more, and then one night her and Jake both showed up to the house. They had a proposition for us. We wanted a child, they couldn’t financially support two children, so Helen and Jake had decided to give their second born up for adoption. We were in the hospital when you were born. Jake cut Daria’s cord. I cut yours. The paperwork went through that afternoon, and we were legally your parents that day. You were named while you were still in the room. Helen and Jake saw you only for a minute, and we saw Daria for a minute. After they left the hospital, we didn’t see Helen or Jake again. We moved two months later.”

Tilly stared wide-eyed at her parents. “Why didn’t you tell me this before?”

“We were going to tell you.” Started Sarah, but Tilly cut her off.

“When? When the devil decided to drive a snow plow to work?” snapped Tilly.

“Matilda Seiler...” said James, but again, Tilly cut him off.

“Hmmmph, shouldn’t it be Matilda Morgendorffer?”

“No. You are a Seiler. You were raised by us from hour one. Just because I never gave birth to you, doesn’t mean I am any less your mother, and that your father is any less your father.” Said Sarah.

“Bull.....” started Tilly, but James cut her off before she could finish.

“I will not tolerate that language in here young lady.” Snapped James.

Tilly got up from the table so quick, she knocked the chair over. “Screw you both.” She ran down the hall, and slammed the door to her room. She walked to the mirror, and looked at the picture hanging on the mirror. It was a picture of Daria. She made the decision. She shoved some clothes in a bag and grabbed her keys. She opened the window, and climbed out. She walked around the front of the house, got into the car, and backed out of the driveway. She took one last look at the house, and then took off down the street.

Chapter Four

Daria and Jane were through their fifth episode of Sick Sad World. "I need a drink. You want something?" asked Daria of Jane.

"Yeah, a soda would be awesome." Said Jane, as she repositioned herself on the couch. Daria got up, and wandered into the kitchen. She opened the fridge, pulled out two cans, and took them into the living room. She sat down, tossed a can to Jane, and had just opened her soda when they heard what sounded like a car pulling up. "Must be Trent." Said Jane, getting up and going to the door. She looked out the peephole. "Rut roh."

"What?" asked Daria "Trent trade his car for the Mystery Machine?"

"Uhhh, you better come see this for yourself." Said Jane.

Daria got up, and looked out the window. "Who do we know who drives a silver Chrysler?" Jane glanced over at Daria, but didn't have time to say anything. "Well, so much for a plain weekend." She opened the door, just as Tilly was about to ring the doorbell. "Hey Tilly."

"Hey Daria.... Jane." Said Tilly, with a bit of a anger in her voice.

"Come in. We were watching Sick Sad World." Said Daria.

"Sounds good." Said Tilly. She tossed her bag on one of the other couches, and sat down with Jane and Daria, and started watching TV.

A few minutes go by, Helen came into the room. "Hello sweetie, hello Jane.... Tilly? What are you doing here?"

"I'm not here, I'm a figment of your imagination." Said Tilly without taking her eyes off the TV. Both Daria and Jane looked at each other, shrugged, and went back to watching TV.

Helen walked in front of the TV, folding her arms across her chest. "Tilly... "

"Yeah, why are you here?" asked Jane.

"What? I can't come see my long lost sister?" asked Tilly, trying to avoid the question.

Daria picked up Tilly's bag. "You brought a huge bag to just come to visit?"

"Fine. I had to get away from home. Had a huge argument with my parents. Adoption, a few choice words, blah blah." Said Tilly with an inflection that almost sounded like Quinn.

"I know this is a stupid question, but do your parents know where you are?" asked Helen. The look on Tilly's face confirmed Helen's suspicion. "You need to let them know where you are."

"No thanks, I'd rather not." Said Tilly.

Helen eyed Tilly. She sat down on the couch closest to Tilly. "Now Tilly. I know you might be upset with your parents..."

"Upset? Highly pi...." Started Tilly, but Helen cut her off.

"If you're going to be in this house, you will follow our rules, and the first one is neither me nor Daria's father will tolerate foul language in this house. Is that understood?"

Tilly looked at Helen a bit shocked. "Yes ma'am." Said Tilly, looking down at the floor.

"You don't have to call me ma'am." Said Helen.

"Okay."

"Now, why are you upset with your parents." Asked Helen.

"Well, I had to find out that I was adopted by eavesdropping, and then when I confronted them about it, they first tried to deny it, but then they admitted it. I just got upset, and left." Said Tilly.

"At least you knew." Muttered Daria.

Helen glanced at Daria for a moment, and then turned to look at Tilly. "Is there anything you would like to know from me?"

"My parents said they named me. Did they?"

"Yes. Your parents were not officially your parents yet, but they were there when you were born. Your father came up with the name. He was the one who cut your cord. The paperwork was finalized and dated as of the date and time of your birth." Said Helen. "I'll be right back." Helen got up, and went upstairs. She was gone for a minute or so, and came back down with a photo album, with Jake following her down.

"Hi kiddo! Jane.... Tilly?" greeted Jake.

"Hi Mr. Morgendorffer." Said both Tilly and Jane.

"Okay, now, where was I... Oh yeah.." said Helen as she flipped through the photo album to a certain picture. It depicted a younger version of Jake and Helen holding a newborn Daria, and a younger Sarah and James holding a newborn Tilly. "This was taken about a hour after you two were born." Said Helen.

"Hey! The old photo album. Where did that come from?" asked Jake, a bit clueless.

"It was in the top of the closet dear." Said Helen. She point to another picture, showing young James cutting an umbilical cord. "Here is your father cutting the cord. He was so excited, he dropped the scissors twice!" said Helen.

"I remember that." Laughed Jake. "Matter of fact, I think I did the same thing to Daria."

“Yes Jake.” Said Helen, laughing. She flipped the page, showing two pair of feet prints, and two pair of hand prints. One was labeled “Daria”, and the other was labeled “Matilda”. She turned to Tilly. “Your parents have the same pictures.”

“They never showed them to me. Like I said, I had to find out the hard way about being adopted. I’m sure they don’t have the pictures anymore anyway.” Said Tilly, looking at her feet. She took her glasses off, wiped her eyes, and then looked up at Helen. “Can I stay here for the night?”

Helen thought about it for a second. “Yes, but only under one condition. You need to call your parents and let them know where you are.”

Tilly looked back down, picking at her pants. She put her glasses back on and looked at Daria, who was expressionless, and then looked at Jane, who had a smile on her face. Tilly sighed, and then looked at Helen. “Okay.” She paused for a second. “When?”

“Now, please.” Said Helen.

Tilly sighed heavily. Helen got up, walked into the kitchen, and then brought the phone into the living room, handing it to Tilly. She sighed heavily again, and then dialed. After a second, voicemail picked up. “Mom... Dad... This is Tilly... Uhh.. I’m in Lawndale at Daria’s. Don’t worry. I’m fine. Her phone number is on my desk. I just need to get away, and my sisters were the logical choice. Talk to you later. Bye.” She hung the phone up, and handed it to Helen. “Voicemail.” Said Tilly.

“Try again in a little while.” Said Helen.

Tilly’s parents looked at each other in stunned silence, and then looked at where Tilly had just been sitting. After a minute or two, James stood up, and started down the hallway. “Where are you going?” asked Sarah, standing as well.

“We need to talk to Tilly.” Said James.

“Give her some space. She is just upset.” Said Sarah, walking to block James’s path.

“She needs to understand...” started James, but Sarah cut him off.

“Let her be. She needs to calm down. Then we will both go in and talk to her.”

“No, we need to take this on here, now.” Said James. She walked past Sarah, and put his hand on the doorknob to Tilly’s room. He paused, turned to look at Sarah, sighed, and then reached up and knocked on the door. “Tilly...”

No answer...

“Tilly?”

No answer...

“Tilly?” asked Sarah, stepping to the door. After a few seconds, she opened the door and walked in, with James following her. Sarah looked around the room, seeing clothes strewn about, and the window open. She turned to look on wall above the light switch where Tilly normally hung her keys, and they were missing. “She’s gone!”

“Where?” asked James,

“I don’t know. Let me break out my Matilda-Tracker 9000... I DON’T KNOW!” Sarah looked frantically around the room, and caught a glimpse of a picture on the mirror.. “Honey, look at this.” Sarah reached up to the mirror, and pulled a picture off. “It’s Tilly, with different glasses and hair.”

James took the picture, and looked at it. “No.... That’s Daria.” He flipped the picture over, and found an address on it. “Let’s go.”

Tilly, Daria, and Jane were all sitting in Daria’s room. Tilly turned to Daria. “Wow. This room is so.. so...”

“So mental?” finished Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Tilly.

“Yeah. It also comes in handy for when you find out you have a long lost twin sister.” Said Daria with a smile. She looked over at Tilly, and she was smiling as well.

“Want to have some fun?” said Jane, as a evil grin crept across her face.

“What?” said both Tilly and Daria at the same time.

Jane got up, and ran her fingers through Tilly’s hair, making it stand up a bit more to look like Daria’s. She went into Daria’s closet, grabbed another green jacket, and handed it to Tilly. “Put this on. Tilly, do you have a spare pair of glasses?”

“Yeah. In my bag.”

“Give them to Daria.” Said Jane. Tilly rifled through her bag, found her spare glasses, and gave them to Daria.

“Same prescription? Wow. We are sisters.” Said Daria.

“Not now..” said Jane. She took a step back. After Tilly put on the green jacket, it looked like there were two Darias.. or two Tillys. “Wait here.” Jane walked out of Daria’s room, and across the hall to Quinn’s room. “Hey Quinn. Come over here for a second.” Quinn got up from her desk where she was reading the latest issue of ‘Waif’ and walked into Daria’s room.

“Hi Quinn.” Both Daria and Tilly said at the same.

“Huh wha?” said Quinn as walked in and saw what appeared to be two Darias...Tillys... “Daria?” Both Tilly and Daria looked at each other and smiled. Daria stood up. “Wow.. Those look really good on you Daria.” Tilly reached in her bag and took a brush out, and brushed her hair down to where it normally sat. She then turned

to Daria, and brushed her hair out, trying to get it to lay down as well. It did, but not as much as Tilly's. "Daria! That is a really good look for you!"

Daria took off Tilly's glasses and put her own back on. "I prefer Daria version 1.0 thank you."

Quinn turned to look at Tilly. "I'm Quinn. I guess I am your younger sister."

Tilly nodded. "She looks nothing like us." She said to Daria.

"Yeah, but she still my, err, our sister." Said Daria.

"Both with the same sense of fashion. At least Tilly wears lighter colors." Said Quinn.

Tilly's eye narrowed as she looked at Quinn. Tilly walked to Quinn and grabbed her by the shoulders. Quinn had a scared look in her eyes. Tilly looked at Quinn for a second, smiled, and pulled Quinn into a hug. "I have two sisters." Said Tilly happily.

"Morgendorffer family reunion." Said Jane, sitting on the edge of the rollaway bed.

"Tilly... Daria.... Come down here please." Came Helen's voice from downstairs. All four of them looked at each other.

"Uh oh." Said Tilly and Daria in unison. All four of them walked downstairs. As they came into view, they could see Helen and Jake, and on the other couch was Sarah and James. "Crap." Said Daria and Tilly. They walked into the living room. Daria, Tilly, Jane, and Quinn all sat on the third couch.

"Matilda Seiler, you have a lot of..." James started, but Helen cut him off.

"Tilly sweetie, your parents arrived a few minutes ago. Now, before anything is said, I have talked to them, and they are going to let you stay the night, if you still want to." Said Helen, bringing her full lawyer-esque voice to the table.

"Tilly... why did you run off?" asked Sarah.

"I was tired of being lied to. The only friend I ever really had was Daria, so I came here. I figured there would be no lies here." Said Tilly flatly.

"Well, there was the small omission about me having a twin sister." Said Daria. Jane jabbed her in the side, as Helen shot Daria a glance.

Tilly turned to her parents. "For seventeen years, you lied to me. Didn't even think of telling me that I had a sister. Don't you think I would have wanted to know that? Someone I could have bonded with, or at least been friends with?" she said, her voice getting louder and more harsh.

"Tilly, we were going..." started Sarah.

"NO! The only reason you decided you were going to tell me was because I found out." Tilly stopped, and collected herself. "About a year ago I overheard you two talking about me. The school sent home a copy of a psychiatric evaluation that was ordered by the school. You were trying to decide if it was the way I was raised, or genetic. Then I heard you mention *my* mother and father, the Morgendorffers."

Helen stood up. "Tilly. James and Sarah *are* your mother and father. They raised you from the minute you were born."

"No, they are my parents. You and Jake are my mother and father."

"Tilly, please." Said James.

"No. " said Tilly, she turned to go back up the stairs, but Helen stopped her.

"Tilly, please. They are your parents. You will treat them with respect. That is the way we raised Daria and Quinn. I would expect nothing less from Jane while she is here, and will expect nothing less from you, young lady." Helen said.

Tilly stopped, looked at Helen, and then back at her parents. She turned and sat back down between Daria and Quinn. Quinn put her arm around Tilly's shoulder. After a second, Daria did the same. Tilly looked at Daria, and then at Quinn, and smiled as she looked back at Sarah and James. "I have only known Daria for three days, and I only really met Quinn today, and so far, I feel more loved here than I ever did with you."

"Life isn't a bowl of cherry delight here, either." Said Daria. "Mom is always at work, and Dad is always either complaining about his father, or how he lost another client."

"Tilly, wherever did you get the idea that we didn't love you?" asked James.

"I don't know. How about you never seemed to care about what I did."

"Well, no offense Tilly, but you really didn't go anywhere or do anything." Said Sarah. "You went to school, you came home, and sometimes you went to the library." Helen went to stand up, as to object, but Sarah continued. "You don't have any friends; you don't even TRY to make any friends."

Daria sighed. "That's because if you don't have friends, then there is no one to hurt you when they leave. In seventeen years, I have made only one true friend, and that's Jane Lane over here." Said Daria as she jabbed at Jane. She looked at Tilly, then to Helen and Jake. "I would imagine Tilly feels the same way."

Tilly nodded slowly, a tear running down her face. She took her glasses off, and wiped her eyes with her shirt sleeve. "My sister, whom I have only known three days, knows me better than you two."

"That's because she *is* you." Said Sarah, penny dropping. "Maybe we haven't been the best parents, but we try our best Tilly."

Daria interjected. "Hold it. Matilda is *not* me, and I am *not* her. We are two individual people who just happen to look the same, think the same, and have the same outlook on life."

Helen shot Daria a cold look. "No family is perfect out of the box." Said Helen. "You have to give your parents a chance, and give them the benefit of the doubt. They deserve at least that." Helen turned to Sarah and James. "We promised Tilly she could stay the night with Daria. You are welcome to stay in the guest room, or there is a very nice hotel in town."

Sarah thought about it for a moment. "Tilly, what do you want us to do?"

Tilly looked to her left, and saw Quinn, and then Helen and Jake. She looked to her right, and saw Daria, Jane, Sarah, and James. She leaned over and whispered something into Daria's ear. Daria leaned over and whispered something into Jane's ear. Jane shrugged. Daria nodded. Tilly leaned over and whispered something to Quinn. Quinn looked at Daria, and then nodded. "You can stay here if you want." Said Tilly.

"That's great Tilly, but since we are not that far from home, we will go there. When you are ready to come home, we will be waiting for you." Said James. Sarah nodded in agreement.

"Okay. I'm leaving now. Bye." Said Tilly, as she got up, and ran up the stairs, not giving anyone a chance to react. Helen looked over at Daria. Daria looked at Jane, and they both went upstairs as well. Quinn shrugged, got up, and went upstairs as well.

"Okay, game on." Said Helen to herself. She turned from watching the kids leaving the room, to face Sarah and James. "We went through the same thing with Daria. She didn't have any real friends until she moved to Lawndale. There were these two boys she knew in Highland, but they weren't really friends. When we came to Lawndale, Daria had a friend within two days. Her and Jane have been best friends ever since. She has made a big difference in Daria's life."

Sarah looked at Helen. "It's something to think about."

"We'd best be going." Said James. "Thanks for letting Tilly stay. I hope she finds the answers she is looking for. Maybe her sisters will help her out."

"Thanks again Helen, Jake." Said Sarah.

Helen just nodded. "No problem." Sarah and James walked out the door, and got into their car, and drove off. Helen stood in the doorway and watched them leave, and then closed the door and turned back into the living room. Jake was still sitting on the couch. "Jakey? You okay?"

"I can't help but think that this is somehow my father's fault."

Tilly was laying face down on Daria's bed when Jane and Daria walked in. They stopped short of walking in, and stood in the doorway. Quiet sobs could be heard coming from Tilly. "Maybe I should go talk to her..." said Daria.

"Good idea." Said Jane, starting to walk into the room, but Daria grabbed her by the arm before she could get too far.

"Alone." Said Daria.

Quinn walked up, catching the last part of the conversation. "C'mon Jane. Maybe we can work on your choice of lip gloss." Said Quinn as she grabbed Jane by the arm and dragged her into her room.

Daria walked into her room, closing the door behind her. She sat on the edge of the bed. "Tilly?"

Tilly sat up, looking at Daria. "What do you want?"

“First off, you’re on my bed. Second, I want to know, well, uhh...” started Daria.

“What’s on my mind?” said Tilly.

“Yeah. That and you’re making my pillow all wet.” Said Daria with a small smile.

Tilly sat up fully, took her glasses off, wiped her eyes with her shirt sleeve, and put her glasses back on. “Until three days ago, I thought I was alone in the world. I mean, I knew my biological family was out there, but now I know for sure.”

“You’re never alone. There are too many people in the world.” Said Daria.

“No. My parents are right. I never tried to make friends, I never did anything. I read, I go to school, I browse the Internet. That’s it. I have never really had any friends. I’ve made acquaintances, but no one I ever feel I can confide in.” said Tilly.

“I know how you feel.” Said Daria. “In Highland, I never had friends. There were these two idiots in high school that I used to use for my personal entertainment, but no one I would ever call a friend. Then I came to Lawndale, and met Jane. I tell this to no one, and if you repeat it, I will deny everything and then have you killed, but there are things I will tell Jane, and not tell my parents.”

“I have no such friend, Daria.” Stated Tilly. “When I found out I had a sister, I was hoping I would finally have someone I could do things with, someone to talk to, someone to confide in.”

Daria looked at Tilly. “You do now.”

“Thank you.” Whispered Tilly. They sat and just looked at each other for a second, and then they both turned to the door. “You can come in now.” Said Tilly and Daria together.

The door opened, revealing Jane. “About time. If Quinn tried one more shade of lip gloss on me, I was going to go ballistic.”

“But Black Cherry would go sooooo good with your outfit!” said Quinn from across the hall. Jane closed the door, grabbed the computer chair, and wheeled it over by where Daria and Tilly were sitting.

Tilly looked at Jane. “Jane?”

Jane looked at Tilly with a sideways glance. “Seiler...” Tilly had a surprised look.

“Don’t worry.” Said Daria. “That’s Jane’s way of saying she considers you a friend, too.”

Tilly looked at Jane. A smile crept onto her face. “Lane....”

Jane looked at Daria and Tilly. “Dos Amigas. Que Dios me ayude.”

“Since when do you speak Spanish?” asked Daria.

“Just a few words.” Said Jane. A knock was heard at the door.

“Tilly? Daria? Jane?”, came Helen’s voice from the other side of the door.

“Correct.” Daria and Tilly said at the same time. Jane smiled.

“Can I come in?” asked Helen.

“Enter at your own risk.” Said Tilly.

Helen opened the door, and walked in. “Jane, can you excuse us for a minute?”

Jane looked at Daria, and then to Tilly. “Tres Amigas.” Said Daria. “What you have to say to me and Tilly you can say in front of Jane.

“Daira... I’d really....” Started Helen, but Tilly cut her off.

“Tres Amigas...” started Tilly.

“Hasta el final.” Said Jane.

“Fine.” Said Helen. She turned to Tilly. “You really need to give your parents the benefit of the doubt.”

“I just couldn’t stand the lying anymore.” Said Tilly. “I’ve brought up the fact that I look nothing like them numerous times, and they just make up some excuse and avoid the subject.”

“Running away is not the answer.” Said Helen. “You had Daria’s phone number. You could have called and talked to her or talked to me or Ja... or talked to me.”

“I don’t know if I want to go back.” Said Tilly flatly. Daria and Jane both looked at each other with a surprised look. “I want to stay with my sisters, my real family.”

“Tilly, Sarah and James are your real family. They are the only parents you have known. Whether or not they gave birth to you, they raised you as their daughter.” Said Helen. “You are their daughter.”

“I’m not wanted there.” Said Tilly, looking down.

Helen looked surprised. “Why do you say that?”

“Do you see how they left me here, without putting up a fight? Would they have left me here if they cared?” said Tilly, a tear starting to form in her eye.

“Tilly. Your parents let you stay here so you could get to know your sisters.” Said Helen. “If they didn’t care about you, they would have made you go home. Instead they allowed you to stay here. If that doesn’t say they care, I don’t know what does.”

Tilly looked up at Helen. “I guess you’re right.”

“Have a good night girls.” Said Helen as she stood up. “Tilly, if you want to sleep in the guest room, Daria can get you some blankets and such.”

"Thanks." Said Tilly, looking down at the floor again. Helen walked out of the room.

"She has a point." Said Jane. "At least your parents are home for you. Mine are only home for a few weeks out of the year."

"Yeah." Said Tilly, looking up at Jane, then to Daria.

After a few minutes of silence, Jane spoke up. "So, I guess I am going to go home then." Said Jane as she got up and walked toward the door.

"You're not going anywhere Lane." Said both Tilly and Daria at the same time. Jane stopped in her tracks, and turned around.

"Tres amigas." Said Tilly and Daria in unison. "How about pizza?"

"I'm game." Said Jane. "Should we see if Quinn wants to go?"

"Yeah." Said Daria.

"I'll go get her." Said Tilly. She got up and walked across the hall. Even though the door was open, she knocked on it anyway.

"Yeah?" said Quinn, looking up from her magazine.

"We're going to go get some pizza. You want to go?" asked Tilly.

Quinn thought about it for a second. "Sure. It's Saturday, there should be no one there I know."

"Okay." Said Tilly. She walked back to Daria's room. "Quinn said yes." A minute later, Quinn was in the doorway.

"How we getting there?" asked Quinn. "Are we going to have to get a ride from Jane's brother?"

"No. I have my parent's car." Said Tilly.

"Oh. Okay." Said Quinn. They all walked downstairs. Helen and Jake were sitting in the living room. Jake was reading the newspaper, and Helen was flipping through her datebook.

"Hello girls." Said Helen, looking up.

"Hey mom. We're going to go get pizza." Said Daria.

"Okay. Try not to be out late." Said Helen.

"Uhh, daddy, can we get some spending money?" asked Quinn.

"Sure sweetie!" said Jake, pulling a fifty out of his wallet.

"What about me, *daddy*?" asked Daria.

“Uhhh, okay kiddo.” Said Jake, pulling another fifty out of his wallet.

“What about me...” started Tilly.

“Aaaagghhh! Just take it!” said Jake, throwing his wallet on the table and storming off. Helen shook her head, laughed, and pulled two more fifty dollar bills out and handed one to Tilly and one to Jane. Tilly and Jane looked at each other, and laughed.

“Have fun girls!” said Helen as they walked out the door.

Daria, Tilly, Jane, and Quinn all got into Tilly’s car. Tilly started the car, and backed out of the driveway. “Pizza here we come!”

Sarah and James were driving through Lawndale, heading toward the highway. “I hope Tilly finds what she is looking for.” Said Sarah.

“Daria seems to be a smart girl. Helen and Jake are also good people. Tilly is in good hands.” Said James. He drove down the road, and then all of a sudden pulled into a convenience store. Without saying a word, he went in, and then after a minute, came out with a newspaper.

“A newspaper?” asked Sarah.

“Yeah.” Said James. “I have an idea floating around in my head. That and I want to see what goes on in this town.”

“Like?” asked Sarah.

“Nothing. It’s just a random thought.” Said James with a smile on his face. He pulled out of the parking lot of the store, and continued on the way back to Edgewood.

“Ooooooooookay.” Said Sarah.

“Pizza good....” Said Jane, faux-beating on her chest like a caveman. Quinn buried her head in her hands.

“Why did I agree to this?” said Quinn.

“Because you wanted to get to know your new sister, err, cousin.” Said Daria.

“No. No more of that cousin or exchange student or other crap. You two are my sisters.” Said Quinn. “Just don’t expect me to hang around with you all the time.”

“Thanks, Quinn.” Said Daria.

“You don’t have to worry about me.” Said Tilly. “I go to a different school anyway.”

“You could always move to Lawndale.” Said Jane.

“Yeah, like that will ever happen.” Said Tilly.

“I think Ms. Li would have a stroke on the spot.” Said Daria.

“That could be a good thing.” Said Jane. “Gives me an idea for a painting, not that I haven’t had enough ideas over the past three days.”

“Uh huh.” Said Daria as she took a drink.

“More pizza.” Said Tilly. She grabbed another slice and took a bite.

“Definitely related to Daria.” Said Jane.

“Didn’t we order cheeseless pizza?” asked Quinn, trying to pick the cheese off.

“Cheese is good for the complexion.” Said Tilly.

“Yeah, it’s the grease that makes you break out.” Said Daria.

Quinn dropped her slice back onto the plate. “I think I will just eat the crust.”

“Ugh... I ate too much.” Said Jane as she sat in the backseat of Tilly’s car.

“I hope I don’t break out from all that grease.” Said Quinn.

“It’s inevitable.” Said Daria. “Contact pimples.”

Tilly laughed. She looked in the rearview mirror at Quinn, who was now checking out her face in a pocket mirror. “They don’t happen instantly, Quinn. It takes a few days.”

“A few days?!?! Great, I’ll be the zit-queen of Lawndale High!”

“Consider yourself lucky you go to a different school.” Said Daria.

“Why’s that?” asked Tilly, focusing on the road ahead.

“The Fashion Club.” Said Daria in her best Sandi impression.

“Oh yes. The overlords of fashion.” Said Jane. “Always there to tell you what you should be wearing.”

“Ahem.” Said Quinn

“Oh, forgot you were one of the Fashion Nazis.” Said Jane. Quinn just glared at Jane, not saying anything.

“Okay. No need to start a war.” Said Tilly. “Besides, you can’t be fashionable and at war at the same time.” Daria, Jane, and Quinn all looked at Tilly at the same time.

“Are you sure you’re related to me?” asked Daria of Tilly.

“Quite sure.” Said Tilly.

“How is that possible?” asked Quinn.

“What?” said Tilly.

“To be a brain and fashionable at the same time.”

“Who said I was fashionable? I just have a little more intelligence than your average carrot.” Said Tilly.

“Quinn may be fashionable, but she is smarter than she looks.” Said Jane.

“Huh?” said Daria as she spun around to look at Jane.

“What?” said Jane.

“Nothing.” Said Daria.

“Out with it, Morgendorffer.” Said Tilly.

“I don’t believe we are having a conversation about how intelligent Quinn is.”

“Well, pay attention more, Daria.” Said Jane. “I’ve noticed that sometimes when she is with the Fashion Club, she looks as if she doesn’t belong.”

“Sandi is a royal pain in my…” blurted out Quinn, but Daria cut her off.

“WHAT?”

“If any of you ever repeat this, I’ll deny everything.” Said Quinn.

“Okay.” Said Jane and Daria.

“I don’t go to your school.” Said Tilly.

“Well, I think Sandi is intimidated by me. Actually, I would say she is afraid of me.” Said Quinn.

“What brings you to that conclusion?” asked Daria.

“Just the way she acts. I really can’t say much more than that.” Said Quinn.

“FINALLY! We’re home.” Said Jane, “Well, we’re at Daria’s.” They got out of the car, and walked into the house. Helen was sitting on the couch, on the phone. Jake was sitting across from her, reading the newspaper.

“Hi Daria, Tilly, Jane, Quinn... Yes Eric, I’m still here.” said Helen.

“Hi there kiddos.... And Jane...” said Jake.

“Hi Mom, Dad.” Said Quinn and Daria.

“Hey.” Said Jane and Tilly.

“Did you four have fun? Yes Eric....I’m listening.” asked Helen.

“Pizza, pizza, and more pizza.” Said Jane.

“And fun was had by all.” Said Daria. As they were talking, Tilly was slowly walking toward the stairs.

“Hold on Eric..... Tilly honey, are you okay?” asked Helen.

“Yeah, I’m just tired. A lot on my mind. A lot happening.” Said Tilly.

“Yeah, I think it’s time for bed anyway.” Said Daria.

“Okay, I guess it’s time for the third amiga to head home.” Said Jane.

“You’re not going anywhere Lane.” Said Tilly.

“Yeah. What she said.” Said Daria. Jane smiled. With that, they all walked up stairs.

Quinn just stood there. “Mom....”

“Yes Quinn?”

“Is she really Daria’s sister?” asked Quinn.

“Yes Quinn.” Said Helen.

“There are times you can tell, and then there are times I wonder if she really is. Anyway, I have to call Stacy and Tiffany before bed. Goodnight!” said Quinn, and she turned and bounded up the stairs.

“Two Darias.....” Helen said to herself, shaking her head and then remembering Eric was still on hold. “Damn.”

“Okay, how we going to do this?” asked Jane.

“Well, I have my bed.” Said Daria.

“Mine’s in the corner.” Said Jane, indicating the rollaway bed.

“I guess I get the floor.” Said Tilly, looking and walking around the room like a cat looking for a place to lay.

“No... If Jane can keep her hands to herself, she can sleep with me, and Tilly can sleep on the rollaway.” Said Daria.

“Have you seen me sleep?” asked Jane.

“Yeah, and it’s not pretty.” Said Daria.

“Besides, two sisters in bed together? Too corny.” Said Tilly. Daria looked at Tilly with a raised eyebrow.

“I’m sure Upchuck would love to see that!” Jane started laughing. “I’ll sleep against the wall.”

“Well then. Let’s all get some sleep, I’m tired.” Said Tilly. They all took their turns at disappearing into the closet to change clothes. After they were done, they proceeded to climb into bed. Tilly placed her glasses on the table next to Daria’s bed, and Daria placed her glasses next to Tilly’s. After the lights were out, it didn’t take long for the trio to fall asleep. Tilly was the first, completely balled up in her blanket. Jane was next.

“What a freakin’ day.” Sighed Daria. She looked over to Tilly. All you could see was a ball of blankets. She closed her eyes, and was asleep in a few minutes.

The room was dark. Or at least she thought it was a room. She could sense the presence of walls, a floor, and ceiling. She looked around the room, and saw nothing. She couldn’t even see her own hand in front of her face. “Some light would be nice.” Muttered Daria.

“Please specify luminance level.” Came a voice from the darkness.

“Bright enough so I can see where the hell I am at.” The light level rose in the room, revealing black walls with yellow lines in a grid pattern. “Where the hell am I?”

“Current location is Holodeck Three.” Said the voice from the darkness.

“Holodeck? What the hell is a holodeck?” said Daria, as she looked around the room.

“A holodeck is a simulated reality facility in which objects and people are simulated by a combination of transported matter, replicated matter, tractor beams, and shaped force fields onto which holographic images are projected. Sounds and smells are simulated by speakers and fragranced fluid atomizers, respectively. The feel of a large environment is simulated by suspending the participants on force fields which move with their feet, keeping them from reaching the walls of the room.¹” Said the voice from the darkness.

“This has to be a dream.” Said Daria.

“Correct.” Came the voice.

“So what am I doing here?”

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodeck#Features>

"Insufficient data to answer inquiry." Came the voice.

Daria thought for a minute. Then she looked down. "At least I am wearing clothes this time." She said to herself. She looked around the room. "Is there a purpose for me being here?"

"There is currently a program loaded." Said the voice. "You wish to run the loaded program?"

"Yes, run the program." Said Daria. The room instantly changed, to a hallway of a school. It looked like Lawndale High, but the colors were wrong and the school was in better shape. A second later, various students appeared, none of which she recognized.

A teacher walked up to her. "Tilly, shouldn't you be on your way to class?"

"Huh?" said Daria, not fully understanding what was going on.

"History class?" said the teacher.

"Uhh, yeah. I just have to use the bathroom." Said Daria as she looked around. "Uhh, where *is* the bathroom?"

"You feeling okay?" asked the teacher.

"Yeah... Just where is the bathroom?" asked Daria.

The teacher pointed down the hallway. "On the right."

"Thanks." Muttered Daria. She quickly walked to the bathroom. Just as she walked in, the bell rang. "What in the hell is going on?" She walked to the sink to splash water on her face, but when she looked in the mirror, she didn't see herself, but she saw Tilly. "What is going on here?" She stepped back, and looked at herself. She was wearing her normal clothes; green jacket, black skirt, orange shirt. Yet when she looked in the mirror, she saw the blue jacket, white shirt, and black skirt that Tilly wore.

"Computer, freeze program." Came a voice. It was a different voice than before.

"What the hell?" said Daria as she spun around. Standing before her was a woman, wearing a blue uniform and black pants.

"You're at Matilda's school. For all intents, everyone in this program sees you as Matilda." Said the woman.

"Who are you?" asked Daria.

"Who I am is not important, however, you can call me Deanna."

"What am I doing here?" asked Daria.

"Don't know. This is your dream."

"So this *is* a dream." Said Daria.

“Yes. This is a manifestation of your feelings and thoughts based on what information your mind has available.” Said Deanna.

“In English, please.”

“You watched a sci-fi program once, and now your head is drawing from it.” Said Deanna.

“So why am I at Tilly’s school, and why am I being seen as Tilly?”

“I can’t answer that.” Said Deanna. “Your mind has brought you here, and only you can answer that question.”

“Okay, then what are *you* doing here.”

“I am here as a representation of the technology. Someone to help you operate the equipment, so to say.” Said Deanna.

“Okay, so what do I do?”

“You can resume the simulation by just saying ‘Resume Program’. The computer is programmed to accept voice commands. You can also pause the program, as I did before, by saying ‘freeze program’. The computer can help you with any questions.” Said Deanna as she turned to walk away.

“Wait...” said Daria, running after her. She ran into the hallway, but Deanna was gone. You could see a few kids, frozen in mid-stride, apparently running to classes. “Damn.” Daria thought for a second. “Computer, where am I supposed to be right now?”

“History class.” Said the computer voice.

“Can you put me there?”

“Affirmative.” Said the computer. The scenery changed, and Daria found herself outside a classroom, with ‘World History’ written on the glass of the door. Daria walked inside, and found the class apparently had just started when the program stopped. She found an empty desk, and assumed it must have been hers. She sat down, and waited.

“Oh.... Computer, resume program.” Said Daria. The motion resumed, with the teacher writing something on the chalkboard.

“Now class. Who can tell me what the answer to yesterday’s trivia question?” asked the teacher as he turned to face the class. No one raised their hand. “Nobody?” Daria looked down at her desk. No books, no nothing. “Matilda?” Daria was still looking at her desk. “Miss Seiler, is there a problem?”

Daria looked up. “No problem.”

“Then why are you not prepared for class?” asked the teacher.

“Computer freeze program.” Said Daria. She waited for the action to stop. “Computer, can you provide me with the appropriate supplies for this class?”

"Affirmative." Said the computer. A instant later, a pencil, notebook, and history book similar to the one she used at Lawndale High appeared on her desk.

"Resume program." Daria waited for the scene to start again. "I am prepared for class. I just... forgot.. what the question was."

"The question was `What Apollo 11 astronaut claimed he was the first to wet his pants on the moon?'" asked the teacher.

Daria thought. That was an odd question. "Computer freeze program." The computer complied, and the motion stopped. Daria asked "What is the answer to the given question?"

"Neil Armstrong." Came the computer voice.

"Weird. Okay, resume program." The motion continued. "Neil Armstrong." Said Daria.

"Very good, Miss Seiler. Perhaps you can tell me how you found this out?"

"I asked the... err, looked it up on the computer." Said Daria.

"Computer freeze program." Came a new voice. Daria turned to look. It was Tilly.

"See how similar our lives are. A bunch of drooling halfwits. Except I don't have a `Jane' in class with me." Said Tilly. Daria shrugged. "Here, let's fast forward a little bit." Tilly cleared her throat. "Computer, advance forward to lunch time, same program." The students disappeared, then the classroom changed to a cafeteria, and then students reappeared.

"You know how to operate this thing?" asked Daria.

Tilly didn't answer, except to say "Computer, run program." The motion restarted.

"Can they see you?" asked Daria.

"No." said Tilly.

"Where do you sit?" asked Daria.

Tilly pointed to a table in the corner of the lunchroom. It wasn't one of the long gang tables, but a small round table, like where teachers would sit. "I have no one to each lunch with. This is the way it has been, and the way it is for me."

"Okay... I get it." said Daria as she thought for a second. Then she just blurted out "Computer end program." The students disappeared, and the scenery disappeared a second later.

"Daria?" came a voice from the distance... "Daria!"

"Huh?" said Daria as she all of a sudden realized she was back in bed.

"Daria? You okay?" asked Jane, who was sitting up.

"Yeah. Weird dream." Said Daria.

"Want to talk about it?"

"No big deal." Said Daria. She looked over to see that Tilly was still asleep. Daria lowered her voice a little.

"You know `Star Trek`?"

"Yeah. `Beam me up Scotty`."

"No, the newer one. Anyway. I dreamt I was on a Holodeck, and that I was Tilly at Tilly's school." Said Daria.

"Weird."

"No, what was weird is that that counselor from the show was there." Said Daria as she reached for her glasses without looking. She grabbed them and put them on. "I looked at myself and saw myself, but if I looked in the mirror, I saw Tilly. I was Tilly."

"Probably just your mind getting used to a second you." Said Jane, snickering a little.

"What?"

"Nothing." Said Jane, trying not to laugh.

"Speak now, or end up as fish food." Said Daria.

"Go look in the mirror."

Daria got up and walked to the mirror. She then realized that she was wearing Tilly's glasses. "Aaaahhhhhh!"

"Nrrrrgh." Came Tilly's voice from under the blankets.

"The mummy lives!" said Jane. Daria looked over to the clock. 9:30am.

"Weird dreams and even weirder friends." Said Daria as she went over and swapped out glasses.

"One of these friends is related." Mumbled Tilly from under the blankets.

"I need a shower." Said Daria. She quickly grabbed some clothes and made for the bathroom.

"What's wrong with her?" came Tilly's voice from under the blankets.

"She is trying to cope with having a twin." Said Jane.

"I thought she was coping pretty good." Said Tilly, finally exposing her head.

“Yeah. Daria has her own ways of doing things. She’s okay though.” Said Jane.

“What can you tell me about her?” asked Tilly.

“She’s a very unique girl. Very smart, but very shy. She seems cold on the surface, but there is passion under there somewhere.” Said Jane.

“I think I can relate...” said Tilly

“What about you?” asked Jane.

“Daria minus the best friend.” Said Tilly. “I have been told I am very intelligent, but sarcastic, cynical, and shy. Some have even called me `The...”

“The Misery Chick.” Finished Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Tilly.

“They call Daria the same thing. A local football hero, who went to Lawndale, died on school grounds on the day they were dedicating a goal post in his name. All of a sudden, Daria went from being a social outcast to being highly sought out for her opinions because they figured she would know how to feel.” Said Jane.

“Same basic situation.” Said Tilly. “A well liked teacher had died while trying to surf in a hurricane. All of a sudden, people who would never even consider talking to me, wanted to talk to me.”

“This guy wasn’t very well liked. That and I wished him dead shortly before he died.” Said Jane.

“Remind me not to get on your bad side.” Said Tilly.

Jane laughed. “You’ll never see me coming.” Daria walked back into the room, drying her hair.

“Next victim.” Said Daria as she walked into the room.

“I’ll go.” Said Jane. “You two could use some sister sister time.” Jane grabbed her bag, and headed out the door.

Daria and Tilly just sat and looked at each other. After a minute, Tilly broke the silence. “Jane seems to be a cool girl. You’re lucky to have her as a friend.” Daria just sat motionless, not really paying attention to what Tilly had just said. “Daria? You okay?”

“Why does everyone keep asking me that?” snapped Daria.

“Because, you will be fine one minute, like nothing is bothering you. Then you go complete 180 on us and stonewall.”

“I am just still coming to grips with all of this.” Said Daria, looking away.

“Come to grips with what?” Asked Tilly. “You still don’t believe that I am your sister?”

“No. It’s not that...”

“Then what? Out with it Morgendorffer.” Said Tilly

Daria just sighed... “Fine. I am still not comfortable with this. I try to push it to the back of my mind, and just try to treat you as a friend, but then I keep having these weird dreams that seem to state that I am you or you are me. I am an individual, as are you, but my subconscious seems to want to tell me otherwise.”

“Daria, it is common knowledge that twins often do many things the same way. It’s not that they are the same people, they are just similar people.” Came Jane’s voice from the doorway. Both Daria and Tilly turned to face Jane.

“Speak from experience?” asked Daria. “Because if you say yes, I am going to call you a liar. You have no twin.”

“You’re right. I don’t. Yet I have dealt with twins before. It’s almost always the same thing.” Said Jane.

“I’m going for the shower next.” Said Tilly. She grabbed some clothes out of her bag and headed out the door.

“Damn, she even walks like me.” Said Daria.

“Yeah... the same little wanton wiggle.” Said Jane with a smile.

Daria turned to look at Jane, slightly surprised. “I don’t wig... Wait, you’ve watched my ass?”

Jane turned a few shades of red. “Well.... Yeah. You’ve never watched someone walk away and notice things about them?”

“No.... yeah.” Said Daria

“Which is it?”

Daria looked down at the floor. “Yeah... yeah I have.”

“And?” asked Jane.

Daria started turning red herself. “Nothing... well... I do know that you don’t wear the same type of underwear all the time.”

“Or sometimes none at all.” Said Jane. Daria turned beet red. “I’m kidding.” Jane laughed softly. “Unlike you, who wears the same type all the time.” Jane paused. “Are we really talking about this?”

“You started it by watching Tilly walk out of the room.” Said Daria. She thought for a second, then continued. “Do you think Tilly is the same way?”

Jane laughed. “Do you really want to know?”

Daria turned red again. “I think I need to know.”

Jane got up, walked over to Tilly's bag, and was reaching down for it when she stopped, stood back up, and sat back down. "Let's just ask her when she comes back in. I know I wouldn't want someone rifling through my stuff."

Daria got up, and walked to her dresser, opening the top drawer. Looking, she saw the same type of underwear, same type of socks, and the same sports bras... All white.... "Am I really that unadventurous where I don't even have a color selection?" She shut her drawer, and turned back to Jane. "Do you even know, well, uhh..."

"What size you are?" asked Jane. Daria nodded. "Yeah. I've looked, and let's say you are better equipped than I." Daria turned even deeper red than before. "Besides, it's not like I haven't seen you topless before."

"Huh wha... Where? When?" asked Daria, still red from embarrassment.

"Well, about a month or so ago. I actually came over to ask your mom about some legal advice. She said she was busy, so I came upstairs to talk to you. I knocked on your door, but you didn't answer, so I slowly opened the door, and you were topless. I don't remember what you were doing. I think you were getting dressed or something. I turned away and just waited in the hallway for a second. Then you came out." Said Jane, turning a little red herself.

"I remember coming out of the bedroom and running into you in the hallway." Daria paused, then asked "Were you... turned on?"

"No. No.... but I was intrigued. Here is this girl I have known for a while, and I never knew how, well, how endowed you were."

"Are we really having this conversation?" asked Daria. "Because if we are, then I have no where near the carnal knowledge of you that you have of me." Jane shrugged, reached down, grabbed the bottom of her shirt, and went to lift it up. "Aagghh!" said Daria as she turned away.

"Well, you wanted to know." Said Jane, laughing.

"No, I didn't." said Daria.

"Relax. I was kidding. I wasn't going to actually do it." Said Jane, still laughing.

"Do what?" asked Tilly, coming into the room.

"Flash Daria." Said Jane, still giggling.

"Did I miss something? Did you two turn lesbian while I was away?" asked Tilly, smiling.

"No. We were just discussing things nature gave us." Said Daria.

"Huh?" asked Tilly.

"Okay... Blunt approach." Said Jane. "Daria wants to know what kind of bra and panties you wear." Daria reached over and punched Jane in the shoulder. "OUCH!"

"I... uhh... huh?"

"The whole twins thing." Said Daria. "Jane said that you have a little wiggle to your walk, apparently like I do. She said that twins commonly do things similarly, if not the same as the each other, including choice of clothing."

Tilly shrugged. She reached over, grabbed her bag, and upended it onto the floor. She spread some of the clothing out, revealing a couple of pair of underwear, and a couple of sports bras... both light blue in color. "Is that what you wanted to know?" Daria turned red again. Jane reached over, and picked up one of the sports bras, and showed the tag to Daria. She nodded. Jane tossed the garment back to Tilly. "I take that to mean we are the same size." Said Tilly. Daria nodded again, without saying a word. "Look Daria. It's not a big deal. We're all girls here, and we're sisters. There is nothing to be ashamed of, or embarrassed about. It's called curiosity. To be honest, I was a little curious myself. Tell me, why do *you* choose to wear clothes to hide 'The Ladies'?"

Daria looked down for a second, and then looked up at Tilly. "I want people to like me for who I am, not for what I look like. Besides, from what I know and have been told, I rank up there in the size class."

Jane looked over at the clock.... 11:30am.."Wow! Time flies when you are embarrassed to hell and back. What are we going to do today?"

Daria and Tilly looked at each other. They said, in unison, "The same thing we do every day Janey... Try to take over Lawndale." They laughed manically, which turned into just silly laughter.

Jane looked at the pair. "You two definitely are twins." She said, laughing.

"I think I really should be getting home. I need to see what kind of trouble I am going to be in for this." Said Tilly.

"I think things will work out better than you think." Said Jane.

Tilly grabbed the clothes she dumped out of her bag earlier, and shoved them back in, except for a shirt, pants, and other necessary garments. "Do you mind if I leave a change of clothes here? Never know when I might decide to come by."

"Sure." Said Daria. "You can put them next to Jane's in the bottom drawer." Tilly walked over and placed the clothes in the drawer. Then they all walked downstairs. As they walked into the living room, Helen was on the phone, Jake was reading a book (12 Steps to Being a Better Parent), and Quinn was also talking on the phone.

They walked to the door. "Hold on Eric... Where you three off to?" asked Helen.

"Tilly is heading home." Said Daria.

"Okay. Goodbye Tilly, hope to see you again soon... No Eric, I am listening. I was telling my daughter goodbye... no not her... not her either... my other daughter. Yes Eric, Daria's sister. Hold on.... Call us and let us know you got home okay. Yes Eric.. I am still here." Said Helen, trying to manage two conversations at once.

"You're leaving?" asked Quinn.

“Yeah. Time to face the firing squad.” Said Tilly. They walked out the door. Quinn sat for a second, and then jumped up and ran out after them.

“Have a good trip home.” Said Jane.

“Yeah, come back to see us.” Said Quinn, walking up.

Tilly walked to Jane. Jane offered her hand, and Tilly took it, but pulling Tilly into a hug. “Daria is lucky to have a friend like you. I hope you will always be there for her, and hopefully for me too.” Whispered Tilly to Jane.

“You can count on it.” Whispered Jane back to Tilly. “Tres amigas hasta el final.”

Tilly stepped back, and looked at Quinn. “It was nice to meet you Quinn.”

Quinn was taken aback. She wasn’t used to this amount of family bonding. “Nice to meet you too.”

Tilly stepped forward and hugged Quinn. “Take care lil sister.” Tilly stepped back from Quinn, and looked at Daria. She immediately pulled Daria into a hug. “I am so glad to have found you. If I hadn’t, I don’t think I would have been around much longer.”

Daria pushed Tilly away. “What?”

“I didn’t want to bring this up, but I was having thoughts of...” said Tilly, but Daria cut her off.

“No, and don’t think of it again. If you ever think of it again, I will come over and personally put you in the ‘I Love Me’ jacket, and yes, I will come visit you on Sundays at the home.” Said Daria, half sarcastically and half serious.

“I promise.” Said Tilly. She pulled Daria back into a hug. “I love you, Daria.”

Daria was again taken aback. “Come back anytime.”

Tilly stepped back, and paused for a moment. “You can bet on it.” Tilly got into her car, backed out of the driveway, and drove down the road. Daria, Jane, and Quinn watched as she drove away.

“You have an awesome sister.” Said Jane.

“Yeah, I do.” Said Quinn. “Both of them.” Quinn looked at Daria, and went into the house.

“You coming back in?” asked Daria of Jane.

“No. I better get home myself. I am sure Trent is worried about me.” Said Jane.

“No... Trent is probably still sleeping.” Said Daria.

“I’ll see you later, amiga.” Said Jane. She hugged Daria, and then walked down the driveway, and then down the sidewalk. Daria watched her walk away, until she could no longer see Jane. It seemed like Jane was going away forever, but she knew that she would be seeing her on Monday morning as they go to school. She sighed, then turned and walked into the house.

Helen was still on the phone, but the conversation wasn't as heated as before. "Yes. I know. Yes, it was very important. (pause) No, I wasn't going to undermine your authority, but (pause) Yes, I know. Well, it worked out. Both of them seem very happy. (pause) Yes, yes I agree. (pause) Well, if you need any legal help with that, I will be more than happy to help. What? You're thinking of doing WHAT? Of course I can do the paperwork (pause) Are you sure? Let me talk it over with Jake and the girls, and I will get back to you. Okay.. bye bye."

Daria waited a couple of more seconds, and then shrugged and walked into the kitchen to rummage around for something to eat. She found something that looked edible, and popped it in the microwave. Jake was sitting at the table, reading his book. "Who's mom on the phone with?"

"I don't know kiddo. Call waiting... apparently it was important enough to where she told Eric she would call him back later."

"Wow. Mom puts her boss off for a mystery caller. Film at 11." Said Daria, as she pulled her food out of the microwave and sat down to eat.

Helen came into the kitchen. "Daria, can you excuse us for a little while. I need to talk to your father."

"Trying to eat." Said Daria with a mouthful of food.

"Oh, okay...." She turned to Jake. "Jake, come up to the bedroom. I have something serious I need to discuss with you."

"Too important for me to hear?" asked Daria.

"Right now, yes." Said Helen. She walked over to the bookshelf and pulled a couple of law books from the shelf, and headed upstairs, with Jake following behind.

Chapter Five

Tilly pulled into the driveway of her house. She shut the car off, and sat in the car for a minute. She could see someone had peeked out of the front window. "They know I am home." Tilly said to herself. "Might as well get this over with. Probably won't have car privileges anymore. So much for seeing Daria for a while, not unless she come here." Tilly grabbed her bag, and got out of the car, and walked into the house.

"Hi honey. Welcome home!" said James.

"Hi Tilly. Welcome home." Said Sarah, running up and hugging Tilly.

"Here." Said Tilly, handing her mother the keys to the car.

"What's this?" asked Sarah, puzzled.

"Car keys. I figured I would be grounded from the car for a while." Said Tilly.

"Tilly, sit down please." Said James. Tilly sat down on the couch, and prepared for the onslaught.

"We should have told you." Said Sarah. "We were wrong to not tell you."

"Why didn't you?" asked Tilly. "Meeting Daria and Quinn has been the best thing that has ever happened to me."

"To be honest Tilly, we just didn't think you needed to know." Said Sarah.

"Well, regardless, I know now. I have two sisters, and they are wonderful people, and I think I managed to make TWO best friends...." Said Tilly.

"Daria and Jane?" asked Sarah.

"Yes. Tres amigas hasta el final." Said Tilly. "It means three friends until the end."

"That is wonderful." Said James. "I'm glad you are finally making friends."

"And that is why we aren't grounding you." Said Sarah, handing the keys back to Tilly.

Tilly looked at her surprised. "Well, what if I robbed a liquor store with Daria... can I get away with that?"

"Tilly..." started Sarah.

"I'm kidding." Said Tilly with a smile.

"We know." Said James.

"I do want to say this though," Tilly stated, "I want to start spending the weekends at Daria's."

"I think that could be arranged." Said James with a smile on his face.

“Well, I have homework to do. With all that has been going on, I completely forgot about it until the drive home. I have an essay due for English on Monday. I’ll be in my room.” Said Tilly.

“Okay sweetie. Your father and I need to discuss a few things anyway. Don’t worry, it’s nothing bad.” Said Sarah.

She nodded, and walked out of the living room, down the hall, and into her room. She closed the door behind her, hanging her keys on the hook by the door. She looked down, and found her tennis ball, died blue. She picked it up, and set it on the table next to the bed. She sat down on the bed, and looked around her room. It seemed strangely empty. She had really enjoyed the time she had spent with her sisters, Daria and Quinn, and her new friend Jane. She was really surprised on how her parents reacted. She thought for sure she was going to be grounded when she walked in the house. True, the Chrysler was a spare car, and her parents didn’t mind paying for fuel or the extra insurance, but she couldn’t help but feel there was some other force at work here. She shook her head, and got up from the bed, and walked to the computer. She turned it on, and while it was booting up, she sat down at the desk, and looked up at the picture taped to the mirror. It was Daria. She stared at the picture for a minute. The computer had finished booting, and she opened Word, and started typing about her adventures of the past four days. “This should net me an instant A.”

The alarm clock was sounding. “Damn, it can’t be time to get up already. Feels like I just went to sleep a few minutes ago. Ugh. Might as well get up.” Daria threw the blanket off, and got up. “Hey Lane, time to get....” Daria stopped as she looked over by the window. The roll away bed wasn’t there, and neither was Jane. She immediately ran to the desk. “Where is it?” She started tossing papers and such off the desk. After the desk was cleared, and she didn’t find what she was looking for, she slumped down into her computer chair. “Did I imagine the past four days? Maybe I did. (pause) Why am I talking to myself again?” Daria shook her head, and grabbed some clothes and headed for the shower to get ready for school.

Quinn passed Daria in the hall. “Daria... I have...” but Daria just walked right past her, oblivious to her younger sister. After Daria had disappeared into the bathroom, Quinn stopped, and turned to look at the now closed door. She sighed, and turned around and walked to the door, knocking on it. “Daria?”

“Go away.” Said Daria.

“Daria...” said Quinn, as she tried to open the door.

“GO AWAY!” shouted Daria.

Quinn stood at the door. Not hearing any obvious noises, Quinn took two steps back from the door. She then stepped briskly to it, and promptly applied her foot to the door handle, kicking the door open. Daria was standing at the sink, just staring at herself in the mirror. She didn’t even flinch when Quinn broke in. “Daria... DARIA!!! What is wrong with you?” Daria just looked into the mirror. Quinn stepped up beside her older, but shorter, sister, and put her hand onto Daria’s. “Daria. What’s going on?”

“I’m going senile.” Said Daria dryly.

“Wh-hy do you say that?” asked Quinn, looking at her herself in the mirror.

Daria turned to Quinn, taking Quinn's hands into hers, and looking up into Quinn's eyes. "Tell me I am not cracking up. Tell me I didn't just dream up the past four days."

"You're not cracking up Daria, you didn't dream up the past four days." Said Quinn, trying to match Daria's monotone voice.

"Funny." Said Daria. "I'm being serious."

"No, you didn't imagine anything." Said Quinn. Daria opened her mouth to say something, but Quinn cut her off. "Yes, you have a twin sister. Yes Jane spent the weekend here. Mom went moved the bed out of your room after you went to sleep last night."

"Then why can't I find Tilly's picture?"

"That's why I was trying to stop you in the hallway. I found it downstairs last night. I was going to give it back to you." Quinn lowered her voice, dropping the bubblyness for a second. "I know how much she means to you."

"Thank you Quinn." Said Daria. Quinn produced the picture from her pocket. Daria took it, and then handed it back to Quinn. "Hold on to this for a few minutes. I have something I want you to do for me once I get out of the shower."

The doorbell rang at Casa Lane. Jane got up from the couch. The doorbell rang again. "All right. Hold your horses." She opened the door, revealing two familiar faces. "Hi Quinn... Daria?"

"Hi Jane!" Said Quinn.

"Hey." Said Daria.

"Daria?" said Jane... not fully comprehending what she saw.

"I think we've established that." Said Daria.

Jane just looked at Daria. "Oh my... You look wonderful!"

"Really... It's nothing major." Said Daria. She was different somehow. Her hair wasn't the same, it looked like it had been thinned out a little. She wasn't wearing her usual green jacket or skirt. She was wearing a long sleeved green shirt, and black jeans, but was still wearing her Doc Martens. "Quinn helped me out a little with the outfit."

"I wanted to do a little makeup, but Daria drew the line there." Said Quinn.

"Are we ready to go?" said Daria. Jane just stared at Daria, and shook her head. The walk to school was mostly in silence, except for the occasional comment or tip from Quinn.

"Dar-ia... Hold your head up. Look like you're proud to be you." Quinn said. Daria just looked at Quinn and kept walking. "Daria..." Quinn put her hand under Daria's chin and raised her head a little. She then reached

and pulled her shoulders back a little. "There." Daria walked like that for a second, and then returned to how she was used to being.

"Thanks Quinn..." said Daria. She mumbled to herself "I think I hear Pandora's box creaking open." They walked up to the entrance of the school. "Here we go." Said Daria to herself. She opened the door, and started to walk down the hall, with Jane and Quinn following behind. She walked to her locker, opened it, and started taking out what she needed for the day.

Quinn stopped with Daria. "I'm off to my locker. See ya!" Quinn bounded off, walking down the hall and around the corner, running head on into Sandi, Stacy, and Tiffany.

"Hi Quinn!" said Stacy.

"Hi.... Quinn....." drawled Tiffany.

"Geeze Quinn, looks like you've picked up some new friends. Some highly unfashionable and geeky friends. Isn't that your cousin or something?" sneered Sandi.

"Hi Stacy. Hi Tiffany." Said Quinn. She looked at Sandi with look of disgust. "Bite me, Sandi." Quinn looked back to Stacy and Tiffany, and continued on her way.

"Geeze. I guess Quinn has better things to do." said Sandi. Stacy and Tiffany just looked at each other, and then watched as Quinn walked off. "Are you two listening....." Sandi said, but her voice trailed off to Stacy and Tiffany, who were tuning her out.

Daria and Jane overheard the conversation around the corner. "Sounds like Quinn has some new plans for the Fashion Drones." Said Jane.

"Mrrrrh." Said Daria.

Jane turned to Daria. "Seriously. I like this look. What brought this on?"

"A brush with senility?" said Daria with a small smile.

"Seriously..." said Jane.

"Okay. I was just in the mood for a change. I kind of just let Quinn get inventive." Daria paused, hanging her head down. "I shouldn't have done this." Said Daria.

Jane put her hand on Daria's shoulder. "Daria. You look good. It doesn't change who you are. You just decided you wanted a change. Nothing wrong with change."

Daria looked at her outfit. She started to notice that she was definitely more "female looking" in this outfit. She shook her head, and turned to close her locker. As she turned back around, a familiar voice broke through the background noise. "Sweet Daria.. rrrroooooowwrrrrr."

"Upchuck....." said Daria. She looked at him, and noticed that he was looking a bit lower than her face.

"Daria... I never realized how beautiful you are. You have been hiding your beauty from me." Said Upchuck.

Daria just looked at Upchuck. "Up.. Charles... Leave now, while you still can."

"Oooo.. Fiesty." Said Upchuck and he walked away.

Daria slammed her locker closed, cursed herself for her change, and headed to class.

Tilly had taken a shower, got dressed, and ate breakfast. Her parents were in the kitchen. Sarah was just staring off into space. James was reading, between a book and a legal document. "I'm heading to school." Said Tilly. Her parents didn't respond. "Mom? Dad?" asked Tilly.

"Huh? Oh, bye... sweetie..." said Sarah, just staring into space. Tilly looked at her parents, and then shrugged and walked out. Her parents hear the car start up, and then drive away. Sarah looked from space, back to James. "Do we really want to do this?" asked Sarah.

"Tilly deserves to be with Daria. It's the least we can do for her." Said James.

"I don't.... I can't." said Sarah, "I am not giving up my daughter!" said Sarah, voice becoming unsteady.

"It was your idea to begin with." Said James, putting down the papers he had in his hand.

"Well, I've changed my mind. I am not giving up my daughter." Said Sarah.

"Sarah... You said that giving Tilly back to the Morgendorffers was the right thing to do. That she deserved to be with her sisters. You said she was sooooo happy, and that even though the Morgendorffers would be adopting her, she would still be our daughter. I did some research, and Helen did some research, and I drew up a document for this. NOW you decide you want to change your mind?" James said, waving the paperwork he had in his hands around.

"Tilly... is... *MY*... daughter.... I... am... not... giving... her... up." said Sarah, tears running down her eyes. James chuckled, and then started to laugh. "What's so funny? We are talking about giving up *OUR* daughter!" shouted Sarah.

James passed the papers that were in his hand to Sarah. "I thought you might feel that way. Here, read this..."

Daria and Jane were waiting by the doors of Lawndale High. "What are we waiting for?" asked Jane.

"Quinn. She wanted to walk home with us." Said Daria.

"Sayhuhwha?"

"Quinn wanted to walk home with us." Said Daria. "Speaking of the devil." She said as Quinn walked up.

"Hi Jane. Hi Daria." Said Quinn.

"I don't think I can handle the new Quinn." Said Jane.

"Thanks Lane." Said Quinn, smiling.

Jane put her arm across Quinn's shoulders for a moment. "I could get used to her, though." They started the walk away from school. As they walked, they passed Sandi, Stacy, and Tiffany.

"Who.. is.. Quinn.. with?" asked Tiffany.

"It's her cousin and her artgeek friend." Said Sandi. "I think we need to hold an emergency meeting of the Fashion Club to decide if Quinn needs to be on a Fashion Sabbatical."

Quinn just ignored them as she walked past. Sandi just stuck her nose up. Stacy and Tiffany looked at Sandi, and then watched Quinn as she walked away. "Sorry Quinn." Said Stacy to herself.

"What's with the Fashion Nazi's?" asked Jane.

"I don't think Sandi appreciates that I have a sister." Said Quinn.

"You have a sister?" asked Daria, mockingly.

"Two, actually." Said Quinn. She smiled as she walked down the sidewalk with Jane and Daria.

"You two coming over?" asked Jane of Daria and Quinn.

"I was going to ask the same of you." Said Daria.

"I can't. I have a feeling I am going to have to go into damage control." Said Quinn.

"Or go into create damage." Said Daria smiling.

"Wreaking havoc on the Fashion Club?" asked Jane.

"More like wreaking havoc *in* the Fashion Club. I have a feeling I won't be in the club much longer." Said Quinn. They continued to walk in silence. Daria had a look of guilt on her face. They stayed like this all the way to Daria's.

"See you two later." Said Quinn as she disappeared inside and bounded up the stairs. Daria walked inside, with Jane close behind. They walked upstairs, and into Daria's bedroom. Jane closed the door as they walked in.

"What's that for?" asked Daria.

"You're feeling responsible for Quinn." Said Jane. Daria nodded. "You're not responsible. Did you notice over the weekend that Quinn chose her sister, err, sisters, over her friends."

"But Quinn's friends and her popularity were her life. She lived to be fashionable, and she tosses it away over me." Said Daria, face in her hands.

“Actually...” said Quinn as she opened the door and walked in, “I decided that my family should be more important.” Daria looked up at Quinn. “I have been getting tired of Sandi’s bullcrap. I am tired of the narcissist crap. Besides, I don’t need The Fashion Club to be fashionable.”

“Quinn. Why now?” asked Jane.

“Tilly showing up has made me think, that family is more important than friends, and I’m beginning to think that Sandi isn’t a friend.” Said Quinn. Jane looked down at the floor. “You don’t count Jane. You’re considered family.” A small smile crept onto Jane’s face.

Quinn sighed. “I don’t believe I am getting ready to say this.” She said to herself. She cleared her throat. Daria and Jane looked up at her. “I am grateful for my family. My mother and father, my sisters Daria, Tilly,” Quinn looked at Jane, “and my unofficial sister, Jane.” Daria just stared at Quinn blankly. Jane didn’t say a word. Quinn walked over to Daria, and kneeled down in front of her. “I probably haven’t said this enough, or said it at all, but... I love you sis.” She said as she hugged Daria. Daria was taken aback, but returned the gesture. After a second, Quinn stood up, and started to walk out the door, but stopped, and walked up to Jane. She gave Jane a glance, and then turned to walk out. She then quickly stopped, and wrapped her arms around Jane, placing her head on Jane’s shoulder. She whispered into Jane’s ear, “Thanks for being there for Daria.”

Jane returned the hug, whispering in Quinn’s ear “And I always will be too... and for you too, Quinn.”

“Thanks.” Whispered Quinn. They stepped apart, and Quinn looked back at Daria for a second, and then left the room. She closed the door behind her, and then leaned against the door, wiping a tear from her eye. “Family...” Quinn stood for a second, and heard footsteps coming up the stairs. She quickly ran into her room and closed the door.

Jane walked over to Daria, and kneeled down in front of her. “Was that Quinn?” asked Daria, looking up at Jane.

“I don’t know.” Said Jane. “She sure has changed though.”

“I think Tilly has changed us all.” Said Daria.

“Not me. I’m still the same Jane Lane.”

“No... you have changed too. Even if just slightly.” Said Daria.

“Well, don’t let it get out.” Said Jane. She and Daria both looked up as there was a knock at the door.

“Daria? Janey?” came Trent’s voice from the door. Jane looked at Daria. Daria quickly checked the room to see if there was anything embarrassing lying about.

“Nothing like the guy you like coming into your bedroom and seeing your underwear on the floor.” Said Daria to herself. Jane got up and opened the door.

“Hey Janey. Wanted to let you know Mom and Dad are supposed to be coming home sometime today. Just in case you want to bail and stay with Daria.” Said Trent. He looked over at Daria, who was staring at Trent. “She’s 17 Trent...” he said to himself, “but damn she’s hot.” Daria blushed and turned away, looking at a poster on the wall.

"You could have called, or told me later when I got home." Said Jane.

"Was on my way home, and figured you were here. So I stopped by." Said Trent, still looking at Daria.

"Okay Trent. I will probably stay home, but will ask Daria's mom as a backup plan." Said Jane. She looked at Trent, and noticed he was staring at Daria. "TRENT!" said Jane, snapping her fingers.

"Oh, huh what?" said Trent, looking back at Jane.

Jane felt a bit of anger creep into her voice as she said, "Out Trent... Now.."

"Oh, okay. Bye Janey... Bye..." started Trent, but Jane cut him off..

"GET OUT TRENT!" roared Jane. Trent was startled by Jane's sudden increase in volume. He tripped over his own feet as he turned and ran out of the room. Once he heard the door close downstairs, she turned to Daria. "Jesus... he was eyeing you like a tiger eyeballs a steak."

"Really... I didn't notice.." said Daria, looking away.

"You didn't notice? How could've you NOT notic..." Started Jane, but noticed a redness creeping up Daria's neck. Daria had a brilliant look in her eyes. Jane eyed Daria up and down, and it was quite obvious through the clothing she was wearing that she was turned on. "Daria?" Daria didn't move or say anything. "Daria Elaine Morgendorffer!"

Daria snapped into reality, expecting to find her mother standing there, hands on hips. No Helen, just Jane. "What?"

"He was mentally undressing you." Said Jane.

"More like the other way around." Replied Daria sheepishly.

"Ah-hem." Said Jane, pointing to Daria's chest.

Daria looking down, noticing her arousal. "Gaaahhhh!" shouted Daria, covering herself with her blanket. Jane started laughing. After Daria turned red and then back to white, she started laughing too. "I think..."

"You think what?" asked Jane.

"I think I need to go back to what I usually wear." Said Daria, pulling the blanket over her head as she fell back onto the bed.

Quinn was sitting at her desk in her room when the phone rang. She paused a second, and picked it up. "Hello..."

"Quinn." Came Sandi's snide voice over the phone, "An emergency meeting of the Fashion Club has been scheduled for this afternoon at Tiffany's. Your attendance is mandatory."

Quinn sighed. "What time, Sandi?"

"4:30." Said Sandi.

Quinn looked at her clock. It said 4:00. "Fine, I'm on my way." Quinn slammed the phone down. Quinn walked to the mirror, and checked her outfit. She turned back to her closet, and picked out a different shirt, and changed quickly. She then brushed her hair, and then headed out the door to Tiffany's. "This is going to be *really* fun." Quinn said to herself as she walked down the street. After a brisk walk, she was walking up to Tiffany's house. She rang the doorbell. A moment later, the door opened.

"Hi...Quinn..." said Tiffany.

"Hi Tiffany. Are Sandi and Stacy here yet?"

"Sandi.... isn't. Stacy..is." Said Tiffany as Stacy walked up.

"Hi Quinn." Said Stacy, but the usual perkiness in her voice was gone.

"What's wrong?" asked Quinn, as if she didn't know the answer already.

"Come... inside... Quinn." Said Tiffany. Quinn walked in the house, and Tiffany closed the door. They walked over and sat down on the couch. "Sandi... is... planning... to... put... you... on.. a... fashion... sabbatical."

"I think she wants you out of the Fashion Club." Said Stacy, looking down at the floor.

"I know." Said Quinn. "She saw me walking home with my sister and her friend today. I guess family isn't very important to her. In the past week, I have discovered that I have a second sister."

"Another sister?" asked Stacy, looking up.

"Yeah. She is Daria's twin."

"Wow... Two... Darias..." said Tiffany. She looked toward Quinn, but then the doorbell rang. "That... will... be... Sandi..." Tiffany walked to the door, and opened it, revealing Sandi. "Hi... Sandi..."

Sandi pushed her way past Tiffany, and sat down on the couch. Tiffany glared at Sandi, closed the door, and then walked over and sat down with the rest of the group.

"I call this meeting of the Fashion Club to order." Said Sandi. "Our only order of business today is putting Quinn on fashion sabbatical for hanging around with the unpopular instead of the Fashion Club. All in favor?" Sandi looked at Stacy, who looked away. She then looked at Tiffany, who looked dazed as usual. "Tiffany dear... are you paying attention?"

"Yeah... Sandi..." said Tiffany.

"Then what is your decision?"

"I... think...." Started Tiffany. She looked over at Quinn, who seemed to be very amused with herself despite what was about to happen. She thought about what Quinn had said earlier. Friends... family.... She took a deep breath. "I... think... you... need... to... leave... Sandi..."

A look of shock came across Sandi's face. "Excuse me Tiffany?"

"Leave... Sandi..." said Tiffany, getting up and opening the door.

"YOU are OUT of the club!" snapped Sandi to Tiffany. She turned to Stacy. "Come on Stacy, let's go to my house."

"I... I don't think so Sandi." said Stacy.

"WHAT? Let's go Stacy!"

Stacy looked at Quinn. "No Sandi."

"Then YOU'RE out of the club as well!" said Sandi.

"Actually Sandi..." said Quinn, "It would appear you are out of *a* club." She looked at Tiffany and Sandi. "I recommend disbanding of the Fashion Club. All in favor?" Stacy raised her hand, and then Tiffany slowly raised her hand.

"Fine.. Whatever... You three are considered UNPOPULAR!" snarled Sandi.

"Actually Sandi, it's you who is no longer popular. No more Fashion Club, no more dictatorship, and no more Sandi Griffin."

"Get... out... Sandi..." said Tiffany. Sandi spun around and stormed out of the house, slamming the door closed. Tiffany looked at Stacy and Quinn. "No... more... Fashion... Club..."

"Tiffany, Stacy," Said Quinn, "Who says we have to be a member of a club to be fashionable? We don't need a silly leadership or rules or meetings. We dress fashionable, we look fashionable, and therefore, we are fashionable." Quinn sighed. "As for my sisters and Jane, If I want to be with my family, and they aren't considerable fashionable, then WHO CARES? When I discovered that I had another sister, I had realized that I had neglected my family. While I plan to still remain fashionable, I will be spending more time with my family, and my true friends." Quinn looked at Stacy and Tiffany.

"You consider us your true friends?" Asked Stacy.

"Wow... Quinn...." Said Tiffany.

"Yeah. I think I realized that when you kicked Sandi out of the house." Said Quinn.

"I... was... getting... tired... of... her... her... bull...." Started Tiffany, but Stacy cut her off.

"It was time for Sandi to go."

Quinn thought for a moment. Tomorrow, she would be back at school, and Sandi would be there. "Great..." she said to herself. She spoke up, "Look guys, I gotta go. It's almost dinner time."

"Okay... see... you... tomorrow... Quinn..." said Tiffany.

"Bye Quinn!" said Stacy, her perkiness returning. Quinn stood up, and walked to the door, opening it. She stepped into the doorway, and then turned to look at Tiffany and Stacy. Stacy waved at Quinn, and Tiffany smiled. Quinn smiled and waved back, and then walked out and closed the door behind her. As she was walking back home, she reflected on what had just happened.

"No more Fashion Club." Said Quinn aloud. She laughed, and then continued her walk home.

Sandi walked down the sidewalk. "How dare they do this to me! I *am* the voice of fashion." She continued walking. After a few more steps, the anger inside her had built to the point of no return. "AAAAAAAGGGGHHHHHHH!" screamed Sandi. "HOW DARE THEY!" She kicked some nondescript object across the ground. She turned around to look to see if anyone was watching her, and she walked behind a few trees, leaned against them, and started to cry. After a few minutes, she heard someone coming down the sidewalk. She quickly regained her composure, and was preparing to step back onto the sidewalk, when she recognized it was Quinn. Anger turned to rage. Sandi waited for Quinn to walk by, and then she jumped out into her path.

"What do YOU want?" asked Quinn.

"You and your unpopular friends ruined MY club." Snapped Sandi.

"Your club? It was supposed to be our club. You know why we disbanded the club? Because we were tired of your crap, your underhanded ways, and just you in general!" said Quinn.

"Well Quinn, if you were *so* tired of it, why don't you do something about it?"

"Because, you're not worth my time." Quinn said as she started to walk away, but Sandi grabbed her arm. Quinn stopped and turned to face Sandi. "Let go of me, Sandi..."

"Fine." Said Sandi as she released her grip. Quinn turned around to walk away, but it was too late. Sandi had drew back, and swung at Quinn, connecting with her face. Quinn spun around and fell to her knees. The rage in Sandi broke free, and Sandi started to kick Quinn in the side. The second kick dropped Quinn to the ground. Quinn tried to get away, but Sandi kept going. After a couple more kicks, they stopped. Quinn labored to turn her head to see if Sandi was still there. She was. Sandi had taken a couple of steps back, and was running up to Quinn. Sandi drew back and went to put full force into one final kick. Quinn turned her head away, and waited for the inevitable. After a few seconds, nothing happened. Quinn turned again to see Sandi laying on the ground next to a tree, with a younger man standing over her. He turned his attention to Quinn.

"Are you okay?" said the man. Quinn didn't answer. "Are you o....." the man's voice trailed off. She could hear sirens, and then felt herself being picked up. Then her world went dark and silent.

Helen was just walking in the door when the phone rang. She picked it up. "Helloooo? Yes.. this is Helen Morgendorffer..... what? WHAT?... Yes... yes I know where it is. I will be right there." Helen slammed the phone down. Helen threw her datebook down and turned to face up the stairway. "DARIA!! GET DOWN HERE NOW!" Helen was pacing back and forth; waiting the few seconds it took Daria to come downstairs. Jane was following closely. She grabbed Daria by the sleeve, and pushed her out the door. "We need to go, NOW!" said Helen. "You too, Jane." She didn't give the girls a chance to get a word in edgewise. She shoved them into the SUV, started it up, backed out, and floored it heading down the road.

"Where are we going?" asked Daria.

"Cedars of Lawndale." Muttered Helen.

"Why?" asked Daria.

Helen didn't answer. As they flew down the road, they passed some police on the side of the road, an area with crime scene tape, and some officers taking notes. They blew right past them, with no respect for the speed limit. After a few minutes, Helen pulled into the parking lot of Cedars, and jumped out of the SUV. Daria and Jane followed. As they walked in, Jane was staring at one of the vehicles in the parking lot, but didn't get a chance to say anything, as Daria was grabbing her sleeve to pull her along. Helen rushed into the ER, and up to the desk. "I'm Helen Morgendorffer, Quinn's mother." The lady behind the counter looked up, shuffled some papers, and made a phone call.

"The doctor will be right out." She said.

Helen was pacing back and forth. It felt like forever, when it was really only 2-3 minutes. Finally, a doctor came out. "Mrs. Morgendorffer?"

Helen looked up. "Yes?"

"Come with me." The doctor said. They all started to walk back, but the doctor stopped. "I'm sorry. Only Mrs. Morgendorffer is allowed back."

"This is my older daughter Daria, and," Helen paused, and thought for a brief second, "and my adopted daughter Jane. We are *all* going back, and I don't recommend arguing with me right now." The doctor shrugged, and continued walking. They turned a couple of corners, and came into a room. As they walked in, Quinn was laying on a hospital bed, with various wires and tubes connected to her. "Oh my God, QUINN!" screamed Helen as she ran to her younger daughter's bedside. Quinn didn't move, she was unconscious. Helen spun around to the doctor, "What happened to my daughter?"

"We're not completely sure." Said the doctor. "This young man over here found her and brought her in." He said, directing to the man sitting in a chair in the corner. "He's been here since we brought her in. We tried to get him to leave, but he refused until you showed up."

Without taking her eyes off of Quinn, she asked the doctor, "How is she?"

"She is in serious condition. She has three broken ribs, ruptured spleen, and her kidneys are bruised. Some cuts and scrapes, but those are superficial." Said the doctor, flipping through pages on a chart.

Helen turned to the man in the corner. "What happened?"

"Don't know. Saw a girl kicking Quinn. She was getting ready to kick her again as I was driving by, so I took the girl to the ground." The man sat forward, and into the light.

"Trent?" asked Jane as she recognized her brother. Daria was leaning against the wall, but looking at the floor, but looked up at the sound of the name.

"Was just out for a drive. Guess I happened to be in the right place at the right time."

"Thank you Trent." said Helen. She turned back to Quinn, but spoke to Trent. "Did you recognize the other girl?"

"Yeah.... It was that snobby girl from her club." Said Trent.

"Sandi Griffin?" asked Helen.

"Yeah, I guess." Said Trent. "Look, I gotta go." He took one last glance at Quinn, and without looking at anyone else, he walked out of the room. Daria and Jane stood there, looking at Helen and Quinn. Helen indicated for them to go after him. Daria and Jane ran out of the room and hurried after Trent. They caught up to him outside. Trent was standing against a pole out front. After a second, he spoke. "I didn't know what to do. I saw her getting ready to kick Quinn again. Quinn wasn't moving. I don't know why I did it. I guess it was just instinctive."

"You did it to protect Quinn." Said Jane.

"No. What I did to Sandi." said Trent. He swallowed. "I just reacted. I jumped out of the car, and tackled her. Shouldered her into the tree. She screamed, but Quinn..." Trent grabbed Daria by the shoulders. "I'm sorry..." said Trent, and he hugged Daria, putting his head on hers. "I'm so sorry..." Daria could feel a warm wetness seeping through her hair to her head. Trent just kept repeating "I'm sorry..."

"It's okay Trent. You did the right thing." Said Jane.

Daria didn't move. She wrapped her arms around Trent. She could feel the tears welling up in her eyes, but was trying to hold it back. After a few seconds, she couldn't hold it anymore. Daria started to cry herself. "Thank you Trent." Was all she said.

Jane just stood there. After a minute or so, she spoke up. "Here comes your dad."

Daria and Trent stepped apart. There was an obvious wet spot on Trent's t-shirt, and Daria's hair was wet. Trent wiped his face on the sleeve of his shirt, and took a few deep breaths. "You're welcome." He reached and took Daria's glasses off, and using a finger, wiped the tears from Daria's face, and then handed Daria her glasses back.

Jake came running up. "DARIA! Where's your mother?"

"Inside. I'll take you back." Daria said as she was putting her glasses back on. She walked in with her dad. She turned back to look at Trent as she walked inside. Jane stayed outside with Trent.

“Trent? You okay?” asked Jane.

“Yeah. I didn’t hang around the scene; I just picked up Quinn and brought her here. I had to wait for the police to show up here. They asked me what happened and what I saw. I told them what I saw and what I did. The cops were mad, but said I did the right thing. They still have my ID. They’ll probably be looking for me.” Said Trent.

Jane looked at her brother, putting her hand on his shoulder. “Trent. You did a good thing. The police will understand what you did and why you did it.”

“Yeah. Maybe.” Said Trent. He looked up and saw another police car pulling into the parking lot. Trent went to walk away, but Jane grabbed his sleeve.

“Stay. Stand up.” Said Jane. Then Jane thought for a second. “Don’t say a word. I am going to go get Helen.” Jane ran into the hospital.

The cop car pulled up, and an officer stepped out of the car. “Trent Lane?”

“Yeah.”

“What happened?” asked the cop, taking out his notepad.

“I told the other cop. My sister’s friend’s sister was being attacked by this other girl. I stopped her.”

“I need more details than that.” Said the officer. “You attacked a minor.”

“And that minor was beating the hell out of a friend.” Snapped Trent.

“Don’t say another word Trent!” came Helen’s voice from hospital entrance. Both the officer and Trent turned to face Helen. She walked up, and handed a business card to the officer. “I am Helen Morgendorffer of Vitale, Davis, Horowitz, Riordan, Schrecker & Schrecker. I am also Quinn Morgendorffer’s mother. You know, the girl that was *attacked*. I will be representing Mr. Lane. And I am quite sure that Linda and Tom Griffin *won’t* be pressing charges against Mr. Lane, if they know what’s good for them.”

“Well, given the circumstances, I would normally need to take Mr. Lane into custody. However, I can release him to you for... consulting.” Said the officer.

“Fine.” Said Helen. The cop went, opened his trunk, took out a few forms, and started to fill them out. After a few minutes, the officer handed a form to Helen to sign. She signed it, and the officer handed her a copy.

“If there are charges, you will be contacted by the State Attorney’s Office. I will come back later and get a statement from Ms. Morgendorffer when she is able.” The officer went to get into his car, when Helen stopped him.

“How is Sandi?” asked Helen.

The cop looked at Trent, and then to Helen. “Broken shoulder, broken wrist, and a concussion.” The cop paused a second. “Mr. Lane went shoulder first into Ms. Griffin and shoved her into a tree. She will recover.” The cop glared at Trent, turned and got into his car, and left.

Trent lowered his head. Helen walked over to Trent. "Look at me, young man." Trent looked up at Helen. Without warning, Helen hugged Trent. "Thank you, Trent. Thank you for saving Quinn." Trent just stood there, still stunned by the damage he did. Helen stepped back. "Things will work out, Trent. I will see to that." She turned to Jane. "Take him home. "

"With due respect, Mrs. Morgend..." started Jane, but Helen cut her off.

"Call me Helen."

"With all due respect Helen, I would rather stay here for a while. Quinn..." Said Jane, but stopped for a second. "I want to be here for Daria."

"That's okay. I kinda want to be alone right now." Said Trent.

"Okay, Trent." Helen gave Trent one of her business cards, which had her cell phone # on it. "If you need anything, call." She watched as Trent walked to his car, got in, and drove off. After a moment, she turned back to the girls. "Let's go back inside." With that, they all walked back inside.

"Someone should call Tilly..." muttered Daria as they walked inside.

Tilly was in her room, tennis ball in hand, staring at a blank computer screen. "Another fine day in paradise." She looked up at the mirror, and saw the picture of Daria and the phone #. She reached over, picked up the phone and dialed....

"Hellooooo.. You've reached the Morgendorffer residence. No one's home right now...." Came Helen's voice over the answering machine. Tilly hung the phone up. She squeezed the tennis ball a couple of times, and then chucked it at the wall. It bounced and then came back, almost hitting her in the head. She got out of the chair, and picked the ball up, and sat back down. She pulled a book off the shelf over her desk, and started to read.

She made it through about five pages, when she heard James. "Tilly, could you come down here please." Tilly closed the book, and picked up the ball. As she walked out of her room, she turned and winged it at the wall, and then closed the door. As she closed the door, the ball bounced off the back side of the door, right where she would have been standing. She walked down the hall, and into the kitchen. Sitting at the table were James and Sarah. Scattered around them were some legal books and paperwork.

"Sit down, honey." Said Sarah.

Tilly put left hand on one of the books and raised her right one. "I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth... until it incriminates me..."

Sarah smiled. "Ha ha." She said, being sarcastic. She looked at James, and then back to Tilly. "We need to discuss something serious."

Tilly had a sudden feeling that she was in trouble. "I didn't do it. No matter what that cop said."

"What?" asked James.

“Nothing.” Said Tilly. “What’s up?”

Quinn had been moved to a private room. With Helen, Daria, and Jane outside, Jake was sitting in the room, in a chair in the corner, fingertips together, with his index fingers on his lips. He sat and looked at his youngest daughter lying in the hospital bed across from him. He glanced up at the monitor, watching the numbers go up and down. The rhythmic clicking coming from the IV machine seemed to match in time to the heart monitor, which was on a low volume. The doctor came in, and checked a few things. He didn’t notice Jake sitting in the corner. He hadn’t spoken a word since he walked in the room. When he spoke, the doctor jumped. “Didn’t see you there...” said the doctor, turning to face Jake.

“Life is fragile.” Said Jake, not moving.

“You her father?” asked the doctor.

“Yes.” Said Jake, with no inflection or emotion in his voice.

“Yes, you’re right. Life is fragile. Yet Quinn seems to be a fighter. She has improved significantly since she has been here. We are hoping she will regain consciousness tonight or tomorrow.” Said the doctor as he moved to the other side of the bed, checking under bandages and checking Quinn’s eyes.

“Hmmm..” muttered Jake, still not moving. “I just reconnected with my oldest daughter’s twin sister, and here today I almost lost my youngest daughter.”

The doctor turned to Jake. “Mr. Morgendorffer..”

“Jake... call me Jake.”

“Okay.. Jake.. I’m not going to lie to you. Quinn has been hurt pretty badly. However, she has a really good chance of recovering fully.” Said the doctor.

“I hope so.” Said Jake, still in the same position, still with no emotion in his voice.

“Jake!” said Helen as she walked in the room. “How is she.”

“She’s fine.” Said Jake flatly.

“Jake? Are you okay.” Asked Helen.

“I’m fine.”

“You don’t appear...” started Helen, but Jake cut her off..

“I’M FINE DAMMIT!” snapped Jake. It was enough to get the attention of a passing nurse. She popped her head into the room.

“Everything okay in here?”

The doctor looked from Jake to the nurse. "Yes, everything is fine. Mr. Morgendorffer is just a little upset." The nurse nodded, left, and closed the door behind her.

Helen knelt down in front of Jake. "Jake honey, I know you're upset, I know you're mad, but what is important is that Quinn is going to be fine. Someone was looking out for her."

"It's just not fair.... Why Quinn?" asked Jake, a wavering starting to form to his voice.

"No, it's not, but Quinn is a fighter, she will prevail." Said Helen. Jake resumed his position and pose, and closed his eyes.. "Jake?" Jake didn't acknowledge her. "Jake?" No response.

"Mom... maybe we should leave Dad alone for a little bit." Said Daria.

"Daria, your father.."

"Mom...." Said Daria. Helen looked at Daria and Jane, and stood up.

"Okay Jake. I am going to take Daria and Jane down to get a soda. Want me to bring you back something?" Asked Helen. Jake didn't move. Helen went to ask again, but stopped, and left the room with Daria and Jane.

Once walking down the hallway, Daria turned to her mother. "I think someone should call Tilly."

"Okay. You can call her." Said Helen, not really paying attention.

"Maybe you should." Said Daria, but Helen didn't hear her. Daria and Jane had stopped, but Helen kept walking. Daria and Jane just looked at each other, and when they looked back, Helen was gone. Daria sighed, and walked back to Quinn's room to make the call.

Tilly, James, and Sarah were all sitting at the kitchen table. Scattered around was some paperwork, newspapers, magazines, notepads and pencils. "Tilly, you understand why we want to do this?"

"Yeah. It's because you..." Tilly started, but the phone rang.

Sarah picked it up. "Hello?... Oh... Hi Daria... Yes, Tilly is right here.... Hold on a second." She handed the phone to Tilly.

Tilly looked at Sarah, and shrugged. Tilly took the phone. "Hey Daria... What?... WHAT????? How is she? (pause) Okay... Do you want me to come down?... Oh, okay.. Yeah.. Thanks for calling me. Let me know how things work out. If you need anything, call. Okay, thanks sis. Bye.." Tilly hung the phone up and set it on the table.

"What was that?" asked Sarah.

"That was Daria... She said Quinn was attacked by a girl that she went to school with. She is in the hospital." Said Tilly, slumping back in her chair.

“How is she?”

“She’s unconscious right now, but they are expecting her to wake up within the next day or so.” Said Tilly.

“You going to see her?” asked Sarah, arranging papers on the table.

“Well, Daria said it wasn’t necessary, but I think I should go.” Said Tilly.

“That’s up to you. If you want to go, that’s fine, or we can all go.” Said Sarah.

“Thanks.” Said Tilly. “If you will excuse me, I am going to go up to my room.” Without waiting for a response, Tilly got up and went to her room.

“Fast track.” Said Sarah to James. He nodded, and picked up the phone and dialed a number.

“Hello? Yes, this is Mr. Seiler, can I speak to Diana please? Yes, I’ll hold.” James sat tapping his fingers on the table. A moment later, “Hi Diana, this is Mr. Seiler. Yes, we are interested. Okay.. (pause)... Yes.. yes... How about tomorrow? Around noon? Yes, that will work. No, our daughter will be in school. Okay. See you then. Bye.” James hung the phone up. “Tomorrow at noon.”

“Okay. We going to take Tilly with us?” asked Sarah.

“We will see if she wants to go.” Said James. He got up from his chair, and walked down the hall to Tilly’s room, and knocked on the door. “Tilly?” She didn’t answer. He knocked again. “Tilly?”

“Come.” Said Tilly from the other side of the door. James opened the door, and walked in.

“Want to take tomorrow off from school?” asked James.

Daria hung the phone up, and turned to look to see her dad has slipped out of the room.

“Where did my dad go?” asked Daria.

“I don’t know, he just got up and walked out.” Said Jane. “He seemed like he was on a mission.”

Daria just shrugged, and turned to face Quinn. She brushed Quinn’s hair back from her face, then went through Quinn’s bag, found a brush, and was trying to brush Quinn’s hair. “This is harder than it looks.” Said Daria looking at Jane. “Give me a hand.” Jane walked around to the other side of the bed, and helped Daria with brushing out Quinn’s hair. After they had did the best they could, Daria grabbed a basin, and filled it with warm water, and brought it to the bedside. With Jane’s help, Daria did her best to try to clean Quinn up. Once they were done, Jane took the basin and emptied it out.

“My first sponge bath.” Said Jane light-heartedly.

“Quinn will kill us both when she finds out we used the hospital soap and not her exfoliating moisturizing body wash she always uses.” Said Daria, looking down at Quinn.

“She’s gonna freak that the doctors in the ER cut her shirt and pants off.” Said Jane, holding up the remnants of Quinn’s outfit. Suddenly, a smile came across Jane’s face. “I have an idea, but it means going into,” Jane acted like she was being a covert operative, “Enemy territory.”

“Cashman’s.” said Daria. She shuddered. “Let’s go. Bring those with us; we can use them to pick out the new ones.” Daria placed her hand on Quinn’s, squeezed it lightly, and then turned and left.

Jake was pacing up and down the hallways, hands behind his back. A look of determination was on his face. He was on the other end of the floor, when he stopped, and saw the name by the door...”

“Griffin, S.”

Jake looked around, and stepped to the door, and listened. Hearing nothing, he slowly opened the door, peeking in. Seeing no one, he slipped into the room, and closed the door behind him. He walked over to the bed, and noticed the person laying there was asleep. He stood there, staring at Sandi. “How could you?” said Jake quietly. “You tried to take my daughter from me. Perhaps I should take you from your parents.” Jake stepped to the IV machine and noticed the label on the bag. “Morphine.” Said Jake to himself. He studied the controls on the IV machine, trying to figure it out. As he bent down to look, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He spun around to find Helen.

“Jake! What are you doing here?” asked Helen in a whisper.

“Payback.” Said Jake. He turned back to the IV machine, but Helen started to drag him out of the room. Just as they had reached the door, it opened, revealing Tom and Linda Griffin.

“WHAT IN THE HE...” Started Tom, but Helen placed her finger over her lips to indicate everyone to be quiet, and directed to go outside. They all walked outside the room, and closed the door behind them. Once outside, Tom continued. “What in the hell are you two doing in my daughter’s room?”

Jake’s face went stone white. Helen put on her best prosecutors face. “We were just checking to see how Sandi was doing.”

Linda went to say something, but was taken aback by Helen’s response. “Why?” was all Linda could say.

“While it is true that YOUR daughter almost beat OUR daughter to death, the man who brought Quinn in was concerned about Sandi.” said Helen.

“Some man. A 20-something guy beating a 17 year old girl.” Said Tom.

“That 17 year old girl was beating the hell out of our 16 year old daughter.” Said Helen. Beside her, Jake was standing there, clenching and unclenching his fists.

“Do we have a problem, Mr. Morgendorffer?” asked Linda with an air of smugness.

“No.... problem...” Jake said through clenched teeth.

“Jake, please.” Said Helen. She turned to Linda. “Look. I am only going to say this once. Your daughter attacked my daughter. A Good Samaritan stopped and helped Quinn. Just because he was older is irrelevant. The fact remains that your 17 year old daughter brutally attacked my 16 year old daughter. I’m quite sure your daughter would be tried as an adult, considering the seriousness of my daughter’s injuries.” Helen grabbed Jake’s hand, and as she began to walk off, she said to Linda. “The choice is yours Linda.” With that, Helen walked off, dragging Jake behind her.

Jane and Daria stepped off the bus in front of the mall. They walked in, and throughout the mall, until they were standing in front of Cashman’s. “Here we go.” Said Daria. They walked in, and headed straight to the “Junior 5” section. They walked around, not really knowing what they were looking for.

“Can I help you two with anything?” asked a lady that had walked up to them. She wore a name tag that said her name was “Theresa”.

Jane pulled the clothing remnants out of the bag. “We need replacements for these.”

Theresa looked at them, and then the clothes. “Wow... what happened?”

“Long story.” Said Daria.

Theresa eyed Daria up and down. “These won’t fit you, sweetie.”

Daria’s eyes narrowed, and she took a step toward Theresa, but Jane stopped her. “They aren’t for us. They belong to... our sister. She was in an accident, and they had to cut them off of her. We wanted to get new ones for her.” Jane said, trying to resist the urge to strangle the salesperson.

“Who’s your sister?” asked Theresa.

Daria hesitated for a second. “Quinn Morgendorffer.”

“Oooohhhhhhhh. Why didn’t you just say so? Okay. Right this way.” Said Theresa. She led them to a rack, flipped through the shirts until she found an identical shirt to the one Daria had. She handed the shirt to Jane, and then led them to a shelf with a bunch of different pairs of pants. The salesperson looked through them, and then pulled out a pair of pants that were identical to the ones Daria held. She handed them to Jane. She then led them to the register. “Will this be all?”

“Yes.” Said Daria. Theresa rang up the clothes. Daria pulled some money from her pockets, and Jane pulled some money from her pockets. “I have this.” Said Daria to Jane.

“I’ll help.” Said Jane. Daria went to protest, but Jane cut her off. “No arguments.” Daria sighed, and relented. They grabbed the receipt, and the bag with the new clothes, and made a beeline for the exit. They walked out of the mall, and sat down waiting for the bus. After a minute or so, a familiar red car pulled up.

“Hellooooo ladies.”

“Hey Up... err, Charles.” Said Daria.

“Why the long faces?”

“Nothing.” Said Jane.

“Can I offer you two a ride?”

Jane looked at Daria, who looked back at Jane. “Sure Charles...” Upchuck was surprised by the use of his name, twice, and not his nickname. Jane and Daria got in.

“Where to?” asked Upchuck.

“Cedars of Lawndale.” Said Daria. Upchuck had a puzzled look on his face, but drove on. Daria saw the look on Upchuck’s face. “Quinn is in the hospital.” Upchuck just looked up in the mirror at Daria, but kept driving. After a few minutes, they pulled into the parking lot. Daria and Jane got out of the car. “Thanks Charles.” Said Daria.

“No problem ladies...” said Upchuck. As he began to drive away, he stopped. “Hey Daria!” Daria stopped and turned to look at Upchuck.

“Yeah?”

“I hope Quinn gets better soon.”

“Thanks Charles. I’ll tell her you wished her well... when she wakes up.” Said Daria. Upchuck smiled, but not his usual smarmy smile, more of a gentleman’s smile, and then drove away. They walked into the hospital, boarded the elevator, and took it to the 3rd floor where Quinn’s room was. They walked down the hall, past the nurse’s station, and into Quinn’s room. Once inside, they took the new clothes they bought for Quinn, removed the tags, and then folded them back up and placed them neatly into the bag and onto the table nearby. They had just sat down in the two chairs when Helen came in, still dragging Jake behind her.

“What in the hell were you thinking?” asked Helen, trying not to yell.

Jake just stood there. He glanced over at Quinn. “I guess I wasn’t.”

“You could have put any possible lawsuit at risk. You shouldn’t have even been NEAR that room.” Said Helen. Jake just stood there like a scolded child. She looked at Daria and Jane, and then at the clock on the wall. “I think we should all go home for a little bit.”

Jake looked over at Quinn. “Someone should stay here with Quinn.”

“I will change clothes and come back.” Said Helen. “I will need to call Eric and let him know that I will not be in tomorrow.”

“Or I could stay.” Said Daria flatly.

“That’s okay, sweetie, but I will come back tonight.” Said Helen. A knock came from the door. “Who could that be?” asked Helen, walking toward the door. She opened it, to reveal Tom and Linda Griffin. “What do you want” said Helen, taking on Daria’s monotone voice.

“We wanted to see how Quinn was doing.” Said Linda.

Tom peeked around Linda, and caught a glimpse of Quinn. “Oh my..” he said quietly.

Tom’s expression caught Linda’s attention. She looked around Helen and saw Quinn. All she could say was the same thing. “Oh my...” She paused a second, regained her composure, and turned back to Helen. “Maybe we should talk outside. Bring a notepad.”

Helen turned to look at Jake and the girls. “Take them home. I’ll be home in a little bit.”

Jake took one last look at Quinn. “Let’s go girls.” Said Jake as he, Daria, and Jane walked past Helen and the Griffins. They walked out of the hospital and to Jake’s car.

Once driving, Daria turned to her father. “What was mom talking about?”

Jake kept his eyes on the road. Sighing, he said “I almost did something stupid.”

“Like?” asked Daria.

“I’d rather not talk about it.”

“Okay.” Said Daria, she turned back to look at the road in front of her.

After a second, Jake spoke up. “I tried to kill Sandi.”

Daria took on a quick look of surprise, and then back to her normal unreadable face. “It’s a reaction. You see your daughter lying in a hospital bed, and you can only think about exacting revenge on the person who put her there.”

“Yeah...” said Jake, voice trailing off.

“Except the voice of reason talked you out of it.” Said Jane.

“No. Your moth... Hel....” Jake looked over at Daria, and then up in the mirror at Jane. “Helen talked me out of it.”

“I think you wanted to be stopped.” Said Daria.

“Huh?” asked Jake.

“Yeah, I’d like to know this too.” Said Jane.

Daria thought for a second. “You went to military school. You were trained in combat tactics and hand to hand combat. You’re a mid-40’s man who could have easily made short work of Sandi. Yet, you were stalling for time. You were hoping, betting that someone would come stop you. And someone did. You were upset that Sandi did that to Quinn, and you were hurt, and you reacted. Yet, your subconscious was controlling you, keeping you from doing any real damage.”

Jake turned back to face Daria. “Maybe you’re right.”

“Okay.” Said Helen, writing a last bit of info down. “You are agreeing to pay all of Quinn’s medical bills that relate to this incident, including any reconstructive procedures that are needed, and any outpatient procedures that will be needed, and any equipment or care that is required afterwards. You are also agreeing to pay any medical bills from any future complications that arise from this incident. This includes any other non-medical needs that she may have in regards to this incident, such as, but not limited to, tutoring or transportation needs.”

“Yes.” Said Tom and Linda together.

“You also will be funding a \$50,000 college fund for Quinn, payable and due by the time she graduates high school.” Said Helen.

“Yes.” Said Linda.

“You will see that Sandra receives anger management counseling.” Said Helen.

“Yes.” Said Tom. He paused at the sound of Helen using Sandi’s given name of Sandra.

“And that this contract does not prevent you from being sued in the future regarding this incident, will be signed by a judge and enacted as a court order. Violation of this order will be considered violation of a court order, and will be handled as such.”

Linda and Tom hesitated for a second, looked at each other, and turned back to Helen. “Yes.”

“You also agree to not press charges and hold Trent Lane and the Lane family harmless from any and all damages resulting from this incident. You will also pay for any legal fees for Trent Lane and the Lane family resulting from this incident.” Said Helen.

Tom looked at Linda, and was about to object when Linda quickly spoke up. “Yes.”

A small smile crept onto Helen’s face. She waved over a person who was wearing a suit, and had been standing off to the side. He walked over, and pulled out his Notary supplies. She placed the paper down on the table, and handed Linda a pen. “Sign here.”

Daria walked into her room, taking her jacket off. She then sat down on her bed, and took her boots off. She grabbed the remote, and turned the TV on. Sick Sad World was coming on. She watched the first few minutes of it, but just couldn’t get into it. She turned the TV off, and then laid down on her bed, just staring up at the ceiling, trying to clear her mind. All she could think about was Quinn. “Damn.”

The door to Daria’s room was open, but Jake knocked on the doorframe. “Daria?”

“Unfortunately.”

“There is a message on voicemail for you from Tilly. She asked for you to call her when you get home. She wanted to know how Quinn was doing.” Said Jake.

“Thanks, dad.” Said Daria. She reached down and went to call Tilly, when the phone rang. She answered it. “Hello.... Lawndale Home for the Insane.”

“Hey amiga.” Came Jane’s voice over the phone.

“Hey.”

“Wanted to know if you are going to school tomorrow?” asked Jane.

“Yeah. Might as well.” Said Daria.

“Okay, see you in the morning.” Said Jane.

“Okay. Bye.”

“Bye.” Said Jane, but neither of the girls hung up the phone. After a second, Jane spoke up. “Is there something wrong, Daria?”

“Tell Trent I said thanks.” Said Daria.

“I think he’s still awake. You want to talk to him?” asked Jane.

“NO!” said Daria quickly. She could hear Jake calling her name downstairs. “I gotta go. Dad’s calling.”

“Okay. See you tomorrow amiga.” Said Jane.

“Bye.” Said Daria. She hung the phone up, and started to get up, but then realized that she was going to call Tilly. She picked the phone up and again, and dialed Tilly’s number.

The phone rang twice, and then was answered. “Hello?” said the female voice.

“Hi Mrs. Seiler. It’s Daria. Is Tilly around?”

“Yes Daria, hold on.” Said Sarah. She could hear Sarah yelling for Tilly to pick up the phone.

A click was heard, and Tilly came on the line. “Hey Daria.” Said Tilly bleakly.

“Hey. What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing, just tired.” Said Tilly. “How’s Quinn?”

“About the same. They had to cut her clothes off in the ER, so me and Jane went to Cashman’s to get replacements.” Said Daria.

“YOU went to CASHMANS?” asked Tilly surprised.

"Don't advertise it." Said Daria.

Tilly laughed. "Daria in Cashmans. Would have loved to been there."

"No, it was awkward. We took the old clothes with us, but the clerk had to start off with an insult. Then she found out the clothes were for Quinn." Said Daria.

"Now I know what to get you for Christmas." Said Tilly. "A Cashman's gift card."

"I'll end up giving it to Quinn." Said Daria.

Tilly paused for a moment. "Are you going to school tomorrow?"

Daria sighed. "Jane just asked me that a minute ago. Yeah, I am. Then I will probably go to the hospital afterwards."

"Okay. Well, give me a call tomorrow and let me know how Quinn is doing." Said Tilly.

"Okay."

"Okay. Bye. Love you sis." Said Tilly.

"Byeloveyoutoo." Mumbled Daria. She hung the phone up, and then walked down stairs to see what Jake wanted. As she came to the bottom of the steps, Helen was walking in the door.

"Hi Daria." Said Helen.

"Hey mom." Said Daria. "And before you ask, yes, I am going to school tomorrow."

Helen laughed wearily. "Been asked that a few times?"

"Yeah... Jane and Tilly." Said Daria. Jake had come out of the kitchen when he heard Helen come in.

"I'm going to go shower and change clothes, and then I am going back to the hospital." Said Helen. "Jake, will you come upstairs with me for a minute?"

"Sure." Said Jake. Helen started to walk upstairs, and Jake followed, but remembered he had called Daria. "Oh." He said, pausing for a second. "I reheated some leftovers. They are on the counter." Jake then continued his way up the stairs.

Daria shrugged, and went into the kitchen. She made herself a small plate, and sat down to eat it. She picked at it, but didn't really eat anything. After what seemed like only 30 seconds to Daria, Helen and Jake emerged from upstairs. Helen had changed into a more casual outfit. "That was quick." Said Daria. "Skip the shower?"

"What?" asked Helen. "No."

"You were only up there for a minute." Said Daria.

"I was up there for 30 minutes." Said Helen.

Daria looked over to the wall clock. Indeed, 30 minutes had passed. "I think I need to go to bed."

"Okay, good night sweetie. Have a good day at school." Said Helen. Daria got up and walked up the stairs, and into her room, closing the door behind her. She slipped out of her clothes of the day, and put on a night shirt. She then turned the light off, laid down in bed, put her glasses on the table beside the bed, and closed her eyes. When she did, all she could see was an image of Quinn, laying on the ground, with Sandi standing over her. She snapped her eyes open. She could see the red glow of the alarm clock. She tried to close her eyes again, but all she could see was Quinn. She opened her eyes again, sighed heavily, and rolled over.

"Go to sleep, Morgendorffer." Said Daria to herself. She closed her eyes again, but this time she didn't see Quinn. "This works." Came the voice in her head. As the scene panned around, she saw Quinn again. This time Daria walked up to the form on the ground. She reached down, and touched her. She noticed that Quinn wasn't breathing. She rolled Quinn over, but jumped back as she didn't see Quinn's face, but her own. "AAAAGGHHH!" screamed Daria as she sat up in bed. She looked at the clock next to the bed. A couple of hours had passed. "This is going to be a long night." Said Daria as she put her head back down on the pillow.

Jane and Daria were walking through the halls of Lawndale High. They stopped in front of Ms. Li's office. Daria walked in. "Can I help you, Ms. Morgendorffer?"

"Yeah. Here." Said Daria as she tossed a letter onto the desk.

Ms. Li opened it, reading it to herself. "So Quinn isn't going to be at school for a while. Hope she brings a doctor's note."

Daria just shot Ms. Li a disgusted look, and turned and walked out, without waiting for another word. She slammed the door behind her. "That went well." Said Jane as they started to walk down the hall.

"About as well as a trip to Hell." Said Daria. They stopped in front of Daria's locker. She took out a couple of books and put them into her bag, when Stacy and Tiffany walked past, then stopped and turned back.

"Hey Daria. Where's Quinn? Is she like sick or something?" asked Stacy.

"Yeah, or something." Said Jane.

"Huuuuuh?" asked Tiffany.

"Quinn's in the hospital." Said Daria.

"Ohmygosh!" exclaimed Stacy. "What happened?"

"Sandi beat the crap out of her. Have any idea why?" asked Daria, going on the defensive.

"Sandi?" asked Tiffany.

"The Fashion Club broke up. Sandi was going to throw Quinn out of the club for walking home with you and Jane yesterday. First Tiffany, then me, and then Quinn basically dissolved the club. Tiffany then threw Sandi out of her house." Said Stacy.

"How's... Quinn...?" asked Tiffany.

"Unconscious." Said Daria. "She's at Cedars." Daria paused, then muttered. "So is Sandi."

"We should go see Quinn after school." Said Stacy.

"I think Quinn would like that." Said Daria.

"Hospitals.... All... that... white." Said Tiffany.

"Are you going later?" asked Stacy.

"Yeah." Said Daria.

"Okay. We'll see you there then." Said Stacy. She and Tiffany walked away. Daria slammed the door to her locker. They continued walking to class.

“Another day at.... Laaawwwndale High.” Said Jane, doing her best Ms. Li impersonation.

“I hate you.” Said Daria as they walked into class.

The day seemed to go by quickly. Daria and Jane were walking home, and had just stepped out onto the sidewalk, when Trent pulled up. “Hey Janey... Daria... You want a ride?”

“Sure.” Said Jane. They both got into Trent’s car, and Trent started driving.

“You going home, or going to Cedars?” asked Trent.

“Am I going with you?” asked Jane.

“You don’t have to.” Said Daria.

“*WE’RE* going to Cedars.” Said Jane.

“Cool.” Trent paused. “I wonder how Quinn is doing.”

“You could come up and see.” Said Jane. Daria kicked the back of her seat.

“Nah. Hospitals are creepy.” Said Trent. The ride was mostly uneventful. They arrived at Cedars, Trent pulled up to the entrance, and the girls got out. “You gonna need a ride home?”

“Nah. My mom or dad will be here. We can catch a ride with them.” Said Daria.

“Thanks Trent.” Said Jane.

“Hey... no problem.” Said Trent. “Later.” He put the car in gear and drove off. Daria and Jane walked into the hospital, and took the elevator to the floor where Quinn was. They walked through the hallways, and found Quinn’s room. They walked in, revealing Jake, asleep in the chair.

“Hey dad.” Said Daria.

Jake snapped awake. “Huh wha who... Oh, hey kiddo!” said Jake.

“Where’s mom?”

“She went home this morning. I’ve been here since you left for school.” Jake winced. “I haven’t had anything to eat yet.” Said Jake.

“Why don’t you go get something to eat Mr. Morgendorffer. We’ll stay here with Quinn.” Said Jane.

Jake looked at Daria, then to Quinn, then back to Daria. “Okay.” He said meekly. He got up, rubbing his forehead. He stretched, and then headed out the door. “I’ll be back in a little bit.” Daria sat down where Jake was just sitting, and Jane grabbed another chair and pulled it up next to Daria.

“Homework?” asked Daria.

“Nah. I did it earlier in school.” Said Jane.

“Same here.” Said Daria. Daria pulled out a book and started reading. Jane pulled out a sketch pad, and started to draw. It was quickly obvious she was drawing Quinn in the bed. “I wonder how Stacy and Tiffany are taking this.”

“Stacy is concerned. Tiffany is probably clueless as usual.” Said Jane. The next recognizable object Jane was drawing was a person with wings, hovering over Quinn’s bed. The person didn’t have a face yet.

“Think they will actually show up?” asked Daria.

“Maybe.” Said Jane. She was filling in some room details.

Daria looked around the room, then got up and poured herself a glass of water, and then sat back down. She took a drink, and then set the cup down. However, when she went to pick her book up, it slipped from her fingers to the floor, landing with a loud bang. “Damn!” said Daria as she bent over to pick it up. As she opened the book back up, there was a knock at the door. “Come.” Said Daria. They both looked to the door, to see Stacy and Tiffany walking in.

“Ohmygosh!” said Stacy, covering her mouth with her hands.

“Quinnnnnnn.” Said Tiffany. They both walked to the bed. “Her... hair....”

“I tried to brush it out the best I could.” Said Daria.

Stacy placed her hand on top of Quinn’s. “I’m soooo sorry Quinn.”

“Meee tooooooo.” Said Tiffany.

“Will she wake up?” asked Stacy.

“The doctors say today or maybe tomorrow. If not within the next couple of days, then she may not wake up at all.” Said Daria, not looking up from her book.

Stacy wiped a tear from her eye. “I have to go.” She said quickly, and bolted out the door.

“Let.. us.. know.. how.. Quinn.. is.. doing..” Tiffany paused. “Will.. you.. Daria?”

“Yes.” Said Daria, still not looking up.

“Thanks.” Said Tiffany. She turned to walk out of the room, but stopped and turned to face Daria and Jane. She had a look of concentration on her face. “Quinn is lucky to have a sister like you.” Tiffany turned and left the room.

Daria and Jane both looked up at the door. “Did Tiffany just speak without excessive pauses?” asked Jane.

“Must be the air in here.” Said Daria.

"Maybe." Said Jane. This time, a second winged person was hovering on the other side of Quinn's bed.

"I hear a lot of scratching over there." Said Daria.

"Just inspired." Said Jane. The first winged person had a face... Trent's.

"How can white walls, white floors, and white sheets inspire?"

"You would be surprised." Said Jane. She drew the other winged person's face, starting with the glasses. Daria shrugged, opened her book back up, and started reading.

"Nrrrgh."

"What did you say?" asked Daria.

"I didn't say anything." Said Jane.

"Maybe I am hearing things now. It wouldn't surprise me. I didn't get much sleep last night." Daria went back to reading her book.

"Nrrrrgh."

Daria looked over at Jane. "Out with it Lane."

"What?"

"You just said something." Said Daria.

"I did not."

"Well, if you didn't, then who..." asked Daria, the stopping as the penny dropped. She jumped out of her chair and was at Quinn's bedside in a flash. "Quinn?"

"Ugh... not so loud. I have a massive headache." Said Quinn, very weakly.

Daria pressed the nurse's call button, but then turned her attention back to Quinn. "Quinn?"

"Daria.... What are you doing in my room?" said Quinn, quietly.

"I'm not in your room. You're at Cedars." Said Daria. Now, Jane walked up and stood beside Daria.

"What hap.." Quinn started to ask. "Where's Sandi?"

"Down the hall." Said Jane.

"I remember her jumping out at me. She kicked me." Quinn said, feeling her side. She winced in pain. "Then I remember someone asking me if I was okay... Then I woke up here with you two."

“You’ve been in here since yesterday.” Said Daria. “Mom stayed the night last night...” Daria looked at Jane and motioned to the phone. “So she is at home right now. Dad has been here since this morning. He’s getting something to eat. Jane and I have been here since school let out. Stacy and Tiffany just left.”

Jane hurried over to the phone, and quickly bashed out Daria’s phone # into it. After a minute, Jane covered the receiver and said “Voicemail.”

“Leave a message.” Said Daria, looking up at Jane. She then turned her attention back to Quinn, and then to the nurse who came strolling in very casually.

“Do you need...” started the nurse, before she saw that Quinn was awake. She turned around and walked back out of the room.

“Sandi was lining up for another kick.” Said Quinn, “But it never happened. How?”

Daria went to open her mouth, and then stopped for a second. Jane followed through. “Someone saw what was happening, and stopped to help you. That’s why Sandi is in the hospital. She has a broken shoulder and other minor injuries.”

“Who?” asked Quinn.

Daria sighed. “It was Trent, Jane’s brother.” She paused. “He was driving by and saw what was happening. He stopped Sandi.”

“Tell him I said....” Started Quinn, before she fell back unconscious.

Daria gently shook Quinn’s shoulder. “Quinn?” No response. “Quinn?”

“So our sleeping beauty is awake now.” Said the doctor as he walked in the room.

“She was.” Said Daria. “She was talking to us, and now she is back out.”

The doctor did a few quick checks. “Niiiiiiiice.” Said the Doctor.

“What?” asked both Daria and Jane at the same time.

“She’s slipped back into the coma.” Said the doctor.

“How in the hell is THAT possible?” asked Jane and Daria at the same time.

“Sometimes, patients who have had head trauma will be unconscious for a period of time, and then will regain consciousness for a brief time, and then slip back into unconsciousness.”

“How long?” asked Daria.

“Unknown for sure.” Said the doctor. “Could be a day, or a year.” Daria looked down at Quinn, sighed, and returned to her chair. Jane returned to her chair. “Where are your parents?”

“Dad is getting something to eat. Mom went home.” Said Daria. She picked up her book at started to read again. The doctor was checking Quinn’s vital signs. Daria looked over the top of her book at the foot of Quinn’s bed, and noticed the sheet was moving. “Are you sure she’s in a coma?” asked Daria.

“I’m quite sure.” Said the doctor. “I have four years of medical school, and 15 years as a doctor that back up that diagnosis.”

“Well, the moving sheet says otherwise.” Said Daria. The doctor looked down, and saw the sheet moving, like Quinn was tapping her foot.

“What the...” said the doctor. After a second, he said “I’ll be right back.” The doctor walked briskly out of the room.

“Wow... Morgendorffer one, doctor zero.” Said Jane, who had resumed her sketching. The second winged figure’s face was looking more like Daria’s.

“Someone has to keep them on their toes.” Said Daria.

“Ahh... toes... sheet. I get it.” Said Jane, not looking up from her sketchpad.

“Daria? Where’s your father?” asked Helen, coming through the door.

“Went to get something to eat. You just missed the excitement.” Said Daria, not looking up from her book.

“Jane said Quinn was awake.” Said Helen, looking at Quinn. “She’s still unconscious.”

“She was awake a few minutes ago. She’s tapping her foot, though.” Said Jane. Helen looked down to the end of the bed, to see the sheet moving.

“Could be a mouse.” Said Daria.

“Okay Daria, enough already.” Said Helen.

“She missed the earlier wisecracks.” Said Jane.

“You too, Lane.” Said Helen. She stopped when she realized she just sounded like Daria. She smiled, shook her head and pulled the end of the sheet back to see Quinn’s foot moving, like she was tapping her foot to the rhythm of a song.

The doctor came back in, this time with another doctor, and a nurse pushing a small cart. The second doctor checked Quinn out quickly. “She’s not entirely in a coma. It’s more like she is in a deep sleep.”

The first doctor looked back at the nurse. She handed him a syringe. The second doctor nodded, and the first doctor injected the syringe into the IV line. “This should work really quickly.” Said the second doctor.

Quinn’s foot stopped tapping. Helen took on a look of shock. “What did you do?” asked Helen.

“A stimulant of sorts. The foot is a good sign.” Said the second doctor.

“Who turned off the music?” said Quinn weakly, without opening her eyes.

Helen grabbed Quinn’s hand. “Quinn? Quinn? Can you hear me?”

“Mom?” said Quinn, opening her eyes.

“Yes.” Said Helen, tears starting to form in her eyes. She let go of Quinn’s hand to wipe her eyes.

“Where’s Daria?”

“Over here.” Said Daria, not getting up.

“I fell asleep. I’m sorry.” Said Quinn.

“It’s okay. You need your beauty sleep.” Said Daria, patting Quinn’s hand, then just holding on to the edge of the bed.

Quinn suddenly became fully awake. “Wait... you said Stacy and Tiffany were here? And they saw me? Like this?”

Helen looked over at Daria. “Yeah... Stacy left crying, and Tiffany actually spoke a full sentence without drawing it out.” Daria turned to look at Jane, but Jane wasn’t there. “Where did Jane go?”

Helen looked up. “I don’t know. She was there a moment ago.”

Jane walked to the nurse’s station. “Can you page Jake Morgendorffer to come back to his daughter’s room?”

“Sure.” Said the nurse.

“And can you tell me where Sandra Griffin’s room is?”

The nurse didn’t say anything, and just gestured down the hallway. Jane set off down the hallway, fists clenched, not noticing the person who was walking up to her. She walked down to the end of the hall, and found the room. She pushed the door open, and walked in. Sandi was awake, and sitting up in bed. “What do you want?” asked Sandi.

Jane turned, pushed the door closed behind her, and walked to Sandi’s bedside. “Quinn is awake.”

“So...” said Sandi.

“So... I would suggest you remove yourself from that bed, go down there, and apologize to her while you still have a chance.” Said Jane, trying to remain calm.

“Like, why would I want to do that for?” said Sandi.

“Because... if you don’t...” Jane moved so her face was an inch from Sandi’s, “I will beat the hell out you. It’ll make Quinn’s injuries look like a stubbed toe.” Jane stepped back.

Sandi hung her head down. "I... I can't." The door opened behind Jane.

"You can, and you will." Said the voice from behind Jane.

Sandi looked up, and Jane spun around. "Decide to change your wardrobe, Quinn's cousin or something."

Jane smiled, and then turned back to Sandi. "First off, the person's name you keep forgetting, her name is Daria. Second, *that's* not Daria."

"Then who is it?"

"Her sister." Said Tilly. She stepped beside Jane. "Daria's twin sister, and Quinn's highly pissed older sister."

Sandi looked at Jane, and then at Tilly. Her hand was inching toward the nurse's call button. "Are you two threatening me?"

"If you don't..." started Tilly, but she stopped, feeling a hand on her shoulder. Both Jane and Tilly spun around to see Linda Griffin.

"Sandra... Go down there, and apologize to Quinn." Said Linda.

Sandi looked at her mother, then to Jane and Tilly. Jane and Tilly she thought she could work, but not her mother. She sighed, and pointed to the wheelchair in the corner. "Can someone help me out of this bed?" Linda brought the chair over, and Jane and Tilly helped Sandi out of the bed, and into the chair. Tilly got behind the chair, and started to push it out the door. "Are you coming, mother?"

"No Sandra. You have to brave this adventure on your own." Said Linda. Tilly started to push the chair out of the door. Linda stopped Jane on the way out. "Nothing had better happen to her."

"Empty threat's mean nothing to me." said Jane as she followed out the door behind Tilly.

Linda watched them walk out the door. "Empty threats." She repeated to herself.

Tilly pushed the chair down the hall a bit, and then stopped. She waited for Jane to catch up. "Where's Quinn's room?"

"Other end of the hall, on the right." Said Jane.

"I can't do this." Said Sandi.

"Why not?" asked Jane.

"I need to talk to someone." Said Sandi.

"Here we are. Start talking." Said Tilly.

"I... I don't know what happened. I don't know what came over me. I saw Quinn, and I was just hit with this, like, rush of anger. I tried to stop but I couldn't. Next thing I know, I am waking up here." Said Sandi.

Jane kneeled in front of Sandi. "Let's not beat around the bush here. I don't like you. I don't like what you did to Quinn. Matter of fact, I hate you for what you did to Quinn."

"Why do you care about Quinn? You're unpopular, and besides, she's not even related to you. She doesn't even *like* you." Said Sandi.

"Because, Daria is my best friend, almost my sister. So, by extension, Quinn is my sister. We Lanes are *very* protective over the family we love. It doesn't matter if she likes me or not. Besides, I don't think you know Quinn as well as you *think* you do." Said Jane.

"And I *am* related to her." Said Tilly.

Sandi sat there, expressionless. After a moment for everything to soak in, she continued, "She is not going to want to talk to me."

"Probably not. There's no guarantee she will even be awake. She has been drifting in and out of consciousness." Said Jane.

"We are only going to bring you to the door. You will have to wheel yourself in there and do it. We will be nearby, and we will be listening." Said Tilly. They continued to Quinn's room, stopping outside the door.

"Your choice." Said Jane quietly to Sandi. "Her mother is in there, her father is probably in there, and Daria is in there. All eyes are going to be on you. You *will* feel the hate being directed towards you. You're doing not what you *have* to do, but what you *need* to do."

"Or you turn around and go back to your room. If that is your decision, we will return you to your room and help you back into your bed. No questions asked." Said Tilly. "We will be over here." Her and Jane left Sandi, and walked down the hall a little, and sat down on some chairs. Sandi turned to look at Tilly and Jane, and then back to the door. With her only good arm, she grabbed the door frame, and pulled herself into the doorway.

"Broken shoulder." Whispered Jane to Tilly.

"Damn." Said Tilly. "Come on." They got up and walked to Sandi. Tilly grabbed the handles on the wheelchair and pushed Sandi into the room.

Daria was standing with her mother on one side of the bed, and the doctors on the other side. "Are you in any pain?" asked Helen.

"Not really. My side hurts, and I have a headache." Said Quinn quietly.

"Broken ribs and a concussion will do that." Muttered Daria.

Quinn looked around the room. "Where's dad?"

“Right here.” Said Jake, as he came running into the room. Helen and Daria looked at him, puzzled. “Jane had me paged.”

“Where is Jane?” asked Daria.

“I don’t know. The nurse’s station said she just came up and had me paged, and then walked away.” Said Jake. He walked around to where Helen and Daria were standing. Daria went to step back, but she couldn’t move. Quinn had a firm grip on her hand.

“Don’t go.” Said Quinn.

“I’m not going anywhere. Just letting dad in.” said Daria. She smiled briefly. Quinn smiled back, and let go of Daria’s hand. Daria turned and walked to the chair, and sat down.

Jake and Helen just stood there, looking at Quinn. Helen glanced up at the doctor. “How long will that stimulant last?”

“It’s enough to give her system a boost, a jump start of sorts.” Said the second doctor.

“So.....” started Helen, but they were interrupted by the door opening, and someone in a wheelchair trying to make their way into the room. “What in the hell are you doing here?” asked Helen, with fire in her eyes, as she recognized who it was.

“Look what we found out in the hallway, trying to drag herself down here.” Said Tilly as she came up behind Sandi and pushed her the rest of the way into the room.

“I want her out of here NOW!” said Jake, turning to move toward Sandi.

“Back to finish the job?” said Daria, standing up and beside her dad.

Jane stepped between them. “She has to have a reason for coming down here.” Said Jane, turning to Sandi. Jake and Daria looked at each other. Jane winked at Daria.

“Let her in.” said Quinn. Everyone turned to face Quinn. Tilly pushed Sandi to Quinn’s beside.

Sandi just looked at Quinn, and Quinn just stared at Sandi. “Quinn..... What have I done?”

“Apparently quite a lot.” Said Quinn. After a moment, she continued. “What do you want Sandi?”

“Quinn. I came to apologize.” Said Sandi. “I don’t know what happened. I just reacted.” Sandi paused. “I just had my club destroyed, my purpose in life to bring fashion sense to those who have none, and with one blow, it was all gone. I saw you walking, and I just reacted.” Sandi paused again, wiping her eyes. “I am sorry Quinn. I am sorry for what I did to you, I am sorry for not controlling myself, and I am sorry for having to put everyone through this. Will you ever forgive me Quinn?”

Quinn looked at Sandi. “Sandi... I hate you for what you did. I don’t know if I will ever forgive you for what you did to me or to my family. However, just so you know, what you have done here, now, does not go without purpose.”

Sandi looked a bit confused. “She means that she doesn’t know if she can forgive you, but that your apology wasn’t wasted.” Said Daria. Sandi nodded in acknowledgment.

“I should go.” Said Sandi. She turned to Jane. “Can you take me back to my room?”

Jane looked at Quinn. Quinn nodded. Jane nodded back, spun Sandi around, and pushed her out of the room, and down the hall. After they were out of the room, Helen looked over to Tilly. “What in the hell was that? Wait, how did you get here?”

Tilly laughed. “Sarah and James came to Lawndale for something. They were going to drop me off to visit with Daria, but no one was home. Then I remembered that Daria said Quinn was here, so I figured everyone would be here. Then I ran into Jane. As for Sandi..” Tilly thought for a second, “I don’t know what that was all about.” Tilly glanced over at Daria, who had a look on her face like she knew that Tilly was lying.

“I am glad you came.” Said Quinn.

“I couldn’t come to Lawndale and not see my younger sister.” Said Tilly, walking to Quinn’s bedside.

The doctors had finished their checks and measurements. “If there are any changes, have the nurse call us. We will leave you alone to visit with Quinn.” Said the second doctor. The doctors turned, and left.

Helen watched the doctors leave, and then turned to Quinn. “Is it okay that your father and I leave for a little bit? Daria and Tilly will be here, and I am sure Jane will be back soon.”

“Yeah. I’ll be fine.” Said Quinn.

“Okay sweetie.” Said Helen as she turned and walked from the bed. As she passed Daria, she glanced over, “If you need me, you have my cell phone number.”

“Yeah.” Said Daria. Helen continued walking out the door, with Jake taking one last look at Quinn, then to Daria and Tilly before leaving as well.

Quinn looked over to see Helen and Jake leave. Once she was sure they were gone, she turned to look at Daria, who had moved her chair to over beside Quinn’s bed. Tilly was dragging her chair beside Daria’s. “Daria... Tilly... I’m scared.”

Daria and Tilly looked at each other, then back to Quinn. “Why?” asked Tilly.

“Sandi. I don’t know what to expect.”

“Don’t worry about Sandi.” said Jane, coming through the door, and walking up between Tilly and Daria. “If she messes with you again, she is going to have to deal with us.”

“Why bother? All I have done is be a... a... spoiled brat!” Quinn said, tears running down her face. “Any time someone would think Daria was my sister, I would pawn her off as my cousin, or someone else.”

“I know.” Said Daria. She paused for a second, and then continued. “It doesn’t matter what you say, or what you do, you’re still my sister, and no matter what...” Daria paused again, taking a deep breath, and looking

down, "...no matter what, I love you." Daria looked back up, expecting to see a look of shock on Quinn's face, but instead, she saw a look of acknowledgement.

"I know Daria." Said Quinn. She looked back up at the ceiling, then back to the girls. "I'm a bit tired."

"You want us to stay?" asked Tilly.

"No. You don't have to. I'll be fine." Said Quinn.

"Are you sure?" asked Daria.

"Yeah..." said Quinn, her voice trailing off. She shifted position in the bed ever so slightly, and closed her eyes.

Daria, Jane, and Tilly stood up, and moved the chairs back where they were. Tilly and Jane walked to the door. Daria was still standing by Quinn's bed. She looked up at Tilly and Jane, and then back to Quinn. "We'll be outside." Said Jane, pushing Tilly out the door.

Daria looked at Quinn. She bent down, and kissed Quinn on the forehead. "Goodnight Quinn. Sweet dreams." Just as Daria straightened up, a tear had run down her cheek. She wiped her face on her sleeve, and then walked out of the room, where Jane and Tilly were waiting. "Let's go home." They walked down the hall, down the stairs, and out of the building. As they were walking across the parking lot, a black sedan pulled up.

"Tilly.. Daria.. uhhh, Jane is it?" came Sarah's voice.

"Present." All three said at once.

"Where you three off to?"

"Heading home." Said Daria.

"Want a ride?"

"Sure." Said Tilly. They all got into the back seat. Once inside, James, who was driving, started down the road.

"How's Quinn?" asked Sarah.

"I think she will be fine." Said Daria.

"That's good." Said Sarah.

Not much more was said on the ride home. They pulled into the Morgendorffer driveway. Jane, Daria, and Tilly got out. "Going home?" asked Daria of Tilly.

"Yeah. I have school tomorrow." Said Tilly.

"That's funny. So do we." Said Jane. They all laughed a little.

"Okay. Well, see you later then." Said Daria. Without another word, she turned and walked away, and into the house.

“What’s wrong with her?” asked Tilly of Jane.

“Don’t know. She’s been acting weird... well, weirder than normal since she found she had a sister, and then with Quinn....” Said Jane.

“Look after her.” said Tilly.

“You don’t have to ask me twice.” Said Jane. “Have a safe trip home.”

“Bye, Jane. Tell Daria I said bye and that I love her.” Said Tilly. She got back into the car. Sarah and James waved to Jane as they backed out of the driveway, and then drove off down the road. Jane waved as they drove off, and then turned and started to walk towards the house, when Helen and Jake came out of the front door.

“Hey Mr. and Mrs.... Err, Jake and Helen.”

“What are you two doing here?” asked Helen.

“Quinn said she wanted to rest, and she said we could leave if we wanted.”

“Oh, okay. What’s wrong with Daria? She just came into the house, and went straight upstairs. It was like she didn’t even see us.” Said Helen.

“I don’t know. She might just be overwhelmed.” Said Jane.

“Would you go talk to her?” asked Helen.

Jane sighed. She knew that she should just go and let Daria think for a while, but she didn’t want Daria to be alone. “Yeah. I will try.”

“Thanks Jane.” Said Helen. “We are going to the hospital to check on Quinn. We might be back if she doesn’t want anyone there.”

“Okay. See you.” Said Jane, as she walked to the front door, opened it, and went inside. She turned to see Helen and Jake getting into Jake’s car, and leaving. Jane closed the door behind her, and then turned to look up the stairs. She sighed, and walked up the stairs, and stood in front of Daria’s door. She put her hand on the doorknob, and was going to just walk in, but decided against it. She knocked. Nothing. She knocked again, louder. Nothing. She tried the doorknob, but the door was locked. She tried pounding on the door, but still didn’t get a response. Jane studied the lock. After a moment, she went across the hall, and into Quinn’s room. She found a nail file, and then returned to Daria’s door. With practiced ease, she popped the lock on the door, and opened it. The room was dark, shades pulled and curtains closed. She stood for a second to let her eyes adjust to the dark, and to let the light from the hall illuminate the room. Jane walked into the room, and heard a crunch as she stepped on something plastic. She reached down, and found a pill bottle. Holding it close to her face, she was able to make out that it was a bottle of sleeping pills, and it was empty. All of a sudden, things fell into place. “She’s trying to kill herself!” she said to herself. She went to rush to Daria when she stepped on something else. A pen. She picked it up, and it had a piece of paper attached to it. She held it up to read it.

To whomever finds this – First off, I am not trying to kill myself. I took a few sleeping pills as I need to get some sleep, and I cannot get my mind to clear enough to allow my body to sleep. There were only four pills left in the bottle. I took the last four. If I don't wake up for school in the morning, just let me sleep.

Jane walked over and flipped on the light. Daria was laying face down on the bed, still dressed from the day. She walked over, and untied her boots, and took them off. She then rolled Daria over, unzipped her jacket, and pulled it off of her. Jane found Daria's glasses, folded them up, and placed them on the table. She pulled the blanket over Daria. She put the pill bottle and note in her pocket, and then turned off the light, and closed the door behind her. She went downstairs, found a notepad and pen, and left a note for Jake and Helen.

Jake and Helen – Daria is asleep now. She said that she is just really tired and didn't feel good. She asked that if she doesn't get up for school in the morning, to just let her sleep.

Jane signed the note, and left it on the kitchen table. She then left the house, and headed to her own house. As she was walking home, she couldn't help but think if that maybe Daria had lied to her, and did in fact take the whole bottle. There was nothing Jane could do. She had to trust Daria. She would know soon enough if Daria had indeed lied to her or not. She walked into her own house, and up to her bedroom. She undressed and took a shower. All the while, she couldn't help but think about Daria. She quickly showered, and then dressed for bed. With the lights off, she laid down in bed, staring at the ceiling. "Damn you Daria... Damn you. You're getting sleep, and I am going to be awake all damn night worrying about you!" she said halfway aloud. "This is going to be a long night."

The morning came. Jane was still awake. After she realized she wasn't going to be going to sleep, she decided to paint. The picture she painted told a simple, two pane story. On the top, was Daria, with tears in her eyes, standing at Quinn's bedside. The bottom pane showed a similar pane... Quinn standing, in a black dress, tears in her eyes, next to Daria's coffin. It was titled "The Love of Sisters". Jane was sitting on the edge of the bed, staring at the painting. When the doorbell rang, it startled her. She ran down the stairs at full tilt, and flung the door open, expecting to see Daria. Instead, she saw two Lawndale police officers, one male, one female. "Jane Lane?" asked the male cop, looking at a notepad.

"Yeah." Said Jane.

"We need to ask you a few questions. Do you have a minute?" asked the female officer.

"Yeah, sure. Come in." said Jane. She led the officers to the living room. She sat down in a chair, and the female officer sat on the couch. The male officer chose to stand.

"Don't you have school today?" asked the male officer.

"Yeah. I was up all night last night, so I had my brother call me in sick." Jane said, lying. She glanced over at the clock, noticing it was almost noon.

"Ah." Said the male cop.

"Do you know a Daria Morgendorffer?" asked the female cop.

"Yeah, she is my best friend." Said Jane.

"When did you see her last?" asked the male cop.

"Last night, about 7pm. Her twin sister's parents dropped us off at the Morgendorffer's. Daria went in the house as soon as we got there. I talked to the Seilers for a few minutes, and then I went in, where I ran into the Morgendorffers. After I talked to them for a few minutes, I went up to see Daria, but she was asleep. She fell asleep completely dressed, so I took her boots and jacket off, put her glasses on the table, and covered her up. Then I came home, here." Said Jane.

"Can anyone attest to that you were here all night?" asked the male cop.

"Huh?" asked Jane.

"Was there anyone else here with you last night that can tell us when you came home, and that you were home all night?" Clarified the female cop.

Jane thought for a moment. "No." Jane said finally.

The male cop sighed. "Well, the reason we ask is because Miss Morgendorffer was found dead this morning in her bed. Preliminary analysis shows she died of a drug overdose."

"Sleeping pills." Muttered Jane.

"Excuse me?" asked the male cop.

“Sleeping pills.” Said Jane. “When I went up to Daria’s room, she left a note saying she had taken some sleeping pills, but not enough to do anything...”

“Her parents found the letter you left last night. It didn’t mention anything about sleeping pills. Yet, when we searched her room, we found the box and the cellophane wrapper from the packaging. We didn’t find the bottle.” Said the male cop.

“I have it.” Said Jane. “It’s in my jacket pocket upstairs. I took it and the note with me so that Daria wouldn’t get in trouble from her parents.”

“Could you go get those items?” asked the female cop.

“Yeah, sure.” Said Jane. She walked out of the room. She came back a couple of minutes later with the bottle and the note. She handed them to the female cop, who put them into evidence bags and then handed them to the male cop.

“Thank you.” Said the female cop.

“Daria’s dead....” Mumbled Jane. “Why did she do something so....”

“Yes. She’s dead.” Said the male cop, cutting Jane off. “And since you were the last one to see her, you are the prime suspect.”

“WHAT? You think I killed her? Why would I want to do that? She was my best friend! She was like a sister to me!” Jane’s voice was increasing in volume as she continued. “You think I killed her? If you do, you’re stupider than I thought.”

“Miss Lane, calm down please.” Said the female cop.

“How in the hell do you expect me to calm down. You just accused me of murdering my best friend!” Screamed Jane. She was fighting like hell to keep the tears back. She was sad to hear Daria was dead, but she was also hurt that now she was the prime suspect.

The female cop took a picture out of an envelope, and handed it to Jane. It was a picture of Daria. “This is how she was found this morning.”

Jane threw the picture down. “No... she can’t be dead... she can’t be.” Jane started to cry. “She can’t be.” Was all she could say, repeating it over and over. She looked down at the picture, which had landed face up. “Damn you Daria! Damn you!” Jane finally stammered out.

“Miss Lane. I’m afraid we are going to have to take you into custody.” Said the female cop. “If you would please stand up, and put your hands behind your back.” Without saying a word, Jane just stood up, and put her hands behind her back. The female cop put a pair of handcuffs on Jane. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say or do can and will be held against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you. Do you understand these rights as they have been read to you?” Jane just nodded. “I need to hear you say it.”

“Yes.” Said Jane. The female cop patted Jane down, and then escorted Jane to the police cruiser sitting outside. She opened the rear door, and sat Jane down inside the back seat, and closed the door. Jane lowered her head. “Damn you Daria, damn you...” She heard a pounding sound, that sounded like it was way off in the distance.....

Jane sat straight up in bed, breathing heavily. She looked around. She was in her room. She heard the pounding, even louder. She took a moment to come to grips with reality, and bolted out of bed and flew down the stairs. She flung the door open, to reveal Daria standing at the door, dressed and ready for school. Jane wrapped her arms around Daria, squeezing her tightly. “Oh my god... you’re not dead...” Exclaimed Jane.

“No...” said Daria, after a few moments. “Jane?”

Jane let go of Daria, but held her at arm’s length. “Daria... You have no idea how glad I am to see you!”

“What’s wrong?” asked Daria.

“You, sleeping pills, everything.” Jane took a moment to collect her thoughts. “I just had a dream that you OD’d on sleeping pills, and the cops came and arrested me for it.”

“Wow...” said Daria. She looked up into Jane’s deep blue eyes. “Are you okay?”

“I am now.....” said Jane, taking Daria back into her arms.

Jane and Daria were walking home from school, when Daria turned to Jane. “Did you really think I was dead?”

“Yes. Two cops came to my house, and arrested me for it.” Said Jane. They continued walking towards Daria’s house. “It was too real.”

“It’s been a busy week so far.” Said Daria. “With Tilly, then Quinn...”

“Maybe I just need some sleep. I didn’t get any last night. I stayed up most of the night worrying about you.” Said Jane, looking down at the ground.

Daria stopped, and just looked at Jane. “Where you actually worried about me?” Jane didn’t stop, and didn’t answer. She just kept walking. “Jane?” Daria started walking again, and caught up to Jane. With a couple of long strides, she passed Jane, and then stood in front of her.

“Out of my way, Morgendorffer.” Said Jane flatly.

Daria raised up, and was preparing to stop Jane. She braced herself, as Jane pushed into her, and then started to push Daria along the sidewalk. “You’re either going to stop, or you’re going to run me over.”

Jane sighed, and stopped. “What?”

“Worried...”

“Yes, damn it. I was worried, okay. I always worry about you. More than you will ever know.” Said Jane, getting irritated.

“I...I...” started Daria, but Jane continued.

“The day I met you, I knew there was something special about you. We became friends, and it took off from there. You’re not just a friend to me anymore. You’re the sister I always wanted.” Jane paused for a second. “And I love you like a sister.”

Daria turned a shade of red. “I don’t know what to say...”

Jane continued. “Then you pull this stunt last night. You don’t know how bad I wanted to tell Jake and Helen what you did. I had to relent, and trust you. I almost stayed with you the entire night.”

Daria was speechless. After a moment, all she could say was “I’m sorry, Jane.”

Jane embraced Daria. “Don’t you ever do something like that again. EVER!” said Jane, holding Daria tightly to her.

Daria pulled away. “Why don’t you go home and get some sleep.”

Jane looked down at Daria, and sighed. “Yeah. I guess some sleep would be good. I’ll see ya, amiga.” Jane walked away without another word. Daria just watched as she walked away. She turned to continue walking home, but realized they had stopped in front of her house. As she walked up to the door, she noticed the black sedan sitting in the driveway. She walked into the house, and quietly closed the door behind her. As she headed up the stairs, she overheard what was being said in the kitchen.

“Thanks for helping up out with this Helen. James doesn’t deal with this area of law too much.” Came Sarah’s voice.

“Oh, that’s okay. I don’t do much of this either, but I have done some. There is a junior associate in the office that specializes in this, and she is going to look over everything before we submit it. She has even offered to be there with us at signing.” Said Helen.

“That and since you and your associate are doing this pro bono, this is going to help us out even more.” Said James.

Daria stopped at the top of the stairs, and then headed back down, and into the kitchen. “Hey.” She said as she walked to the refrigerator, and pulled an Ultra-Cola out.

“Hey kiddo!” said Jake, looking up at Daria.

“Hi Daria.” Said Sarah.

“Who is with Quinn?” asked Daria.

“They are doing some tests right now, so we have about an hour before they are done.” Said Helen, not looking up from the paperwork she was checking.

“And Tilly?”

“She should be on her way home from school right now.” Said James.

“Ah... so what are you all doing?”

“Just some paperwork.” All four responded at once, a bit too quickly.

“Right.” Said Daria. She turned and left the room, walking upstairs. She walked down the hall, and was about to turn into her room, when she stopped, and turned into Quinn’s room instead. Walking inside, the room was a disaster. Daria sighed, set her bag down on Quinn’s bed, and began to pick the room up a little. After about an hour, she had everything picked up, clothes put away, bed made, and even put away the different makeup containers that Quinn had left out. She grabbed her bag off the bed, and then left Quinn’s room, closing the door behind her. She walked into her own room, threw her bag on the floor by the foot of the bed, grabbed the remote, laid down on the bed, and turned the TV on.

“Do authors get into their work, or does their work get into them? Find out next, on Sick Sad World!” said the announcer.

Daria propped her head up on her hand, and started to watch the program. After a few short minutes, she was asleep.

Quinn was lying in her hospital bed. The two nurses were changing bandages and checking vitals. The doctor was standing at the foot of the bed, overseeing the work. “How am I?” asked Quinn, trying to ignore the poking and prodding.

“Pretty good. You’re actually recovering faster than we thought.” Said the doctor, flipping through the chart. With any luck, you might be able to go home towards the end of the week.

Quinn paused a second, then asked, “How’s Sandi?”

The doctor looked at Quinn, then to the nurses. “I’m sorry Miss Morgendorffer, I cannot discuss other patients without their consent.”

“That’s okay.” Said Quinn quietly. “I was just curious.”

The nurses were finishing changing bandages. “Do you think you can stand being out of bed for a few minutes?” asked one of the nurses.

Quinn looked at the doctor. “I wouldn’t mind it.”

“I think we can try.” Said the doctor. He nodded at one of the nurses, and she disappeared out of the room, and then came back with a wheelchair. Between the two nurses, they helped Quinn out of bed, and to sit into the chair. The doctor grabbed the handles, and turned Quinn towards the door. “Let’s go for a short walk while they change the bed.”

“Okay.” Said Quinn quietly. The doctor pushed Quinn out of her room, and down the hall. He stopped at the nurse’s station to exchange charts. He then continued pushing Quinn down the hall. “You’re going to come with me for my next patient.” He pushed Quinn down to the end of the hall. “Now, let me go check to make sure it is okay.” He stepped into the room. Quinn could hear quiet words being spoken, but couldn’t make them out. The doctor came back a minute later. “Okay, all is good.” He pushed Quinn into the room. As they entered the room, Quinn could see the person in the bed, and two people sitting in chairs across from the bed.

“Hi Quinn.” Said Sandi, the usual smugness in her voice gone, replaced with a tired lowness that Quinn had never heard from Sandi.

“Hey Sandi.” said Quinn. “How you feeling?”

Sandi looked over to her parents, and then to Quinn. “Fine I guess. Just sore. What about you?”

Quinn looked down to the hospital gown she was wearing. “Okay I guess. Surgery sucks, but not as much as this gown.” She looked up at Sandi.

Sandi looked down to see the same gown she was wearing. “They are definitely a fashion don’t.” Sandi looked at Quinn, who had returned her gaze to the floor. “I’m sorry Quinn.”

“That’s okay Sandi. They can’t have Cashmans making their gowns or they would.....” Quinn said, but her voice trailed off as she saw Sandi turn her head away. “Sandi....”

Sandi turned back to look at Quinn. “Quinn... I really want to say that I am sorry. I didn’t mean for this to happen. I’m.. well.. just.. I’m sorry..”

Quinn glanced over at Tom and Linda, and then to the doctor who was poking at Sandi’s shoulder. “I didn’t mean for things to happen the way they did. I knew you were going to kick me out of the club. I was prepared for it. What I didn’t prepare for was for Tiffany and Stacy to dissolve the club.”

Sandi just looked at Quinn. “You were going to give up fashion for family. I guess I can respect that.”

“I wasn’t going to give up fashion. I just wanted to spend more time with my sisters.” Said Quinn, taking a bit of a defensive tone.

Sandi looked down. After a moment, she said, “I wish I had a sister to spend time with. All I have is my brothers.”

“I think it’s time to go.” Said the doctor.

Quinn pulled herself to the side of Sandi’s bed. She reached her hand out, and took Sandi’s hand into hers. “It’s okay Sandi.” Quinn paused a second. “We will talk more.” She let go of Sandi’s hand, and pushed away from the bed. She turned to the doctor, “Okay, let’s go.”

The doctor pushed Quinn out of the room, and back down the hall. As they were leaving, Quinn could hear Linda saying “I’m surprised she even wanted to see you.”

“So am I.” said Sandi.

Quinn leaned her head against the back of the chair. Her side hurt even more now, probably from pulling herself to the bedside. The doctor pushed Quinn back into her room, where Helen Jake was waiting. "See, Mr. Morgendorffer. I told you she would be back in a minute." Said the nurse who was just finishing Quinn's bed.

"Feel good to get out?" asked Jake as he hugged Quinn.

"Yeah...." Was all Quinn could manage to say. The nurse and Jake helped Quinn back into bed. Once there, she told the doctor. "My side is hurting."

The doctor came over and inspected the bandages. There was a little blood on them. He lifted the bandage to inspect the sutures. "You pulled a stitch." He turned to the nurse. "Bring me a suture kit." The nurse left, and came back a few minutes later with the package. The doctor gave Quinn a local anesthetic, and once it had taken effect, fixed the pulled stitches, and then re-banded the area. Once he was done, he addressed Quinn "Now, no more pulling."

Quinn nodded. "Okay, okay." The doctor made a few last minute checks, and then left, with the nurse following.

"How ya doing, kiddo?" asked Jake.

"Okay I guess. I went down to see Sandi."

Jake took on a look of confusion. "Why on Earth would you EVER want to see her?"

"Because, I don't think she meant to do what she did. It just happened." Quinn thought for a second. "She snapped."

"Quinn... She put you in the HOSPITAL!"

"I know.... I know." Said Quinn. "But if Sandi could put aside the shame and guilt of walking into a potential fire fight with everyone in here, then I can be the bigger and better person and give Sandi the chance to prove herself."

"I don't know, Quinn..." started Jake, but Quinn cut him off.

"Look, I don't think Sandi is going to be stupid enough to try that again. If she does, I don't think Daria, Jane, or Tilly will stand for it. I think they would pound her into the ground." Said Quinn.

"Quinn!" exclaimed Jake.

"I don't understand it. All the years I shunned Daria, and made fun of her, and she still, deep down inside, looks out for her little sister." Said Quinn, looking down.

"Your sister is a smart girl, and so are you, Quinn. She knows, deep down inside, you love her as much as she loves you." Said Jake.

Quinn looked up at her father. "I hope so."

“OH!” said Jake, remembering. “Your sister is in for a big surprise here soon!”

“What?”

“Well, I guess I can tell you, but Sarah and James wanted to keep it a secret from Daria.” Said Jake.

“What?”

Jake got up, and handed Quinn a notebook. Quinn flipped through it. “Wow... When?”

“Next week.” Said Jake.

“Daria is going to flip.” Said Quinn.

“She sure is. Don’t tell her, now.” Said Jake.

“I won’t. I would love to see the look on her face when she finds out.”

The next day, Daria was putting books into her locker, and getting ready to meet Jane and leave school for the day. She felt someone walk up, but didn’t see who it was until she closed her locker. She expected Jane, but it wasn’t. “Hi Daria...” Said Stacy once the locker was closed.

“Hey.”

“Hi... Daria....” Said Tiffany.

“You know... nevermind.” Said Daria. “What do you two want?”

“We were wondering how Quinn was doing.” Said Stacy.

“She’s awake. You can go see her if you want.” Said Daria. She was looking between them, and thought she saw someone she recognized walk across the hall. “I gotta go.” She pushed between them and headed for the end of the hall.

“Yo, amiga!” came Jane’s voice from behind Daria.

Daria just raised her hand in acknowledgement, but keep heading to the end of the hall. She turned, and just saw a leg and foot disappearing behind a door. She walked down to the door, and read the sign.. “Ms. Li, Principal”.

“Hey! What’s the issue?” said Jane as she caught up to Daria.

“I could have sworn I just saw James.” Said Daria.

“What would James be doing at `Laaawwwndale Hiiigh’” Said Jane, doing a Ms. Li impersonation on the school name.

"I don't know." Said Daria. "Maybe this Quinn stuff has me seeing family that's not there. Let's get out of here." They turned and walked down the hall, and then out of the building. Waiting out front, was Trent.

"Hey Janey.. Daria. You two want a ride home?"

"Yeah." Said Jane, shoving Daria forward.

"Remind me later to have Sandi beat you up." Mumbled Daria to Jane. Jane just responded by pushing Daria into the waiting car. Daria climbed into the back seat, while Jane got into the front seat.

"To the Morgendorffer homestead, driver..." said Jane with a grin.

"Huh?" asked Trent, looking at Jane.

"My house." Said Daria.

"Oh. Okay." Said Trent. He started the car and drove off.

Daria just sat with her arms crossed, focused intently on a non-existent point in front of her. "Whatcha thinking about?" asked Jane after the silence became intolerable.

"Just thinking." Said Daria.

"About?"

"Shh!" said Daria, with a look of annoyance.

"Ooooookay." Said Jane. She turned to Trent, "So, what are you doing up this early?"

"Thought I would go see Quinn." Said Trent. "Mr. Morgendorffer said she was awake."

"Oh." Said Jane. She turned back to looking out the side window. A minute or so later, they were pulling up at Daria's. Just as Jane got out, Helen's SUV was pulling into the driveway. Daria got out of the car.

"Hello girls!" said Helen, getting out of her SUV.

"Hi Mrs. Mor... Helen." Said Jane, waving.

"Hey." Said Daria.

Helen walked down to the street. "I am going to be going to see Quinn in about 30 minutes or so. You two want to go?"

Daria shrugged. Jane looked at Daria with a puzzled look, but addressed Helen, "Yeah. I'd like to go."

"Okay. We will be going as soon as I change clothes." Said Helen. She headed into the house.

"I'll be inside." Said Daria to Jane. She turned and headed into the house as well.

“Well, I guess we will see you at the hospital.” Said Jane to Trent.

“Maybe.” Said Trent. “Later Janey.” Jane closed the car door, and Trent drove off. Jane watched Trent drive off, and then turned and headed into the house.

Helen had set her datebook onto the counter, and was getting a drink out of the refrigerator, when Daria came into the house, still with a look of concentration. “Daria... Is something wrong?”

“No. Just think I am seeing things.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Helen.

“I thought I saw James at school today.”

Helen about spit out what she was drinking. “What would James be doing at Lawndale High?”

“That’s the same question I keep asking myself, and I am not coming up with any reasonable answers.” Said Daria.

“Maybe seeing Quinn will get your mind off of it.” Said Helen.

Daria was going to say something, when Jane walked in. She walked right to the fridge and grabbed an Ultra-Cola. “I spend so much time here, it’s almost like I live here.” Said Jane.

“Except your last name isn’t Morgendorffer.” Said Helen with a grin.

“There are legal avenues to remedy that.” Said Daria with a smile.

“Jane Lane-Morgendorffer.” Jane thought for a second. “Nah... Daria Lane sounds better...” Jane paused. “Mr. and Mrs. Trent Lane.” Jane started to laugh. Daria picked up a nearby notepad and tossed it at Jane, which she easily dodged. “You throw like a girl!”

“Uhhhh. I am a girl... at least the last time I checked.” Said Daria.

Helen watched the back and forth between Jane. “I’ll be upstairs changing.” Helen left the room, and headed up the stairs. She walked into the bedroom, and closed the door behind her. “Where was Jane so many years ago.” Said Helen to herself as she looked on her wall and saw a family portrait of herself, Jake, Daria, and Quinn. Everyone was smiling, except for Daria. “She has brought so much happiness into Daria’s life. Daria actually smiles and laughs now.” Helen thought about what Daria had said earlier, that she thought she saw James at Lawndale High. “Maybe we should have never given up Tilly. She could have been the friend Daria needed when growing up.” Helen shook her head, and proceeded to change out of her work outfit and into something more comfortable. After a few minutes, she was done. She started to head downstairs, but then remembered something. She turned and went into Quinn’s room, and picked up her “overnight bag”, which had her essential beauty products in it. Jake had called from the hospital and had asked Helen to bring it when she came. Grabbing the bag, she exited the room, and headed downstairs. As she walked slowly down the stairs, she could hear Daria and Jane talking.

“That would mean she is coming to Lawndale.” Said Jane.

“Yeah. That’s the only reasonable explanation.” Said Daria.

“Can you imagine. Two Daria’s at Lawndale High. Someone reserve the rubber room for Mr. O’Neil.” Said Jane with a smile.

“And Mr. DeMartino. I think he would be shocked with having us both in his class.” Said Daria with a grin. She thought for a second. “What about Ms. Li?”

“I’m willing to be she has to be heavily sedated.” Said Jane. Daria laughed... actually laughed. Jane was surprised at first, but then smiled.

“What?” said Daria.

“Nothing. I like it when you laugh.” Said Jane.

“Don’t get used to it.” Said Daria.

Helen finished her trip down the stairs. “Okay girls, ready to go?”

Jake walked back into Quinn’s room, carrying a folded up newspaper. “Find a newspaper?” asked Quinn.

“Sure did. Today’s paper too! Oh, and I found you something to read too.” Said Jake. He unfolded the paper, revealing the latest issue of “Waif”. He handed it to Quinn.

“Where did you find this? I seriously doubt anyone here reads this.” Said Quinn.

“Down in the gift shop.” Said Jake.

Quinn looked at Jake, her eyes saying “Thank you!” and took the magazine and started to read it. Jake sat down, and unfolded the paper and started to read it. After a minute, he looked over the paper to see Quinn reading, with a smile on her face. Satisfied, Jake returned to reading his newspaper.

“Hey Mr. Morgendorffer.” Came Trent’s voice from the doorway.

“Hi Trent! Come on in!” said Jake.

Trent walked slowly into the room. Quinn put down her magazine, and just stared at Trent. “Hey Quinn.”

“Hi...” said Quinn, still staring at Trent.

“I just wanted to see how you were doing.” Said Trent.

“Fine I guess.” Said Quinn. “They are saying I might be able to leave by the end of the week.”

“Cool.” Said Trent. He looked around the room. “Uhh, hows....” Started Trent, but stopping short.

“Sandi?” asked Quinn. “She will be okay. She came down to visit with me yesterday, and she was down here again this morning.” Quinn looked away from Trent, and towards Jake. Jake just nodded slowly. “Trent... I just want to say.... I just want to say thank you.”

Trent nodded. “Cool.” He looked around the room uncomfortably.

“Is there something wrong Trent?” asked Jake.

“I don’t like hospitals.” Said Trent.

“It’s true.. he doesn’t.” came Jane’s voice from the doorway. She came walking into the room, followed by Helen, and then Daria.

Quinn smiled at the arrival of her mother, Daria, and Jane. “Hi...” said Quinn.

Helen walked up and kissed Quinn on the forehead. “Hi honey. How are you feeling?”

“Fine.” Said Quinn.

“We brought something for you.” Said Jane. Daria stepped forward, and handed Quinn her overnight bag.

“Mom remembered to bring it, and it wasn’t written in her datebook.” Said Daria.

Quinn opened the bag, and the first thing she took out was a hairbrush. She brushed her hair out, trying to pull all the knots out. “Ugh. I can’t stand not being able to take a real shower.” Said Quinn.

“Maybe tomorrow.” Said Helen. “I will go check with the doctor.” Helen turned and walked out of the room.

“How’s school?” asked Quinn of Daria.

“Same Lawndale High you know and love. Stacy and Tiffany asked about you.” Said Daria.

“Daria has been given permission to tutor you for the classwork you have missed. Mr. O’Neil is working on getting her permission to give you missed tests as well.” Said Jane.

“Yeah. You can call me Miss Morgendorffer.” Said Daria dryly.

Jane laughed. “Maybe I can get permission for Daria to teach me outside of school. I wouldn’t have to leave bed.”

“You would still have to come to my house every day.” Said Daria.

“But I could stay at your house, and never have to get out of my pajamas!” said Jane, trying to imagine how convenient that would be.

“Daria... A teacher...” said Quinn. She thought for a second. “I wonder what they are going to do for Sandi.”

“Depends if she returns to school or not.” Said Jane. She looked around, “Hey, where did Trent go?”

Quinn looked around the room. "I don't know. He was here a minute ago."

"He did say he didn't like hospitals." Said Jake from behind his newspaper.

"I'll go look for him." Said Jane. She turned and left the room.

Daria stepped to Quinn's bedside. "I don't know what is in that bag, but I believe your basic essentials are in there. I think your body wash, shampoo and conditioner are in there as well."

"Thanks Daria." Quinn paused for a second, looking down at the bag, then she looked back up at Daria. "Dad mentioned something the other day, and I wonder if there is any truth to it."

Jake looked up from his newspaper. Daria glanced over at Jake, and then back to Quinn. "What?"

Quinn looked away. "Nothing. Nevermind."

Jake folded his paper. Daria looked over at Jake again, and then back to Quinn. She sighed. "What did you want to ask Quinn?"

Quinn was picking at her sheet. Finally she spoke. "Me and dad were talking about Sandi after she had visited yesterday. I told dad that you, Jane and Tilly would likely beat Sandi into a pulp if she tried anything."

Daria looked over at Jake, who was reading the paper again. "Well, we would contract it out to some Mafia hit men. Not knowing Tilly, she would probably handle it herself. Jane would likely turn her into paint."

Quinn laughed. "Which proves my point." Quinn paused for a moment. "I think that even though I have shunned you, never acknowledging that you are my sister, that you still deep down inside, love your little sister."

Daria looked at the floor. "Yeah... really deep down." Muttered Daria.

"Daria." Said Jake from behind his paper.

Daria shrugged, and looked at the floor. "Yeah, well... IguessIdoloveyou." Mumbled Daria.

"What was that Daria? I didn't hear you." Said Quinn. Daria looked up at Quinn, and Quinn winked at Daria, letting her know that she did in fact hear what Daria said. "Thanks Daria."

"What did I miss?" asked Helen, walking back into the room.

"Sisterly bonding." Said Daria.

Helen walked over and felt Daria's forehead. "Are YOU feeling okay?"

"All systems operating within normal parameters." Said Daria.

"Well, I guess Trent left. His car is gone." Said Jane, walking into the room.

"It's okay, Jane. I can understand. I don't like hospitals either. Too much white clothing." Said Quinn.

“Anybody home?” came a voice from outside the door.

“Come in.” said Quinn. A moment later, Stacy and Tiffany came in.

“Hi Quinn! You’re awake!” said Stacy.

“Yeah. Hi.... Quinn..” said Tiffany.

“We’ll let you visit with your friends Quinn. I’m going to take Daria and Jane home.” Said Helen.

“Okay. Bye Jane, bye mom... Bye sis.” Said Quinn as Daria, Jane, and Helen left.

“See you later... sis.” Said Daria as she walked out of the room.

As they were in Helen’s SUV heading home, Helen turned to Daria, who was looking out the window. “What was that between you and Quinn.”

“Nothing. Just a little banter between sisters.” Said Daria.

“Daria...” started Helen, but Daria cut her off.

“Let’s just drop it. I don’t want to talk about it.” Said Daria.

“Ookay.” Said Helen, she looked up in the rearview mirror at Jane, who was just shrugging. Helen went to say something, but stopped in mid thought. “It will keep.” She said to herself. They continued with the ride, and after a few minutes, Helen pulled into the driveway. The SUV hadn’t stopped for more than a second before Daria was out and into the house. “Jane, do you want me to drive you home?”

Jane looked at Daria as she went into the house. “Maybe I should go home.” Said Jane.

Helen turned to Jane. “I need to talk to you for a minute, Jane.”

“Sure.” Said Jane.

Helen thought for a second. “Has Daria ever mentioned to you about her life before Lawndale?”

“Yeah. She said that there was uranium in the water in Highland, which explained the two idiots she went to school with.” Said Jane.

“Beavis and Butt-head...” Said Helen, shaking her head. “Anyway, Daria has never had any friends in school. She went to school, she came home, she read. Lather, rinse, repeat. That was it. When we moved to Lawndale, I thought she was going to be the same way. Then she met you. Let me tell you Jane. I have known Daria for all her life, and I have never... NEVER... heard her laugh. Isn’t that weird? I’ve never heard my own daughter laugh. Since she has been around you, she has made a significant change, and I believe that is all because of you.”

Jane just looked at Helen, blinking. “Daria is a unique person, just like me. When I met Daria, I saw someone who was just like me. I’ve never really had any friends either, and my parents were hardly ever home. In the

past two years, I think they have been here a total of four weeks. I think I have seen you and Mr. Morgendorffer more in the past year than I have seen my parents in years.”

“You are always welcome here, Jane, and if you and Trent ever need anything, you are welcome to come to me or Jake for help.” Said Helen.

“Thanks.” Said Jane. She looked back at the house. “I think I will go see what Daria is up to.”

Helen smiled. “Thank you Jane.”

“No, thank you.... Helen.” Said Jane. She got out of the SUV, and went up the walk and into the house. Helen followed closely behind. Jane walked up the stairs, and to Daria’s room. She knocked on the door.

“GO AWAY!” sharply came Daria’s voice from the other side.

“Daria... It’s Jane.”

Jane could hear Daria sigh, or she thought she could hear it. “Enter at your own risk.” Said Daria in a broken voice.

Jane walked in the room. The lights were off, and the curtains pulled. The room was bathed in the red light from the clock. She knew Daria was probably lying on the bed. She could barely see Daria in the light. She sat on the bed next to Daria. “What’s wrong amiga? You have been a little moody here recently... well, more moody than usual.”

“Nothing.” Said Daria, face buried in a pillow.

Jane paused for a second, “Do you want me to just hold your head into the pillow until you stop moving?”

Daria shot up, looking at Jane. “What the...”

“Thought that would get your attention. Now, what’s wrong amiga?” Jane could see Daria didn’t have her glasses on.

“Just life.” Said Daria. She leaned against Jane. “Just Quinn. I realized while I just recently gained a sister, I came close to losing a sister. If it wasn’t for Trent, I might have lost her.”

“Trent was my protector when I was growing up. My mom and dad were hardly home, so Trent mostly raised me. I was never really close to my sisters or other brother. I feel like you are more my sister than my real sisters.” Said Jane. Daria didn’t say anything. “Daria?”

“I’m here. Just listening to your voice.” Said Daria.

Jane looked over at Daria. She could feel the warmth of Daria’s skin against her own, and could smell the combination of her shampoo, body wash, and deodorant. It was a very familiar smell, almost comforting. “Daria.... Can I ask you something?”

“Sure.” Said Daria.

Jane noticed that Daria's usual monotone had changed into a more warm tone. "How do you feel about me?" asked Jane in an equally warm tone.

Daria sat up, and moved forward so she could see Jane clearly. After a moment, she wrapped her arms around Jane, placing her head on Jane's chest. "I can't describe the feeling. Around you, I don't have to put up my defenses. I can be me, not who I want everyone to think I am." Daria sat like this for a second, and then sat up. "Jane?" Jane didn't say anything. She was just staring at a fixed point on the wall. "Jane? You okay?"

"Yeah... I'm fine..." said Jane, in a barely audible voice.

Daria could make out in the dim light that Jane was crying. She didn't say anything, but just took Jane's hand into her own. "Is it possible we have grown so close, that we are past the point of being friends?"

"I've never had anyone care for me like this, except for Trent. My own family hardly knows me." Jane wiped her face on her sleeve. "It's sad that your mom and dad care for me more than my own."

Daria let go of Jane's hand. "I think they treat you like I treat you... As my sister. So, in essence, they have four kids."

A small smile crept onto Jane's face. "What about Trent?"

"Dad seems to really like him. Getting into a car accident together seems to bring men together." Said Daria.

"Yeah... I guess it does." Said Jane. She stood up. "I guess I better go."

"Okay." Said Daria, still with a warm tone. "See you tomorrow?"

"Yep." Said Jane. She quickly turned and walked out the door. Down the hall, and down the stairs. Helen was in the kitchen, getting a drink. Jane quickly opened the door, and ran out of the house, almost slamming the door behind her. She kept running until she got home. She went into the house, and straight up to her room. She flung herself down on the bed, trying to comprehend the feelings she was dealing with. "Daria thinks of me as more than a friend." Jane laid on the bed, mind racing. Shortly thereafter, she was fast asleep.

Thursday came, and was passing quickly. Daria was walking out of school, when her mother's SUV pulled up. "Daria. I am heading to the hospital. Do you and Jane want to go?"

"I will. I haven't see Jane all day. She wasn't in any of her classes." Said Daria, getting in. Helen drove off, and started towards home.

"I have to go home and change really quick. Eric has been really good and been letting me go early so I can relieve your father from staying with Quinn. Though I have been doing some casework while sitting with Quinn." Said Helen. Daria just sat quietly, not saying a word. After a minute, Helen broke the silence. "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

"No." said Daria flatly. She reflected on what had transpired between her and Jane the evening before, and if it had anything to do with Jane not being in school. After a few minutes, they were pulling into the driveway.

Daria got out of the SUV, and followed her mother into the house. She went straight to the phone, and dialed Jane's phone number. It rang and rang. Finally, someone picked up the phone.

"Hello?"

"Trent? It's Daria. Where's Jane?"

"Oh, hey Daria. Janey? Uhhh, she's not here." Said Trent.

Daria felt a chill creep up her spine. "Then where in the hell is she? She wasn't at school."

"I don't know. She wasn't here when I woke up." Trent paused a moment.

"Trent?"

"Uhhhhh." Trent continued his pause, and after a moment, continued talking, but in a hushed tone. "She's here. She didn't want to talk to you."

"Is she okay?" asked Daria.

"No. She's been moping around the house all day. I think you need to come talk to her." Said Trent. He paused again, and then continued in a bit of a louder voice "I will tell her you called when I see her. Bye."

Daria hung the phone up. Helen was coming down the stairs. "Ready sweetie?"

"On second thought, I think I am going to go to Jane's. I'm a little worried about her."

"What's wrong?" asked Helen.

"Nothing." Said Daria. She didn't want to get into this with her mother.

"I'm calling your bluff Daria. You can't lie to a lawyer." Said Helen. She led Daria into the living room, and sat Daria down on the couch.

Daria sighed. "I was a bit truthful with Jane last night. I think I might have scared her."

Helen looked at Daria. "Truthful about what?"

Daria sighed. "She was there. I was feeling bad. I hugged her." Daria paused, waiting for her mother's reaction. When she didn't see any, she continued. "I laid my head on her chest, and told her I was just listening to her voice."

Helen raised an eyebrow. "Do you think you like Jane more than just a friend?"

Daria took on a shocked look. "You mean?" Daria stopped in mid-sentence, penny dropping. "Oh god."

Helen maintained her calm. "Do you think you like Jane that way?"

"I don't think so." Said Daria, looking at the floor. "I don't know."

“Daria, let me ask you something, and I want you to be completely honest with me.” Said Helen, looking at Daria. Daria looked up at her mother. “Can you do that?” Daria shook her head in confirmation. Helen thought for a second, trying to form her sentence carefully. “Do you think, maybe somewhere inside, you might care for Jane more than you normally think you would because you nearly lost your sister? I know you consider her more than a friend, almost like a sister, maybe more. Maybe you are afraid to lose her?”

Daria just sat back on the couch. She looked at her mother. “Maybe.” Was all she could say.

“You going to go see her?” asked Helen.

“I think I should.” Said Daria.

“I can drop you off on the way.” Said Helen. Daria just nodded. “Okay, let’s go.” She got up, and Daria followed. The entire trip to Jane’s, Daria didn’t say a word. Her mind was running at full tilt, trying to figure out what she was going to say. They pulled up in front of Jane’s. “You want me to wait?” Daria just shook her head “no”, and got out. She looked at Helen with an expressionless look, and then turned and walked up the walk to Jane’s house. Helen watched as Daria walked into the house, looked around, and then closed the door behind her. As she drove off, she said to herself “What is going on in that girl’s mind? She has the capability to love someone strongly, and she won’t succumb to it.”

Daria walked into La Casa Lane, and looked around. Not seeing anyone, she went to head up the stairs, but stopped when she heard a door open. “Hey Daria.” Said Trent in a low voice.

“Hey.” Said Daria.

“Janey is in her room. What happened?”

“I think I might have scared her a little.” Said Daria. She noticed she wasn’t hesitating while talking to Trent. Her mind was focused on the task at hand.

“Daria.... Janey means a lot to me, and you mean a lot to her. She was crying last night.” Said Trent.

Daria felt her stomach knot up. She swallowed, and looked up the stairs. “Damn.”

“Daria... Janey...” Started Trent, but he noticed Daria’s gaze had shifted from looking up the stairs to looking at Trent. “Daria?”

“Huh wha? Oh, sorry.” Said Daria, turning away.

Trent stepped forward, and spun Daria around to face him. “Hey. Janey needs you. Thanks for coming over.” He placed the edge of his hand under Daria’s chin, and lifted her head up gently. He leaned forward, and softly kissed Daria on the lips. Without thinking, she kissed him back. After a moment, Trent pulled away. Daria just stood there, unable to move. Trent turned and left the room. Daria was frozen. She had to force her mind back onto track. Before thinking, she spun around and headed up the stairs. As she got to Jane’s bedroom door, she could hear what sounded like Metallica’s “Nothing Else Matters” being played at a high volume.

Daria could actually feel the bass drum in her chest, or was that her heart still going after her run in with Trent. Sighing, she knocked on the door.

“Go away Trent.” Came Jane’s voice from the other side of the door. Daria tried the door handle, but it was locked. “I said go away Trent.” Daria eyed the door carefully. She seriously doubted she had the weight to force her way into Jane’s room. Daria knocked on the door again. This time, she heard the music go down, and heard footsteps coming towards the door. She took a step back, as she heard the door being unlocked. Daria prepared herself. The door swung open. “Dammit Trent. I said...” Said Jane as she realized it wasn’t Trent. “Hey.”

“Hey.” Said Daria. “Can I come in?”

“Sure.” Said Jane. She left the door open, and walked back and flopped down on the bed. “Let me guess.. Trent told you I was here.”

Daria turned red. “Let’s not talk about Trent right now.” She said as the memory of a few moments ago flashed through her mind. “I think I need to clarify a few things.” Daria sat on the edge of Jane’s bed.

“You wanted to know why I wasn’t in school today...”

“Yeah. Though I have a good idea.” Said Daria. She tried to force her mind clear, but it was becoming more and more difficult with every passing moment. “I’m afraid you thought the wrong thing yesterday. Maybe, that you mistook my actions as meaning something else.”

Jane sat up. “That you were in love with me?”

“Yeah.” Said Daria slowly. “Don’t get me wrong. I *do* love you, but not like that. I love you like I love my sisters. You are an extension of my family. With what happened to Quinn, I think maybe a few feelings were crossed, and it came off wrong.”

Jane moved down and sat by Daria. “You know, I thought about it all night last night, and all day today. All I have known about you, simply went out the window yesterday. I was scared. I had to get out.” Jane looked down at the floor. “I’m not *that* way.” She paused, forming her next words carefully. “But, if I ever did go that way, I would want it to be with you.” Jane placed her arm around Daria, and laid her head on her shoulder.

Daria thought about it for a second. Pushing thoughts of Trent from her mind, she tried to focus on Jane. “I would want the same thing.” Said Daria as she placed her arm around Jane. She thought for another moment. “You are my best friend. You are my, well, now third sister. I couldn’t stand the thought of losing you, just like I couldn’t stand losing Quinn, and now Tilly, or my parents, as much as a pain in the ass they might be.”

“I’m glad amiga. I don’t think I could stand losing you either.” Said Jane.

Daria felt a warmness creeping up from her toes to her head. “With that said, I have something to tell you.”

Jane pulled away. “Oh Christ, here it comes. She is getting ready to tell me she doesn’t want to be my friend anymore.” Said Jane to herself. She prepared herself for what was coming.

“Trent kissed me.” Said Daria deadpan.

Jane's eyes went wide. "WHAT? When? Where?"

Daria started to turn red again. "Downstairs, right before I came up here. He said something about you needing me, and thanked me for coming over. Then he kissed me." Daria paused a second. "I kissed him back. And before you ask, it was on the lips."

"DARIA!" exclaimed Jane. "Finally!" Jane paused a second. "Did you like it?"

"No...." said Daria. "Well, yeah. I couldn't move afterwards."

"Well? Now what?" asked Jane.

"I don't know. I don't think I could see him right now. I would probably melt down into a puddle of goo." Said Daria, thinking back.

Jane looked at her friend. "Thank you for coming over."

Daria moved back. "That's what Trent said before he kissed me." Jane moved forward like she was going to kiss Daria, but Daria pushed her back. "You're not entirely right, are you?"

"Nope, I'm half left!" said Jane with a smile.

Daria stood up. "I think I am going to go home. I want to get caught up on some things at home. Hopefully, Quinn will be home tomorrow."

Jane stood up, and placed her hand on Daria's shoulder. "You really do love your sister, don't you?"

"Yeah. I guess I do, but I will deny it in public if ever spoken of again." Said Daria with a small smile.

"I'll walk down with you, so I can distract Trent if we run into him." Said Jane. They walked out of Jane's room, and down the hall, and down the stairs. As they came down the stairs, Trent was sitting on the couch. When Trent saw Daria, he stood up. Jane took two quick steps to get ahead of Daria, and headed for Trent. At the sight of Trent, Daria froze. "Hey Trent, can you help me with something?" said Jane. Trent ignored her, looking at Daria.

"Okay Morgendorffer. Fire or clear." Said Daria to herself. She forced her feet to move, except they weren't heading for the door, they were heading towards Trent. Jane watched as Daria walked to Trent. She looked up at him, and he looked down at her. Daria gestured for Trent to bend down. When he did, she moved forward, took him in her arms, and deeply kissed Trent. After a second, Trent gave in, and returned the kiss, wrapping her up in his arms. Now Jane couldn't move. She tried to turn away, but just couldn't. After what seemed like an eternity, they broke their embrace. "See you later, Trent." Said Daria as she turned and walked out the door. Jane just stood there in shock.

"Later.... Daria..." was all Trent could get out. He sat back down on the couch, and just stared blankly at the doorway where Daria once was..

Jane finally forced herself to function. "Trent?"

“Yeah...”

“What the hell was that?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t expect that from her.” Said Trent.

“Neither did I.” said Jane. “Neither did I.”

Daria walked home, but it felt like she was floating on a warm cushion of air. Her mind was racing as the scene replayed over and over in her mind. She didn’t think of anything else, she couldn’t think of anything else. Shortly, she was at home. She walked into the house, and sat down on the couch. She looked off into space, trying to sort the feelings in her mind. “I need something to slow my mind down.” Daria said to herself. She thought about the different medications that were in the cabinets, but she decided on the old standby. She walked to the liquor cabinet, and pulled a half-full bottle of spiced rum from the cabinet. She went into the kitchen, put some ice in a glass, and filled the glass about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way with the rum. She then filled the glass the rest of the way with Ultra-Cola. She stirred the drink up, and took a few sips from the drink. After a few sips, she quickly drank the rest of the glass. She took a moment to let the drink settle. “Not slow enough.” She said to herself. She fixed another drink in the same glass. She drank that one done a little slower, but still quickly.

Two hours later, Daria was up in her room, passed out on the bed. An empty glass, and a equally empty rum bottle was beside the bed. She at least thought to change into her night clothes before she continued drinking.

Helen came home around 9pm. She went into the kitchen, and saw the empty soda cans on the counter, and the cap to the rum bottle. She looked around, and saw Daria’s jacket on the couch. She headed up the stairs, and to Daria’s room. She knocked on the door, but it swung open with the first touch. She walked into the room, and saw Daria face down on the bed, and the empty rum bottle. Helen quickly tried to remember how much was in the bottle, and noted that it wasn’t a very big bottle. She walked over to the edge of the bed, and noticed that Daria was still breathing. “Daria?” she said as she rubbed Daria’s back.

“Nrrrgh.” Was all Daria said as she moved a little and went back to sleep.

Helen stood up, and shook her head. “She’s going to have one hell of a hangover in the morning.” She pulled the blanket over Daria.

“Thank you Trent.... You were wonderful.” Muttered Daria in her sleep.

Helen looked at her daughter, shaking her head. “I’ll have to find out about this later.” Helen picked up the empty bottle and glass, and walked out of Daria’s room, closing the door behind her. Tomorrow was going to be a busy day, with Quinn being released from the hospital in the afternoon. Helen walked back downstairs, and went into the kitchen, throwing away the empty cans. She took the empty glass, and washed it quickly and put it up. She then took the bottle, and buried it in the bottom of the trash can. She didn’t want Jake to find out, not yet. She glanced at the calendar. Tomorrow was a teacher duty day, so there was no school. “You’re lucky Daria...” Helen locked the house up, turned off the lights, and went upstairs to go to bed herself. Tomorrow was going to be a long day.

Jane rolled over, and looked at the clock. 8:30am. She could hear what sounded like music from downstairs, but it was too good, and too early, to be Trent. She climbed out of bed, and walked downstairs. When she walked into the kitchen, she saw Trent, making breakfast. Jane shook her head. "I have to be dreaming, or someone has kidnapped Trent and left an android in his place." She said to herself. "Morning, Trent."

"Oh, Hey Janey." Said Trent.

"What are you doing up *this* early?"

"Never went to sleep last night. Couldn't." said Trent, stirring some potatoes in a frying pan.

"Why?" asked Jane, sitting down at the table.

"Just couldn't. Too much on my mind." Said Trent.

"Too much stuff, or too much of someone?" asked Jane, already knowing the answer. She could see the back of Trent's neck turning a little red.

Trent turned around with the pan, and poured the potatoes onto a plate. "You want some, Janey?"

"Sure." Said Jane. Trent took another plate that was under his and put some of the potatoes on it. He grabbed two forks, and brought the plates to the table, setting one down in front of Jane, and then he sat down across from Jane.

"Daria." Said Trent, looking down at his plate.

"What about her?" Asked Jane. She looked up at Trent, but noticed he wasn't looking up. "Trent... Look up at me." Trent slowly raised his head. "What did she do to you?"

"I think she stole my heart." Said Trent.

Jane picked at her food, eating a couple of forkfuls. "Trent. I want to tell you something." Jane put her fork down, and looked Trent square in the eyes. "Daria is my best friend. She is like a sister to me. I want to remind you, that she is still 17. You're 22."

"I know Janey... I don't plan on doing anything." Said Trent.

"Nothing is ever planned. However, I am still going to tell you this. If you hurt her, if she comes to me crying that you hurt her, you will wish you lived here alone, because I will make your life a living hell until her and I BOTH feel better. You got me?" Trent looked at his sister, and then just nodded. "Say it, Trent."

"Yeah Janey, I know." Said Trent. He looked down at his plate, and then back up at Jane. "She really means that much to you, doesn't she?"

"More than you will ever know, Trent. She is the first real person I could consider a friend." Said Jane.

"She seems to feel the same about you." Said Trent.

"Yeah, that and a brother who insists on telling people I am home when I am not."

“Hey.. I care for you too, Janey.”

“I know, Trent.”

Helen was sitting at the kitchen table, eating some pancakes she had made herself, and going through her datebook to see who she had pushed off for the day, when her cell phone rang. “Hello? Oh Hi Eric... What? No. I will be out until Monday..... What? Yes, you heard me. Off until Monday..... No, there is nothing wrong with me, my daughter is supposed to be coming home from the hospital today..... Yes Eric, that one.... What? No, they are just going to have to wait until Monday..... Yes Eric... *Yes* Eric... Okay... Bye...” she hung the phone up and set it on the table, but before the phone was barely out of her hands, it rang again. “Hello? Oh, Hi Sarah. Yes, Quinn is supposed to be coming home today.... Sure..... Yeah, school is out here today too.... Daria is.... Uh, She is not feeling well. She went to bed early..... Really? I’m sure Daria will be completely surprised..... Okay... If you need anything, just call.... Okay... Say hi to James and Tilly for me... You too.... Bye bye...” Helen hung the phone up and set it on the table.

“Did someone get the license plate of that truck that ran me over?” Said Daria as she staggered into the kitchen, and to the refrigerator. She rummaged through it, finding an Ultra-Cola. She went and sat down at the table across from Helen. Helen pushed a small pill cup with a couple of different medications in it across the table to Daria. “What’s that for?”

“Helps with a hangover.” Said Helen, nonchalantly.

“Thanks.” Said Daria as she took the pills and swallowed them with a gulp of soda. “Wait, who said I have a hangover? I just don’t feel good.”

“I found the bottle in your room, Daria.” Said Helen.

Daria buried her head in her hands. “What time?”

“About 9 o’clock.” Said Helen, putting down her datebook. “What prompted that?”

“Nothing.” Said Daria, taking another drink.

“Daria... Look, I know sometimes things can be hard to deal with, but alcohol is not a way to deal with your problems.” Said Helen.

“I wasn’t dealing with any problems. I was trying to slow my thoughts down some.”

“Why?”

Daria sighed. “I’m trying to decide if I did something that was stupid or not.”

Helen looked at Daria. “What did you do, Daria?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Said Daria, still with her face buried in her hands.

“Daria....” Said Helen. Daria looked up at her mother. “If I can do anything to help...”

Daria just looked at her mother. After a couple of seconds, she spoke. “When did you know that dad was the one?”

Helen just stared blankly at Daria. “What?”

Daria sighed again. “I... uh... kissed Trent yesterday.” Helen just sat there. Daria took another drink. “I went over to Jane’s to talk to her yesterday. Trent met me downstairs, and told me Jane was upstairs. He then told me I was a good friend to Jane and then he kissed me.”

Helen took a sip of her orange juice she was drinking. “And?”

“And what? That was it. I went upstairs when talked to Jane.” Said Daria.

“You said YOU kissed HIM.” Said Helen, prying for more information.

Daria sighed again. “After I talked to Jane, I came downstairs. He was sitting on the couch. I needed to see if I could, so I did.”

“Daria... I know I don’t have to tell you about...” started Helen, but Daria cut her off.

“No, I am not planning to do anything.” Said Daria. “I just wanted to see what it was like.”

“Daria... You just used Trent as an... an experiment?”

“Yes.”

“Daria... that’s not very fair to Trent. I know you have some sort of attraction to him. Every time you talk to him or about him, you start turning red.” Said Helen.

“I don’t want to go into this.” Said Daria, rubbing her head.

“Maybe we should invite Trent and Jane over for dinner tonight.” Said Helen.

Daria sat straight up. “No.”

“Daria, you need to either tell him how you feel, or you need to tell him you’re not looking for a relationship right now. It’s not fair to him.” Said Helen.

“Thank you Dr. Ruth.” Said Daria, as she got up and headed towards the stairs.

“Are you going with me to the hospital later?” Asked Helen of Daria.

Daria sighed again. “Probably.” She turned back to the stairs. “I will be in my room.”

Helen picked up the phone, and dialed Jane’s #. “Hello? Jane? Hi... I was wondering if you and Trent want to come over for dinner tonight?... I don’t know what we are going to be having. We might just order pizza.... I thought you would like that.... About 7 o’clock or so..... What?.... Yes... she told me. Yes... it will be our

secret.... Okay Jane... Oh, if you want to stay the night, make sure you bring clothes. Daria could probably use someone to talk to. I tried to get her to talk, but she didn't tell me much.... Okay Jane... See you tonight... bye bye." Helen hung the phone up, and looked over at the clock. It was about 9:30 or so. She had to be at the hospital at noon. She finished her orange juice, and then headed upstairs herself to take a shower and get ready for the day.

Jane was in her room, staring at a canvas. On the canvas was a basic outline of two people. One was a bit shorter than the other. They looked to be holding hands. The shorter figure was taking on a female shape, while the taller one was male. She was just about to put brush to canvas when the phone rang. "Yo!.. Oh, Hi Helen.....Dinner? What are you going to be having?.... I could handle that. I'm sure Trent would like that too. What time?..... 7 o'clock. Oh..... Did Daria tell you what she did last night?.....Oh, well don't tell her I told you, even though you already know....Okay Helen, see you tonight.....Yeah, I think I might do that. Okay.. bye." Jane hung the phone up. She set the brush down, and walked outside of her room. "Yo Trent!"

"Yeah Janey?" came Trent's reply from downstairs. A few moments later, he was coming up the stairs.

"Helen just called. Invited us over for dinner. Probably having pizza. Wanna go?"

"I don't know Janey.." said Trent as he turned a bit red.

"It would be an opportunity to see what Daria thinks of you. I would say, that how she acts tonight will tell you everything." Said Jane.

"Yeah.. Maybe... I don't know." Said Trent.

"C'mon.. It will be fun."

"Maybe." Said Trent. "If I'm going, I need to get some sleep." Trent disappeared into his room, closing the door behind him. He walked in and over to his dresser. He opened up the top drawer, and took out a small cigar box. Inside the box was a few items. He dug to the bottom, and pulled a couple of pictures from the box. They were pictures of Daria. One was one that Jane took after they came back from their failed trip to Alternapalooza, and then the other one was a recent school picture that Daria "left" for Trent, even though she wouldn't admit she did. He looked at the pictures for a second, and then put them back in the box. He walked back to the other side of the bed, picked up the phone, and dialed a number. "Hey.... Monique... I need to talk to you about something.... I think we need to see other people. Huh? You're already seeing someone? Cool... No hard feelings? Cool. Bye." He hung the phone up, and then flopped down on the bed. A few minutes later, he was fast asleep.

Helen was getting ready to go upstairs to see if Daria was ready to go, when Daria slowly came down the stairs. She was dressed in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt, and her hair was in a ponytail. "Daria?"

"Hey." Was all she said as she came down the stairs. She walked to the couch, and sat down.

Helen came in and sat down beside her daughter. "Daria... this is a new look?"

“Not really. Same thing I wore to Alternapalooza that one time. The hair is something that Quinn did one time. I didn’t like it then, and I really don’t care for it now.” Said Daria. She fiddled with the scrunchie that held her hair up.

“I didn’t know you even owned a scrunchie.” Said Helen.

“It’s one of Quinn’s.” said Daria.

“What brought this on?” asked Helen.

“Was in the mood for a change for the day. The real test will be if Quinn catches it.” Said Daria. “Hopefully no one...” She started, but before she could, there was a quick flash of bright light. When she could see again, she saw Helen putting a digital camera into her pocket. “I hate you.”

“Love you too, sweetie.” Said Helen. “You ready to go?”

“Yeah.” Said Daria. She grabbed her bag, and followed her mother out the door. They got into Helen’s SUV and drove off. Daria was just staring out the window on her side, trying to avoid any conversation that would make her headache any worse. As she was looking, they passed a house about a block down the road that had a “FOR SALE – SOLD!” sign on it. Sitting in the driveway, was a black sedan. “That looks like James’s car.” Muttered Daria.

“What was that Daria?” asked Helen.

Daria sighed. “I thought I saw James’s car in the driveway of that house we just passed.”

Helen put on a look of confusion. “Why would James be at a house for sale in Lawndale?”

Daria was still staring out the window. She was trying hard not to do too much thinking. “I don’t know.” Was all she said.

After the short trip, they were pulling into the hospital parking lot. Daria and Helen got out of the SUV, and walked into the hospital. Helen knew the route from memory, and just instinctively walked the way to Quinn’s room. When they walked in, Jake was asleep in the chair, and Quinn was reading a book that was a class assignment that Daria had brought from school for her. “Hi Quinn..” said Helen as she walked in.

“Hi mom... Hi.... Daria?” said Quinn, staring at Daria.

“What?” said Daria.

After a moment, Quinn spoke. “You look good, Daria.”

“Thanks...” said Daria as she sat down next to Jake. “Dad... Wake up.”

“Huh who wha?” said Jake as he was trying to wake up. “Oh, hey kiddo. Hi honey.. when did you two get here?”

“About two minutes ago.” Said Helen. “Has the doctor been in yet?”

“No.” said Quinn. “The nurse was in though, and said that the doctor would be in around noon.”

Helen looked at her watch. “Good, then we aren’t too late. So, how are you feeling?”

“My side doesn’t hurt as bad as it did yesterday, but it’s still a bit sore. God I hope they let me out of here today. I can’t stand this place. Too many people wearing the same outfits.. Ugh...” said Quinn, trying to put the image of bad fashion out of her mind.

“What about Sandi?” asked Helen.

“She left last night. She stopped by with her parents for a few minutes before she left.” Said Quinn, looking down at the sheet. “Her parents brought her some clothes from home so she didn’t have to wear the hospital gown home.”

“The look suits her.” Said Daria, looking over the newspaper she swiped from Jake while he wasn’t looking.

“Daria...” said Helen as she glanced over at Daria, who just raised the paper to hide behind.

“Did you bring Quinn some clothes to wear home?” asked Jake.

“No, she has clothes here.” Said Helen.

“I remember they cut my clothes off of me.” Said Quinn.

“I think you will be surprised. Daria and Jane picked these clothes out for you the day you were admitted.” Said Helen.

“But mo-om.... Daria doesn’t know how to co-ordinate...” whined Quinn.

“Good ol’ Quinn is amongst us.” Mumbled Daria from behind the newspaper.

Helen turned to face Daria, but looked at the newspaper instead. “I know what you and Jane did.”

Daria dropped the paper enough to look over the top. “Did what?” she asked, with a small smile.

“Oh Daria..” said Helen as she walked to the dresser and pulled out the bag that said “Patient Belongings”. From within that bag, she pulled out a Cashman’s bag, and then pulled out the pants and shirt that Daria and Jane had bought Quinn. Then Helen pulled out another bag that had other necessary clothes in it. “Your sister and Jane went to Cashman’s and bought you a new shirt and pants. I brought you the other bag from home.”

Quinn took the shirt and held it up, and then the pants. “Daria? You and Jane bought me these?”

“Yeah.” Said Daria, hiding behind the paper. “We figured you wouldn’t want to go home wearing the hospital gown.”

“I can’t believe this. Daria and Jane went into Cashman’s.” Quinn put down the clothes. “You didn’t pay full price did you?”

“No. Some chick name Theresa helped us. As soon as she knew we were shopping for you, she knew exactly what we needed.” Said Daria, still not looking from behind the paper.

“Thank you, Daria.” Said Quinn. “I still don’t believe you went into Cashman’s. Did you see anything you liked? We could always go shopping for a better outfit for you.”

“I don’t think so.” Said Daria. She was getting ready to say something, when there was a knock on the door.

“Come in.” said Helen.

The two doctors from earlier in the week walked in. The second doctor spoke up. “Good afternoon Quinn, Mr. and Mrs. Morgendorffer, and... Daria, is it?”

“Correct.” Said Daria from behind the paper.

“Hello doctor.” Said Helen.

“So, do I get to go home today?” asked Quinn.

“Well.” The second doctor started, looking at the chart in his hand. “You were hurt pretty bad, Quinn. Broken ribs, emergency surgery, and then a short coma.” Quinn started to pick at the sheet. She was waiting for the doctor to say she was staying. “However, I have seen an outpouring of support from your family and friends. You can go home this afternoon, but you still will not be able to go back to school for at least another week. You should be able to walk on your own, but I really don’t want you trying to walk at least until you’ve had your first follow up visit on Monday.” The doctor signed off some paperwork, and handed a few forms and a couple of prescriptions to Helen. “The nurse will be in to see you in a few minutes to process the discharge paperwork. Also, I don’t want you taking baths. A shower will be okay, but be sure to change the dressings afterwards.” The doctor got up, shook Helen’s and Jake’s hands, and then left the room.

Not even a minute after the doctor left, the nurse came in with some paperwork. Helen signed some forms, and set up the follow up appointment for Monday. The nurse left for a minute, and then came back, and gave Helen some copies of the forms. She then removed the IV, and disconnected the monitor sensors. She instructed Quinn on how to remove the sensor pads. Then, as a bit of symbolism, she handed Quinn a pair of scissors. “It’s to cut off the wristband.” The nurse said with a smile. Quinn quickly cut off the band, and handed the scissors back to the nurse. “Okay. You are free to go.” She picked up a few things, and then left, closing the door behind her.

“Well, I guess it’s time to get out of this place.” Said Helen. She helped Quinn into the bathroom, and then brought the clothes to her. Helen then closed the door to let Quinn get changed. After a few minutes, Quinn yelled for Helen to come back in to help her out. Quinn had brushed her hair out the best she could, and tried to wash her face a little. Helen helped Quinn back to the bed, while Jake grabbed the wheelchair from the corner of the room, and then he and Helen helped Quinn into the chair. Daria folded up the paper, and helped gather Quinn’s belongings. Once everything was squared away, Jake pushed Quinn out of the room, and down the hallway to the elevator. Down to the bottom floor, and then down the hallway to the exit. A hospital volunteer followed them out to bring the wheelchair back in. Helen figured it would be easier for Quinn to get into Jake’s car than to climb into Helen’s SUV. Jake helped Quinn out of the wheelchair, and into the car. The hospital volunteer took the wheelchair back inside. Jake got into his car, and started on his way home. Helen and Daria got into the SUV, and started on their way home. As they neared home, they passed the same FOR

SALE – SOLD! sign on the way. This time, there was a silver Mercedes, a green SUV, and a moving truck in the driveway. “Looks like someone is moving in.” said Helen with a grin.

Daria didn’t pay attention. She had the seat reclined, with her eyes closed, rubbing her forehead. “I need to find something stronger than Tylenol for this headache.”

Helen just shook her head. “I don’t think you will be doing that again anytime soon.”

“I am thinking about an Ultra-Cola and whisky when I get home.”

“Daria!” said Helen.

“Don’t be shocked, mom, but for a time there, I was able to think better, and a lot of things lifted from my mind.”

“That’s alcohol for you. Look Daria, I don’t want you drinking any more until you turn 21. Okay?”

“Nrrgh.” Muttered Daria.

“Promise me, young lady.” Said Helen sternly.

“Fine... I promise.” Said Daria. Helen didn’t notice, but she had the fingers on her right hand crossed. Daria said to herself, “I promise not to leave evidence for you to find.”

They pulled up to the house. Jake was already there, helping Quinn into the house. Helen and Daria pulled up next, and they walked in behind Jake. “I’ll help you upstairs, Quinn, and then you can take a shower if you want. You just have to be careful.”

“I’ll help her upstairs.” Said Daria. Quinn looked over at Daria. “C’mon sis.” Quinn put her arm around Daria’s shoulders, and they walked up the stairs, one step at a time. Once upstairs, Daria led Quinn to her room.

“It’s clean...” said Quinn, as Daria helped her to the edge of the bed.

“Yeah. I cleaned it the other day.... Looking for blackmail material.” Said Daria, looking away.

Quinn just looked at Daria. “Were you really that worried about me?”

Daria looked back up at Quinn. “Yes, but I will deny ever admitting it if ever brought up again.” She walked away from Quinn. “What clothes do you want?”

Quinn just looked at Daria for a second. She was shocked by Daria’s comment. “Just grab me a long shirt out of the closet, and some underwear.”

Daria grabbed a long, oversized pink shirt from the closet, and a random pair of underwear from the drawer. She noticed that Quinn had all different colors, designs, and cuts. “Do you really need all these?”

“Daria... A guy likes to see a girl in cute undies and a matching bra.”

“You let guys get that far?” asked Daria. She reflected to the events of yesterday, and imagined Trent seeing her in her usual plain white underwear and sports bra.

“Sometimes...” said Quinn.

“Do they ever get farther?”

“I’m going to take a bit of advice from mom, and plead the fifth.” Said Quinn.

“Quinn...”

Quinn sighed. “Yeah, Daria. I’ve been with a couple of guys.”

Daria just looked at Quinn bewildered, shaking the image of herself and Trent out of her mind. “Let’s get you into the shower. I know you are dying to wash your hair.”

Quinn could see the uneasiness on Daria’s face. “Yeah... “ Daria walked over, and helped Quinn out of the bedroom, and into the bathroom.

“If you need anything, I will be in my room. If you need anything, please don’t hesitate to scream...” said Daria, trying to mask her uneasiness with sarcasm.

“Thanks Daria.” Said Quinn. Daria left the bathroom, and shut the door behind her. She went over into her room, and sat down. She turned on her computer, and once it was booted up, started browsing the Internet for ‘Drinks for teenagers that parents don’t know about’. After what seemed like an hour, but really only 20 minutes, she heard Quinn calling her name. She walked to the bathroom, and knocked on the door.

“Come in.” said Quinn. Daria walked in, and Quinn was finishing brushing her hair. “Thanks Daria. I needed that.”

“Where to?” asked Daria, as she started helping Quinn out of the bathroom.

“Bed.” Said Quinn.

“You’ve been in bed for days already. Aren’t you tired of it?”

“Yeah, tired of the hospital bed. I’m ready for *my* bed.” Said Quinn. Daria helped Quinn into her room, and over to the edge of the bed. Daria turned to walk out of the room. “Thanks Daria... for everything.”

“Don’t mention it.” Said Daria, as she was walking out of the room.

“Oh, Daria..”

“What?” said Daria as she turned around.

“Mom and Dad told me Jane and Trent were there when I was unconscious. You also said that Jane helped with the clothes.”

“Yeah.” Said Daria.

"Tell them I said thank you." Said Quinn.

"You can tell them yourself. Mom invited Jane and Trent over for dinner." Said Daria. She turned and left Quinn's room, and went back into her own, sitting back down in front of the computer.

Daria looked at the clock. 5:30pm. She had spent the past few hours just laying in bed, staring at the ceiling. She was trying to figure out a way to get out of appearing at dinner. She thought of a few different ways, but they all ended up in her possible grounding, or worse. She was just getting ready to go through another scenario in her mind, when she heard what sounded like someone falling against the wall. She rolled out of bed, and walked to the door, opening it. There, she saw Quinn, leaning against the doorway. "About time you opened the door." Said Quinn, as she took advantage of the handrails installed in Daria's room, and worked her way over to Daria's bed. Daria just watched as Quinn moved.

"Can I help you with something?" asked Daria, going back to the bed and sitting down.

"What happened with you and Trent?" asked Quinn.

Daria looked surprised. "How did you hear about that?"

"Mom was up checking on me, and she kinda let it slip out." Said Quinn.

Daria sighed. "Does everyone in the house have to know?" she asked herself. She looked at Quinn. "Nothing really. I went over to Jane's. He kissed me, I kissed him back. I went up to talk to Jane. Came back down, and I just kissed him again."

"Oookay." Said Quinn.

"No, you don't get it... I *kissed* him." Said Daria, a brief flashback running through her mind.

"Daria!" exclaimed Quinn. "I can't believe it."

"What? I kissed a guy. No big deal." Said Daria, trying not to make eye contact with Quinn.

"Uhhh... It *is* a big deal! You sat there and moped around the whole day when you found out Trent had a girlfriend. Now you finally make your move and you say 'No big deal'? I don't think so." Then, everything came together for Quinn. "That's why you're hiding in your room. You don't want to see him tonight."

"I don't know if I can." Said Daria. "Besides, he is still dating that girl."

"And that matters because why?" Said Quinn. "Try dressing up for him a little. Let him see that you are better than that 'thing' he is currently dating." Quinn didn't wait for Daria to answer. She rose to her feet, and walked, albeit slowly, to Daria's closet. "Let's see what you have in here that we can work with."

Daria rolled her eyes. "I don't believe I am going to do this."

“Well, we have to find something that is different than what you normally wear, but something that still represents you as you.” Said Quinn, flipping through the clothes. She finally pulled a dark green shirt from the closet. She tossed it to Daria, and then ambled over to the dresser. She found only a few pair of pants, but mostly skirts. She finally decided on a pair of black jeans. She threw those over her shoulder, and then walked back over to Daria. “This should go good together, for you anyway.” She handed Daria the pants.

Daria just gave her a non-descript look. “If Trent likes me for me, why am I dressing up like someone I’m not?”

“You’re not. This is something you would wear. You just didn’t think of it yet.” Said Quinn. She finally sat down on the edge of the bed again.

Daria looked at the clothes. “What about... other... clothes.”

Quinn gave Daria a puzzled look. “Other?... OH! You mean... Daria... You aren’t thinking about... are you?”

“No. I was just thinking...” said Daria, feeling the heat creeping into her face again. “I’m sure that girl probably wears something more provocative than plain white underwear and sports bras.”

Quinn tilted her head sideways a little and looked at Daria. “It’s a personal preference. Sometimes you wear what is comfortable, but when you want to impress, you might have to sacrifice comfort for fashion, or sexiness. Thought I might be able to help with the bra part.” She eyes Daria for a second. “What size are you?” Quinn didn’t give Daria a chance to answer. “Wait, nevermind. I don’t want to know.” Quinn ambled out of the room, and across the hall. After a few minutes, she came back in, and tossed a bag to Daria. “Here. This is one that mom bought me a few months ago. It’s never been worn. It should fit you.”

Daria pulled the garment out of the bag. It was plain white, but had a small bow on the front, and a simple lace pattern to the fabric. “Quinn... this isn’t necessary.”

“Nonsense Daria. Try it. You might like it. It offers better support than what you usually wear.” Said Quinn as she turned to walk out of the room. When she made it to the door, she called behind her, “If you want some help with makeup or your hair, let me know.”

Daria looked down at the garments. She sighed, and tossed them onto the bed. “This is stupid.” She said. However, the more she thought about it, the more she was warming to the idea. She stood up, went to the dresser, and grabbed a bit of necessary clothes, and headed for the shower. A few minutes later, she came back into her room, with a towel wrapped around herself. She removed the towel, and finished drying her hair, and walked over to the mirror on the wall. She looked at herself standing there, in just her underwear. “Who in their right mind would want this? I’m not attractive... which could be a good thing.” She walked to the dresser, and took out one of her sports bras, and put it on. She then stood in front of the mirror. She thought about it for a moment, and then took it off, tossing it onto the bed as she walked over and picked up the bra that Quinn gave her. She took a moment to figure out how it went on, and then put it on, adjusting it afterwards. The difference in her figure was astonishing. She took another look at her body. She then realized what she was doing, shook her head, and then walked over to the bed and finished dressing. When she was finished, she stood up, and then was heading for the door to go brush her hair. However, Daria stopped, and looked in the mirror again. “Arrrrghh..” she said, and then walked to the bathroom to brush her hair. She was just going to do her hair like she normally did, but instead did the same thing she did earlier... ponytail and scrunchie. She then left the bathroom and went to Quinn’s room, knocking on the door.

Quinn opened the door. “Wow Daria! You look great.... For you anyway..”

"Thanks... I think." Said Daria.

"You can actually tell you're female." Said Quinn. Daria shot her a hurt look. "Sorry Daria, but you look good. Now if you will excuse me, I need to get dressed." Quinn closed the door. Daria turned to go to her room, but she heard the doorbell ring, and froze in place.

"Oh hi Jane, Trent. Come in." came Helen's voice from downstairs. "Daria.... Jane and Trent are here."

Daria forced herself to move... straight into her bedroom, where she closed and locked the door. She laid down on the bed, and buried herself under the blankets. "Maybe no one will find me here." She thought she was safe, until she heard someone knock on the door.

"Hey Daria, you in there?" came Jane's voice from the other side of the door.

"Yo Trent! You ready?" called Jane from the top of the stairs. There was no response. "Trent!" Jane still didn't hear a response. "Great... he's still asleep." She walked down the hall to his room, pounding on the door.

The door opened, revealing Trent in a pair of jeans, and no shirt. "Hey Janey."

"You didn't hear me?" asked Jane. "Obvious you're not ready yet."

"Can't decide what to wear." Said Trent.

"Wear what you always wear. Jake and Helen are not going to care." Said Jane.

"It's not them..." said Trent, turning and looking at shirts in his closet. He flipped through them, and then started flipping through them again.

"Trent... *SHE* isn't going to care what you wear." Said Jane. She walked over, and flipped through the shirts, and picked out a faded green t-shirt that didn't have any rips or stains on it. "Here, wear this." She glanced at his jeans. "You have a pair that aren't ripped?"

"Yeah. Over there." Said Trent, pointing to the bed.

"Well, put those on. Wear that shirt. Finished getting dressed and let's go!" said Jane. She walked out of Trent's room, closing the door behind her. She went downstairs, and sat down on the couch. After about 10 minutes, Trent finally came downstairs. "Wow Trent.... Not bad."

"Thanks. I hate dressing up."

"You're not dressing up." Said Jane.

"This is not something I would normally wear." Said Trent, looking down.

"Yeah it is. It's just clean." Said Jane with a smile. "C'mon. Let's go." She grabbed her bag, and headed out the door. "We walking or driving?"

"We can drive." Said Trent. "Or, how about you drive." He said as he tossed Jane the keys.

"Me?" asked Jane.

"Yeah... I don't think I can right now." Said Trent.

Jane hopped in, and started the car. Trent was still standing at the door. "C'mon Trent. Think of it as a date with Monique."

"I broke up with Monique this afternoon." Said Trent, as he opened the door and got in.

"You did what?" asked Jane, looking at Trent in surprise.

"I... broke up... with... Monique." Said Trent.

"Planning or dating someone else?" asked Jane with a smile on her face. She backed out of the driveway, and headed down the road to Daria's.

"Not sure." Said Trent.

"I think you might be." Said Jane. A few minutes later, they were pulling into the driveway at Daria's. "We're here." She said as she got out of the car. She walked halfway up the walk, when she realized Trent wasn't behind her. "Trent?"

"I don't think I can go in there." Said Trent.

"What? You're scared of Daria?" asked Jane, walking back to the car. "It's just Daria. The same girl who is always over. My friend.... "

Trent thought about it for a moment. "It's different now. I don't want to screw this up."

"C'mon Trent. It will be fine. It's not she is some girl you met at The Zon or anything. It's Daria."

Trent got out of the car, and walked beside Jane as she walked up to the door. "Here we go. Remember, just be yourself." Said Jane. She rang the doorbell. A moment later, the door opened, revealing Helen.

"Oh hi Jane, Trent. Come in." Said Helen. Jane and Trent walked into the house, and Helen closed the door behind them. She turned and called up the stairs. "Daria.... Jane and Trent are here." There was no answer. "She has been upstairs all afternoon since Quinn came home."

"I'll go up and see what she is doing." Said Jane. She walked up the stairs and out of sight.

"Trent. I hope you're hungry. Jake made spaghetti. I think he thought he was trying to feed an army." Said Helen as she walked into the kitchen.

"Just be yourself." Came Jane's voice in Trent's head. "Just be yourself." Trent loosened up a little.

"Trent my man! Have a seat!" said Jake, as he was stirring something on the stove.

“Hey Mr. Morgendorffer. Smells good.” Said Trent, as he took a seat at the table.

“Spaghetti with meatballs!” said Jake, sampling the sauce.

Trent started to relax a little. Familiar place, familiar people. “How’s Quinn?”

“She’s doing pretty good. She came home from the hospital today. She’s not supposed to be walking, but it sounds like she is walking everywhere up there.” Said Jake.

“Yeah. I wouldn’t want to come home from being in the hospital and then have to stay in bed.” Said Trent.

“Trent... You look... different.” Said Helen, taking a seat at the table.

“Just different clothes. Janey said I should wear something decent.” Said Trent.

Helen looked at Trent. She lowered her voice, so only Trent could hear her. “I heard what happened the other day.”

Trent sat straight up. “Uhhhh. I...”

“Trent... Relax. I’m not upset.” Said Helen. “If you hadn’t been Jane’s brother, I might have been, though.”

“It just happened.” Said Trent.

“Things happen Trent. Just make sure nothing serious `just happens’.” Said Helen.

Trent just nodded. “This might be a long night.” He said to himself.

“Hey Daria, you in there?” said Jane as she knocked on the door. She tried the handle, but the door was locked.

“She’s in hiding.” Said Quinn, ambling up behind Jane.

“Hey... Good to see you out of the hospital and up and about.” Said Jane, turning to face Quinn.

“It’s good to be out. Now I can actually wear real clothes.” Said Quinn. “Oh, I wanted to thank you for what you and Daria did.”

“Eh, it was the least we could do.” Said Jane. “Though I don’t think I will ever get over the shock and horror of being in Cashman’s.”

“Ha ha.” Said Quinn. “Very funny. I was telling Daria that we should go shopping sometime...”

“And she turned you down.” Said Jane.

“Yeah. I guess she wants to remain one big fashion don’t.” said Quinn.

"She's wants people to like her for who she is, not what she wears." Jane said. She looked at Quinn. "Did you have anything to do with Daria hiding?"

"No... well maybe." Said Quinn. She turned and walked back into her room. Jane just stood there. A moment later, Quinn came back with a key, handing it to Jane. "It's the key for her room."

"Why do you have a key to Daria's room?" Jane asked Quinn, but Quinn was already walking back into her room.

"I need to finish getting ready." Said Quinn as she closed the door behind her.

Jane looked down at the key in her hand. She turned and knocked on Daria's door again. "Are you going to come out, or am I coming in?" After a minute of no response, Jane unlocked the door, and walked in. The room was dark. Jane walked in, slowly, letting the light from the hall light the room up. She could see the lumpy form on the bed. She walked to the foot of the bed. "Okay sister-in-law, get up."

"No... Wait, how in the hell did you get in here?" said Daria without lifting her head from the bed or moving the blanket.

"I picked the lock." Said Jane, putting the key into her pocket. "What's the problem, amiga?"

"Nothing. I'm tired." Said Daria.

"So you went to bed with your boots on?"

"I am **really** tired." Daria mumbled from under the blanket.

Jane grabbed the blanket at the end of the bed, and snatched it off. "Apparently, went to bed fully dressed too."

Daria looked back at Jane with a dirty look. "Go away... Please."

"Can't stay in here forever."

"Sure I can. Room service, chamber pot, Internet.... Everything I need." Said Daria.

"C'mon. Let's go down and join the party." Said Jane. Daria sat up, and faced Jane. She noticed how Daria was dressed. "Daria... you look... look..."

"Ridiculous?"

"Absolutely awesome." Said Jane.

"It's official. I have slipped into the seventh level of hell that is known as vanity." Said Daria.

"No. You look great!" said Jane as she eyed Daria up and down. "Stand up." Daria stood up. Jane looked Daria over. "Something is different." Jane studied Daria a little closer in the dim light. "Boobs... You did something."

“Quinn.” Said Daria.

“You’re wearing Quinn under your shirt?”

“No. Quinn gave me a bra that mom bought for her a while back. It’s not her size, but apparently it is mine. Except it is a bit uncomfortable.” Daria said as she adjusted herself a little.

“Daria. You look fine.” Said Jane.

Daria looked down at herself. “It’s not me.”

“You’ve had a boob job?” asked Jane.

“No.” Daria said, giving Jane a weird look.

“Then it is you.” Said Jane. “C’mon. Let’s go knock Trent over.” She stood up and walked towards the door. Daria sighed, and got up, and headed towards the door. As they walked out and into the light, Jane stopped and looked at Daria. “Wow. You really do look good. Hey, if Trent doesn’t want you, can I have you?”

Daria gave Jane a surprised look. “WHAT?”

Jane started laughing. “Nothing.” They were getting ready to head downstairs, when Quinn appeared out of her room.

“A little help for the handicapped?” asked Quinn. Daria walked back, and put Quinn’s arm around her shoulders, and helped Quinn walk down the stairs, with Jane behind them. They stopped at the bottom of the stairs, where Quinn relieved herself of her human crutch, and slowly ambled into the kitchen.

“Is it just me, or did Quinn dress down?” asked Jane.

Daria facepalmed. “This is going to be a long night.”

“Nah. It’ll be over before you know it.” Said Jane. They walked into the kitchen.

Daria walked in with Jane, but stopped as soon as she saw Trent. “Hey Daria.” Said Trent.

“Hey.” Said Daria, turning a bit red.

“You look good.” Trent said.

Jane was standing behind them. She could see the redness creeping up the back of Daria’s neck. “Hey, let’s eat.” Jane grabbed Daria and dragged her towards the table, while Trent just stood there for a second, and then turned and headed to the table himself. At first, Jane was going to sit next to Daria, and let her and Trent sit next to each other, but at the last minute, she decided to sit between Daria and Trent. As she sat down, she looked at Daria, but couldn’t read her expression.

Dinner was over. They were all sitting in the living room. Jake and Helen were sitting on one couch, Jane and Quinn on the middle couch, and Trent and Daria were sitting on the other. Jane was constantly looking back and forth between Jake and Helen, and Daria and Trent, watching for reactions from both. Trent would reach over and take Daria's hand, and she would let him, but after a minute or so, she would pull her hand back.

"So Trent, have you heard anything from the police about Quinn?" asked Helen.

"Yeah. They said that the Griffins were not pressing charges."

"That's wonderful." Said Helen. She looked to Jane. "Have you heard from your parents lately?"

"Yeah, mom is in Japan studying ancient pottery. Dad is in Canada, taking pictures of bears." Said Jane. The conversation passed back and forth for about 30 minutes or so. Nothing more than casual conversation. Then Quinn broke the monotony, turning towards Daria.

"Can you help me upstairs?" asked Quinn.

"Sure." Sighed Daria. She stood up, and helped Quinn to her feet, and then helped her upstairs. "Are you staying up here?"

"Yeah, I need to catch up on what has been going on with Stacy and Tiffany." Said Quinn. "Thanks, Daria." Daria just dismissed her with a wave of the hand, and headed back downstairs. As she walked back downstairs, Trent was standing at the door, and Jake and Helen were standing with him. She stayed at the top of the stairs, but continued to listen in, out of sight.

"Well, it was good to have you over, Trent." Said Helen.

"Thanks. We don't eat very many home cooked meals at home. Just usually what I cook, or what leftovers you give Janey to bring home." Said Trent. He looked over at Jane. "Have a good time tonight, Janey."

"Thanks for driving me over, Trent." Said Jane.

Trent looked around. "I would have liked to say goodnight to Daria."

"She is probably still upstairs with Quinn." Said Helen.

"Say Trent..." Jake started. Helen looked at Jake with a "Keep it to yourself" look. Jake just dismissed Helen, and continued. "What do you think of Daria?" Trent took on a look of shock, and at the top of the stairs; a faint "Eeep!" was emitted, but not heard.

"Well... uhh.. I think she's a cool person." Said Trent.

"Apparently, you think more than that about her." Said Jake. He waited for a moment, and continued. "I heard what happened the other night at your house." Daria, who was crouching at the top of the stairs, fell backwards.

"How did you hear about that?" both Helen and Trent asked at the same time. Trent looked around nervously. He had never had to deal with the father of a girl he was interested in.

He leaned towards Trent. "I'm not as clueless as everyone thinks."

Trent turned back to Jake. "Daria is a very special girl. She is not like any girl I have ever met."

"You're right, Trent." Said Helen. "She is very special, and I want her to remain special." Trent looked at Helen blankly. "Trent, how old are you?"

"Twenty-two." Said Trent, looking down. He knew where this was going.

"And you do know how old Daria is, right?" asked Helen.

"Yes. Seventeen." Said Trent. He was waiting for it.

"Yes. She's seventeen. Which means she is still a minor. A minor, Trent." Said Helen, going from mother to lawyer. "You understand what I am saying?"

"Yes'm." said Trent. "Maybe it isn't too late to call Monique... No wait, she is seeing someone else." He said to himself. Before Helen could continue, he piped up. "Daria means a lot to Janey, and she means a lot to me. I think that I care for Daria more than I realize." Trent looked at Helen and Jake for a moment, and opened his mouth as if he were going to say something, and stopped. He paused, and then spoke. "Well, I guess I should be going. Thank you for having us over for dinner." He turned to Jane, who was just staring at Trent, jaw agape. "See you later, Janey." He turned and walked out the door.

At the top of the stairs, Quinn was standing next to Daria. She nudged Daria with her toe. "Don't look now, but Trent is leaving." Daria sat up, and watched as Trent walked out the door. "Go get him!" said Quinn, pushing Daria with her foot.

"If he wanted me bad enough, he wouldn't have left." Said Daria, standing up to leave.

Quinn sighed. "Daria... He's standing in front of mom and dad. Do you really think he wants to do something like that in front of them?"

"They already know he kissed me, and that I kissed him back." Said Daria.

"And do you see mom or dad getting angry?" Quinn said. Daria turned and looked at Quinn. "Well? Do you?"

"No." Said Daria, turning her attention to back downstairs.

Quinn pushed Daria. "Then go! You will never know unless you try!"

Daria regained her balance, and spun around as to snap at Quinn, but her anger deflated as what Quinn had said sunk in. Daria sighed. "You know, you're right." She muttered. Daria looked at Quinn, and then walked downstairs. Her parents had already closed the door behind Trent, and were returning to the kitchen. She could sense her parents were watching her, but she wasn't sure. She opened the door, and went outside. She walked up to the car, just as Trent was about to get in. "Hey."

"Hey Daria." Trent said, rubbing the back of his neck. "It was cool of your parents to invite me a Janey over for dinner."

“Yeah.” She said. Daria turned and looked at the house. She swore she saw the curtain in the front window move, a lock of red hair quickly disappearing from view. “If I don’t do this, I’ll never hear the end from Quinn. If I go through with this, I will never hear the end of it from Quinn.” She said to herself.

“Daria?” Asked Trent.

“Damn.” She said to herself, realizing she had paused a little too long. She closed her eyes for a moment, took a deep breath in and let it out slowly. “Trent. A lot has happened in the past couple of weeks. My long lost twin sister, Quinn almost...” She paused. “Quinn being in the hospital.” She felt herself starting to turn red. “The kiss.” She muttered.

“Daria?”

She looked up into his eyes. “Trent?”

Now it was Trent’s turn to take a deep breath. “Maybe we can be a little more than friends.”

Daria looked down at the ground. “You have a girlfriend. Monique.”

Trent took Daria’s hand into his. “No... I don’t. We broke up.” He paused. “I guess Janey was right, we just didn’t work out together.”

“Trent?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you asking me out?”

Trent took Daria’s other hand into his. “Y-y-yeah... I mean, yes.”

Daria drew her hands back, placing them at her sides. She forced her mind to think. “Let me think about that.” She said. She saw Trent’s expression go blank for a moment. “What the hell.” She said to herself. “I accept.” She said aloud.

“Cool.” Said Trent. He reached down and took her hands again, and kissed her. She didn’t resist, and returned the gesture. After a moment, they stepped apart. “I’ll call you.” Said Trent, as he stepped into the car, and closed the door. Daria just stood there, unable to move. “Daria?”

“Yeah?”

“You’re not red anymore.” Said Trent. Daria held her hands up, and looked at the back of them. Sure enough, she wasn’t turning red like she normally did when she was around Trent. He smiled at her. “Later.” He started the car, and backed out of the driveway.

Daria just stood there, and watched him drive away. Once he was out of sight, she turned around to head back in the house, and almost ran into Quinn, who was about two steps behind her. “Gah!” She yelped as she turned around. She paused a moment, and recovered. “How long have you been there?”

“Long enough.” Quinn said with a smile on her face.

“So? How long am I going to hear about me finally listening to something you said?” Asked Daria.

“Not long.” Said Quinn, still smiling. “When’s your first date?”

“Don’t know.” Said Daria. “Said he’d call me.”

“Well, we better go inside. Mom and Dad are waiting.”

“WHAT?”

“They were watching from the window the whole time after I came outside.”

“Great.” Said Daria. “Well, let’s get this over with.” She walked into the house, with Quinn closely following. She stepped through the door, with Quinn closing it behind them.

Jake and Helen just stood there, in the living room, a blank look on both of their faces. “Daria...” started Helen.

Daria sighed. “Correct.” Helen thought about her words carefully. She went to speak a couple of times, but recanted and thought about it more. Finally, she just stepped forward, and hugged Daria. Daria just stood there. No words were spoken, except finally by Daria, who, after a moment, just said, “Thanks, mom.” She walked past them and up the stairs.

Standing at the top, was Jane, with her hands on her hips. “Well?” Daria just nodded. “DARIA!” She exclaimed.

Daria just covered her face with her hands. “What did I just get myself into?”

Jane and Daria were sitting on the couch in the living room. In the kitchen, they could hear Jake and Helen talking back and forth, but couldn’t make out what was being said. “They are probably talking about me” said Daria, picking at her shirt.

“Yeah, probably.” Said Jane. “Think of it this way, if they are talking about you, then they are leaving someone else alone.”

“I wish they would leave me alone. I finally decide to take a chance and go out with Trent, and all they can do is talk about it. They know I wouldn’t let him do anything.”

Jane shook her head. “Would you do anything?”

“No... I don’t know....” Said Daria. The doorbell rang. “Who could that be?”

“Probably Trent.” Said Jane, with a smile on her face.

“Nrrrrgh.” Said Daria, as she got up and walked to the door. She took a deep breath, and opened it, expecting Trent.

“Hiya sis...” said Tilly.

“Hi.” Said Daria, a bit put off.

“Expecting someone else?” asked Tilly.

“Yeah, she was expecting her boyfriend.” Said Jane from the couch.

“Shut it, Lane.” Snapped Daria. She turned to Tilly. “What are you doing here?”

“Thought I would come down and see my sisters.” Said Tilly. She stepped through the door, and closed it. She walked over to the couch, leaving Daria standing by the door. “Heya Jane.”

“Hey amiga dos.” Said Jane. Daria walked back over to the couch, and sat down heavily on the couch.

“So, what’s this about a boyfriend?” Said Tilly, looking over at Daria.

Daria turned red. “She’s dating my brother.” Said Jane. Daria facepalmed. “She ran out after him like a cat chasing a mouse!”

“I need a drink.” Said Daria.

“Ultra Colas all around!” said Jane.

“I’ll have mine with a little spiced rum.” Said Daria.

“What?” both Jane and Tilly asked.

“Spiced.... rum.....” said Daria, slowly.

“You’re not serious.” Said Tilly.

“Sure she is.” Said Jane. She turned to look into the kitchen, and saw Jake and Helen still at the table. “I’ll get the Ultra Colas. You raid the cabinet. Come with me, Tilly.” She walked into the kitchen, and Tilly followed. Daria got up, and headed upstairs. Jane walked up the fridge and opened it. Jake and Helen stopped talking as soon as they entered.

“Tilly? What are you doing here?” asked Helen. Jane pulled a six pack of sodas from the fridge, and then grabbed three glasses.

“Thought I would drop by and spend some time with Daria.” Said Tilly. “That and I wanted to see how Quinn was doing.”

“All the way from Edgewood?” said Helen, with an amused look.

Tilly rolled her eyes. “Yeah. It was a really long drive here.”

“Got the sodas.” Said Jane.

“Sodas?” asked Helen.

“Yeah, we’re going to adjourn to Daria’s room and watch Sick, Sad World.” Said Tilly.

“Okay. You kids have fun.” Said Helen. She watched as Jane and Tilly disappeared out of the kitchen, around the corner, and up the stairs.

The two walked into Daria’s room, closing and locking the door behind them. Daria pulled a bottle from under the bed. “That doesn’t look like rum.” Said Tilly.

“No. Tennessee Whisky. Mom hasn’t replaced the rum yet.” Said Daria, as she opened the bottle, took one of the glasses, and poured a bit of the whisky into it, drinking it down quickly.

“Damn, Daria.... Drink much?” asked Jane.

“Helps me think. Actually, helps me to keep from thinking.” Daria said as she took one of the sodas and poured some into the glass, followed by some of the whisky. “You two care to imbibe?”

“None for me.” Said Jane. “Alcohol doesn’t agree with me too well.”

“I’ll have some.” Said Tilly. Daria fixed her a glass. Jane reached over and took the third glass, and just filled it with soda.

“To the three amigas...” said Daria. She raised her glass, and Jane and Tilly did the same.

“Tres amigas hasta el final.” Said Jane and Tilly in unison. They toasted, and then drank. Tilly set her glass down. “So, what’s this about a boyfriend?”

“Jane’s brother.” Said Daria. “I went over to talk to Jane the other day, and he kissed me. When I left, I took a chance and kissed him back. Then mom found out, and invited Trent and Jane over for dinner. After some discussion, he finally asked me out.”

“And you said?” asked Tilly.

“Nothing.” Said Jane. “She couldn’t talk.” Daria just glared at Jane, and quickly finished her drink. She took the bottle, and filled her empty glass about half full, and quickly drank it, wiping her mouth on her sleeve afterwards. “Easy Morgendorffer.”

“Shut it, Lane.” Said Daria.

“Daria... I’m a little worried about you.” Said Jane.

“Same here.” Said Tilly. “I mean, I like to have a drink every now and then, but damn.”

Daria just shot them both a look that could kill. “I need this. I need to be able to just shut my mind off. I am tired of thinking.”

“Well, at least you’re at home with family.” Said Tilly, trying to lighten the mood.

“That’s right... sister-in-law.” Said Jane. She glanced over at Tilly, who hand her hand over her face, shaking her head. Daria just shook her head, and fixed herself another mixed drink.

“Jake. What do you think about Daria dating Trent.” Asked Helen.

“I don’t know. Trent seems like a nice guy, but Daria is still my little girl.” Said Jake. “I mean, I don’t think Trent would do anything, but I know what *I* wanted from a girl when I was Trent’s age.”

“That’s what I am worried about.” Said Helen. “I think that Daria is smart enough to not get into trouble, and that Jane would keep Trent in line. Still, I am just uneasy with it. “

“It’s only a four year difference.” Said Jake. “There are a lot of couples who have four or more years between their ages.”

“Yes Jake, but Daria is also a minor. That would be statutory...” Helen said, but Jake cut her off.

“I don’t want to hear that! La la la la la.” Jake said, sticking his fingers in his ears.

“Grow up Jake.” Said Helen, shaking her head.

“Daria is a big girl. Why don’t we give her the benefit of the doubt?” asked Jake. “It’s not like she has done anything stupid in her life.”

Helen covered her face with her hands. “If you only knew, Jake.” She said to herself.

Quinn was lying in bed, with the phone to her ear. “But Tiffany, I was stuck in the hospital for a week with no access to makeup or a real shower! (pause) Yes, Tiffany... No Tiffany... (beep) Hold on Tiffany, that’s my call waiting.” Quinn switched over to the other call. “Hello... Oh... Hi Sandi.... Yeah, I was on the phone with Tiffany.... No, we weren’t planning a meeting or anything... Yeah, I thought about it, but it wouldn’t be the Fashion Club without you, Sandi.... I don’t know Sandi.... I will have to think about it... Why? Well, because you beat the hell out of me for one thing... I know Sandi... I know.... Look, I need to go. Call me tomorrow? Okay... bye.” Quinn clicked back to Tiffany. “Hey Tiffany... that was Sandi... Yeah... She came and saw me a couple of times... I don’t know... Yeah... I need to go, Tiffany. Talk to you later... Bye.” Quinn hung the phone up, and lay back on her bed, holding her side. “Why does pain have to hurt so much? Guess I shouldn’t have been walking as much as I did.” She said to herself. She slid out of bed, and ambled to the wall to turn off the light, and then back to bed. She pulled the covers over herself, and tried to get comfortable. After a minute or two, she found the best position, and was soon fast asleep

Daria was laid across the bed, with her head at the foot of the bed. Jane had retrieved the roll-away bed, and Tilly was sitting in the computer chair. “You know.... Why does... why does everyone think I am suicidal?” slurred Daria.

“With the amount of alcohol you’ve drank, it’s not a stretch.” Said Jane.

“Daria.. you need to stop.” Said Tilly.

“Oh shut the hell up, the both of you.” Said Daria, rolling over on her back. “You know, I have to deal with the damn yenta, and then when I finally give in and decide to date her brother, she won’t shut up about it.”

“Daria...” started Tilly.

“And who in the hell are you? For 17 years of our lives, you never put two and two together and realized you were adopted? You look nothing like James and Sarah! Damn, how can you be so dense?” said Daria.

Jane’s feet hit the floor. “Shut up, Daria, before I shut you up.” Tilly just looked at the pair.

“You and what battalion?” said Daria, trying to sit up.

“I don’t need any help. I can, and will, stomp your ass right here, right now.” Said Jane, standing up and walking towards Daria.

“You two stop. Now.” Said Tilly, her voice getting a bit more firm.

“Shut up.” Snapped Daria at Tilly. She got to her feet, and turned to Jane. “Bring it.” Jane was about three feet from Daria, when Tilly stepped between them.

“You two stop. NOW.... I am not going to tell you again.” Said Tilly, standing up.

“You have a hearing problem...” said Daria.

Tilly spun around, grabbed Daria by the shirt, and pinned her against the wall. “I SAID KNOCK THIS OFF.... NOW!”

Jane froze in her tracks, and stared at Tilly, who had her arm across Daria’s chest, keeping her pinned against the wall, with her feet just off the ground. “Tilly.....” started Jane.

“This is not going to happen. You two are too good of friends to fight, and over stupid crap because of alcohol.” Said Tilly. Daria said nothing. She had a look of fear in her eyes. Tilly saw this, and continued. “You know, you should fear me.”

“Let me go.” Said Daria, trying to free herself.

“As soon as you apologize to Jane.”

Daria looked into Tilly’s eyes. “Fine... I apologize.”

Tilly let Daria go, and turned towards Jane. Daria went to reach out and grab Tilly. “Tilly!” exclaimed Jane, as Tilly spun around to see Daria lunging for her. Without hesitation, Tilly grabbed Daria, and effortlessly spun her around and threw her onto the bed. She slid across it, and hit the wall... hard. Jane didn’t think that her friend was about to attack her, but that she now needed help. Tilly was just standing there, fists clenched, breathing heavily. “Daria, are you okay?” Daria didn’t respond. Jane quickly looked Daria over. “She’s knocked out.”

Tilly had her eyes closed, breathing slow and deep, trying to calm down. "I told her to stop."

"What the hell did you do?" Jane said, never taking her eyes off Daria.

"Aikido. What else would a lightweight like me use?" said Tilly. She walked over to Daria, and checked her over as well. "She's still breathing."

"Let's get her ready for bed. Let her sleep this off." Said Jane. Between the two of them, they drug Daria's body into position on the bed. They pulled her boots off, took her glasses off, and then covered her up. They set her glasses beside the bed in their normal spot. Once they were done, Jane walked to the roll-away bed, and grabbed her bag. "I'm going to go change."

"Change here. I am going to take the guest room." Said Tilly.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. I think when Daria wakes up, she is going to want to see you." Said Tilly. "I'll see you in the morning." Tilly grabbed her bag, and picked up the whisky bottle, putting the cap back on it. "I'll stash this in my bag for now."

"Have to get it back into the cabinet." Said Jane. "I really think we need to get Helen involved."

"No. After this, we might not have to." Said Tilly.

"Maybe." Said Jane. "I'll see you in the morning."

Tilly looked at Daria. "I'm sorry, sis." She turned and walked out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Jane quickly changed into her night clothes, and crawled into bed. In the morning, she was going to have to deal with Daria. "What in the hell am I going to do with her?" said Jane to herself as she covered up. "Good night amiga."

After Tilly had changed into her night clothes, she walked downstairs, and slipped the bottle back into the cabinet. She started to head back upstairs, but decided she needed a drink, so she went into the kitchen and grabbed a soda from the fridge. She had turned around to head back upstairs, but ran head on into Helen. "Hey."

"Tilly? What are you doing down here?" asked Helen.

Tilly held up the soda. "Needed a drink."

"Six sodas weren't enough?"

"Not when Jane and Daria are involved." Tilly said, opening the soda and taking a drink.

“What was that noise I heard from Daria’s room? Sounded like something hitting the wall fairly hard.” Helen said, getting a glass of water.

Tilly thought quickly. “Jane pushed the bed against the wall a little too hard.” She said, hoping Helen bought it.

“It’s a good thing Jake is a heavy sleeper. Well, good night, Tilly. See you in the morning.” Said Helen. She finished her water, and then headed upstairs.

Tilly stood there and finished her drink, as she watched Helen walk off. She finished the soda, threw the can away, and headed upstairs. Just as she started up the stairs, Jane was coming down the stairs. “Thought you were asleep.”

“Needed a drink.” Said Jane, walking down to Tilly.

“She still out?”

“Yeah... she’s not going anywhere anytime soon. After you left, I checked her out a little more. I’m hoping that the swollen spot I felt on her arm isn’t serious.”

“It shouldn’t be. It might just be where I spun her around.” Said Tilly.

“She will probably wake up thinking she had some weird dream about someone feeling her up.” Said Jane, laughing, trying to cut the tension.

“Hmmm... something to play into when she wakes up.” Laughed Tilly.

“Maybe.” Said Jane. “I don’t know. Tilly... I’ve never...*NEVER* seen Daria like that.”

“Alcohol just intensifies a personality. Daria has the capability to be very emotional, but she keeps it bottled up.” Said Tilly.

“Looks like she showed us a little bit of it.” Said Jane, as she motioned for Tilly to come sit at the table.

“If Daria is anything like me, that was only the tip of the iceberg. If she ever decides to let loose, you are not going to want to be anywhere near her. She won’t care about anyone or anything. She will just unload on anyone or anything.”

“The alcohol?”

“Will make it worse.” Said Tilly. She interlaced her fingers, and propped herself up on her arms. “Daria is an emotional time bomb waiting to happen. I just hope it is around one of us when she does it.”

“Why in the hell would you wish that for?” asked Jane with a look of surprise.

“Because we both know. We won’t take it personally. She will say whatever comes to her mind, and she will not care who she hurts.” Tilly went on, watching the look on Jane’s face.

“So if she jumps my ass, it is something she has thought about all the time?”

“Yes and no. Everybody has thoughts about everyone around them, both good and bad. I have thoughts about you, both good and bad. You have thoughts about me, good and bad. We choose to keep the bad to ourselves, as they are not important, for the good thoughts outweigh the bad ones. Daria has these thoughts too, but they are more intense. She will not make the distinction between good and bad. They will all come out.” Tilly leaned back in the chair, picking at her fingernails.

“And you know this because?” asked Jane.

Tilly sighed, and held out her arms, palms up, to show Jane her wrists. “See those marks?”

“Yeah.” Said Jane, noticing the scars on Tilly’s wrists.

“When I was 13, I got into something I shouldn’t have. Needless to say, I was committed for 72 hours. These are from being tied to the bed. They said I tried to destroy the room, and that I posed a threat to myself. I was released, and therapy helped, but I still have to deal with it. Aikido, and other martial arts have helped me to focus, and to vent safely.”

“Wow.” Jane had a look of shock on her face, as she took one of Tilly’s hands into her own, and ran her fingers over the scars on Tilly’s wrists with the other. “I didn’t know.” Jane suddenly had a look of realization on her face. “Will this happen to Daria?”

“I hope not, however, with all of the events that have happened in her life, it is liable to be worse. That’s where we need to be there for her. She is lucky to have a friend like you. I didn’t have anyone to turn to, to talk to.” Tilly thought for a moment. “Maybe we should teach you a little Aikido. When Daria turns violent, it will help protect you, and her.”

Jane just slumped down in the chair. “I wonder if her parents know.”

“They might, but I don’t think they know the severity of it.”

“I think I need to go to bed.” Jane stood up, and started heading toward the stairs. She turned, and looked at Tilly, who was following her. “You know, you make Daria out to be a possible serial killer waiting for a place to happen, and I should be in fear of my life, but yet, she is still Daria. I don’t think, I know, I will be fine. She wouldn’t, she won’t hurt me. Goodnight Tilly. See you in the morning.” Jane walked up the stairs, and into Daria’s room. She closed the door, and walked over to the roll-away bed. She turned, and looked at Daria. Jane sighed, and walked over to Daria. She shook her gently. “Daria?” A short pause... “Daria?”

“Wha...” mumbled Daria.

“You okay?” Asked Jane, stepping back.

Daria rolled over and opened her eyes. “Yeah.... Jane?”

“Yeah Daria?”

“M’ so sorry Jane. M’ so sorry.”

Jane laid her hand on the side of Daria’s face. “It’s okay, amiga. I forgive you.”

“Thanks.... Jane... Jane... I just want to tell you s’mthing.”

“Yeah Daria?”

“I just want to tell you.... Tell you... I love... love....” Slurred Daria, but she fell back asleep before she finished her thought.

Jane knelt down beside the bed, brushing the hair out of Daria’s face. “I love you too, amiga.” Jane bent down, and gave Daria a kiss on the forehead. She stood back up, and walked over to the roll-away bed, and lay down, pulling the blankets over her. “Let’s try this again.” She said to herself. She closed her eyes, and waited for morning to come.

Quinn sat up in bed, and stretched, or until she pulled her side and winced in pain. “Damn.” She pulled up her nightshirt, and looked at the bandages. “They need fashionable bandages.” She got out of bed, and ambled out of her room. She walked across the hall, and knocked on the door. “Daria? You awake? I need to go downstairs.”

A minute or so later, Jane came to the door. At the same time, Tilly came out of the guest room. “What’s up, Quinn?” asked Jane through half closed eyes.

“Where’s Daria?”

“Still asleep.” Said Jane. “I’ll help you.”

“I got it Jane. Go back to sleep.” Said Tilly. Jane shrugged, and turned and walked back into the room, closing the door.

Tilly walked up to Quinn. “Ready?”

“Yeah.” Said Quinn. She put her arm around Tilly, and the slowly made their way down the stairs. Even though she could walk on her own, Tilly helped Quinn to the kitchen.

“End of the line.” Said Tilly.

“Thanks, sis.” Said Quinn. She walked around and began to fix herself a bowl of cereal.

Tilly went over and had a seat at the table. “Quinn, can I ask you a question?”

“Uhh, I guess so.” Said Quinn.

“I know Daria is your sister, but what do you know about her?”

Quinn sat the cereal box down, and picked up the milk. “Strangely, not a lot. I’ve lived with her all my life, but never have kept up with her. She spent a lot of time with psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists. She’s antisocial, a misanthrope, and acerbic.”

Tilly nodded, knowing Quinn's description was dead on. "Have you ever had concern for your safety around her?"

Quinn set the milk down. "No. Daria is my sister. I don't think she would hurt me, much less anyone else."

"Quinn..."

"What?"

"Nevermind." Tilly got up, and pulled out a Sugar Tart. "The breakfast of champions."

"Daria eats the same thing." Said Quinn. "And has said the same thing."

Tilly shrugged, and sat back down at the table, eating her breakfast. Jake rounded the corner, and came into the kitchen. "Hiya kiddos!" He said as he made himself a cup of coffee. "How long you staying, Tilly?"

"Probably going home today." Said Tilly, taking a bite out of her breakfast.

Jake laughed. He knew what was going on. "Where's Daria?"

"Still asleep." Quinn turned to Jake. "Can you help me to the table?"

"Sure kiddo." Said Jake. He took Quinn's bowl, and set it on the table. Quinn slowly walked to the table, and sat down. Jake sat down as well, and picked up the newspaper. He took out the business section, and handed the rest to Tilly, thinking she was Daria. He quickly realized his mistake. "Oh, sorry Tilly. Force of habit."

"That's okay. I read too." Said Tilly, taking the paper from Jake. She opened it up, and started reading, trying to take her mind off the events of last night.

"Good morning everyone." Said Helen, as she walked into the kitchen.

"Morning honey!" said Jake.

"Morning mom!" said Quinn.

"Morning... mom..." said Tilly, as she lowered the paper, revealing the smile on her face.

"Tilly... I should have known. Daria is never this happy in the morning." Said Helen, getting a glass of juice from the fridge.

"Daria not happy in the morning? Surely you jest?"

Helen chuckled. "Daria is never happy, except when she gets a new bone delivery. Then sometimes not even then." Tilly said nothing, and raised the paper to continue reading.

"Ugh, is it morning already?" asked Jane, as she stumbled into the kitchen.

"Yes, Jane. It is." Said Helen.

“No talk. Must... Have... Cereal.” Said Jane, walking to the cabinet like a zombie.

“Zombie Lane.” Said Tilly.

Helen laughed to herself. “Jane? Are you staying all weekend?”

“Hrmmmm.” Said Jane, pouring a bowl of cereal.

“I take that as a yes?”

Jane nodded, as she added milk. She put the milk up, and sat down at the table. After a couple of bites, she responded. “Yeah, I think I will stay all weekend.” She looked over at Tilly, who was looking over the top of the paper at her.

“Speaking of Daria, where is she?” asked Helen.

“Still in bed.” Said Jane.

“Is she not feeling good? Is it drugs?” asked Jake. Jane and Tilly looked back at each other.

“No, we were up late.” Said Jane.

Jake looked at Jane. “Oh... Okay.” Jake went back to reading the paper.

Helen was about to ask Jane a question, when they all heard a door close upstairs. “The drunk is number two must be awake.” Said Jane. Tilly shot her a glance across the table.

“Drunk?” asked Helen.

“A line from a movie.” Said Jane. Tilly raised the paper back up and kept reading.

Footsteps could be heard coming down the stairs, albeit slowly. “She must really be tired.” Said Quinn.

“Not tired, more like sore.” Mumbled Tilly under her breath.

Daria walked around the corner, and came into the kitchen. Her hair was all disheveled, and she wasn't wearing her glasses. She stumbled to the table, pushed the paper down, took Tilly's glasses from her, and put them on. She then went to the cabinet and pulled out the last pack of Sugar Tarts. “We need more Sugar Tarts.” She said as she walked to the table.

Tilly reached up, and took her glasses back from Daria. “Lest you forget, I need those just as much as you.”

“Nrrgh.” Was all Daria said as she sat down. She opened the package and took out one of the tarts, and took a bite out of it.

“How you feeling, Daria?” asked Tilly.

“My wrist hurts.” Said Daria, taking another bite.

Jane and Tilly looked at each other again. "What is with all the looks?" asked Helen.

"We were teaching Daria Aikido last night." Said Tilly.

"Uh huh. I didn't know you knew Aikido, Tilly." Said Helen.

"Neither did I." muttered Daria. Tilly and Jane both looked at each other, and then to Daria. Daria said nothing further, and continued to eat her breakfast.

Daria was pulling on her shirt, when someone knocked on her door. "Enter at your own risk."

Jane poked her head into the room. "Safe to enter?"

"Yeah. I'm wearing clothes." Jane pushed the door the rest of the way open, and walked in, with Tilly right behind her. Tilly closed the door behind her. "Two against one, and I'm crippled." Said Daria, rubbing her wrist. "Unfair odds."

"You're not crippled. Not yet." Said Tilly. "However, you pull another stunt like you did last night and I won't hesitate to disable you... permanently."

"What happened last night? I remember we were drinking, and then I woke up in bed, covered up, and I had red lipstick on my forehead." Daria looked over at Jane, and Jane turned to look at the corner of the room.

"You had a little too much to drink, tried to pick a fight with Jane. I stepped in, you tried to attack me, and I was forced to defend myself." Said Tilly.

Daria looked down at the floor. "I guess I did drink too much. I just like the feeling of not having to think. Order to chaos."

"If you want to drink, that's all on you. However, you need to use moderation. You said some things last night that might have caused lesser friends to no longer be your friend." Said Jane.

"What did I say?"

"Let's not discuss that." Said Tilly. "Better off that you didn't know."

"I want to know." Said Daria.

"No, you don't." said Tilly. "I'm done with this subject. Next one, please."

Jane spoke up. "What are we going to do today?"

"Same thing we do every day, Jane. Try to take over the world." Said Tilly, in her best Brain mouse impersonation.

"Narf!" said Jane, trying not to laugh.

Daria shook her head. "I'm surrounded by idiots." She said, doing her best Jeremy Irons.

"How about food?" asked Tilly.

"Maybe." Said Jane, thinking for a minute. "Yeah, I could go for something. Daria?"

"As long as it is laced with strychnine." Said Daria.

"Okay... food it is. Now where? And NO PIZZA!" Said Tilly.

"McBurgertown?" asked Jane.

"Anywhere, as long as it is not Burger World." Said Daria.

"I don't think they have those up here." Said Jane.

"Thankfully." Said Daria. She turned to Tilly. "Any more ideas?"

"There's that chicken joint out by the highway." Said Tilly. "I saw it when I came in."

"I don't know. I'm not in the mood for chicken." Said Jane.

"How about Chinese?" asked Daria.

"I think I could go for chicken after all. I'm **really** not in the mood for cat." Said Jane with a smile.

"Chicken it is." Said Tilly. "I'll go get dressed. You two get ready and I'll meet you downstairs." Tilly walked out of Daria's room, and down to the guest room to get changed. Jane grabbed her bag, and headed for the bathroom, closing the door behind her. Daria walked over, locked the door, and changed clothes. She opened her drawer to pull out a pair of socks. A glimpse of something shiny caught her eye. She quickly shuffled things around to hide it, and then closed the drawer back. She sat down on the chair, put socks and her boots on, brushed out her hair, and then grabbed her bag and headed out the door. When she arrived downstairs, Jane and Tilly were waiting for her. "Okay, let's go."

They had returned from their chicken run, and were getting out of Tilly's car, when they heard a car pull up. They all turned to look as the familiar Plymouth came to a stop, and the driver got up.

"Uh oh." Muttered Tilly to herself as Trent walked up.

"Hey." Said Trent. He looked at the three girls, stopping with Daria. "Hey Daria."

"Hey.... Trent." Said Daria. Jane turned to look at Daria, who noticed she wasn't turning red.

"You wanna go for a ride?"

Daria looked at Tilly, then Jane, then back to Trent. "I don't know."

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to. I understand.” Said Trent. He started walking back towards his car.

“No... wait.” Said Daria. She quickly walked to catch up to Trent. Jane had walked to beside Tilly. Trent turned around, and waited for Daria to catch up. “Where we going?”

“Just for a ride.” Said Trent. Daria turned to look at Jane and Tilly, and saw blank looks on both of their faces. Daria shrugged, and got into the car. Trent got in and drove off. After they were down the road a bit, Trent spoke up. “Daria...”

“Yeah Trent?”

“How’s Quinn?”

“You had to go for a ride to ask me that?” asked Daria.

“Not really, but I thought it would be nice to spend a little time with you.” Said Trent. He reached into the back seat, and handed Daria a small box.

“Quinn’s doing okay. She has to go back to the doctor on Monday for a follow up visit.” Daria said as she was opening the box.

“Cool. Oh, I noticed your other sister was in town.” Said Trent. He waited for a response, but when he didn’t receive one, he looked over at her. “Oh, I noticed your other sister was in town.” Said Trent. He waited for a response, but when he didn’t receive one, he looked over to Daria. “Daria?”

“*Jane Eyre*....” said Daria, reading the title of the book that was in the box. She also pulled out a smaller box. She opened it, revealing a simple gold necklace. She looked at it, and turned to look at Trent. “When did you get this?”

“I’ve had it for a month or so. I’ve been wanting to give it to you, just never got around to it. Figured now would be a good time.” Said Trent, looking back to the road.

“Thanks.” Said Daria. She pulled the necklace from the box, and looked at the clasp, noticing the ‘18K’ mark. She thought for a brief second on how much it probably cost Trent, but didn’t dwell on it as she put it on.

Trent looked over at Daria. “Looks good on you.”

“Thanks.” Said Daria, turning a bit red. Trent fidgeted around in his seat, like he had something else to say. “Out with it Lane.” Daria paused. “I think I’ve said that before.”

Trent laughed, which helped break his anxiety. “I was wondering if you wanted to go out to dinner sometime?”

Daria looked up. She wasn’t prepared for that question. “I... I guess.”

“If you don’t want to, you don’t have to. I know you’re kind of apprehensive about the whole dating thing. Janey warned me about this a while back. I understand. I was like that when I first started dating.” Said Trent.

“You were?”

“Yeah. I started dating when I was a freshman in high school. Was worried about what kind of girls I would be bringing around Janey. That, and I was just scared.” Said Trent.

“I think dinner would be cool.” Said Daria.

“Cool. When do you want to go?” asked Trent.

Daria thought about it for a minute. “How about Wednesday?”

“Works for me.” Said Trent. They were coming to back in front of Daria’s house. “Hey, we’re back at your house.”

Daria was lost in space. She shook her head quickly to bring herself back to Lawndale. “Oh.” Was all she said. She looked out the window as the car came to a stop, and noticed no one was outside. “Thanks for the ride.” Said Daria, as she stepped out of the car.

Trent got out and walked around to the passenger’s side. “Thanks for coming.” Said Trent. He bent down, and gave Daria a kiss, and then wrapped his arms around her.

“Look!” said Jane, pointing out the window at Daria and Trent. Tilly walked up, and moved the curtain slightly so she could look out. She could see Trent lean down and give Daria a kiss, and then as he took her in his arms.

“They look sooo cute.” Said Tilly with an air of sarcasm. Jane pulled her head from the window to look at Tilly. “Well, they do! Uh oh, here she comes!” Tilly quickly moved away from the window as the pair dashed across the living room, with Tilly jumping over the couch, and making a beeline to the kitchen. They had just sat down at the table, when they heard the front door open, and then close. Jane pulled a pencil and sketch pad from her bag, and Tilly picked up the paper from breakfast and started reading it.

Daria walked into the kitchen, and grabbed a soda from the fridge. She closed the fridge, and looked at Jane and Tilly. “So, how much did you see?”

Tilly looked up from the paper, and Jane looked up from the sketch pad. “What are you talking about?” asked Jane.

“You two were apparently watching me from the window.” Said Daria.

“No, we’ve been here since you left.” Said Tilly.

“Liars. Your paper is upside down, dear sister. As for you `Janey’, your sketch pad is blank.” Said Daria, sitting down at the table, and putting the box on the table.

“Busted.” Said Jane, putting her pencil down. She looked at Tilly, and back to Daria. “Yeah, we saw most of it.”

“What’s in the bo..” started Tilly, but then she noticed the necklace. “Where did you get that?”

“Trent.” Said Daria. “The box too.”

Jane reached for the box, and opened it. “A book... *Jane Eyre*. Really...”

Tilly snatched the box out of Jane's hands. "How did he know you..." Tilly looked over at Jane. "Oh, nevermind. You're dating Jane's brother. So he has access to all of your deep dark secrets, at least the ones you have shared with Jane."

Daria looked at Jane. "You didn't tell him about that night I slipped out of the club, and the rash, did you?"

"He knew already." Said Jane.

"What rash?" asked Tilly. Daria facepalmed.

Jane laughed. "Daria went with me to go to see the Spiral one night, and when I told her we were going with Trent to get a burger, she slipped out of the club. She had turned bright red!"

Tilly looked at Jane. "The Spiral?"

"Mystik Spiral... Trent's band." Said Daria, with her face still in her hands.

"Yeah. Trent has a band. They practice in our basement." Said Jane.

"Have to come down and see them sometime." Said Tilly.

Daria looked up at Tilly. "You might want to reconsider that."

"Why?"

"They aren't that great." Said Jane.

"I'll be the judge of that." Said Tilly. She looked at Daria. "Anyways, I was going to say that the necklace really looks good on you."

"Thanks, I guess." Said Daria, as she pushed back from the table, grabbed the box, and headed upstairs.

"What's with her?" asked Tilly after Daria walked out of the room.

"I think she is a bit scared with the whole dating Trent thing." Said Jane.

"She had a crush on Trent. Now she is dating him, and she is scared?" asked Tilly. She thought for a minute, trying to put herself in her sister's shoes. "I think I can feature that, but why not just take the bull by the horns and run with it?"

"Not her style. She has to approach everything with foresight and knowledge. If not, she won't go near the situation. Sometimes even with the knowledge, she won't go near it." Said Jane.

"Maybe now that I am here, she will change a little." Said Tilly.

"What are you talking about? You're going home tomorrow." Said Jane.

“You are right, I will be going home tomorrow.” Said Tilly, “However, I don’t live in Edgewood anymore. We moved to Lawndale this weekend.”

“Run that by me again?”

“My parents decided I needed to be closer to my sisters. So they are selling the house in Edgewood, and we are renting a house about a block down the road.” Said Tilly.

“So that means...” said Jane, but Tilly finished.

“I will be attending school at Lawndale High. I have to go through some damn psychological test, and then I will be assigned classes.”

“Do they know you are of the Morgendorffer clan?” asked Jane.

“I don’t think so. Dad met with the principal on Thursday.”

“Ahh, so he was introduced to our own Ms. Li.” Said Jane.

“Yes. From what dad said, when she read my records, that she kept swearing she had seen these records before.” Said Tilly with a smile. “Obviously, she must have been experiencing déjà vu.”

“Want to have some fun?” asked Jane.

“I’m always game for fun.” Said Tilly.

“Good. Here’s what you’re going to do.” Said Jane. She flipped the page on her sketchbook, and started laying out a plan with Tilly.

Dinner time was getting near. Jane and Tilly were watching Sick, Sad Word, and quietly exchanging ideas. Daria was at the computer, reading an article on mixed drinks for beginning drinkers. “Girls! Dinner’s ready!” came Jake’s voice from downstairs.

“Let the feeding commence.” Said Tilly, getting up and turning the TV off.

“I can hardly wait.” Said Daria, turning the monitor off and getting up as well. Jane said nothing, and got up and followed the sisters out the door.

“Who wants to be my escort tonight?” asked Quinn, leaning against the doorframe of her room.

“I’ll do it.” Said Daria. She went over, and helped Quinn down the stairs, after Jane and Tilly had walked down. Daria had noticed that Quinn wasn’t leaning on her as much. “You seem to be getting better at walking.”

“Yeah. I can walk okay. I’m just worried about going up and down stairs. Don’t want to fall.”

“I think you will be back to your old self here in no time.” Said Daria.

"I hope so." Said Quinn as they reached the bottom of the stairs. Even though she didn't need the help to walk, just to walk up or down the stairs, Daria still stayed within close proximity to Quinn. They walked into the kitchen, where everyone else was already sitting.

"Another one of Dad's creations?" asked Daria as she sat down.

"Nope. Pizza tonight!" said Jake, bringing the pizza to the table.

"But Da-ad.... I don't eat cheese on my pizza." Whined Quinn.

"Took care of that too!" said Jake, as he brought over a small pizza that didn't have cheese, and set it down in front of Quinn.

"Thanks!" said Quinn as she pulled a slice from the box and started eating.

"So Jane..." started Helen. She stopped when she caught the glares from both Daria and Tilly. After a second, she continued. "So tell us more about your brother."

Jane cursed to herself. She could lie to Helen, and tell her what she wants to hear, or she could tell Helen the truth about Trent, and could possibly cause Helen to forbid Daria to see Trent. She cleared her throat. "Well, Trent was the one who practically raised me. He tends to sleep a lot. He's a musician, lead singer in a band. Uh..." Jane was grasping at straws for good things to say, before she laid into the hard truth. "He tends to be forgetful, doesn't normally even get out of bed until two or three." Jane stopped when she noticed the look on Helen's face go from being inquisitive to just blank. "Dammit... too far." She said to herself.

"Daria..." said Helen, turning to her oldest daughter.

Daria shot a look at Jane. "Great... here we go." Said Jane to herself. "Helen is getting ready to lay into Daria about Trent."

"Daria. I know you have, or had, a crush on Trent. I know crushes can obscure the truth behind the person." Helen paused, as she saw Daria's expression turn to one of a scowl. Helen sighed. "My better judgement tells me that I should forbid you to see him. However, I am going to give both him and you the benefit of the doubt. All I ask is that you keep your mind open to maybe that you are taking things a little too quickly."

Daria just maintained her scowl. "Whatever." She muttered inaudibly. She shot a hateful look towards Jane, pushed away from the table, and stood up. She walked out of the room, and upstairs.

"Great." Said Jane. "Just what I didn't want to do."

"It had to be said." Helen said.

"Wait, what?" asked Jane.

"Jane. I've known you and your brother for a while now. I know all about Trent. I just wanted Daria to hear it from you."

“So you managed to turn...” started Jane, but she was interrupted by the front door slamming. She knew it was Daria. Jane continued, “You managed to turn me against Daria. Nice.” Jane thought for a moment. “I think I’d better go home.” Jane pushed away from the table, and left the room, heading to get her stuff.

Helen watched as Jane walked out of the room. No one said a word, until the front door opened and slammed closed again, as Jane left the house.

“Great.” Said Tilly. She shook her head, and finished eating. She had a feeling a long night was going to be upon her.

“I just don’t want Daria to get hurt.” Said Helen.

“So you question the one thing Daria relies on, her own judgment. Don’t you think she is smart enough to keep from being hurt?” asked Tilly.

“Lust has a way of clouding one’s reasoning.” Said Helen.

Tilly slammed her fists on the table. “Daria isn’t like that.”

“Might as well add fuel to the fire.” Said Helen to herself. She continued, audibly. “Tilly, I am Daria’s mother. I have known her for all 17 years of her life. You have seen it for yourself, when she is around, or someone mentions Trent, she turns bright red and can’t even speak. How in the hell is she supposed to make an informed decision when he is right there, close to her, and ready to do something?”

Tilly took a drink of her soda, and cleared her throat. “Helen, I am going to completely ignore the fact that you just compared my sister to an everyday, run of the mill high school girl. Daria is a whole lot smarter than that! Daria might be a little in lust with Trent, but when push comes to shove, she will make the right decision.” Tilly thought back to the events of the night before, and of a few minutes ago, where Daria lashed out at the sound of someone questioning Trent.

Helen was about to counter Tilly’s comment, when Quinn spoke up. “I hate to interrupt the show, but shouldn’t someone go out after Daria?”

Everyone looked at Quinn. “She is probably going to Ja... No wait, she just left here. Where would she be going?”

“Daria is a big girl. Maybe she needs to just walk this off. Always helps me.” Said Tilly.

“What do you mean ‘Always helps you’?” asked Helen.

Tilly sighed. “Helen... I think there are a few things you need to know.”

Daria walked down the street, kicking anything that happened to be on the sidewalk. She carried a 20 ounce soda bottle with her, taking drinks from it as she walked. She said nothing, and just walked. As she walked, she came up to Casa Lane. She noticed that Trent’s car was in the driveway. She thought about going in, but then decided against it, and kept walking. The more she walked, the more she thought. “Was mom right? Should I

be dating Trent?" She wrestled with this question as she walked. She had no particular destination, she was just walking.

Jane flung her bag against the wall as she walked into her room. "Dammit Helen. Of all people, you have to turn *me* against Daria. I sure she hates me right now." Jane thought for a moment. "Oh well, it was bound to happen sooner or later. No one ever stays around for long." Jane sat on the bed, and went to pick up the remote for the TV, when she saw a book on the floor, that wasn't an art book. "Must be Daria's. Will have to give it to Trent to give back to her." Jane held the book in her hands, opened it, and was reading from the pages. Without warning, she closed the book, and flung it against the wall as hard as she could. She fell back onto the bed. She wiped her eyes. "Tears? Why in the hell am I crying? I should be used to this by now. Another person revolving through my life. Why is Daria any different?" Jane thought about all of the things they had been through in their short time together, and started to cry harder. She knew the answer on why Daria was different. Daria was her friend. Not like any other person she had ever known. Someone who actually have given a damn. Someone she actually ever had feelings for. Now that was all over. Jane lay back on the bed, covering her face with a blanket, and began audibly sobbing.

Helen just stared at Tilly in shock. "I didn't know."

"It's not something I like to discuss." Said Tilly.

"So, if you have these issues, why doesn't Daria?" asked Quinn.

"Environmental factors most likely. Family life, schooling, etc etc." said Tilly. "That was probably the reason why my parents decided to do the move. So I could be closer to Daria and Quinn." She pushed back from the table. "I am going to go look for Daria." She turned and walked upstairs. She went into Daria's room, and grabbed her bag, and then went into Daria's closet and pulled one of Daria's jackets out and slipped it on. She walked down the stairs, and was about to the door when she heard Helen speak up from the living room.

"If you need anything, call us."

"You're not going to come out and look for her?" asked Tilly.

"No. I think it would be best if you found her. I'm sure she's not happy with us right now."

"Probably right." Said Tilly as she walked out the door. She got into her car, and backed out of the driveway, and started slowly driving down the road, looking for her sister. After driving around for 30 minutes and finding no sign of Daria, she headed to Jane's. "Maybe she is there." She said to herself. She pulled into the driveway, got out of the car, walked up to the door, and knocked on it.

No answer.

She knocked again.

No answer.

She tried the door handle, and it was locked. She stepped back, and looked under the mat for a key. Not finding one there, she tried the top of the doorframe. There was the key. She unlocked the door, and walked into the house. "Hello? Jane? Trent? Anyone home?" She looked throughout the first floor of the house, and didn't find anyone. She went upstairs, and she found a room with light showing under the door. She knocked on the door. No one answered. This time, she just tried the handle. The door opened, revealing a lot of artwork, easel, and a bed, with Jane laying in it. She walked up to the bed, and gently shook Jane's shoulder. "Jane?"

"Huhwha?" said Jane, picking her head up. "Daria?" She blinked a couple of times, and forced her eyes to focus. "Oh, hey Tilly. I'm not really in the mood.."

"I can't find Daria." Said Tilly. "I've been driving all over Lawndale for the past 30 minutes and don't know where she is. I need your help."

Jane sat up, wiping her eyes. "Why would I care about Daria?"

"Because she's your friend, or did you forget that?"

"After what I said at dinner? I doubt she is any more." Said Jane.

"If you and Daria are as good of friends as you say you are, then that won't matter. She will understand. Come on. I'm worried about her."

Jane got up off the bed, and walked to the bathroom, leaving Tilly in her room. She came back a minute later. "Okay, let's go."

"Good. Have any idea where she might be at?" asked Tilly, as they were walking down the stairs.

"Well, there is only a couple of places she might be. Here would be one of them." Jane stopped midstep, and ran back up the stairs. She went to Trent's door, knocking on it. "Hey Trent, you in there?" Tilly walked up behind Jane.

After a minute, the door opened, revealing Trent. "Hey Janey... Hey Tilly. Where's Daria?"

"We were going to ask you that?" asked Jane. "She got pissed at dinner and took off. She took her bag with her. Haven't seen her since."

Trent went from being partly asleep to wide awake. "When?"

"About an hour ago." Said Tilly, looking at the clock on her cell phone.

"We need to go find her." Said Trent.

"We are going to do that." Said Tilly. "You should stay here, in case she shows up here." Tilly reached into her bag, pulled out a pen and a scrap of paper, and wrote down a phone number. "Here is my cell number. If she shows up here, call me."

"Sure. No problem." Said Trent. He put the scrap of paper into his pocket.

“Let’s go.” Said Tilly. They went down the stairs, and out of the house. Getting into Tilly’s car, they took off down the road. “Where the hell is she?”

“I don’t know. Let’s try the pizza place.” Said Jane. They were there in what seemed like no time. Jane was out of the car before it stopped completely. She ran in, looked around, and then back out, and got back into the car. “She’s not in there, and they haven’t seen her either.”

“Where the hell is she?” said Tilly, slamming her fist onto the steering wheel.

“We could try the Zon, or McGrundy’s Pub.” Said Jane. “There are not many places she goes.” They drove down the road, stopping by the Zon, and then by McGrundy’s. Daria wasn’t at either place.

“This is maddening.” Said Tilly. She began to drive down the road.

“I have an idea. Drive... that way.” Said Jane, pointing out the window. They drove throughout the town, finally pulling into the parking lot of Lawndale High. They got out of the car. “This way.” Said Jane, as she led Tilly to the field. They walked into the middle of the field, and looked around.

“Wait, what’s that?” said Tilly, stopping and pointing to something on the stands.

“It can’t be.” Said Jane. They both walked up to the figure laying on the stands. As they got closer, the details of the person became clearer.

“Damn. It’s not her.”

“What are you kids doing here?” asked the man.

“Looking for a lost friend.” Said Tilly, stepping in front of Jane.

The guy sat up. “Your friend wouldn’t happen to be a girl, about five two, glasses, green jacket?”

“Yeah. You seen her?” asked Jane.

The guy thought for a minute. “Yeah. Some guy was here looking for her about 10 minutes ago. She went that way.” He said as he pointed to the other set of stands.

“Some guy?” asked Tilly of Jane as they ran across the field. They rounded the stands, and saw a guy kneeling beside someone who was sitting on the ground.

“Is that Daria?” asked Jane as they got closer. After a few moments, Jane knew it was Daria. “Hey, get away from her!” shouted Jane.

Tilly went running up, but came to a sliding stop when the guy turned around. “Trent? What in the hell are you doing here?”

“I called Jesse, and he said something about he thought he saw Daria heading here.”

“How is she?” asked Jane as she knelt down beside Daria and Trent.

“Drunk off her ass.” Said Trent. “She has been mumbling ever since I got here.” Trent paused a second, and then stood up. “I think she doesn’t know I am here.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Jane.

“Some things she said.” Said Trent.

“Please elaborate.” Said Tilly, kneeling down beside Daria.

Trent looked down at the ground, and then up at the top of the bleachers. “She was saying that she wasn’t sure if dating was right for her.”

Tilly looked up. “Well, to be blunt, that is part of the reason why she is like this.”

Jane shot a glance at Tilly, and then at Trent, putting her hand on his shoulder. “Trent. She has had a crush on you since she met you. Now, she is dating you. She has trouble dealing with her emotions. You know that.”

“I know Janey, but some of the things she said...”

“Like what?” asked both Jane and Tilly at the same time.

“God, Trent is hot as hell.” Mumbled Daria.

“How’s that not flattering?” asked Tilly.

“She has said other things.” Said Trent. “She said she loved me, but didn’t want to be around me.”

Tilly shook Daria’s shoulder gently. “Daria? It’s me, Tilly.”

Daria looked up at Tilly. “Hi... Tilly...” Daria smiled. “God you’re cute. I wish I looked as good as you.”

Tilly looked up at Jane, and then back to Daria. “Uh, Daria... You do. Remember? We’re twins?”

Daria shook her head. “Yeah... but you’re so much prettier than I am.” Daria put her hand on Tilly’s shoulder, and grabbed Jane’s hand and pulled herself to her feet. “Probably if I wore better clothes...” Daria let go of her help, and took her jacket off and threw it at Trent. He reacted just slow enough for him to catch it, but it hit him in the face.

“Daria... what are you doing?” asked Trent.

“Come on... you always wanted to see me naked. Now’s your chance.” Daria started taking her shirt off.

“Whoa!” said Jane, lunging at Daria, but Daria surprisingly stepped out of the way, as she pulled her shirt off and tossed it aside. Tilly took her jacket off and tried to cover Daria, but Daria pushed her away, knocking her to the ground. Daria slipped out of her sports bra, and then quickly pulled her skirt down and stepped out of it, kicking it across the ground. Trent lunged at her, trying to cover her with the jacket, but Daria fell to the ground. Trent mis-stepped, and fell on top of Daria.

“Just like you wanted, eh Trent?” asked Daria in a semi-sensuous voice.

Trent quickly got to his feet, and tossed Daria's jacket over her. Before she could react, he quickly reached down, and pulled her up, wrapping the jacket around her. Jane had gotten to her feet, and helped Tilly to her feet. "We need to get her home." Said Trent.

"Yeah. Where's your car? We parked over in the main lot." Said Tilly.

"It's over here. I'll take her home. You two follow." Said Trent. He let Daria go for a second, bent down, and picked her up, carrying her in his arms. "Let's get you home."

"Come on Trent... Don't you want to stop off somewhere and be alone?" asked Daria. Trent ignored her. Tilly had collected Daria's clothes, and Trent took them from her, holding them in his hand. He walked to his car. Once he got there, he threw the clothes into the floorboard, and opened the door with his foot. He placed Daria into the front seat, and closed the door. Before he could take two steps, Daria had thrown her jacket out of the window. Trent cursed to himself, and picked the jacket up, and tossed it in the floorboard once he got into the car. He started it, and took off, heading for Daria's house.

Jane and Tilly were sprinting across the field, back to Tilly's car. "We need to get back to Daria's before Trent does. If Helen sees Daria naked, and Trent carrying her, all hell is going to break loose." Said Tilly.

"Yeah, unless we can brief her first." Said Jane. They made it to Tilly's car, and got in. Starting it, they quickly headed for Daria's. "I hate to think what Trent is going through right now. I didn't know Daria would turn like that."

"That's not alcohol." Said Tilly. "She's on something else."

"Whatever it is, it is really screwing with her. She's going to hate herself when she sobers up." Said Jane.

"Well, then we don't tell her about it. We'll try to pass it off as a hallucination or something." Said Tilly.

"Lie to her? She's too smart for that." Said Jane.

"It should work, but it will only be effective if we are all in on it. We will have to get with Trent." Said Tilly.

Jane sighed. "I guess."

Trent was driving as fast as he could, trying to not to pay attention to Daria, but also trying to keep an eye on her. "Hey Trent... here's something for you..." said Daria, as she flung her underwear at him. Trent had to force himself to not look.

"Any other time, I would love to see this." Said Trent to himself. Daria reached over, trying to pull his arm to her.

"Come on Trent...." Said Daria.

Finally, Trent couldn't ignore it anymore. "Dammit Daria, any other time, yes, I would love to see you, but you're drunk, or high, or something else. It's not fair to you."

"Awww, come on Trent. You *know* you've wanted to see this."

“No.” was all he said. The rest of the way to Daria’s, she kept trying to get him to look over at her, or tried to pull his hand to her. He was relieved as he saw Tilly’s car come flying around him, just in time to pull into Daria’s driveway. Just as he was pulling in, Jane and Tilly were waiting at the passenger’s side of the car.

“Wow... a stripper in the making.” Said Tilly. Jane had to stifle a laugh. Trent just looked deadpan at Tilly.

“Come on, Trent. You know it was funny.” Said Jane.

“Nothing is funny right now, Janey.” Said Trent. He collected Daria’s clothes out of the floorboard, while Jane and Tilly helped Daria out of the car. Jane re-wrapped Daria’s jacket around Daria, Trent handed the clothes to Tilly, scooped Daria up, and carried her to the door, with Jane and Tilly close behind. He had just set foot on the front step, when the door opened, revealing Helen and Jake. Trent went to step in, but Jake and Helen stopped him.

“I don’t think so, Trent.” Said Helen. Jake stood with his arms folded.

Trent stared down Helen. “No offense Mrs. Morgendorffer, but move out of my way.” He literally pushed his way past Helen and Jake. Helen shot a glare at Jake, and then to Tilly and Jane.

“He found her.” Said Jane, as she walked past Helen and Jake. Tilly just glared back at Helen and Jake, and walked past. Jake closed the door, and then turned to Helen.

“She’s naked!” said Jake.

“Yeah.” Said Tilly, interrupting any response from Helen. “Trent is the one who found her. When we got there, she was just picking at the dirt, mumbling incoherently. She then stood up and starting stripping. Trent was trying to keep her covered up. She was sitting in the dirt. That’s why she is so dirty.” Tilly had to stifle the joke she was thinking.

Helen looked at Tilly, then to Trent, who was beside Jane, trying to keep Daria pinned down to the couch. The poker face that Helen was wearing slid off to a face of concern and doubt. “Tilly, will you and Jane take Daria upstairs and get her in the shower and to bed. Trent, will you come into the kitchen please?” Tilly looked over at Trent, and then Trent looked to Jane.

“Go. We’ll be fine, and so will you.” Said Jane, smiling at her brother. Tilly walked over, and took Trent’s place. Trent stood up, and walked over to Helen, trying to keep Helen between himself and Jake. Tilly and Jane managed to get Daria to her feet, and helped her upstairs.

Helen watched Jane and Tilly take Daria upstairs. Once they were out of sight, she started walking to the kitchen. Trent stood still. Jake unfolded his arms, and walked towards Trent. Still, Trent stood his ground. Jake looked to see that Helen disappeared around the corner. He placed his hand on Trent’s shoulder. Jake spoke in a stern, but smooth voice, unlike his normal speaking voice. “Son, Daria might be my oldest daughter, but she is still my little girl. You bring her here with no clothes on, and she is intoxicated or high. I don’t think you had anything to do with it, but it took guts and showed love for her to bring her home, when you knew you were walking into a firefight.” He looked over Trent’s shoulder, to see Helen standing there, tapping her foot, hands on her hips. “The truth, and nothing but the truth.” Trent looked at Jake, and then turned to walk into the kitchen.

“Have a seat Trent.” Said Helen, motioning to a chair that had been pulled out. Trent sat down, looking around the room. He had just been there the night before, but it seems alien to him now. Helen pulled a chair out, and sat down. She picked up a pen that was sitting on the table, next to a notepad. “Okay Trent.... What happened?”

Tilly had stripped down to her underwear, holding Daria upright in the shower, while Jane was trying to rinse her off. “Good thing you’re here. I don’t think I could do this myself.”

“What are you two doing?” asked Quinn from the doorway.

“Trying to sober your sister up.” Said Jane. “Can you go get her some clothes?”

“Yeah.” Said Quinn, she turned around and disappeared down the hall.

Jane eyed Daria up and down, and then looked Tilly up and down. “Damn, you two really **are** sisters. You look exactly alike. Everywhere.”

Tilly looked down at Jane, who was working her way up Daria with a washcloth. “Uhhhh...” Tilly turned a shade of red.

Jane laughed. “That’s the first time I’ve seen you embarrassed!” Jane continued with the task at hand. She stopped at the top of Daria’s legs. “Uhhh... I don’t think I can do this.”

“Why?” asked Tilly.

“Because she has a thing for me.” Mumbled Daria, who had decided to come back to the world for a moment.

Tilly looked at Jane, who was now turning red herself. “Say what?”

“Jane wants me.” Said Daria, giggling.

Jane gritted her teeth, looked up at Daria and Tilly. Tilly was trying hard to not laugh. “Here, hold her. Hand me the washcloth.” Jane handed Tilly the washcloth, and held Daria. Tilly quickly washed Daria’s lower body, and then handed the cloth back to Jane. “Are you going to want to keep that later?” Said Tilly, no longer able to hold the jokes in.

“Remind me to toss you down an elevator shaft.” Said Jane, as she took the cloth back from Tilly and continued washing Daria.

“Jane... you **know** you love me. You **know** you want me.” Said Daria, smiling. Jane clenched her jaw, and continued with the job at hand, as she washed Daria’s arms and chest. “Yeah Jane...”

“Dammit Daria. Shut the hell up.” Said Jane to herself. She rinsed Daria off, and then looked to Tilly. “We need to do her hair.”

“Okay, hold on.” Said Tilly as she spun Daria around.

“Here are the...” started Quinn, as she walked in the bathroom. She finally saw Tilly in her underwear, holding up a naked Daria, and Jane with soap on her hands. “Uhhh.”

“We’re trying to get her cleaned up.” Said Jane, turning a bit red.

“No... Jane’s trying to put the moves on me.” Muttered Daria.

Quinn just set the clothes on the counter, and walked out. “I don’t want to know.”

Jane cursed to herself as she wetted Daria’s hair, and then put some shampoo in her hands and started washing Daria’s hair. “Oh Jane...” Daria moaned.

“I think you’re exciting her.” Said Tilly.

Jane looked at Tilly. “Please, stop.”

“No, don’t stop.” Said Daria.

“You know, I think I might tell her about all of this.” Said Jane.

“No.” said Tilly. “I’ll behave.”

Jane finished washing Daria’s hair, and rinsed it, and then applied conditioner. “Almost done.” Said Jane to herself. She rinsed Daria’s hair again, and then quickly rinsed Daria off one final time. She turned the water off, and then turned and got a towel, and started to dry Daria off. Tilly helped Daria out of the shower, and Jane picked up the underwear Quinn had brought, and fought to pull them on.

“We done already Jane? Was it good for you too?” said Daria, giggling.

“Ignore her.” Said Tilly, seeing the frustration on Jane’s face.

“I’m trying.” Said Jane. She grabbed the big T-shirt that Daria normally wore, and pulled it over her. They then brushed her hair out, and then, with Tilly’s help, helped Daria to her room, and into bed, pulling the covers up onto her. They turned and walked out of the room, turning the lights off.

“I love you Jane.” Said Daria.

Tilly looked back at Jane. “I’m gonna go get some dry clothes on, and then go check on Trent. See if he needs the ambulance yet.” Tilly smiled at Jane, and then bounded down the stairs. Jane stopped at the door and turned around, walked to Daria’s bed, and knelt down beside it.

“Jane...”

“Yeah Daria.”

“Do you love me?”

Jane thought for a moment. “Yeah Daria.”

“Say it Jane. Please. I need to hear you say it.”

“I love you, Daria.” Jane leaned over, and softly kissed Daria on the lips. She felt a wave of warmth run through her body, followed by a wave of guilt. She quickly got up, and left the room.

“I love you too, Jane.” Said Daria. She had a small smile on her face as she drifted off to sleep.

“So Trent, you expect me to believe that you found Daria, stayed with her until Jane and Tilly found you, and then she started stripping her clothes off. You then brought Daria home, who was now naked, and didn’t do anything?”

“Yes `m.” Said Trent. “Mrs. Morgendorffer, Daria is a very beautiful girl. Did I want to see her like that? Yes, but not like this. It would have been unfair to her, and improper of me. I am not, and will not, take advantage of her.” Trent paused. “Tilly said I am to blame for this.”

“She is under a lot of stress right now. First Tilly, then Quinn, and now dating you. She made a bad decision by turning to alcohol. Now she has to deal with this, as do you.” Said Helen.

“I don’t know what to do. If I stop seeing her, it will drive her deeper into her stress. If I continue seeing her, it will drive her deeper into stress.” Trent shook his head.

“Trent. I made a flash decision when I saw you carrying Daria.” Said Helen, who looked up to see Jake walk into the room. “I overheard the conversation between you and Jake.” Helen thought for a moment. “You’re a very special young man, Trent. Despite your age, Daria’s age, and other factors, it is our decision that if you want to continue to see Daria, we do not have a problem with it. As for your dilemma, we will back whatever decision you make.” Helen looked to Jake, who just nodded.

Trent stood up. “Thank you.” He pushed the chair in. “I think I need to go home and think.”

“Okay Trent. Want us to call you when Daria wakes up?”

“Yeah.” Said Trent. Jake extended his hand, and Trent shook it. “Thank you.” He walked into the living room, just as Jane came down the stairs. Tilly was sitting on the couch, brushing out her hair. She turned to see Jane coming down the stairs as well.

“Jane? You don’t look too good.” Said Tilly.

“I... I need to go home.” Said Jane. “Ready Trent?”

“Yeah.” Said Trent.

“See you later Helen, Jake... Tilly.” Jane walked to the door, opened it, and walked out, with Trent following her. He closed the door and they walked to his car. They got in, and headed to Casa Lane. It seemed like hours to Jane, but they were soon in the driveway at their house. Jane quickly ran into the house, and up to her room, closing and locking the door. Trent shook his head, and reached over and locked the passenger’s door of the car. As he moved back, he noticed something in the floorboard, but under the seat. He reached down,

and picked it up. It was Daria's underwear. Trent held them in his hand for a moment, and then took them with him as he got out of the car, and went into the house.

"I'll give them to Janey to give back to her." Said Trent, as he walked into the house. He walked up the stairs, and set them on the floor by Jane's door. He then went to his room, and closed the door. He flung himself down on the bed, and started to think.

Once Jane was inside her room, she quickly stripped off the clothes she was wearing, as they were wet from Daria's shower. She put on a long t-shirt, turned off the light, and lay down in bed. Once she was settled down, she could hear Daria's voice in her head. "I love you, Jane."

"I do love you Daria." Said Jane to herself. She then recalled the kiss. It wasn't a passionate kiss, but it was still enough to stir a little excitement. Jane felt the warmth creep through her body again. She just stared at the ceiling, trying hard to not think. After a few minutes, Jane drifted off to sleep. Tomorrow was a new day, and she would have to deal with Daria, and the new feelings she had sparked.

Tilly was sitting in the computer chair in Daria's room, in the dark, with a cup of coffee in hand. She took a sip, as she looked over at the clock. It was 3:30 in the morning. She was sitting, analyzing Daria's behavior, trying to figure out what she took. She knew she had been drinking, but it was more than alcohol. After a minute, she finished the little bit that was in her coffee cup, slipped her shoes on, got up and headed downstairs. Walking through the dark house, she took her cup and put it in the kitchen. She then went into the living room, grabbed her jacket, but then put it down, grabbed Daria's jacket, and headed out the door. She got into her car, and drove back to the field. She arrived within minutes, parking next to where they found Daria. She got out, and walked over, finding the bottle that Daria had been drinking from. She picked it up, and sniffed it. "Some kind of alcohol, and soda." She said to herself. She took the bottle back to the car, and held it in front of the lights, so she could look at it better. In the bottom, there was a little sediment. There was a slightly orange color to it. She looked around, and then remembered the man on the bench. She reached into the car, and retrieved a small aluminum bat, and then started walking across the field.

Once she was at the man, she poked him with the bat. "Wake up." The man stirred, but didn't wake. She poked him again. "Wake up."

The man looked over at Tilly. "Hey..." he said drowsily, "Did you enjoy those?"

"Those what?" said Tilly.

"Those tablets I gave you." Said the man.

Tilly had to control her anger that was beginning to build. "What were they?" She said through clenched teeth.

"I told you what they were." Said the guy.

Tilly brought the bat up to view. "What were they?"

"What? You want more?" asked the man. "You look like you could use them."

Tilly took a breath. "Look. If you don't tell me what those were, I am going to beat you to death right here were you sit."

"You and what..." started the man, but was interrupted by Tilly swinging the bat, just missing the man's head by inches, and striking the bench. The man jumped. "What the hell?"

"Tell me." Said Tilly.

"It was 'X'." said the man.

"X?"

"You know, ecstasy." Said the man, carefully eyeing Tilly.

Tilly let the bat down to her side, and turned to walk away. As she stepped away, the man went to lunge at her. She quickly spun around, swinging the bat and connecting with the man's head, knocking him to the ground. She went to raise the bat again to strike the man, but then turned around, looked down at the man, shook her head and walked away. She walked back to the car, got in, and drove away. After a few minutes, she pulled back into the driveway, and got out of the car. She walked into the house, tossing Daria's jacket back onto the couch. She walked into the kitchen, and made herself a cup of coffee. She then went back up to Daria's room, and sat, waiting for her to wake up.

Jane woke up around 8:00am. She threw the covers off, and sat up. For a moment, it was any other day, and then a flood of memories came back to her mind. "What did I do?" asked Jane of herself. She shook her head, and got out of bed, and went downstairs and grabbed a soda from the fridge. She walked back to the living room, and sat down, staring at the blank TV. As she stared at the blank screen, a face started to form. Soon, she realized the face was Daria's. She sat back on the couch, and closed her eyes. When she did, all she could see was her kissing Daria the night before. Her eyes popped open.

"Hey Janey. You look like you didn't sleep too well." Said Trent.

"Where did you come from?" asked Jane, surprised to see her brother.

"Just woke up." Said Trent.

"A bit early for you, isn't it?"

Trent sat in the chair across the room. "I couldn't sleep either."

"Daria?"

"Yeah? You?"

Jane hesitated for a second. "D... Daria."

Trent raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

Jane sighed. She had thought about telling Trent. She should tell Trent. "Trent." She paused. "I kissed Daria last night."

"That's okay, right?" asked Trent.

"No Trent, you don't understand. I kissed her like you kissed her."

Trent's expression went blank. He sat back in the chair. "Whoa."

"Yeah... Woah." Said Jane.

After a few moments of silence, Trent continued. "Do you like her like that?"

Jane looked at Trent. "I don't know. She means a lot to me. She is the only real friend I ever had." Jane closed her eyes, and swallowed, trying to contain her emotions. "I can't say I don't find her attractive to me."

"She is a beautiful girl." Said Trent. He got up, and walked over and sat beside Jane, putting his arm around his little sister. "Janey, you mean the world to me, you and Daria both. I'm not going to think any less of you or her, no matter what your decision is." Trent took a breath. "I am not sure if I want to keep seeing her, if it all it does is hurt her. I don't like to see her like that. Maybe she needs someone better than me."

"Trent, there is no one better than you. You looked after me, practically raising me, all these years. I can't think of a better person for Daria to be with. However, maybe you would be better off being friends for now." Jane could see Trent's face go blank again. "It doesn't mean you can't still see her, or go out on dates, or even be intimate. I just think the whole boyfriend girlfriend thing is messing with her. Let her get used to being around you, and for her to find her true feelings." Jane paused. "It could mean that she will decide she is dating her crush, and not you. It could also mean that you might find that you are dating the girl who understands you, and not Daria."

Trent sat with an expressionless look. "Janey, do you love Daria?"

Jane felt a warmth creep across her face. She could tell by Trent's reaction that she was turning red. "I don't know Trent. I feel very strongly for her, but I don't know if I am into that sort of thing or not." Jane shook her head. "I find guys attractive, but I also think Daria is attractive as well."

"What's wrong with that?" asked Trent.

Jane swallowed. "Last night, while me and Tilly were giving Daria a shower, I was washing her. When I got to her..." Jane paused, but made a motion to indicate the area she was talking about, "I couldn't do it. I felt if I touched her there, that I wouldn't be able to..." Jane's voice trailed off.

Trent looked at Jane. "Were you excited?"

Jane looked at Trent with shock and surprise. "What?"

"Were you turned on by seeing her like that?"

Jane shook her head, trying to clear the image from her mind. "I think so."

Inside, Trent felt his stomach tie into a knot. "There's nothing wrong with that, Janey. In time, you will ultimately decide how you feel. Regardless, I will support you no matter what."

Jane looked at her brother. "Even if that means I am dating your girlfriend?"

"Yes." Said Trent. He got up, and walked into the kitchen, grabbed a soda, and then headed upstairs. After a few minutes, the beginning of the song 'Don't Cry' by Guns N Roses, being played at high volume.

"Damn." Said Jane, sitting back on the couch. After a few moments, she began crying.

"Nrrrrgh." Came the sound from under the blanket.

"The drunk in number two must be awake again." Said Tilly, putting her feet to the floor.

"Nrrrrgh." Said Daria, as she sat up.

"Are we awake?" asked Tilly.

Daria tried to focus on Tilly, but was having trouble without her glasses. "I don't know. Are we my sister?"

"Yes, we are." Said Tilly.

"Then we're awake. But we're very puzzled." Said Daria.

Tilly cracked a smile. "Welcome back to the land of the sober."

Daria rubbed her head. "This isn't an alcohol hangover."

"No." said Tilly, recalling her adventure earlier. "Remember anything?"

"Not much." Said Daria, rubbing her forehead. "I remember mom acting like an ass, and trying to throw Trent under the bus. I left, and found my hidden drink. I remember walking down the street. Then I ended up at Lawndale High, on the football field."

"Do you remember a man out there?"

"Vaguely." Said Daria. "He asked for a drink, so I gave him my bottle. Next thing I know, I wake up here, with you staring at me." Daria looked around the room. "Where's Jane, and where's my glasses?"

"Glasses are by the bed, and Jane is at home."

"What's she doing at home?" asked Daria.

Tilly thought for a moment. "She was tired." She paused. "You don't remember anything?"

"No." said Daria. "Should I?"

“Well. You ended up behind the bleachers at the football stadium. Me and Jane found you, and brought you home.”

“I’m clean.” Said Daria, feeling her skin.

“Yeah..” Tilly sighed. “We gave you a shower.”

Daria’s face went blank. “What happened?”

“The truth?” asked Tilly.

Daria thought for a moment. “Yes.”

Tilly shook her head, and pushed back a little. “Okay, in a nutshell, you got pissed, you got drunk, the man at the stadium gave you ecstasy, and you were sitting on the ground behind the bleachers. Trent found you. You told Trent you loved him but didn’t want to see him. Jane and I showed up. You started stripping.” Daria’s face turned red. “You were down to your underwear. Trent picked you up, and put you in his car. On the way here, you took off your underwear and threw them at him. We brought you into the house. Trent and Helen had a discussion. Jane and I gave you a shower. Jane was afraid to touch you in certain place.” Daria subconsciously looked down at her chest, and then her lap. “You told Jane you loved her. We brought you in here, dressed you, and put you to bed. You kept telling Jane you loved her. I went to go put some dry clothes on. Jane stayed with you for a minute, and then she hurried out of the room. I sat here for a while, then went and found out what happened. I beat the man on the bench with a bat because he drugged you, then I came back here. Been drinking coffee since about 2am.”

Daria just looked at Tilly. “Did Jane kiss me?”

“I don’t know.” Said Tilly.

Daria slowly reached up, and wiped her lips with her finger. When she pulled it away and looked at it, there was a trace of lipstick on it, the same color as Jane wore. “She did.” Daria hung her head down, shaking it. “Why in the hell do I keep doing this?” She looked back up at Tilly. “I drink to keep from thinking, but then have to do twice the thinking to get out of the mess I put myself into.” Daria came to a realization. “Mom and dad know, don’t they?”

“Not everything. They know you were drunk, they know Trent brought you home despite walking into a firefright, and that was a quote from Jake.”

“Tilly... I don’t.... I don’t know what to do.” Said Daria.

“Well, let’s deal with one thing at a time.” Said Tilly. “First... Trent. How do you feel about him.. Truly feel?”

“I like him.” Said Daria.

“Like him. Do you like him, or do you like your crush?”

“I don’t know.”

“Okay. You’re drinking because you’re dealing with your mind. Letting go of Trent will relieve you of some of that stress.” Tilly looked at Daria, who had no expression. “You don’t have to ignore him, or stay away. You can still be friends, go do things together. Hell, you can even make out if you want!” said Tilly. A small smile crept onto Daria’s face.

“I thought so. Now... Onto Jane.” Tilly said, as she winced when she said the last part. “Bad pun” she said to herself.

“Jane is my best friend, like my sister. I love her like I love you and Quinn.”

“Is it more than that?” came Quinn’s voice from the doorway. Tilly and Daria turned to face her as she walked slowly into the room.

“I like men.” Said Daria firmly.

“Daria, I saw what could only be described as love between sisters. Jane and Tilly were getting soaking wet, trying to give you a shower. They put aside their own needs to tend to you.” Said Quinn. She looked directly into Daria’s eyes. “Loving Jane more than a sister doesn’t make you a lesbian. “

Daria thought for a minute. “Maybe I do.” A few images and situations flashed through her mind. Daria and Jane in an intimate embrace, Daria and Jane in bed together, Jane playing with Daria’s..... “No... I don’t love her like that.”

“You could have fooled the hell out of me.” Said Quinn. Both Daria and Tilly looked back to Quinn. Tilly shot Quinn a “shut up” look. “You were hinting to a lot of things.” Quinn caught the look from Tilly. “However, Ecstasy can make you feel things you wouldn’t normally feel, or make you say things you wouldn’t normally say.”

Tilly followed. “Those thoughts are part of your subconscious. Your conscious mind filters most of it out. Those can be feelings you have, but you wouldn’t normally act or address them.”

“And you two would know because?” asked Daria.

“I’ve had it slipped to me before.” Said Quinn.

“I took it one time, trying to warm up to a guy.” Said Tilly.

Daria looked at the floor. “So I could love Jane more than a sister, but I won’t consciously admit it or feel it.”

Quinn and Tilly looked at each other, then back to Daria. “Yeah.”

“Great... so I am a subconscious lesbian Misery Chick.” Daria shook her head again, and then reached down and grabbed the phone. She dialed in a number she has dialed numerous times before. “Jane? Daria. Can you come over please. I need to talk to you. Yes, now would be fine. Thanks. Bye.” She hung the phone up. “Time to settle this.”

Jane hung up the phone, and just stared at the wall. She was hoping to manage this on her own terms, but it seemed that Daria has forced her hand. Jane walked upstairs to her bedroom, and as she was walking up, she noticed the white fabric by the door. "Must be Daria's. Not mine, and not Tilly's.... WAIT! TILLY!" she exclaimed to herself. She walked down to Trent's room, and knocked on the door.

"Yeah?" came the voice from the other side of the door.

"I need Tilly's phone number." Said Jane.

After a moment, Trent opened the door, and handed Jane the paper with the phone number on it. "Why don't you just call over to Daria's?" Said Trent, looking down at the floor.

"I need to talk to Tilly without Daria knowing." Said Jane.

Trent thought for a second. "Janey. You need to talk to Daria about... about booze."

"Trent... you drink..."

"Yeah, but Daria is too good for that. I'm worried about her." Said Trent.

"Thirty minutes ago you were debating leaving her, and now you're worried about her?" Said Jane.

"No matter what, I still care about her." Said Trent. "Please, Janey."

"Okay Trent. I will see what I can do."

"Cool. Thanks."

"Oh, Trent? Have you made a decision yet?"

"Yeah." Said Trent as he closed the door.

Jane went to raise her hand to knock again. She wanted to know what decision Trent had made, but she figured it could keep. She went to her room, picked up the phone, and dialed.

"Ello?" came Tilly's response.

"Tilly, it's Jane. Daria wants to see me to talk." Said Jane.

"Uhh.. Hold on mom..." Tilly said. Jane could hear the phone being covered, and something muffled being said. After a minute, she came back. "Hey Jane. I was sitting next to Daria. What's up?"

"Daria wants to talk to me. What am I walking into?"

"She remembered what happened between you two last night." Said Tilly.

"She remembered? Or you told her?" asked Jane.

“Lest you forget, I left out of the room. I filled her in on what happened. She drew her own conclusions, and the lipstick was a giveaway.” Said Tilly.

Jane cursed to herself. “I should have never done that.”

“Jane, there is nothing wrong with what you did. I know you love her, and have more than just passing feelings for her. Just be honest with her. You would want her to be honest with you, and she will expect you to be honest with her.” Said Tilly.

“What about the alcohol. I don’t want her to…” started Jane, but Tilly cut her off.

“I already have a plan, and before you ask, I want you to help me. She will need both of us.” Said Tilly.

Jane sighed in relief. “Thanks. Anyway, Daria wants me to come over now.”

“I’ll be waiting outside by my car, unless you want me to come get you?”

“No. If you did, she would know I called you.”

“She’s gonna know that anyway really soon.” Said Tilly.

“Okay. I’ll see you outside in a few. Bye.” Said Jane. She hung the phone up, and quickly got dressed. She was down the stairs and out the door in a flash. She sprinted down the sidewalk to Daria’s, passing Tilly’s new house on the way. She stopped really quick, and looked over the house. She was about to take off again when someone came out of the house. The person came across the yard and walked up to Jane.

“You must be Jane.” Said the person.

“Yeahhhhh.” Said Jane, not sure who this was.

The person stuck out his hand. “I’m James Seiler, Tilly’s dad.”

“Oh. Okay. Nice to meet you.” Said Jane. “Wait, how did you know who I am?”

James laughed. “Tilly has told us about you. You fit the description.”

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing?” said Jane with a small smile.

“It’s good. We’re so glad that Tilly has friends now. Before you and Daria, she never really had any friends.” Said James. “It’s one of the reasons why we decided to move to Lawndale.”

“Wow. You moved here because of Daria and me... for Tilly?”

“Yes.” Said James.

“Wow. I wish my parents cared that much. I hardly ever see mine.”

“Yeah... Tilly told us something about that. Well, I hate to cut and run, but I have to run to the store. We’re trying to get things set up.”

“Okay. I’m heading to Daria’s anyway.” Said Jane, as she just remembered why she was out.

“Have a good day, Jane.” Said James, as he got into his car.

Jane just waved, and started sprinting towards Daria’s. A few minutes, and she was there. Tilly was standing beside her car, on her phone. As Jane approached, she put the phone into her pocket. “About time.” Said Tilly.

“Sorry. Stopped by James.” Said Jane.

“My dad?”

“Yeah. I was going by, and I stopped to look at the house, and he was coming out. Talked to him for a minute.” Said Jane.

“Nice.” Said Tilly.

“Well, let’s get to it.” Said Jane. She sighed heavily, hoping this wasn’t going to be the last time she saw Daria as a friend. They walked into the house, and Daria was sitting on the couch.

Daria stood up. “Tilly, I need to talk to Jane... alone.”

“Daria. I would like Tilly to be there.” Said Jane.

“I... okay.” Said Daria, giving in. She wanted to get this over with.

“Well, what’s up?” asked Jane, as she sat down.

“Lipstick.” Said Daria. “You kissed me last night?”

Jane looked directly into Daria’s eyes. “Yes I did.”

Daria was surprised that Jane answered so quickly and directly. “Why?”

Jane looked away for a second, then to Tilly, and then back to Daria. “I don’t know why. I just did.” Said Jane.

“Jane, there is something you’re not telling me. Either you’re afraid to hurt my feelings, or something else.” Said Daria.

“Fine.” Jane paused for a minute. “I think I love you.”

“Okay.” Said Daria.

“I don’t think you understand. It’s not like a sister, or a friend. I think I love you more than that.” Said Jane.

Daria’s eyes narrowed for a second. “Why do you think that?”

“I don’t know. I just have feelings for you. Do you remember how you felt when Trent was eyeing you a while back?”

“Yeah.”

“I feel the same way about you sometimes.” Said Jane. She looked over at Tilly, and then back to Daria.

Daria was turning a bit red. “I don’t...”

“You don’t know what to say? Or you don’t want me around anymore?” asked Jane, shuffling around.

Daria sighed. “I don’t know what to say.” She pondered for a second, then continued. “I need to tell you something Jane, and I don’t want you to get mad, or upset. Okay?”

“Great. Here it comes.” Said Jane to herself. She nodded yes to Daria.

Daria got up from where she was sitting, and sat next to Jane, “You’re an attractive, smart, and talented person. I’m pleased that you think of me that way. However, and to be entirely honest, I don’t know what I want. I’ve never given thought to seeing girls. For that matter, I haven’t given much thought to seeing guys either. Like you have said before, if I ever decide to do that, I would want it to be with you.” Daria laughed a little. “Maybe we will both get tipsy one night and experiment.” Daria turned to Tilly when she heard her exhale forcibly through her nose.

“That is something else we need to talk about.” Said Tilly. “This drinking needs to stop.”

Daria went to pull her hand away from Jane’s, but Jane gripped it tighter. “Daria. We’re worried about you. Last night was scary for us. We didn’t know where you were. We were scared.”

“I’m sure.” Said Daria, snatching her hand away from Jane. “You practically threw Trent under the bus in front of Helen and Jake.”

“Helen asked.” Said Jane. “What did you want me to do? Lie?”

“No.” said Daria, sighing.

“Shortly after you left, I left. I went home, and I cried. I cried, because I thought I had lost my best friend. Then Tilly came over and we went looking for you. At that point, all I could think about was losing you.” Said Jane.

“She’s right.” Said Tilly. “I just found you, and I don’t want to lose you either. You really need to stop with the drinking. We can find alternate methods to help you wrestle with your mental demons. If you want to have an occasional drink, that’s fine. I don’t think Helen or Jake would mind, as long as you were here or with them, but we are honestly worried about you.”

Daria went to speak, but felt a hand on her shoulder. She turned around, and saw Quinn standing behind her. “Daria. We all worry about you.”

“She’s right, Daria.” Came Helen’s voice from the kitchen. Jake and Helen walked into the living room, and sat down beside Tilly. “We understand that you are dealing with a lot of things right now, and you are looking for ways to deal with this. We can, we all can, help you. However, you have to want that help. You have a family and friends who love you, and care about you. We don’t want to see anything happen to you.”

Daria turned to face Jane, and then looked at each of the people gathered there. Quinn, Jake, Helen, and finally Tilly. They were all nodding in agreement with Helen. "Perhaps I should stay away from it. I just don't want any lectures or other crap if or when I come to someone for help. No speeches or hidden motives." She paused. "I guess I have become so used to being alone, that I have forgotten that there are actually people to turn to."

"Exactly." Said Jake. "Any time you need anything kiddo, just ask."

Daria smiled, and then it faded. "How long were you listening in?" Asked Daria of Helen.

"We heard most of it." Said Helen. She saw Daria take on a look of fright. "No matter what choices you make in your life, we are always there for you." She looked over at Jake. "If that means you want to have a relationship with Jane, or whoever you want, we will support you."

Daria had a look of relief. "Thank you. All of you, thank you."

"Anytime Daria, anytime." Said Jane. "Well, running over here has made me hungry. Lunch?"

"I'm starving." Said Tilly.

"I could go for a slice of cheeseless." Said Quinn.

"Pizza it is." Said Daria.

They walked back into the house from their lunch trip, Tilly and Quinn first, followed by Daria, and Jane, who was dragging her feet. Tilly turned around to address Jane. "Hurry up Lane!"

"Ehhhh." Said Jane, looking at the ground as she walked in.

Tilly stopped short, as Daria was helping Quinn up the stairs. Tilly waited for Jane to catch up. "What's up with you?"

"I don't know." Said Jane, as she glanced up and saw that Daria was walking upstairs. Jane's eyes followed Daria's movement until she was out of sight.

"Trent." Said Tilly. She watched as Jane winced when she mentioned the name. "Problem found, now, to solve it."

"I feel like I have betrayed him." Said Jane.

"Why? Because you think you might love his girlfriend?" asked Tilly.

"Maybe." Said Jane.

"You know, before you beat yourself up over anything, you should find out if you indeed have these feelings, and that they are or are not misguided. You didn't start having these feelings until Trent and Daria started going out."

“No, I’ve had them before. They weren’t that strong, and I just ignored them, or thought they were misguided.”

“They might very well be.” Said Tilly.

Jane stepped in close to Tilly. “I got off over it last night.”

“Excuse me?” Asked Tilly.

“Last night, after seeing Daria naked, and after kissing her, I went home. When I got home, I was in bed in my nightclothes. I then...” said Jane, but Tilly held her hand up.

“I understand.” Said Tilly. “Nothing wrong with that.”

Jane’s eyes went wide, then narrow. “What?”

“Nothing.... Wrong... With... That.” Said Tilly.

“I pleased myself while thinking about Daria.” Said Jane. “And you say there is nothing wrong with that?”

“No. It’s no different than if you were doing it to any guy you know in school. Name a guy you like.”

“Evan.” Said Jane.

“Okay. Now, did you ever have those feelings about him?”

“Yeah. Just never did anything about it.” Said Jane, remembering feelings from the past.

“You found him attractive?”

“Yeah.”

“You wanted to get with him?”

“Yeah.” Said Jane.

“Then what is the difference between him and Daria?”

“Daria is my friend.” Said Jane flatly.

“So, you are trying to tell me that you can’t be friends with a person you’re intimately involved with?”

“No. I’m not saying that.” Said Jane. “I don’t know what I am saying. I just don’t know.”

Tilly laughed. “That’s what love is. You can’t describe it, you don’t understand it. You just feel it.”

Jane thought about it. “I guess you’re right.” She rubbed the back of her neck. “I guess just because it is Daria, I feel weird about it.”

“Can’t help you there. You have to deal with that demon on your own.” Said Tilly.

Jane smiled. “Thanks... I think.”

Tilly smiled a small smile at Jane. “Anytime. Come on. Let’s go save Daria from Quinn.” Jane didn’t say nothing, but just smiled. They walked up the stairs and disappeared out of sight.

“Helen... I don’t know about this.” Came Jake’s voice from the kitchen.

“About what, Jake?”

“Daria... Jane...” said Jake, getting up and getting a drink.

Helen sighed. “What can you possibly have against your daughter being happy?”

“I don’t have anything against her being happy. I’m just worried about anything that could happen to her if people found out. I’m worried about her... and Jane’s, safety.” Said Jake.

“I think if anything happened, Daria has a wonderful support group in place to help her. Besides, if anyone does mess with them, I will sue them back into the Stone Age.” Said Helen with an evil grin.

Jane and Tilly walked into Quinn’s room, and did a double take. “Wait.” Said Tilly. She turned to Jane. “Why am I seeing two Quinns?”

“Daria has perfected her cloning technique?” said Jane.

Tilly laughed, partially at the joke, and partially that Jane was in a better mood. “Possibly, but what is the purpose of having two Quinns?”

“Ha ha.. laugh it up funny girls.” Said Daria. She was wearing similar jeans and a similar shirt to what Quinn was wearing. Daria’s hair was brushed out, and arranged similar to Quinn’s.

“Don’t you think she looks good like this?” asked Quinn.

Jane was speechless. “Yeah, she doesn’t look half bad.” Said Tilly.

“I feel like a life-sized Barbie doll.” Said Daria.

“Except Barbie didn’t wear Doc Martens.” Said Jane.

“I had to draw the line somewhere.” Said Daria.

Quinn turned to look at Daria. “You really do look good like this. I think we could adapt your wardrobe to be a little more fashionable, without compromising your personality.”

“Maybe.” Said Daria.

Quinn smiled. "All I ask is you give it a chance."

"Maybe." Said Daria. She grabbed her clothes. "I'm going to my lair."

"Okay." Said Quinn. "I wanted to call Sandi anyway."

Daria stopped in her tracks and spun around. "Sandi?"

"Yeah... " said Quinn.

Daria shrugged. "Tell her I said hi." She deadpanned as she walked out of the door. She walked across the hall and into her room. Jane and Tilly were already in there, and she swore she saw Tilly just sitting down as she walked in. "What are you two up to?"

"Nothing." Said Tilly with a smile as she glanced over at Jane.

"Yeah... nothing." Said Jane. She was laying on Daria's bed, with her hands behind her head. Tilly was in her usual position in the computer chair. Daria walked over to the rollaway bed, and laid down on it.

"How do you sleep on this thing?" asked Daria.

"Very carefully. When you're tired, you'll sleep anywhere."

"I've heard that before." Said Daria. She turned to Tilly. "So, when you heading home?"

"Trying to get rid of me already?" Tilly laughed. "I should be getting on the road here soon. Long drive back to Edgewood." Tilly shot a glance at Jane.

Jane smiled. "Yeah. Need your beauty sleep for school tomorrow."

"Yeah. I don't have access to Quinn to make me over." Said Tilly.

Jane tried hard to not laugh.

"Dar-ia..." came Quinn's voice from across the hall.

Daria sighed. "Nurse Morgendorffer is on her way." Mumbled Daria as she got up and walked out of the room.

Jane sat up. "Did you get the stuff?"

Tilly checked the doorway. "Yep. Grabbed one of her skirts, one of her shirts, and I will somehow nab her jacket that is downstairs which has her other pair of glasses in it."

"Remember. You have to describe the look on Ms. Li's face in detail to me." Said Jane.

"Even better. I will take a picture. I have a small camera at home... if I can find it."

"Awe... uh oh, here she comes." Said Jane. Daria walked back into the room.

“Quinn needed help with her bandages. I’m no expert, but it doesn’t look right.” Said Daria.

“So, did you rip the bandages off fast, or slowly peel them off for maximum pain?” asked Tilly.

“She already had them off... dammit.” Said Daria.

Tilly laughed. “Well, I think I need to be heading home.”

“Okay.” Said Daria. She turned to walk out the door. Jane got up, and followed her out, with Tilly taking up the rear. They popped into Quinn’s room, and Tilly gave Quinn a quick hug and said her goodbyes. They then walked downstairs.

“Well, I guess I will see you next weekend.” Said Tilly.

“Yeah.” Said Daria.

“Feel the love.” Said Tilly.

“Sorry, just not feeling well right now.” Said Daria.

“It’s okay.” Said Tilly. “I’ll see you two later. Tell Helen and Jake I said bye.” Tilly went to walk out the door, but stopped short. “Oh... Daria.. Can I borrow your jacket? I left mine at home, and it is a bit cold out.”

“Sure.” Said Daria. She handed Tilly the jacket that was draped over the back of the couch. Tilly slipped it on, and inconspicuously felt to see if the glasses were still there. They were.

“Well, I’m off. Later.”

“See ya.” Said Jane.

“Bye.” Said Daria. Tilly walked out the door, and walked to her car. Daria closed the door behind her. Tilly got in her car, and drove off down the road, like she was heading to the highway, except she went around the block, and then headed to her new home.

“You going home too?” asked Daria.

Jane looked at Daria. It would be easy to just run and avoid the situation, but Jane needed to deal with her feelings. “Nah. I think I will stay awhile.”

“Just make sure you wear smudge proof lipstick next time.” Said Daria with a small smile.

Jane’s expression didn’t change. Yet, she was screaming inside. “How in the hell can you make a joke like that?” she said to herself. She just concentrated on all the good times she has had with Daria, and in short order, the frustration started to melt away. “I wonder if Sick Sad World is on?”

“Let’s find out.” Said Daria. They walked over to the couch, and sat down. Daria grabbed the remote, and turned the TV on. They sat next to each other, and after a minute, Jane put her arm around Daria. Unconsciously, Daria nestled up next to Jane. Jane just smiled, feeling the warmth of her best friend, the smell

of her hair. The upcoming day was going to be a fun one, but now, the only thing she had on her mind was spending time with Daria.

Jane had just walked in the door to her house. As she walked up the stairs, she could see the light on in Trent's room. She walked down the hall, and peeked in. She could see a little bit of Trent's legs on the bed. She knocked on the door. "Yo Trent!" Jane could hear something being shuffled around, and being slid across the floor.

"Hey Janey." Said Trent as he opened the door.

"Just thought I would let you know I was home." Said Jane.

"Cool. How's Daria?"

"She's fine. We had a talk with her about the drinking. She is going to try to seek other methods of dealing with her feelings. Talking to me, Tilly, her parents... even Quinn." Said Jane.

"Woah... Quinn?" asked Trent.

"Yeah. Go figure. Her and Daria seem to be better friends since Quinn's injury." Said Jane.

"What about Tilly? She isn't always going to be around."

"Yeah, she is. They moved to Lawndale this weekend. Tilly starts school tomorrow with us."

"Cool." Said Trent. No other words were spoken for a minute or so.

Jane shrugged and got up, walking to the door. Just outside of Trent's room, she spun around, expecting Trent to still be on the bed, but he was a few feet behind her. "What's your decision about Daria?"

"Rather not discuss it right now." Said Trent as he went to close the door. Jane stuck her foot in the door.

"No, Trent. I have to know."

"Janey..." started Trent, but Jane held up her hand to stop him.

"Trent... please."

Trent sighed. "I'm going to try to stay with her. If it starts to get to her, and she turns back to drinking..." Trent saw Jane's face go blank. "I'm sorry Janey. I know you have feelings for her. I'm sorry..." Trent closed the door.

Jane just stood there, staring at the door. "He's sorry." She said to herself. She turned and slowly walked to her room. The rest of the night went by in a blur. Taking a shower, getting ready for bed, going to bed, and finally going to sleep.

Jane was sleeping, when she awoken by the doorbell, followed by a knock on the door downstairs. She looked at the clock, and it said 2 am. "Who the hell is that?" She walked downstairs, and into the living room. She opened the door. "Daria?"

"Hey." Said Daria as she walked into the house. Jane closed the door behind her, and followed Daria as she walked in.

"Do you know what time it is?" asked Jane.

"Yeah. Two in the morning." Said Daria, as she walked up the stairs and to Jane's room.

"Wait.. what.. huh.. " was all Jane could say as she followed after Daria.

Once Daria was in Jane's room, she stopped, and spun around to face Jane. She waited for Jane to get in the room. "Okay. Now..."

"Why in the hell are you here at 2 am?" asked Jane as she finally caught up to Daria.

"This." Said Daria. She stepped to Jane, pulled her down to her, and gave her a deep, lingering kiss. At first, Jane fought it, but then stopped resisting, wrapping her arms around Daria. They kept going, with Daria moving her hands down and running them up and down Jane's back. Jane stepped back, holding Daria at arm's length.

"What was that for?" asked Jane as she took in what Daria was wearing. She had her signature green jacket on, but was wearing a pair of sweatpants, and slip on shoes.

"You said you wanted your first time with a girl to be with me, and I wanted my first time being with a girl to be with you." Said Daria. "Here, sit down." Daria sat Jane on the end of the bed. She pulled a black silk cloth from the pocket of her jacket. "Now, I have a surprise for you. I'm going to put this on you." She saw Jane move like she was going to say something. Daria placed her finger to Jane's lips. "Don't worry. I'm not going to do anything to you, yet." Jane sighed, and Daria took the cloth, and covered Jane's eyes with it. "Can you see anything?"

"No." said Jane.

"Good." Said Daria. She stepped back, and slipped off the shoes. She started to tremble a little as she followed by taking off her jacket, shirt, and sweatpants, revealing the black lingerie underneath. She took her glasses off, and put them on a nearby stand. Daria ran her fingers through her hair, smoothing it out a little. "Okay, are you ready?"

"I think so." Said Jane.

Daria walked over, and turned off the light in the room, leaving the room lit with only the moonlight that was shining into the window. Daria walked over and stood in the light, letting it gently illuminate her from behind. "Okay. You can take it off now."

Jane could hear the uneasiness in Daria's voice. Jane slowly took the blindfold off, revealing Daria, standing in the moonlight. "Daria...." Started Jane, but that was all she was able to get out. She couldn't speak.

“Do you like it?” asked Daria as she walked towards Jane. Jane just nodded. “Good.” She gently lifted Jane, having her stand up. Daria then began to remove Jane’s nightshirt, followed by the shorts she was wearing, leaving Jane standing in her black lace underwear. Jane just watched as Daria undressed her. “You have a wonderful body.” Said Daria, taking a step back to look at her friend.

“T-thanks.... Daria.... Is this...” Said Jane, but Daria silenced her by placing a kiss on Jane’s lips. Jane this time returned it, pulling Daria tightly against her.

Daria pulled away. “Just enjoy yourself, Jane.” Said Daria. She lay down on the bed, taking a seductive pose. She patted the bed next to where she was laying. “Come join me.”

Jane hesitated, but for only a moment. She laid down next to Daria. “What do I do?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never done this either. Use your imagination.” Said Daria.

“Is there anything you don’t want me to do?” Asked Jane, her hand on Daria’s.

“No.” said Daria. She sat up, and slipped off the lingerie, leaving no clothing to cover anything. Jane just smiled, and started by kissing Daria on the lips, and then started working her way down, planting kisses on Daria’s neck, then down her chest to her stomach. Jane stopped short of Daria’s waist. “Please Jane..... “ Jane went to lean in to continue, when she heard what sounded like her alarm clock....

Jane sat up in bed, breathing heavily. She looked around the room. She was there alone. She looked down at the alarm clock. It said 6 am. “Damn.” She said, as she rolled out of bed. She went to the window, and looked out. “Monday already.” She shook her head. “Damn, what a dream. It seemed so real.” Jane sighed heavily, and turned to get ready for the upcoming school day.

The alarm clock was going off. Daria reached an arm out from under the blanket, and swatted at the clock. She missed the snooze button, and knocked the clock off on the floor. “Dammit.” She said as she flung the blanket off, sat up, and found the alarm clock. She turned it off, and then slowly rose to her feet. She walked to the dresser, and grabbed some clothes, and headed to the shower. She was due to meet Jane at 7:30 to walk to school, and she still had to eat breakfast.

Double Down – Phase Two

Tilly was just walking out of the shower, when Sarah passed by. “Excited about the first day at a new school?”

“You have no idea.” Said Tilly with a smile.

“Now Matilda, I hope you are not planning to start anything. Remember your first day of high school in Edgewood.” Sarah shook her head. “I still feel sorry for those people.”

“Good times... good times.” Said Tilly, her smile getting bigger.

“Matilda, you can’t possibly think that taking the school counselor away in a strait jacket was funny.”

“No... it wasn’t.” Said Tilly. Her mother started to look relieved, then Tilly continued. “It was hilarious!”

“What do you have up your sleeve?” asked Sarah.

“Nothing major.” Said Tilly, as she put on the pair of glasses she had in her hand.

“Aren’t those Daria’s?”

“Why yes.. yes they are.” Said Tilly. “Don’t worry mom. I promise... no strait jackets.”

Her mother looked relieved. “That’s good. Thanks, honey.” Sarah walked down the hallway and down the stairs.

“I’m shooting for the paramedics this time.” Muttered Tilly to herself, as she walked to her room to finish dressing.

Daria and Jane are standing by their lockers, when Tiffany and Stacy walk up. “Hey Daria... How’s Quinn?” asked Stacy. Tiffany was just staring at them.

Daria ignored the fact that the only reason they were talking to her was to get info on Quinn. “She’s doing good. She has to go to the doctor today to get checked up. She should be back to school next week.”

“We... need... to... go...” drawled Tiffany.

“Go ahead.” Said Stacy. “I’ll catch up to you in a minute.”

“O..kay... “ said Tiffany. She glanced at Stacy, then to Daria, and walked away.

“Daria, do you know if Quinn has talked to Sandi?”

“Yeah. She called her yesterday. I don’t know if she talked to her or not.” Said Daria.

“Okay. Tell Quinn we might...” Stacy looked over her shoulder at Tiffany, who had just rounded the corner, out of sight. “Or I might come over.”

“Okay... Later.” Said Daria, as she closed her locker door. Stacy stood there for a second, and turned and hurried away.

“Wow... even the ex-Fashionistas are talking to you.” Said Jane. It was pretty much the first thing Jane said to Daria all morning, which Daria noticed.

“Wow... So you can speak.” Said Daria.

“Sorry. Didn’t get much sleep last night.” Said Jane.

“I would say so. Another nightmare?” Daria asked, as she and Jane turned to walk down the hall.

“Yeah... you could say that. Let’s get to class.”

Tilly walked into Lawndale High, and to the guidance office. “Can I help you young lady?” asked the woman behind the counter without looking up.

“I’m here for my first day routine.” Said Tilly.

“Have you reg...” said the lady as she looked up at Tilly. “Uhhh.. Haven’t I seen you before?”

“No... This is my first day. I’m Till, err, Matilda Seiler.” Said Tilly.

“Ooookay.” Said the lady, as she shuffled some papers around, and pulled a folder out. “Here we go.” She opened the folder, reading the contents. “I’ve seen this profile before.” The lady muttered to herself. She looked back up at Tilly. “Okay, you have to meet with the school counselor, and then you will be meeting with the principal. Then you will receive your class assignments, and be assigned a mentor for the first few days until you are accustomed to the school.”

“Can I request someone in particular?” asked Tilly.

“Yes. Ask Ms. Li when you meet with her.” Said the lady. “Have a seat. Mrs. Manson will be with you in a few minutes.” The lady behind the counter took the folder and handed it to a student aide, who disappeared out of the office. Tilly sat down in a row of chairs against the wall. She looked around the small room, and noticed there was only one other student in there. She glanced at him, and then started to observe some obscure point on the wall across from her.

“Hey.” Said the other student. Tilly just looked at him for a second, and then turned back to her observation. “Hablas Ingles?”

Without looking at the kid, Tilly simply said “Yeah.”

“So....”

“So what?” said Tilly, turning to look at the kid.

“Well, at least you looked over at me.” Said the guy.

“So I did.” Said Tilly, turning back to the wall.

The kid stood up, and moved closer to Tilly, with a chair between them. “You’re new here too?”

“No. I’ve lived here all my life. I just decide to re-enroll myself every few months to keep the staff on their toes.”

“Sounds like fun. I’m new here too.” Said the kid.

Tilly sighed. “Where’d you move from?”

“New Smyrna in Florida. You?”

“Edgewood.” Said Tilly.

The kid looked Tilly up and down. “Nice outfit.”

Tilly looked down. “Yeah, but not my usual. I’m playing a joke on a few people.”

“Wow... First day and you’re already screwing with people. Sounds like me.”

Tilly was getting ready to say something, when a tall, older woman with a grey streak in her hair, and glasses, came into the room. She had the folder in her hand. “Ms. Seiler?” She said without looking up.

“Yeah.” Said Tilly.

“Come with...” said Manson, stopping when she looked up at Tilly. “Very funny, Ms. Morgendorffer.”

“Who?” asked Tilly, in fake innocence.

Mrs. Manson looked harder. “Nothing. I thought you were someone else. The outfit, the profile... Nevermind... come with me.”

“Okay...” Said Tilly, smiling as she got up and followed the counselor. She turned to look at the guy she was talking to, and noticed he was grinning as she was walking away. “It wasn’t that funny...” said Tilly to herself. She stopped for a second. “Wait, was he checking me out?” Tilly sighed audibly. “Great. Here one day and already a guy is hitting on me.”

“Now Matilda... What do you see here?” as Mrs. Manson held up a card with a silhouette of two people standing.”

“It’s Tilly, and I’m going to say a herd of beautiful wild ponies running free across the plains.” Said Tilly, deadpan.

“Uh... There aren’t any ponies. It’s two people.” Said Mrs. Manson.

“Last time I took one of these tests, they told me they were clouds. They said they could be whatever I wanted them to be.” Said Tilly. She could see the look frustration mixed with confusion forming on Mrs. Manson’s face.

“That’s a different test, dear. In this test, they’re people, and you tell me what they are discussing.”

“Oh... I see... Alright then. It’s a guy and a girl and they’re discussing... a herd of beautiful wild ponies running free across the plains.” Said Tilly. Mrs. Manson dropped the picture down onto the table, and put her face into her palms. “Is there a problem?”

“No. Nothing.” Said Mrs. Manson. Tilly could hear Mrs. Manson mutter “I swear I’ve heard this before.” She made some remarks on the report, and got up. She walked to a file cabinet, and removed a folder. Bringing it back to the table, she opened it up and started to compare notes. Tilly was trying to read the report on the other folder, but could not make out the writing. Mrs. Manson closed both folders and stood up. “Come with me, please.”

“Okay.” Said Tilly. As she stood up, she could make out the name on the tab of the folder. “Morgendorffer, Daria E.” Said Tilly. “Who’s that?”

“Nevermind that.” Said Mrs. Manson. She walked out of the office, with Tilly following behind. She took her back to the office she started at, and handed Tilly’s folder to the woman behind the counter. “You can tell Mrs. Li I’m done with her.” She turned to Tilly. “Have a seat.”

Tilly sat down, noticing the guy who was there was gone now. She shrugged and sat down. “Ms. Seiler, you said you wanted to request a specific student guide?”

“I thought you said I had to ask this Mrs. Li person.” Said Tilly.

“I’m going to go ahead and have this student ready. Who did you want?”

Tilly smiled. “Daria Morgendorffer.”

The woman behind the counter shook her head. “May I ask why you want her?”

“She’s a girl I have been talking to on the Internet before I came here.” Said Tilly. It wasn’t too much of a lie.

“Okay. I will have her sent to Mrs. Li’s office shortly.” Said the woman. She turned and typed some info into the computer.

Another woman walked into the office, and up to the counter. This woman wore a grey pantsuit, glasses, and appeared to be of an Asian descent. Picking up the folder, she read off the name. “Seiler, Matilda L.” said the woman, without looking at Tilly. “Follow me.” She sighed as she walked out the door.

Tilly looked at the woman behind the counter, and mouthed the words “Mrs. Li?” The woman behind the counter nodded. Tilly shrugged, and followed Mrs. Li out the door, down the hall, and into another office.

“Have a seat.” Said Mrs. Li as she rounded her desk and sat down, never looking at her. Tilly sat into the chair, and waited. “So, Ms. Seiler. What brings you to Law...” Started Mrs. Li as she looked up and saw Tilly for the first time. She blinked her eyes a few times, as if she was trying to clear her vision. “Ms. Seiler?”

“That’s me.” Said Tilly, trying her best to match Daria’s tone and pattern.

Mrs. Li just stared at Tilly for a second. “You’re sure you are Matilda Seiler?”

“Yes. I have been all my life, well, except for that time in 1993 when I thought I was Joan of Arcadia.” Said Tilly, watching as Mrs. Li was looking more and more confused.

“Very well. I am Mrs. Angela Li, the principal here at Lawndale High.” Mrs. Li opened up the folder on her desk, and began reading from it. She would start to say something, then stop, and read more. After a few minutes of

this, Mrs. Li closed the folder, and picked up the phone. A few brief words were spoken, and Mrs. Li hung the phone up. "You will have a student guide that will show you around the school for your first few days. If you have any questions, you can ask your guide. You're above average grades will bring honor to Lawndale High." A knock was heard at the door. "Come in."

Daria walked into Mrs. Li's office, and noticed the new student. "You wanted to see me?"

"Ahh, Ms. Morgendorffer. I would like you to meet Matilda..." Started Mrs. Li, but Daria finished for her.

"Seiler. What in the hell are you doing here, and why the hell are you wearing..." Started Daria, before the penny dropped. While she was wondering why Tilly was at Lawndale, she knew why Tilly was wearing her clothes, and her glasses.

"I go to school here... now." Said Tilly, smiling.

"You two know each other?" asked Mrs. Li.

"Yes. We're sisters." Said Tilly and Daria in unison as Daria sat down next to Tilly.

"So, there are two of you?" asked Mrs. Li, hand reaching for a lower desk drawer.

"No, only one Tilly." Said Daria.

"And only one Daria." Said Tilly.

"But we are very similar otherwise." They said in unison.

Mrs. Li halfway tossed a piece of paper at Tilly. "Ms. Morgendorffer, here is Ms. Seiler's class schedule and locker assignment."

"I'm over here." Said Daria, reaching over and grabbing the paper from Mrs. Li.

"No, I'm Daria." Said Tilly, grabbing the paper.

"I'll take that." Said Daria, snatching the paper back from Tilly. Mrs. Li just looked back and forth at the two.

"Just get out, both of you!" Exclaimed Mrs. Li, jumping to her feet and pointing towards the door. The sisters stood up, and walked out of the office, giving a last glance to Mrs. Li as they closed the door behind them. She pulled out the drawer, and removed a small flask from it. "Why my school, and why me?" asked Li to herself as she took a large swig from the flask.

"So, where are we heading first?" asked Tilly as her and Daria were walking down the hall.

"DeMartino, history class." Said Daria. She approached her locker, and then read the paper from Mrs. Li. "Lovely. Your locker is only two away from mine."

“Great.” said Tilly as she glanced at the combination written on the paper. She spun the dial and had the locker open in a few moments.

“So, when did you move here?” asked Daria, as Tilly was inspecting the contents of her locker.

“We officially moved in Saturday. They have been moving stuff since Thursday.” Said Tilly, sliding junk from the locker, and into a nearby trash can. She pulled a small reproduction painting of the *HMS Titanic* sinking, and attached it to the inside of her locker.

“Nice.” Said Daria, as she motioned for Tilly to look in her locker. Amid the pile of books, there was a photo of the *Hindenburg* in the back. She closed her locker, and turned to Tilly. “Why are you here?”

“I was waiting for that.” Said Tilly. “Mom and dad decided I needed to be around my sisters. It was this or the alternative.” Tilly closed her locker.

“What was the alternative?” asked Daria, as they started to walk down the hall to DeMartino’s class.

“Sarah and James were going to give me up to Helen and Jake.” Said Tilly.

Daria stopped in her tracks. “What?”

“Sarah and James were going to give up their rights to me so Helen and Jake could take me back.”

“That’s what I thought you said.” Said Daria. She started to walk again. “Why would they do that?”

“Well, not permanently. They were going to appoint Helen and Jake as legal guardians. It was a last resort option. They were looking into buying a house in Lawndale, but they didn’t have the cash for the down payment. The owner of the house we are renting is someone Helen knows. We were able to get the house without a security deposit. Between Helen and James, they are talking to the owner of the house to see if we can buy it once we sell our house in Edgewood.” Said Tilly, as she stopped in front of a classroom.

“Here we are.” Said Daria. The name on the door said “A. DeMartino – History”

“Hey Daria!” came Jane’s voice from down the hall. She ran up to the sisters. “Oh, hey Tilly! What are you doing here?” Said Jane in mock surprise.

“Cut the crap Lane.” Said Daria. “You had to be in on this.”

“Yeah.” Said Jane. She turned to Tilly. “How did it go?”

“Well, I think I’ve only been called Daria about three or four times. Mrs. Li was drinking before I got out of the office good.”

“Nice.” Said Jane. “Shall we go in?”

“After you.” Said Daria. Jane walked into the classroom, followed by Tilly, and then Daria went in last.

(Side note. At this point is where I finally get in touch with Canadibrit. Then she tells me I am not allowed to use the Lynn character. So, with some thought, and much help from the people at PPMB, Lynn is now being changed to Matilda "Tilly" Lynn Seiler. Kate and Jerome are now Sarah and James. AP is now Tristan T. Mathiesen. The similarity ends... and the new world begins... Though I still give partial credit to Canadibrit for concept of twins...)

Daria and Jane were sitting at their lunch table, trying to make heads or tails of the offerings handed to them by the school cafeteria. "So, what hand did you have in this?" asked Daria as Jane was prodding at the brown mass on her tray.

"Hand in what?" said Jane in mock innocence. Tilly walked up and sat down.

"Her." Said Daria, jerking a thumb in her direction.

"What did I walk into?" asked Tilly, sitting down.

"You and the clothes." Said Daria.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Said Jane, trying to not look Daria in the eye.

Tilly began to laugh. "We concocted this idea a couple of days ago. It almost died when you became obliterated the other night. Head still hurt?"

"Very funny." Said Daria, as she rubbed her head.

"So, what do you think of the nutjobs we call teachers?" asked Jane.

"Mr. O'Neill is a bit of a fruit loop, and I think DeMartino is going to have a coronary one day. Mrs. Barch is a bit of a man hater, and what is up with Mrs. Li? Is she running for dictator of the year?"

"Mrs. Li is always trying to make a buck in the name of education. It just so happens she spends it on things that are a bit out there. Wait until you meet the rest of the staff." Said Jane.

"It's better than jail." Said Daria.

"How would you know?" asked Jane.

"Wrote about it." Said Daria, closing her eyes.

"You know, I could.... Uh oh." Said Tilly as she tried to duck behind Daria.

"What?" asked Jane.

"Him." Tilly said, pointing to a guy who was walking up.

"Never seen him before." Said Jane, turning to look.

“Neither have I. Another victim?” asked Daria.

“He was in guidance when I was. He was hitting on me.” Said Tilly, trying to hide.

“Hello ladies, mind if I join you?” asked the kid as he went to sit down next to Jane.

“Uhh..” said Daria and Tilly together.

“Sure.” Said Jane, smiling.

“So, how did you enjoy your first day so far... Matilda, is it?” He said, looking around Daria.

Tilly shrugged, and gave up. “It was okay... and call me Tilly. Only my mother calls me Matilda.”

“And your sister.” Said Daria.

“And your other sister.” Said Jane.

The kid looked at Tilly, and then to Daria, and Jane. “I can see the resemblance between you two.” He said, pointing at Daria and Tilly, “But I don’t see it with you.” He said, pointing at Jane.

“So, what is your name?” asked Jane.

“Tristan. Tristan Mathiesen.”

“And what town did they ship you in from?” asked Jane.

“A small town down in Florida called New Smyrna.” Said Tristan. “My dad worked for a company that was downsizing, and they offered to move him up in this area. They paid for the down payment and such on the house, paid for the move, everything.”

“The alternative?” asked Jane.

“Lose his job, the house, and everything else.” Said Tristan, taking a bite of his lunch. “Not too bad.”

“You can actually eat this stuff?” asked Tilly.

“Yeah. It’s better than what I used to eat in school.” Said Tristan. “What about you? What’s your story?” He said, motioning to Tilly.

“Witness protection program.” Said Tilly. “Classified, can’t say more than that.” Jane coughed, almost choking on her soda.

“And now the truth.” Said Tristan.

Tilly said nothing, just looking at Tristan.

“Nice.” Said Tristan, taking another bite. The amigas shuddered as he ate.

"I still can't believe he's eating this stuff." Said Jane.

"He'll pay for it later." Said Daria. Tilly stifled a laugh.

"I don't know what it is. I can eat like a horse that hasn't seen food in a month, but I still look like this." Said Tristan, standing up. Tilly just stared at him, while Daria and Jane rolled their eyes.

Daria noticed Tilly, and reached over and pushed up on her chin. Tilly turned bright red, and buried her face in her hands.

"Embarrassment out of Tilly. Good one!" said Jane. She was about to say something else, when the bell rang. "Back to the grind."

"Who do you have next?" asked Daria of Tilly.

"Dafoe." Said Tilly.

"Same here." Said Daria.

"Me too." Said Jane.

Tristan looked at his schedule. "Me three."

"Great. The making of the Fabulous Four." Said Daria to herself as she picked up her bag and made for the door.

Tilly and Jane stood by Daria's locker, waiting for their friend. As she walked up, Tristan was walking up from the other direction. "Here comes your boyfriend." Said Jane. Tilly just shot her a glance, and turned to face Daria coming the other direction.

"Finally. I thought I would grow old waiting for Quinn's assignment list." Said Daria, opening her locker and pulling a few books from it that Quinn would need.

"Assignment list?" asked Tristan, as he walked up.

"Yeah. Her sister is home recovering from some injuries. Daria has been designated her tutor and teacher until she returns to school." Said Jane. Daria just sighed.

"Tell everyone my life story." Muttered Daria.

"Wait. Now I am confused." Said Tristan.

"It's better to stay that way." Said Jane.

"I'm afraid to ask." Said Tristan.

“Be afraid. Be very afraid.” Said Jane.

“Can we get out of here?” asked Daria.

“Yeah, let’s go. I’m tired of this place already.” Said Tilly.

“Wanna walk with us?” asked Jane. Daria shot her an annoyed glance.

“Sure.” Said Tristan. The foursome walked down the hall, and out through the doors. As they hit the parking lot, a familiar car pulled into view.

“Crap.” Said Jane and Tilly in unison, barely audible.

“What?” asked Tristan. Apparently he heard it.

Daria went to turn to go back into the school, but Jane and Tilly stopped her. “It’s my brother.” Said Jane.

“And Daria’s boyfriend.” Said Tilly. They all watched as Trent pulled up to the curb.

“Hey Janey, Tilly... Daria.” Said Trent. Daria turned a bit red at the sound of her name. Jane felt a knot tie into her stomach.

“Hey.” Said Daria.

“You want a ride home?” asked Trent.

Tilly went to say something, but Daria quickly covered her mouth. “No, that’s okay. It’s Tilly’s first day at Lawndale High, and she needs to walk it off.”

“I was asking you, Daria.” Said Trent. Jane felt her face tighten.

“Sure, she would love a ride.” Said Tilly, managing to free herself from Daria.

“Cool. Hop in.” said Trent, pushing the passenger’s door open. Daria sighed, and walked to the car and got in. As she sat down, she shot a look of death at Tilly. She closed the door, and Trent drove off.

“A love-hate relationship?” asked Tristan.

“Yeah. You can say that.” Said Jane through clenched teeth.

“So, who was the new guy?” asked Trent as they slowly rode down the road.

“Exactly that. A new kid. His name is Tristan, I think. Tilly has been eyeing him all day.” Said Daria.

“Kind of how you used to do to me.” Said Trent with a small laugh.

“Yeah.” Said Daria, but she wanted to say “Like I used to? Like I still do.”

“Daria. I picked you up because I wanted to talk to you.” Said Trent.

“Okay.” Said Daria.

“I’m worried about you.” Said Trent. Daria went to speak, but Trent placed his hand on hers, lightly squeezing it. “Saturday night was a little scary for me, for all of us.”

“Trent, I...” started Daria, but Trent cut her off.

“Let me finish.” Said Trent. His voice became a little clearer, and more stern. “Did Janey ever tell you about my friend David?”

“No.”

“Well, he was to me like Jane is to you. He was my best friend. He was a little like you. Anyway, his father was a drunk, and he started drinking at an early age. His mother left them at a early age from the drinking. One night, he went a little too far. They found him very close to where I found you the other night, except he was dead. Alcohol poisoning combined with head trauma. He was so drunk, he tripped and hit his head on the concrete that held the bleachers up.” Said Trent. He flipped the visor down, revealing two pictures. One was a picture of Daria. The other was a picture of two guys. He pulled it from the visor, and handed it to Daria. One of the guys was a younger Trent. The other guy was sandy blonde-haired, wore glasses similar to John Lennon, and was about four inches taller than Trent. “That’s David.” Daria just stared at the picture, letting the info sink in. “After his death, his father felt responsible for his death. They found him about two weeks later, out in the woods. He drove out there, and shot himself.” Daria just sat stunned. “Quite surprisingly, he was sober when he did it.”

Daria handed the picture back to Trent. “I don’t know what to say.”

“Tell me you will stop the drinking.” Said Trent.

Daria looked at Trent. “I will try.”

“Promise me.” Said Trent.

“I will do my best.” Said Daria.

“Cool.” Said Trent. A few seconds later, they pulled into Daria’s driveway. “Here we are.”

“Thanks.” Said Daria. She looked over at Trent. “I’m sorry to hear about David.”

“It’s okay.” Said Trent. He leaned over and kissed Daria gently, with Daria returning the favor. “See you later.” Daria didn’t say anything, and just got out of the car, hurrying into the house. She leaned against the door after closing it.

“Daria? Is that you?” asked Quinn from the kitchen. Daria didn’t say anything for a minute. Quinn walked into the living room. “Daria?”

“Hey Quinn.” Said Daria, not really paying attention.

"Is there something wrong?"

"No. I'll be in my room." Daria said as she hurried up the stairs, and into her room.

Jane was sitting in her room, listening to the radio. She had been home for about ten minutes or so, when she heard the front door open and then close. She paid no mind to it, until someone knocked on her door. "Yo!" The door opened, revealing Trent.

"Hey Janey." Said Trent.

"Hey." Said Jane, turning the radio down. "So, what did you two talk about?"

"David." Said Trent.

Jane looked down at the floor. "David? You mean that kid that you were friends with?"

"Yeah." Said Trent.

"The one that moved to Japan with his parents?" asked Jane.

"Yeah." Said Trent.

"And how much of the truth did you tell her?"

"His name." said Trent. "Same speech I gave you a few years ago." Jane just shook her head.

"Did it do any good?" asked Jane.

"I hope so." Said Trent.

"Thanks Trent." Said Jane. Trent smiled, turned and walked out, closing the door behind him. "I hope the hell it works." She said after he walked out. Hopefully, between Trent, herself, and Daria's parents, Daria would stay away from alcohol.

Tilly walked into the house, and plopped down on the couch. She wasn't used to walking to and from school, as she drove when she lived in Edgewood. After relaxing for a minute, she opened her bag, and pulled out a book, and started reading. "Matilda? You home?" came Sarah's voice from the kitchen.

"No, it's a cat burglar who preys on house renters." Said Tilly as she flipped the page.

"Okay funny girl." Said Sarah, coming into the living room. "How was your first day at school?"

"It was okay. It was better having Daria and Jane there." Said Tilly, flipping another page.

“Homework already?”

“Yeah. Not a big deal. Just have to read the next two chapters. Walk in the park.”

“Uh huh. Do you have anything we need to fill out?”

“Yeah.” Said Tilly, pulling a folder from her bag without taking her eyes off the book, and handing it to her mother. “Here.”

“Okay.” Said Sarah, flipping through the folder. “Wow. They want to know a lot of info.”

“Yeah.” Said Tilly, flipping another page.

“I’ll leave you to read. I think I am going to be a while filling these out anyway.” Said Sarah. She turned around and walked back into the kitchen.

“Yeah....” Said Tilly, continuing to read.

Helen walked in the door, and straight to the kitchen. “Jake? Jake, where are you?”

“In here.” Said Jake. He was in the dining room, adjacent to the kitchen.

“What are you doing in here?” asked Helen, walking into the room.

“Changing a lightbulb.”, said Jake, as he was reaching inside a light fixture.

“You? Changing a lightbulb?” Asked Helen, as she walked over to take the old bulb from Jake, and then handed him the new one.

“Yeah.” Said Jake, screwing the bulb in. “Dammit! It’s bad too!”

Helen took the “bad” bulb in her hand and shook it. It didn’t rattle like a bad bulb would. “Jake? You have to turn the light on to see if it works.” Said Helen, as she walked over and flipped the light switch on. The light, of course, came on.

“Dammit.” Said Jake, as he climbed down off the ladder.

Helen just chuckled to herself. “That’s okay, Jakey. This bulb was bad anyway.” She took the “bad” bulb and tossed it into the garbage. “Once you have everything picked up, I need to talk to you.”

“Okay.” Said Jake, as he was folding up the ladder. Helen just turned and walked out of the room. Jake picked up the ladder, and carried it into the garage. When he came back in the house, Helen was sitting at the table, with her attaché case and a folder sitting in front of her. Jake sat down across from her. “What’s up? Is it the girls? Are they doing drugs?”

“This.” Said Helen, pushing a shipping envelope towards Jake.

Jake took the envelope, and read the return address. "Amanda and Vincent Lane?"

"Yes." Said Helen, dropping into her lawyer persona.

Jake reached inside the envelope, and pulled out some papers, and glanced over them. "What is... Uhhh.. Is this what I think it is?"

Helen nodded. "I ran it by Jim Vitale. It's completely legal." Helen patted the folder in front of her. "It's all here."

"Why?" asked Jake, pushing the envelope back to Helen.

"This might shed some light on it." Said Helen, as she removed a photocopied letter from the folder, and handed it to Jake.

Jake took the letter from Helen, and started to read it. After he finished, he handed it back to Helen. "Is it that bad where they are?"

"I don't know, but I am sure they are just covering their bases. Most likely a 'Just In Case' clause." Said Helen.

"What are you guys doing?" Came Daria's voice as she walked into the kitchen.

Helen quickly shoved the folder into her attaché case. She didn't want Daria to even know about this unless it was absolutely necessary. "Nothing important. Just some stuff from work." Said Helen.

"Yeah." Said Jake, a little over enthusiastically.

Daria just looked at her parents, and grabbed a Ultra out of the fridge. "Okay." She said, as she went to walk out of the room.

"Daria..." started Helen.

"Yes?"

"Are you okay?" asked Helen.

"Do you mean do I want a drink?" asked Daria. Helen and Jake just looked at each other. "Yes I do, but no I am not."

"So how was Tilly's first day?" asked Helen

"You mean my doppelganger? Fine I assume. She didn't mention suicide or wanting to have herself committed." Said Daria.

"Did you bring Quinn's assignments home?" Asked Helen, as she moved her attaché case off the table.

"Yeah. It's up in her room." Said Daria.

"Thanks sweetie." Said Helen. She and Jake just sat there, staring at Daria.

Daria just stood there, staring back at them. After a minute, Daria spoke. "Well, this has been fun. I'm going back upstairs to watch TV. Bye." Daria turned and walked out of the kitchen, and her footsteps could be heard going up the stairs.

"That was close." Muttered Helen.

"I'd say." Said Jake.

The room was dimly lit, and cold. Jane looked around the room, trying to find out where she was. There was a faint sound of air moving, but nothing else. She walked a small circle, looking at the room. "What I wouldn't give for a flashlight." She said half aloud. A moment later, a flashlight appeared at her feet. She bent down and picked it up. "Where in the hell did this come from."

"You asked for a flashlight." Said a male voice.

"Who's that?" asked Jane, shining the light around the room, trying to find where the voice came from. "Where am I?"

"This place really doesn't have a name." said the voice. "This is a representation of your subconscious thought."

"Who are you?" asked Jane, still shining the light around the room.

"That is not important. What is important is this." Said the man, as he walked up to Jane. As he got closer to Jane, a light rose in brightness above them. As he approached Jane, he raised his hand, and snapped his fingers. In an instant, the room changed to a scene of a room with tile walls, and some stainless steel tables, mobile trays, and sinks. As the light level rose in the room, Jane could see a figure on one of the tables, covered in a sheet.

"What the hell is this?" said Jane.

"This is what will be." Said the man as he motioned to the table. A police officer, and a man in a white lab coat was ushering two people to the table. After a minute, Jane recognized them as Helen and Jake. "Let us listen."

"..for coming on such short notice." Said the man in the coat.

"I hope it isn't her." Said Helen, as they approached the table. Jane and the man walked closer to the table.

"Can they see us?" asked Jane.

"No, nor can they hear us. However, these events are real." Said the man. "Now listen."

The four approached the table, with Jake, Helen, and the officer on one side, and the man in the coat on the other. The man in the coat reached across the table, and took the sheet into his hands. He looked up at Helen and Jake. They nodded, and he slowly pulled the sheet back, revealing the person underneath.

"Is this your daughter?" asked the officer, looking at Helen and Jake. Helen looked for a second, and then turned away, burying her face into Jake's shirt, crying.

"Yes. That's her." Said Jake, holding back his own tears.

"Daria." Said Jane to herself. She turned away from the table, but the man turned her back to face the table.

"We found her in the middle of the street." Said the officer. "The driver that hit her said she just walked out in front of him. He couldn't stop in time."

Jake reached out, and brushed Daria's mottled hair from her face. Helen was still crying into Jake's shirt. "Cover her back up, please." Said Jake. The doctor nodded, and pulled the sheet over the body.

"We need you to do some paperwork." Said the officer, as he led Jake and Helen away and out of sight.

"What happened?" asked Jane, not moving from where she stood next to Daria. She reached down, and took Daria's lifeless hand into her own.

"Isn't it obvious? She killed herself. Stepped out in front of a car." Said the man.

"Why?"

"She was drunk, and heartbroken." Said the man.

"Over who?" asked Jane.

"I can't tell you that." Said the man.

Without looking up from Daria, Jane asked "Why did you show me this?"

"Because you can prevent this."

"You said she was heartbroken. She only has one interest... my brother Trent."

"All is not as it appears on the surface." Said the man. He looked at his wrist, but there was no watch. "Time for you to go."

"No. Not until you tell me how to stop this." Said Jane.

"Time for you to go." Said the man.

"No." said Jane.

"Goodbye Jane Lane." Said the man. He snapped his fingers, and it sounded like thunder.

Jane sat straight up in bed, the rain pounding on the window. She sat for a moment, trying to catch her breath, and then she reached for the phone. Just as she picked it up, she looked at the clock. It read 2:30am. She paused, and then put the phone down. She stood up, and looked out the window, watching the rain come

down, and the lightning flashing. She stood there for a minute, and turned from the window, dressed really quickly, grabbed her jacket, and was down the stairs and out the door.

Daria tossed and turned in bed. She was facing the wall, when she felt fingers running down her arm. She smiled for a quick second, and then snapped back to reality and rolled over to see who it was. "Jane... what are you doing here?" Said Daria, trying to focus in the dim light of the room.

Jane put her finger to Daria's lips. "No words." Jane just stared at Daria for a moment.

"How did you get in here?" asked Daria. Jane didn't answer, and just looked at Daria. Daria sat up, and looked at Jane. "Jane? Are you okay."

Jane said nothing, but lunged forward and wrapped Daria in her arms. Jane put her head on Daria's shoulder, and started to cry. "I am now." Daria could do nothing but sit there. She reached up and wrapped her arms lightly around Jane. She looked up, and noticed the door was still open, and Helen and Jake were standing in the doorway.

"She knocked on the door. As soon as your father opened it, she came in, and threw her jacket on the floor and bolted up the stairs." Said Helen, taking a step into Daria's room.

After a minute or so, Jane pulled away. "I'm sorry for waking you up. I just had to know."

"Know what, Jane?" asked Helen, as she walked into Daria's room, turning on the lights.

"I had this dream that Daria was dead." Said Jane. "She committed suicide." Jane wiped her face on her shirt sleeve.

"I'm here, and quite alive." Said Daria.

"It was the drinking. You were drunk, and heartbroken, and stepped in front of a car. I had to make sure it wasn't real." Said Jane. Lightning flashed, and was closely followed by a clap of thunder. Daria could see the pain in Jane's face.

Daria looked at her friend. "It's okay."

"Jane? How did you get here?" asked Helen.

"I ran." Said Jane.

Daria looked out the window, and then back to Jane, noticing her hair was wet. "You ran all the way here, in the rain, because you thought I was dead?" asked Daria.

"Yeah." Said Jane.

"Jane sweetie, do you want me or Jake to drive you home?" asked Helen.

"If it's okay, I'd prefer to stay the night." Said Jane.

"Sure Jane." Said Helen. "Well, you girls need to get to bed. School tomorrow, you know."

"Thanks Helen." Said Jane, looking at Daria.

"Goodnight girls." Said Helen.

"Night." Said Jake, as he and Helen walked out of the bedroom, closing the door behind them.

"You need to get out of those wet clothes. The bed is still set up." Said Daria. Jane just nodded, and got up, grabbed some clothes out of "her" drawer in Daria's dresser, and went to the bathroom. Just as Jane walked out, Quinn walked in.

"What's with her?" asked Quinn.

"She had a nightmare." Said Daria.

"You were dead, right?" asked Quinn.

"Yeah. How did you know?" asked Daria.

"I've had similar nightmares." Said Quinn.

"How did I die in yours?"

"Jumped off a bridge." Said Quinn. "She going to be okay?"

"Yeah. She could have called though." Said Daria.

"Daria. If she ran over here, in the middle of the night, in the down pouring rain... do you think maybe she has more feelings for you than just friends?" asked Quinn.

Daria just looked at Quinn. "I know she does. I think she is bi, and she has a crush on me."

"So?" asked Quinn.

"I don't know if I am into that or not." Said Daria.

"You don't know until you try." Said Quinn.

"What do you know about this?" asked Daria.

Quinn looked down to the floor. "Stacy is gay."

Daria's eyes went wide. "Really?"

"Yeah. She made a pass at me a while back, and I took her up on it. Tried it. It was okay, but I prefer guys." Said Quinn.

“YOU and STACY?” asked Daria.

“Yeah. Please don’t tell anyone.” Said Quinn. “She hasn’t come out yet.”

“I won’t say a word.” Said Daria. She thought for a second. “Do you think you could give me her phone number so I can talk to her?”

“Tell you what, I will call her tomorrow and see if she wants to talk about it.” Said Quinn.

“Works for me.” Said Daria. “Thanks Quinn.”

“It’s the least I can do for my human crutch.” Said Quinn. “Night.” Quinn turned and started to walk out of the room, when Jane approached. “Goodnight Jane.”

“Night Quinn.” Said Jane, as she walked into Daria’s room, and closed the door behind her. Turning off the lights, she walked to the roll away bed. “Okay, I really need to go to sleep.” Said Daria.

“I guess I could use some sleep, too.” Said Jane. She pulled the blankets back on the roll away bed, and lay down, pulling the blankets over herself.

Daria laid back down, and pulled the blankets over her head. “Goodnight Jane.”

“Goodnight Daria.” Said Jane. She paused for a second. “Daria?”

“Yeah Jane.”

“I don’t know how you feel, or how you will react to this, but I have to tell you something.”

“What’s that?” asked Daria. She had a feeling she knew what was coming.

“I love you.” Said Jane.

Silence. Daria didn’t say anything for a minute or so. “Jane?”

“Yeah Daria?”

“I am not sure how you feel about me exactly, all I know is how I feel.”

“And how do you feel? About me?”

“I love you like a sister. You’re my best friend. I’m not sure if I love you like you love me.” Said Daria.

Jane was silent for a moment. “That’s okay.”

Daria was silent for a minute. “Dammit.” Said Daria to herself. “Jane?” she said aloud.

“Yeah Daria?”

“Do you want to sleep in my bed with me?”

Jane didn't answer for a minute. "I'd like that. I promise I won't do anything." Jane got up from the roll away bed, pulled the blankets back, climbed into bed behind Daria, and pulled the blankets back over them. She draped her arm over Daria, pulling her in tightly. After a minute, Daria wrapped her arm around Jane's, holding to it tightly. "Goodnight... and Daria?"

"Yeah Jane?"

"Thanks."

"You're welcome." Said Daria. Within minutes, they were both fast asleep, with Daria held tightly in Jane's arms.

"Now STUDENTS.... Can ANYONE tell me the name of the OLDEST masonry fort in the UNITED STATES?" Hurlled DeMartino at the class. No one raised their hands. "KEVIN!"

"Uhhh... The Freemasons?" Said Kevin, clueless as usual. Tilly looked around the room, sighed, and raised her hand.

"MISS Seiler.."

"Castillo de San Marcos, located in Saint Augustine, Florida. Built in 1672 and finished in 1695." Said Tilly. She looked over at Daria, who was just staring into space. She looked at where Jane normally sat, but she wasn't there. She scanned the room, and found her in the back corner, slumped down in her seat.

"Very GOOD Miss Seiler. Apparently, not only do you LOOK like Miss Morgendorffer, you're as SMART as her as well." DeMartino said. Tilly didn't really pay attention. She was now fixed on Daria.

"Daria?" Asked Tilly. Daria didn't respond. Tilly reached over and touched Daria's arm, causing her to jump.

"WHAT?" snapped Daria.

Tilly just eyed her. "Nothing. Nevermind."

Daria shook her head, as to clear a thought. "Sorry. A lot on my mind." The bell rang. Everyone in the class got up, and filed out the door, except for Daria. Tilly stopped at the door, and turned to look back. She could have sworn she didn't see Jane leave, but she was gone. "Daria? Class is over."

"Oh." Said Daria. She went to gather her books, but realized she hadn't even taken them out of her bag. She got up, and quickly exited, bushing past Tilly and hurried out the door. Tilly looked at the empty class, and then turned and exited herself. She went to catch up to Daria, but she quickly was lost in the crowd.

"Damn." Said Tilly as she turned and headed to her locker. As she approached it, she saw Jane, walking towards her. "Hey Jane!" Jane didn't acknowledge her, and continued on course. "Hey Lane!" Jane just kept looking at the floor, and tried to slip past, but Tilly was ready for her, and firmly grabbed her arm. "J A N E!"

“Lemme go.” Said Jane, trying to shake free. Tilly tightened her grip. She knew she had to be hurting Jane with the amount of pressure she was using, but Jane didn’t let on.

“What the hell is going on?” Asked Tilly. Jane didn’t answer, still trying to pull away. Tilly reached up with her other arm, grabbed Jane’s bag, and pulled back and down, taking the taller girl off balance. At this time, Tilly shifted her grip, spun Jane around, and pinned her against a nearby locker, putting her arm across Jane’s chest to hold her. “Now. We are going to have a little chat, and you’re going to participate.” Jane tried to escape, but Tilly just applied more force. Finally, Jane gave up.

“What?”

“What the hell is going on? Daria’s on Pluto, and you’re avoiding everyone. You two didn’t say word one to each other on the walk here.”

“Nothing to say.” Said Jane.

“Nice try Lane. Now the truth.”

Jane sighed. “I had a nightmare last night that Daria was dead. I went to her house in the middle of the night.” Jane paused... “I slept with her.”

Tilly relaxed her hold on Jane. “What?”

“I slept with Daria.” Jane could see the confusion in Tilly’s eyes. “Not like that. We just slept. I held her in my arms last night.” Jane paused. “I was asleep in minutes.”

Tilly dropped her arm. “Jane... do you think you did something wrong?”

“I. I don’t know.” Jane paused, and looked at the floor. “I love her, but I know she doesn’t feel the same towards me.”

“She does.” Said Tilly.

“Not the same why I love her.” Said Jane.

“You need to talk to her.” Said Tilly.

“I can’t, not during school.” Said Jane.

“I can remedy that problem.” Said Tilly. “Follow me.” Tilly started to head to her locker. Jane just stood there for a second, and then walked after her. In a moment, they were standing in front of Tilly’s locker. A quick spin of the dial, and it was open. She reached into the back, and removed a small spray can. She closed her locker, and then started to look at the ceiling. After a moment she found what she was looking for. “Go to class. We will meet up where we normally do.”

“Okay. What are you going to do?”

“Best you don’t know.” Said Tilly. “I’ll be along in a moment.” Jane looked at Tilly for a second, and then walked away. Tilly waited for the bell to ring, and the last few students to go into class. She shook the can, and

walked over to the locker under an air conditioning return grille. She slapped the can on top of the lockers, pressed the button, and took off running for her class. She had just slid into O'Neill class un-noticed, sat down, and waited. After a few seconds, the fire alarm started blaring.

"Fire! Oh dear! Everyone... let's evacuate in an orderly manner." Said O'Neill. Too late. Everyone just bolted for the door. Tilly casually stood up, grabbed Daria, and steered her towards the door, down the hall, and out of the building.

"Where are we going?" asked Daria.

"Conference." Said Tilly. She steered Daria down the sidewalk, and to the parking lot, where Jane was waiting.

"No... I'm not..." started Daria, but Tilly cut her off.

"You will." Said Tilly. She pushed Daria towards Jane, who looked like she was ready to run. "Now... You two, talk." Silence. "I said talk, dammit. I just used one of my best, and most expensive, tricks to get you two together, alone, to talk. So TALK dammit."

"Hey." Said Daria reluctantly.

"Hey." Said Jane.

"Nrrrrrgh." Growled Tilly.

Jane sighed. "Daria. We need to talk."

"I have to go." Said Daria. She turned to walk away, but Tilly reached out and effortlessly held her in place. "Or not."

Jane sighed again. "Daria..."

"Yeah?" asked Daria. She knew what this was about.

"I'm going to do something. I want you to promise me that you won't get mad, or that you won't run away. Will you do that?" Said Jane.

Daria looked at the ground, to Tilly, and then back to Jane. "Yeah." Said Daria.

"Okay. First off, take your jacket off." Said Jane, as she took her own jacket off. Daria looked at Jane nervously, but slowly slid her jacket off, and handed it to Tilly. "Okay. Are you ready?"

"I don't know." Said Daria.

Jane stepped to Daria, and placed her hands on her arms. She looked into Daria's eyes, and while doing so, took one hand and slowly ran it up and down Daria's arm. She took her other hand and was doing the same to the other arm. After a minute or so, Jane grabbed one of Daria's hand with one hand, and placed the other hand under Daria's chin. She could feel Daria shaking. "It's okay, Daria. Everything is okay." Whispered Jane. She tilted Daria's face up a little, and leaned in and kissed her. It wasn't a simple kiss, it has passion behind it. Unconsciously, Daria raised her free hand, and wrapped it around Jane. After a few moments, Jane stepped

back, and grabbed Daria's hands, and held her at arm's length. "Don't say a word. I want you to think how that made you feel. Analyze it, process it, do what you will. Let me know later how you felt." Jane dropped Daria's hands, picked up her own jacket, and walked away. Daria just stood there, not moving. In the background, sirens could be heard in the distance.

Tilly stepped up to Daria, handing her jacket back to her. "You okay?"

"Yeah." Said Daria. Her voice sounded distant.

"No, you're not." Said Tilly. "School is going to be cancelled for the day. Let's get you home."

Daria snapped out of her trance. "I need to go talk to someone. I'll talk to you later." Before Tilly could object or react, Daria took off back towards the school. Tilly thought about going after her, but she decided she better not return to the scene of the crime.

Daria waded through the crowd of kids, looking for someone. After a minute, she found who she was looking for. She walked up to the pigtailed girl. "Uhhh, can I talk to you..." she glanced at Tiffany, who was standing nearby. "Alone."

"Uhh... I guess so." Said Stacy. She turned to Tiffany. "I'll see you tomorrow, Tiffany."

"Bye... Stacy.." drawled Tiffany. Stacy turned and followed Daria as she walked away from the crowd.

After they were away from everyone, and in an isolated area, Daria stopped, and turned to face Stacy. "I know you don't want to be seen with a brain, but I think you're the only person who I could ask about this."

"It's not a problem." Said Stacy. "With the Fashion Club gone, and no Sandi, there is no real issue. What's up?"

Daria sighed. "I was talking to Quinn the other night..." Daria could see a look of concern and worry come onto Stacy's face. "I know. Quinn told me. I'm not going to tell anyone else."

"Okay..." Said Stacy, nervously.

"Jane is in love with me." Said Daria. "She slept with me last night, not sex, just sleeping, and then kissed me this morning."

"Okay." Said Stacy. Daria was shocked at the response, expecting one of horror or shock. "How did it make you feel?"

"I don't know." Said Daria.

"Let me ask you this, then. Did you feel turned on?"

Daria thought about it for a moment. "I.. I think... yes.. I think so."

"Do you love her?" asked Stacy.

"As a sister, yes. I am not sure if I love her like she loves me." Said Daria.

“You don’t think you’re into girls, do you?” Asked Stacy.

“No. I’m not.” Daria answered quickly, and Stacy noticed it.

“You answered that pretty quickly.” Said Stacy.

“I’m dating her brother.” Said Daria.

“Okay, so then maybe you’re bi. Nothing wrong with that. I still like boys, but I also like girls. It just depends.” Stacy paused. She reached up, and placed her hand on Daria’s shoulder. “It all depends on how she makes you feel. If she makes you feel good, and you like being around her, then give it a try. You can’t say you don’t like it until you try it.” She dropped her hand to her side. “If Jane loves you like she says, then she will understand if you tell her you’re not interested. She will also understand if you have to proceed at a slow pace.”

“Thanks, Stacy.” Daria said. “Quinn is lucky to have a friend like you.”

“If you ever need to talk, call me.” Said Stacy. She turned, and headed back to the dispersing crowd.

Daria waited for Stacy to walk away, and then turned to walk away, when she heard the announcement over the intercom. “Attention students. Due to the requirements by the fire marshal, school has been cancelled for the rest of the day. You’re free to go home.” Daria didn’t recognize the voice, but shrugged, and headed towards the parking lot. When she got there, Tilly was still where she left her.

“Told you school would be cancelled.” Said Tilly. “You seem better.”

“Yeah. Had a talk with someone who helped.” Said Daria. “What did you do?”

“Best you don’t know, at least not yet.” Said Tilly with a smile.

“There is a lot I don’t know about you.” Said Daria.

“Yes. Yes there is.” Said Tilly with a smile.

Daria walked into the house, and was about halfway up the stairs, when she heard Jake. “Daria? What are you doing home this early?”

Daria stopped, and walked into the kitchen. “School burnt to the ground.”

“What?” asked Jake, with a puzzled look on his face.

Daria shook her head. “They evacuated the school for a fire drill. Fire marshal sent everyone home.” Daria took a soda from the fridge, and then sat down.

“Daria? What are you doing home?” came Quinn’s voice from around the corner.

“Bomb scare.” Said Daria.

“Uh huh.” Said Quinn, dismissing Daria’s response, and taking a diet soda from the fridge. “I have my school work done for the week. Can you take it in for me tomorrow?”

Daria looked at Quinn with amazement. “All week?”

“Yeah. When you have nothing to do, and you have read every issue of ‘Waif’ in the house, I might as well do my class work.”

Daria just looked at Quinn. “Quinn the brain.” Quinn looked up at Daria. “Bring it by my room later. I will take it in with me tomorrow.”

“Oh, kiddo. Jane was by here a little bit ago. She came and got her clothes from last night. Didn’t say a word to me except Hi and Bye.” Said Jake.

“Okay.” Said Daria. She stood up from the table, and without saying another word, left the room and went upstairs.

“What? Was it something I said?” asked Jake.

“No, daddy. It wasn’t you.” Said Quinn, getting up from the table herself and following after Daria.

Daria went into her room, closing the door behind her. She sat down on the bed, and stared at the roll away bed. After a moment, she stood up, and walked over, picking up a shirt and jacket that Jane had left behind. She walked back to her bed, and dropped them by the foot of the bed. She would have to give them back to Jane when she saw her next. She dropped the jacket to the floor, but the shirt remained in her hand. She had to force herself to drop it. She sat back down on the bed, and began to think about what had happened earlier. “How do I feel?” asked Daria out loud, but to herself. She picked the shirt up again, but dropped it to floor at the sound of the knock on the door. “Sorry. No vacancies.”

“Daria?” came Quinn’s voice from the other side.

Daria sighed. “Come.” Quinn walked into Daria’s room, closing the door behind her.

“Daria? You okay?”

“Yeah. I’m fine.”

“No. You’re not.” Said Quinn, pulling the chair up and sitting in front of her sister. “Jane kissed you.”

Daria’s head popped up. “How in hell did you know that?”

“You have red lipstick on, which does look good on you, by the way. Also, Jane coming over, getting her clothes and leaving without speaking much. Oh, that and Stacy called. She asked me to give you her phone number. She said you would know what it was about, and what to do with it.” Quinn handed Daria a piece of paper with a phone number on it. “You talked to her today?”

“Yeah.” Said Daria, sighing. “She gave me some insight. She seemed a bit scared that you told me her secret, though.”

“So, what happened?” asked Quinn.

“You were correct. Jane kissed me. In the parking lot, with Tilly watching.” Daria knew the next question that was coming.

“How did it make you feel?” asked Quinn.

“I don’t know.” Said Daria. “I just don’t know.” She took a towel from the floor, and wiped the lipstick from her lips. “It felt weird, but it felt good at the same time.”

“You’re not into girls.” Said Quinn, taking the towel from Daria and helping remove the lipstick.

“I don’t think so.” Said Daria. “I just don’t know how to tell Jane.”

“Be honest with her.” Said Quinn. “You don’t know how to do anything else, so go with what you know.” Daria was about to say something, when the phone rang. She reached for it, but stopped, and withdrew her hand. Quinn reached down and picked up the phone. “Hello? Oh, hi Jane.” Daria started waving her hands as to say she wasn’t there. “Daria?” Quinn paused for a second. “Yeah, she’s right here.” Quinn handed the phone to Daria.

“I hate you.” Said Daria to Quinn, covering the mouthpiece of the phone with her hand.

“You might now, but you will get over it.” Said Quinn. She motioned to the phone. “She’s waiting.”

Jane walked into Casa Lane, and headed straight up the stairs and into her room. She tossed her bag onto the floor, and picked up a nearby sketch book. She walked over to the stereo, picked out a CD from her collection. She dropped it onto the tray, and jumped ahead a few tracks. After a second or so, the sound of Queen’s “I Want It All” came out of the speakers at high volume, loud enough to rival Trent’s practice sessions. She hit the “Random” button, walked over to the bed, and sat down next to it. She started to sketch out a figure. The more she sketched, the more the figure became recognizable. First the face, then the hair, body, and then the important part... the glasses. Within a few short minutes, Jane had sketched out Daria, just as she had seen her, right before she kissed her. She finished that quickly, and then flipped the page, starting another image. As she started drawing, the song changed to “I Want To Be Free”. The image quickly took shape as Jane filled in details, the pose, the outfit, and the face. In short order, it was another sketch of Daria, sans glasses, wearing a provocative outfit. Jane set her pencil down, and looked at the sketch, when it was all of a sudden taken from her hands. “HEY!” was all she could say as she followed the sketchbook up, to see Trent standing there.

Trent looked at the sketch. “That’s really good, Janey.” He said, looking at the sketch. He flipped the pages of the book, looking at the different sketches. After a moment, he handed the book back to Jane. Jane took the book back, and just shoved it under the bed. “Janey? Is there something wrong?”

“No.” Jane said curtly.

Trent sat down on the floor with Jane. “Janey. I may spend most of my time sleeping, but I do know my little sister, and when something is bothering her. What’s wrong?”

Jane looked at Trent. "I can't tell you."

"Yeah you can." Said Trent. "You know you can always tell me anything." Trent thought for a moment. "Is it something to do with Daria." At the mention of her name, Jane let her head fall, looking down at the floor. "C'mon Janey."

Jane looked up Trent, with tears forming in her eyes. "I can't tell you Trent. I don't want to hurt you."

"Janey, you're not going to hurt me."

Jane wiped a tear from her eye, and sighed. "You saw the sketchbook."

"Yeah. So? Daria is a good subject to draw. Complex." Said Trent.

"You didn't notice the racy sketches?"

"Yeah. I did. I take it you have feelings for her." Said Trent. Jane just nodded, fearing the worst. "So?"

Jane looked up. "Wha?" She just stared at Trent. After a minute, the penny dropped. "You knew, didn't you?"

"Yeah Janey. I knew." Said Trent, smiling. "I've known for a while."

"Yeah, well, I don't think she feels the same for me." Said Jane. "I kissed her today. She just stood there, no emotion."

"She's not sure, Janey." Said Trent. "The times I have kissed her, she wasn't too sure either."

"But you're a guy. Girls like guys and guys like girls. Girls don't normally like other girls that way."

"You do." Said Trent. "Big deal if Daria doesn't love you the same way you love her. Does that make you any less of friends?"

"I never said love, Trent." Said Jane.

"You didn't have to." Said Trent. "I bet that Daria does love you more than you think, it's just that she is afraid to admit it."

"Why would she be afraid? She's Daria. She's not afraid of anything. She doesn't care what other people think about her."

"I think she's afraid of a lot more than you know." Said Trent. "She's afraid to hurt the ones she cares for. You, me, Tilly, and even Quinn, Jake, and Helen. "

"Not likely." Said Jane.

"Only one way to find out." Said Trent. He dialed the phone, and handed it to Jane.

"I can't." said Jane.

"It's ringing." Said Trent. He put the phone in Jane's hand, and turned to leave. As he walked through the door, he said "I'll support whatever you two decide." He closed the door behind him.

"Damn." Said Jane half aloud.

"Hello?" came Quinn's voice over the phone.

"Now or never." Said Jane to herself. She put the phone up to her ear. "Hey Quinn, it's Jane..... Is Daria there?"

Tilly walked in the door of her house, flung her bag onto the couch, and headed to the fridge. She grabbed a soda, and then headed back to the living room, hopping over the back of the couch and sitting down. She grabbed the remote, and turned the TV on.

"And now, let's go to Tricia Takanawa who is live on the scene. Tricia?"

"Thanks Dave. We're live in front of Lawndale High School, where the school was evacuated today because of a suspected fire. However, the state fire marshal has informed us that there was indeed no fire, but that the alarm was set off intentionally. While they won't say how it was set off, they did tell us that it was not a pull station, and that the person who did set off the alarm has knowledge of commercial fire alarm systems. It is not known who did it, but an investigation is underway. School principal Angela Li had this to say."

The view changed from the Asian reporter, to Ms. Li. "We do not have any leads at this time, but we are planning to go through everyone's personal belongings... I mean we plan to do a thorough investigation of this incident."

The view changed back to the reporter. "School was cancelled for the day, but Ms. Li has informed us that classes will resume as normal tomorrow. Reporting live, this is Tricia Takanawa."

"Not even here for a week, and I am already making the news." Said Tilly, as she changed the channel. She went through all the channels, and then ended back at the news channel. She turned the TV off, and tossed the remote on the coffee table. She finished drinking her soda, and picked up her bag and headed upstairs, tossing the can in the recycle bin on the way. Once in her room, she continued to finish unpacking. She started putting books onto the bookshelf, and organizing her CD collection. She moved to another box, and opened it. She lifted out a few magazines and papers, to reveal a white Karate gi in a clear garment bag, along with a bag that held the different color belts she had attained. In the bottom of the box was a display rack to hold the different belts, and then beside it was a wooden case. She removed it and opened it, revealing a black belt with four yellow stripes on the end. She took the garment bag, and placed it in the closet. She placed the rack on top of the dresser, and began to set the belts in place on the rack. She stepped back and looked at the rack, when the phone rang. She picked it up. "Your quarter, my time."

"Tilly? This is Tristan...."

"HOW in the HELL did you get my phone number? I don't even know this number yet!"

"I lifted it from your file in the guidance office."

“Hmm... Take it back, it doesn't belong to you.” Tilly hung the phone up, and tossed the phone onto the bed. She shook her head, and continued to put stuff away. The phone rang again. She walked over, picked the phone up, and answered it. “Speak...”

“Tilly... This is Tristan.”

“Hey, what sound does a phone make when it hangs up?”

“I don't know...”

“Now you do.” Tilly said with a smile as she hung up the phone again, then tossed it onto the bed. She went to reach for another box, when the phone rang. She glanced over at it, but ignored it and kept unpacking. After about ten rings, it stopped. “Guess he gave up.” She continued to pull stuff out of boxes, and place it on shelves and in the closet. The phone rang again. “What the hell?” She ignored it, and kept going. After another ten rings, it stopped. She kept going. When the phone started to ring again, she dropped what she had in her hands, and snatched the phone up, answering it. “What in the hell do you want?”

“Matilda? Thank God! Are you okay?” came Sarah's voice over the phone.

“What? Yeah mom, I'm fine... why?”

“I just heard about what happened at the school. I tried calling a couple of times, and no one answered. Say, what was that all about?”

“What?”

“How you answered the phone.”

“Oh. Some guy irritating me.”

“You have a guy calling you? Matilda...” started her mom, but Tilly cut her off.

“Not willingly. He swiped my number from my file at school.”

“You know what that means, don't you?” asked her mother.

“That he's a creeper, or a stalker in training?”

“No. He likes you.” Said her mother.

Tilly thought back to the day she met Tristan in the guidance office, how he was staring at her as she left the room. “Not bloody likely.”

“You need to give yourself some credit, Matilda. A guy would be lucky to have a girl as beautiful as you.”

“Correction, a guy not in his right mind would be lucky.” Said Tilly.

“Be serious Matilda. Perhaps it would do you some good to have some male companionship.”

“Bucking to be a grandmother before I am 18?”

Sarah laughed. “No Matilda, but maybe being in a relationship with a guy will calm you down some.”

“Don’t bet on it, pilgrim.” Said Tilly, doing her best John Wayne impersonation.

“Give it some thought.” Said Sarah.

“Okay.” Tilly paused for a second. “Okay, I thought about it. Answer is still no.”

“Matilda...”

“Okay mom, I will think about it.”

“Thank you honey. Okay, well, I will let you get back to what you were doing. I need to go back to work myself. I will see you when I get home.”

“Okay.”

“Okay sweetie. Love you.”

“Mom...”

“I know. You don’t like saying it, but I know you do. Bye sweetie.”

“Bye mom.” Tilly hung the phone up, and tossed it onto the bed. She looked at the phone for a second, shook her head, and went back to unpacking. She picked a picture frame out of a box. It was a picture of her, James and Sarah. She stood there looking at it. “How did I not know that I was adopted. I look nothing like them.” She went to set the picture down, but then stopped and looked at it again. She noticed a few things that did look similar. Her eyes were similar to her mother’s, and she had a similar facial structure in common with her dad. She sat the picture on the dresser, next to the framed picture of Daria, Quinn, Jake, and Helen, which was next to a framed picture of Jane and Trent. She stepped back, looking at the pictures, when the phone rang again. She sighed, and picked up the phone. “Hello?”

Daria reluctantly took the phone. “Hey.”

“Hey.” Said Jane. She had what she wanted to say all planned out, but at the sound of Daria’s voice, she froze.

“Jane?”

“Daria. I need to know something.”

Daria knew what was coming. “What?”

Jane took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. “I guess you know how I feel about you.”

“I get the general idea.” Said Daria.

"Well, I will put it out on the table right here. I love you Daria." Said Jane.

"I know Jane."

"No. I don't think you do. I love you more than a sister."

"I know, Jane." Daria sighed. "You want to be with me."

"So you *do* know."

"Yeah. I do."

"So..." Jane paused. "Uhh, how do you feel about me?"

"Damn." Daria said to herself. "Jane..."

"That's what I thought. I don't know why..." Jane started, but Daria cut her off.

"Jane. I'm not into girls." Said Daria bluntly.

"I thought so. So I guess you won't want to be around me anymore."

"Can I finish?"

Jane sighed. "She is going to drag this out. Just get it over with and abandon me." She said to herself. "Yeah."

Daria just sat there. Quinn placed her hand on Daria's shoulder. "Tell the truth." She whispered. "It's what you're good at."

Daria gathered her thoughts. "Jane, from the moment I met you, I knew you were going to be a good friend. Someone who is just as cynical, sarcastic, and twisted as I. No matter what happens, here and now or 20 years from now, I will always be your friend, and..." Daria paused, gathering the gumption to finish, "I don't want to lose you."

Jane sat, jaw agape. "Daria... I, I don't know what to say. I thought for sure when I told you this, you were going to reject me, and then abandon me, just like everyone else."

"No. First off, you didn't tell me anything I didn't already know. I know you have a thing for me. I'm just not into that. However, that doesn't make me any less your friend."

Jane smiled, and hoped Daria could hear it. "Thank you amiga."

"De nada. Besides, maybe after dating your brother, I will want to date girls." Daria laughed.

"One can hope." Said Jane, half jokingly. "Will this change how you act around me?"

"I hope it doesn't. And if it does, I am sure you will let me know. You will, right?"

“Yes.” Jane swallowed the lump building in her throat. “Daria?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m sorry if I have put you into an awkward position. I guess I wasn’t thinking about you.”

“Actually, you were.” Daria said with a small smile.

Jane laughed. “I guess I was.” She laughed for a second. “Can I ask you a question then?”

“I’m all ears.”

“If you’re not into girls, why did you let me sleep with you?”

Daria sighed, and looked over at Quinn, who just whispered the word “Truth.”

“You mean a lot to me. I saw and felt that you were…” Daria looked at Quinn, and Quinn just nodded. “I felt that you were scared. It was the only way I could think of to comfort you.”

“Didn’t that make you uncomfortable?”

“Yes and no. Normally, yes, another female in bed with me would have made me uncomfortable, like the times I had to share a bed with Quinn when we would go on family vacations back in Highland.” Daria looked over at Quinn, with a small Mona Lisa smile. Quinn just rolled her eyes. “Since it was you, I made an exception.” There was no response for a moment. Daria swore she could hear Jane’s breathing change. “Jane?”

“Sorry. I guess you really do care for me.”

“Yeah.” Said Daria.

“Well, thank you again, amiga. See you tomorrow morning?”

“Sure.”

“Bye.”

“Bye.” Daria hung the phone up. She looked up at Quinn, who was just watching. “Thanks, sis.”

“Don’t mention it. However, keep an open mind. There is such a thing as bi curious.”

“How in the hell do you know about all this?” Asked Daria.

“Stacy. Also, when you’re a popular and pretty girl, not only guys hit on you.”

“Wow.” Was all Daria could just say.

“Well, I’m glad you got that off your chest. Now maybe you will be a little less miserable.”

“Thanks a lot, Quinn.” Said Daria, sarcastically.

“Don’t mention it.” Said Quinn. She got up, and walked out of the room, albeit slowly.

“Quinn? Are you okay?” asked Daria.

“I’m fine. My side is just hurting a little more than that usual today.”

“Did you tell mom?”

“No.”

“I think you should.” Said Daria.

“I’m okay, really.” Quinn continued walking out of Daria’s room, and across the hall into her own, closing the door behind her.

“If you won’t, I will.” Said Daria, picking up the phone.

Jane hung the phone up, and calmly started to walk upstairs. As she reached the top of the stairs, Trent was coming down. “What did she say?”

“Exactly what I thought she would.” Said Jane, trying to force a smile.

“So, you two aren’t friends anymore?”

“No. She told me she didn’t want to lose me as a friend, that she just wasn’t into girls.”

“That’s good, right?”

“Yeah. I guess.” Said Jane. “I guess I should just be glad that she didn’t abandon me like everyone else in my life.” Jane stood there for a second, just looking at Trent. A tear rolled down her cheek, followed by another, and another.

Trent stepped forward and wrapped his arms around his little sister. “I haven’t abandoned you, Janey, and I don’t think Daria will either. You two complete each other, just like you complete me.” He held Jane at arm’s length. “If it wasn’t for you, Janey, I doubt I would be here.”

Jane wiped her face on her sleeve. “What do you mean?”

Trent let go of Jane, and started to walk down the stairs. “Nothing. Don’t worry about it.”

Jane went after Trent. “No, I want to know.”

“It’s not a big deal Janey. I’m here now, that’s all that counts.”

“Trent...”

“Drop it Janey.. please.”

Jane stopped about halfway down the stairs. “Okay.”

“I’m going to go over to Jesse’s house. I’ll see you later.”

Jane watched Trent walk out of the door, and then heard the car start up and drive away. “Damn him.” She said, turning and going back up the stairs. She walked into her room, and put a new canvas on the easel. Picking up a pencil, she started to sketch out a design. After some time, the sketch was recognizable as three people, or the back of three people. It was Trent, flanked on either side by Daria and Jane, each holding one of Trent’s hands, as they walked along on a moonlit night.

Another day at Lawndale High, and Tilly was walking from one class to another. She walked into O’Neill’s class, and had just slid into her desk, when Ms. Li’s voice came over the PA system. “Attention students, will Matilda Seiler report to the principal’s office... NOW!”

Reluctantly, Tilly stood up, grabbed her bag, and walked out the door. As she walked down the hall, she passed Daria, and then Jane, both with looks of surprise on their faces.

“What was that all about?” Jane asked Daria once they were in class.

“Your guess is as good as mine.” Replied Daria. It was the first thing she had said to Jane except for “Ready?” when she stopped at her house to walk to school.

Tilly stepped into Ms. Li’s office. “Close the door.” Huffed Ms. Li as Tilly walked into the office.

“You rang, *Standorkommandant*?”

Ms. Li shot a glare at Tilly, and then looked down, and shuffled a few folders around on her desk, and pulled one out. She then reached into a desk drawer, and pulled out a plastic bag, with the can from yesterday in it. Tilly eyed the can carefully, looking for signs of possible evidence she might have left behind. “Ms. Seiler. I am sure you know what happened yesterday?”

“Fire drill?” said Tilly, deadpan.

“Come now, Ms. Seiler. You know you were the one who placed this can on a locker, setting off the fire alarm.” Said Ms. Li, holding up the can in the bag.

Tilly leaned forward, looking at the can. “What is that?”

“You should know, it belongs to you.” Said Ms. Li. “I did a little digging, and was able to get your full disciplinary record from your previous school.” Ms. Li started to flip through the folder. “Let me see... Out of school suspension issued seven times, in school suspended fifteen times, multiple referrals... all for mischief, disruption of instruction, and three fights.” Ms. Li set the folder down. “So, anything you would care to admit to?”

“Nothing that I can think of.” Said Tilly.

“Well, this could change your mind.” Said Ms. Li, holding up a manila envelope. “Fingerprint and DNA analysis of the evidence. If you confess now, they will go easier on you.”

Tilly sat for a moment, and in one quick move, jumped up, snatched the envelope out of Ms. Li’s hands, and sat back down. “Let’s see what the results are.” Tilly opened the envelope, revealing nothing. She turned it upside down, shaking it for effect. “Imagine that... it’s empty.” She tossed the envelope on the floor. “So, I assume we are done here?”

“Not quite Ms. Seiler. I’m sure you know that there is video surveillance at this school.” Said Ms. Li, trying to take the upper hand.

“Your point is?” said Tilly.

“We may just have video of you placing the can.” Said Ms. Li.

“Not bloody likely. Besides, I am sure that if you actually *had* any video, it would be so grainy and blurry that you couldn’t tell me from any other student here. So, let’s see this video. You have to furnish the popcorn, though.”

“Damn.” Ms. Li said to herself. She shuffled papers around on her desk. “It appears that the camera in that area just happened to be blank that day.”

“Then we are done.” Said Tilly. She stood up. “I need a pass to go back to class.”

“Fine.” Said Ms. Li. She pulled a pass book from the drawer, scrawled some info onto it, and halfway threw it at Tilly. “Just get out.” Tilly took the pass, shoved it into her bag, and left.

Ms. Li reached down into the bottom drawer, and pulled the flask out again, pouring some of the contents into a coffee cup. She closed the flask, and then took the cup, and quickly drank the contents. She was just about to lower the cup, when she realized the evidence bag with the can in it was gone. She slammed the cup down onto the desk, and started rifling through the desk. She had not yet had the can fingerprinted, hoping to force Tilly into admitting and saving the expense. After a futile search, she jumped up to go after Tilly, but ended up tripping on the corner of the desk, falling flat onto her face. “Next time, Ms. Seiler... next time...”

“Lunch? Or final meal?” asked Jane, poking at the grey mass on her tray.

“Only if you eat it.” Said Tilly, pushing her tray away. “At least the Jell-O is edible.”

“Don’t count on it.” Said Daria. She took a slice of bread off of her tray, and tapped it on the table. “Could break a window with this thing.”

Tilly grabbed the bread from Daria’s hand, and flung it, like a Frisbee, against a nearby window. The slice bounced harmlessly off the glass. “Must be bullet proof glass.”

“Probably not even glass.” Said Jane.

“No, anything else would be too... uh oh.” Said Daria.

“What?” asked Tilly.

“Here comes your friend.” Said Jane, looking up.

Tilly scrunched down, trying to hide, but it was a futile effort. Tristan came over to the table where the girls were sitting. “Mind if I join you?”

“I don’t...” Tilly started, but Jane finished.

“Sure.” Said Jane, motioning for him to sit down.

“Thanks.” He sat down, and opened up a brown sack, pulling a sandwich out.

“Smart boy.” Said Daria, as she attempted a post-mortem on her tray of grey matter.

“I learned the hard way, don’t ever eat school food more than a couple of days in a row. Good way to earn a free trip to the emergency room.” Said Tristan, taking a bite from his sandwich.

“Maybe we should take a hint.” Said Jane. She looked over at Tilly, who was trying to not make eye contact with anyone. “What do you think, Tilly?” Tilly said nothing. “Tilly?”

“Oh Matil....” Said Daria.

Tilly just looked up at Daria with an annoyed expression. “What?”

“Easy killer.” Said Daria. “Just wondering...”

“Yes yes, whatever.” Said Tilly. “I need to go.” She quickly stood up, and walked away from the table.

“What was that all about?” asked Jane.

“I have no idea.” Said Daria.

“I think I might know.” Said Tristan, eating the last bite of his sandwich.

“Do tell.” Said Jane.

“I called her yesterday. She was very, uh... how do I say this..”

“Rude?” asked Daria.

“To the point?” asked Jane.

“Yeah. She hung up on me twice. I was just going to ask her if I could walk with you all to school in the morning.”

"I don't think she wants any male friends." Said Daria, reflecting on how she felt on her first day at Lawndale High.

"Well, I waited for a while, and when I called her back..."

"She hung up on you again." Said Jane.

"No. She talked to me for like 20 minutes." Said Tristan.

"Really?" Asked Daria and Jane in unison. "What did you two talk about?" asked Jane.

"Mostly small talk." Said Tristan, motioning to Daria. "She mentioned that you two were sisters, but I think she told me that on my first day."

"Guilty as charged." Said Daria, pushing her tray away.

"Well, I'm a bit confused though." Said Tristan. "I asked her if I could sit with you all during lunch, and she said 'That would be acceptable'. Yet, when I show up, she doesn't say a word, and takes off."

Daria just shook her head. "Don't worry about it." Said Jane. "She will get over it."

"How do you know?" asked Tristan.

Daria just raised her hand slightly and nonchalantly pointed at herself. "Daria went through the same thing." Said Jane.

"Really?" asked Tristan.

Jane looked over at Daria. "Yeah." Said Daria.

Tristan leaned across the table. "I really like her. She isn't like other girls."

"You can say that again." Said Jane to herself as she glanced over at Daria. She turned her attention back to Tristan. "Yeah, she very unique."

The bell rang, and they all got up from the table, and walked away. Daria and Jane were walking together, and Tristan walking a couple of steps behind. Just as he walked out of the doors into the hallway, he was grabbed and pulled away. He felt himself being dragged by the back of the shirt, but couldn't get turned around to see who it was. After about fifteen seconds or so, he was in a less populated area of the school. He felt his shirt being released, and he quickly regained his composure and spun around, to see Tilly standing there, arms crossed, tapping her foot. "What the hell was that for?" asked Tristan.

"I was going to ask you the same thing." Said Tilly.

"What? What I said to Daria and Jane? I was just trying to make..." started Tristan, but was quickly cut off by Tilly.

"If I WANTED them to know, I would have TOLD them." Said Tilly, getting as close to nose to nose as a 5'2" girl could.

"You know, I was right. You are like no other girl." Said Tristan.

"Arrgh!" shouted Tilly as she drew back, and swung at Tristan. He quickly reached up, and captured her fist. She quickly countered, trying to kick Tristan, but he was able to counter, and with a quick sweep, took her feet out from under her, sending her crashing to the floor. She just sat there for a moment.

"Need a hand?" asked Tristan.

"Yeah." Said Tilly quietly. He leaned down, offering his hand. She took it, and as she got to her feet, Tilly snatched and pulled Tristan off balance, and to the floor. Tilly had stood up as he quickly rolled, swept, and took Tilly back off her feet. He sat up, choosing to stay on the floor. "Ouch." Said Tilly, rolling over and sitting on the floor.

"That was fun." Said Tristan. "I take it you know more martial arts than you told me about."

"Yeah, a little." Said Tilly. "I didn't know you knew it too."

"Some. Purple belt. You?"

"Fourth Dan Black." Said Tilly, getting to her feet. She offered her hand to Tristan.

"You're not going to try to flip me or something, are you?"

"No." said Tilly. Reluctantly, Tristan took Tilly's hand, and she pulled and helped him to his feet.

"Thanks." Said Tristan, still holding Tilly's hand. He looked into her eyes. "You know, you *are* like no other." The bell rang. "See you." He gave her hand a light squeeze, let go of it, and turned and walked away.

Tilly stood there, and watched Tristan walk away. "Damn." She said to herself, as she picked up her bag, and started heading to class.

Daria and Jane were standing by the exit doors to the school, waiting for Tilly. "Where is she?" Asked Jane, looking at her imaginary watch. Daria just shrugged, and continued to read the book she had in her hand. "The Ten Commandments of Dating?" asked Jane, reading the title of the book Daria had in her hands.

"Found it on the floor." Said Daria, closing the book.

"Looking for pointers with Trent?" said Jane with a smirk. Daria just gave Jane an annoyed look. "So, when are you two going to go on your first date?"

"Ask him." Said Daria, looking up. She nodded in the direction of the hallway. "Here she comes."

Jane turned to see Tilly hurriedly walking down the hall. "About time." Said Jane.

"Sorry. Was held up. Hey, I will see you two later. I have to go do a test in guidance. More of that 'new student' crap." Said Tilly.

Jane and Daria looked at each other. "Okay." Said Daria.

"Later." Said Jane. They turned and started walking away.

Tilly stood in the doorway, watching Daria and Jane walk away. After they were out of sight, she walked back into the school.

"Do you remember having to do any tests after starting school?" asked Jane.

"No." said Daria. They walked on. "She hiding something?"

"Nice deduction, Holmes." Said Jane.

Daria looked at Jane. "Is that Sherlock Holmes, or `Yo yo yo, what up Holmes?"

"All of the above?" asked Jane.

"I seriously wonder about you sometimes." Said Daria as they continued to walk on.

Tilly walked back into the school, and rounded a corner. "You ready?"

"Yeah." Said Tristan, as he came out of a classroom. "Why didn't you want them to see you with me?"

"I wouldn't hear the end of it from Daria or Jane." Said Tilly.

"Ahhhh. Well, you have to tell them sometime." Said Tristan as they walked out of the school.

"No I don't." said Tilly. "Look. I hope you don't think this is a date or anything. I'm not looking for anything like that. I'm still getting used to this town, this school, and having sisters."

"Sisters? Plural?" asked Tristan.

"Yeah. Daria has a younger sister named Quinn. That and Daria considers Jane her sister, and I consider Jane as a sister too." Said Tilly.

"I've heard the name Quinn, but haven't seen her. Does she go to Lawndale?"

"Yeah. She was hurt in an incident a week ago. She will be back to school next week." Said Tilly.

"Ahh." Said Tristan. They walked in silence for a few minutes. "So..."

"So what?" asked Tilly.

"I take it you're not new to creative crime." Said Tristan.

"Why do you ask that?" Asked Tilly, feigning innocence.

"I've done the canned smoke trick before. I've also broken into mechanical rooms and shut off the chilled water." Said Tristan. "Or toss a stink bomb into the air handler."

"Nice. Sweaty and stinky." Said Tilly.

"Yeah. My last school, the custodian lost his keys for a day. He found them the next day... after I had a chance to make a copy of them all." Said Tristan. "Did I tell you why I am at Lawndale High?"

"No."

"Well, my dad worked for the space program in Titusville. My mother was a manager for a Pay Day store. Dad got a better deal with one of the private contractors, and he moved up to this area. Mom was planning to transfer up here, and well, I kinda forced her hand." Said Tristan.

"Kinda forced?" asked Tilly. "Do tell."

"I took some thin set epoxy and filled the locks of the administration offices. They had to break the doorknobs off to get in." said Tristan, chuckling lightly to himself.

"Lemme guess, they expelled you."

"Yes and no. My mom was told that if she withdrew me from school, they wouldn't expel me or put it on my record. So we moved in with dad. He was glad that he didn't have to fly down every month to see us, but he wasn't happy about how it happened." Said Tristan.

"Wait." Tilly said, turning to face Tristan. "You told us that your dad lost his job, and had to relocate up here."

"That's just the story I tell everyone. You don't normally run around telling everyone you were almost expelled for vandalism."

"Ahh." Said Tilly. She stopped in front of her house. "Well, this is me. Later."

"Okay. See you tomorrow?"

"Yeah." Said Tilly. She turned and walked into her house. Tristan watched as she walked away, and into the house.

"Like no other." Said Tristan, smiling. He waited for Tilly to close the door, and then continued to walk home.

"You coming over?" asked Daria of Jane as they walked along.

"Sure." Said Jane. "I could use some inspiration." They continued to walk past Casa Lane. "So, what's with the book?"

"I told you I found it on the ground, quite oddly in front of Charles' locker."

“Maybe someone trying to tell him something?” asked Jane.

“Yeah, that he needs to be less creepy.” Said Daria, as she and Jane walked up the path to the Morgendorffer house.

“I don’t think it’s possible.” Said Jane.

Daria just raised an eyebrow, as she opened the front door, and stepped in, with Jane following. They walked into the kitchen, grabbed a couple of sodas from the fridge, and headed up the stairs. They walked into Daria’s room, and tossed their bags onto the floor. “Did you notice how Tilly was acting?”

“She was acting a bit weird, even for being your sister.” Said Jane. “Speaking of, where’s Quinn?”

“Probably in her room.” Said Daria.

“She’s usually in here by now. Or at least bugging us by now.” Said Jane.

Daria nodded in agreement, and walked out of her room, and knocked on Quinn’s door. “Quinn?”

No answer.

Daria knocked again. “Quinn?” She went to open the door, but it was locked. “It’s locked.”

“Maybe she’s asleep.” Said Jane.

“With the door locked?” said Daria. She turned to see the bathroom door closed as well. She walked over to the bathroom, and opened the door. She quickly looked around, and then back to Quinn’s room, this time beating on the door. “QUINN!”

No answer.

Jane tried the door handle. “If I can get it just right, I might be able to pop... Got it!” Jane flung the door open, and her and Daria rushed in.

“Where is she?” asked Daria. It didn’t take her long to find her. She looked to the left, and saw Quinn, laying on the floor, in front of the closet, unconscious. Daria snatched the phone off the dresser, and called 911.

Jane ran over to Quinn. “She’s alive, but there is some blood here.” She gently shook Quinn’s arm. “Quinn?”

“Okay, hurry.” Said Daria, putting the phone down. She turned to Jane. “Ambulance will be here shortly.”

“Better call Helen.” Said Jane, as she was running her hands along Quinn’s legs. “Nothing broken that I can see.”

Daria dialed the phone. After a minute, she spoke. “Maryanne? This is Daria. I need to speak to mom.” A pause. “In a meeting, huh. Tell her Quinn is lying on the floor unconscious. I’ve called 911.” Daria hung the phone up and knelt down beside Quinn, looking at the growing pool of blood. “Damn.”

Jake came running into the doors of the emergency room, to be met by Daria and Jane. "Daria! Where's Quinn?"

"She's fine dad." Said Daria. "Mom's back with her."

Jake took a second, and then continued. "What happened?"

"Didn't get a chance to find out. Mom asked us to come out here and wait for you." Said Daria. She turned, and started walking, with Jane following close behind, and Jake taking up the rear. They walk into the curtain area, where Helen was sitting with Quinn, quietly conversing.

"Quinn! Honey are you alright?" said Jake, running up and hugging his younger daughter.

"I'm fine dad. I fell while trying to reach something on the top shelf of my closet." Said Quinn. Jake stepped back.

"She landed on the chair she was standing on, and it tore open the incision. Didn't do any damage." Said Helen.

"That's correct. We just had to re-stitch the incision back together, but she should be fine. She will have to wait before she goes back to school."

"Another week without Quinn at Lawndale High? Oh what will we ever do?" said Daria.

"Daria..." Helen cautioned. She turned to look at Jake, and then to the doctor. "When can we take Quinn home?"

The doctor looked at the paperwork in his hand. "She should be ready to go home here soon. I just need to give you a couple of prescriptions."

"That will be great." Said Helen. She turned to Jake. "You can go home if you want, and take Daria and Jane with you."

"Are you sure?" asked Jake.

"Go ahead, daddy. I'll be fine." Said Quinn.

"Oh. Okay then." Said Jake. He took one last look at Quinn, and then headed for the exit, with Daria and Jane following him.

They pulled into the driveway, just as the two men were closing the van. Jake got out of the car, and walked up to them. "Mr. Morgendorffer?" The one man said.

"Yep. Jake Morgendorffer."

The man offered his hand. "I'm Ryan with Speedy Carpet Cleaning. Your wife called us to clean a stain in a carpet upstairs."

"Oh, okay." Said Jake, shaking the man's hand. "Stain?"

"Yes. There was a stain in the carpet in an upstairs bedroom. Since the stain hadn't fully set, we were able to clean it. It looks like a new carpet now!" said the man.

"You got here really quick!" said Jake.

"Yes. Your wife's law firm has done some work for the owner of our company." Said the 2nd man, as he brought the first man a clipboard.

"Would you care to inspect our work?" asked the first man.

"Sure." Said Jake. He headed inside, with the first man following him.

"I'm going to head home." Said Jane.

"Never a dull moment around here." Said Daria. "See you tomorrow."

"Yep." Said Jane, as she turned and walked away.

Daria shrugged, and walked into the house, closing the door behind her. She went up the stairs, and into Quinn's room, where Jake and the first man were going over the work. She glanced to where Quinn was once laying, didn't see anything, and turned around and went to her room, closing the door behind her. "Another day in this hell known as Lawndale." She said as she sat down on the edge of the bed to watch TV.

"Is it just me, or does Tilly seem to be late.. again." Asked Daria as she stood in the front yard of Casa Lane with Jane.

"Seems that way." Said Jane.

"I'm not waiting anymore." Said Daria, and she started walking towards school. Jane just shrugged, and followed.

"Hey you two... wait up!" Came Tilly's voice from behind.

"Hurry up slow poke." Said Jane, as she paused to wait. Daria kept walking.

Tilly picked up the pace, breaking into a run to catch up. "What's with her?"

"She's tired of waiting." Said Jane. She waited for Tilly to catch up, and then continued to walk.

"On what?" asked Tilly.

"You I guess." Said Jane.

“Let’s catch up to her and find out.” Said Tilly. She sped up to catch Daria, with Jane easily catching up to the pair. “Hey! Wait up!!” Daria just kept walking. Tilly caught up to Daria, and placed her hand on Daria’s shoulder. “Hey...” Daria stopped, turned, and just glared at Tilly. “Evil stares don’t work on me.”

“Then how about plain English. Remove your hand.” Said Daria.

“Keep in mind, you’re not a threat.” Said Tilly. “Now what is your problem?”

“Nothing.” Said Daria.

“There has..” started Tilly, but Daria cut her off.

“NOTH-ING.” Said Daria. She didn’t say another word, and continued her walk, leaving Jane and Tilly standing.

“Quinn?” asked Tilly of Jane.

“Don’t know, but you heard?”

“Yeah. My mom called Helen last night and found out.” Said Tilly.

“So... what’s with you?” asked Jane as they started walking, after letting Daria get a few seconds ahead of them.

“What are you talking about?”

“Yesterday? This morning?”

“Nothing.” Said Tilly.

“Then I am going to take a stab and say Tristan.” Said Jane. Tilly turned a few shades of red. “The Morgendorffer embarrassment dead giveaway answers for me. So... details?”

“Nothing. Just friends.” Said Tilly.

“Uh huh. How long before you two are going on a date?” asked Jane.

“No dates. Just friends.” Said Tilly.

“Uh huh.” Said Jane.

Another lunch. Jane and Tilly were sitting at their usual table. Tilly had a salad, and Jane had the usual slop. “Salad?” asked Jane.

“It’s the closest thing to being edible.” Said Tilly.

“Where’s Daria?” asked Jane.

“Don’t know.” Said Tilly, as she shoved a forkful of lettuce in her mouth.

“Hey guys!” said Tristan, as he walked up to the table. “Mind if I join you?”

Tilly looked over at Jane. Jane had a small smirk on her face. “Yeah.” Said Tilly, a bit sheepishly.

“Thanks.” Said Tristan. He sat down, and pulled two brown bags from his bag. “I brought you a sandwich.”

Tilly looked at the bag, and then at the salad. “Thanks, but I have this.”

Jane reached over and took the fork from Tilly, and then the salad. “Now you don’t.” said Jane.

Tilly gave Jane a “I’m going to kill you.” look. “I guess I don’t have anything, now.” She took the bag from Tristan, opened up, and reached inside. She found a sandwich, a small bag of grapes, and a couple of homemade cookies. “I don’t know what to say.”

“How about thanks.” Said Jane and Tristan at the same time.

“Daria’s not here?” asked Tristan.

“No. Haven’t seen her.” Said Jane.

“I saw her in the hall. She was heading the other way. Maybe she had to go to her locker first.” Said Tristan.

“Don’t know.” Said Jane. She glanced over at Tilly, who was hastily eating the sandwich.

“Hey guys.” Said Jodie as she walked up to the table.

“Hey.” Said Tilly, Jane, and Tristan at once.

“Daria’s not here yet?” asked Jodie.

“Nope.” Said Tristan.

“I saw her outside of the library. She said she would be here shortly.” Said Jodie, as she shifted the books in her arm to the other arm.

“Avoidance?” asked Jane of Tilly. Tilly just nodded.

“Well, I have to go. See you later.” Said Jodie as she walked off.

“Later.” Said Tristan and Jane. Tilly just waved.

“Should we confront her?” asked Tristan.

“We?” asked Jane. Tristan just started at Jane. “Okay... we.” She looked over at Tilly, who was just shaking her head. “Perhaps not.”

Jane was sitting on her bed, watching TV. Usually, after school, she was hanging out with Daria, or Daria would be hanging out with her. She didn't even see Daria on the walk home. It was just Tilly, herself, and Tristan. "Hey Janey." Came Trent's voice from the other side of the half closed door.

"Yeah." Said Jane. Trent pushed the door open.

"Have you seen Daria?" asked Trent.

"Nope. She ditched us at lunch, and then on the walk home."

"I tried calling her house, and Quinn told me she wasn't home yet." Said Trent.

"Maybe she just decided to go to the library after she left school. Jodie said she saw Daria heading to the school library during lunch." Said Jane.

"Oh." Trent said. He paused for a few seconds. "Janey?"

"Yeah Trent?"

"I was thinking about taking her on a date this weekend." Said Trent.

"I think that would be great." Jane thought for a moment. "Interested in a double date?"

"You have a boyfriend?" asked Trent.

"No. Tilly. She has been hanging around this new guy in school, or he has been hanging around her. Regardless, I think it would be interesting."

"Hmm. I don't know. I was wanting to spend some alone time with Daria." Said Trent.

"It's your call. I'd have to strong arm Tilly into going anyway." Said Jane. "Where were you going to take her?"

"Quinn said something about a French restaurant." Said Trent.

"I don't think Daria would like that." Said Jane.

"What about that new Italian restaurant. I can't remember the name." said Trent, trying to remember the name.

"You mean Cariera's?" asked Jane.

"Yeah. That's it." Said Trent.

"I think she'd like that." Said Jane. "Now you just have to ask her."

"Yeah. Don't say anything to her, okay?"

"I won't Trent."

"Thanks, Janey." Said Trent as he turned to leave.

"Hey Trent?"

"Yeah Janey?"

"Given any idea to what you are going to wear?"

"No."

"Well. I would say you don't have to dress up, but dress nice." Said Jane. "Nice pants. Maybe a polo shirt."

"Polo shirt? I don't know." Said Trent, stroking his goatee.

"Just has to be nice." Said Jane.

"Hmmm... Maybe I'll ask Jesse." Said Trent.

"Just remember... nice." Said Jane.

"Thanks Janey." Said Trent. He turned and left the room.

Jane sat and pondered for a moment. "Trent and Daria on their first date. I would love to be there for that." She said to herself. She shrugged, and then turned back to the TV, flipping channels.

Quinn sat up in bed. "Another day trapped in this house. God I can't wait to get out and go back to school." She said to herself. She paused, not believing what she had just said. She sat there, listening to the noise of the house, like she did every morning. The sound of Jake and Helen rambling around as they got ready for the day. She was expecting to hear Daria next, as she walks out of her room and blindly feels her way along the wall to the bathroom. She didn't hear it this morning, and just assumed she was already downstairs. She got up, and went to the dresser, and reached into the box that held the gauze, tape, and other stuff to maintain her bandage on her side. She took the items she needed, and then went to select clothes to wear. While fashion was her life, she did enjoy the occasional opportunity to dress down, and not have to worry about impressing anyone. She took her clothes and bandaging supplies to the bathroom. She glanced over at Daria's room, and the door was half open. Glancing in, she didn't see Daria in there, so she just shrugged and continued her way to the bathroom. After taking a shower, changing her bandage, and getting dressed, she headed downstairs. Helen was on the phone, and Jake was drinking coffee like water.

Helen put her hand over the phone. "Quinn, have you seen Daria?"

"No. Not lately." Said Quinn as she made herself a bowl of cereal. Helen continued talking into the phone. Quinn sat down at the table with her cereal. "Did Daria leave early today?"

Jake set his coffee cup down for a moment. "I guess so. She was up and gone before we got up." Said Jake.

"I thought so. Didn't hear her this morning." Said Quinn, starting to eat.

Helen hung the phone up, and sat down. She barely set the phone down when it rang again. "Hello? Oh... hold on." Helen handed the phone to Quinn. "It's for you... it's Sandi."

Quinn took the phone. "Hey Sandi.... Yeah... Yeah... Sure.. I'd like to.. Okay.. See you in a few." Quinn hung the phone up and set it on the table.

"What did she want?" asked Helen, a bit coldly.

"She wants to come over and hang out for a few." Said Quinn.

"Oh." Said Helen. "Quinn, are you sure that's a good idea?"

"I don't see anything wrong with it." Said Quinn.

"I'm just not comfortable with her being around you." Said Helen.

"She's been getting therapy, mom." Said Quinn.

"Oh? I didn't know." Said Helen. She looked at the clock. "Well, I have to go. Big meeting with a new client." She grabbed her attaché case, and headed out the door.

"Dad?" asked Quinn.

"Yeah sweetie?"

"What do you think?" asked Quinn.

"About what?"

"Sandi coming over..."

"Sandi is coming over?" asked Jake, clueless.

"Yeah dad."

"Oh. Okay." Said Jake. He just sat there, drinking coffee and staring off into space.

"Daddy? Are you okay?"

"Yeah, sweetie, I'm fine. I'm just worried about your sister." Said Jake.

"Why?"

"You're mother said she left before we got up. I think she never came home last night." Said Jake.

"Maybe she stayed the night at Jane's."

“Maybe, but it’s not like her to not call at let us know.” Said Jake.

“I’m sure she’s fine, daddy.” Said Quinn. However, on the inside, she was beginning to worry herself. “I’m going to go upstairs and get ready for when Sandi comes over.”

“Okay, sweetie.” Said Jake. He got up and poured another cup of coffee, and then sat back down at the table.

Quinn walked into her room, and started to rifle around the dresser looking for her address book. She found it, and began to flip through the book for a number. She found it, penciled in the back. She picked up the phone and dialed in the number. The phone rang and rang, but no one answered. She hung the phone up, and then picked up again and hit redial. After about the fifth ring, someone answered. “Uhh, hello?”

“Trent? It’s Quinn. Have you seen Daria?”

“Uhh... no. Janey had mentioned that she wasn’t waiting for her downstairs when they left.” Said Trent.

“Okay. When Jane gets home, have her call me.” Said Quinn.

“Sure.”

“Bye.” Said Quinn. She hung the phone up, and then flipped for another number. She found it, picked up the phone, and quickly bashed it into the phone. After the 2nd ring, someone answered.

“Hello?”

“Mrs. Seiler? This is Quinn, Daria’s sister.”

“Oh, hello Quinn. How are you doing?”

“Fine. Look, have you or Tilly seen Daria?”

“No. Your mother called this morning looking for her too. Is there something wrong?”

“Not sure. Dad thinks Daria didn’t come home last night.” Said Quinn.

“Well, if we see her, we will call as soon as possible.” Said Sarah.

“Okay, thanks.” Quinn hung the phone up, and looked at the clock. Sandi would be there in a few minutes, and she needed to get ready.

The phone rang, snapping Jake out of his trance. He snatched it up, answering it. “Hello. HELLO?”

“Is this the Morgendorffer residence?” said the voice.

“Yes, this is. Who is this?”

“This is Lawndale High School, is this Mr. Jake Morgendorffer?”

"Yes." Said Jake.

"Mr. Morgendorffer, this is Mrs. Tighe, the school's attendance clerk. We just wanted to inquire as to why your daughter, Daria, was not in school today."

Jake swallowed the lump building in his throat. He thought quickly, and then replied. "Yes, she's home today. Not feeling well."

"Okay. We were concerned. Daria normally doesn't miss school."

"Okay. Thank you." Jake hung the phone up, not waiting for a response. He quickly drank the last bit of his coffee, grabbed his keys and headed for the door. "Quinn! I am heading out!" He didn't wait for an answer, and was out the door. He got in his car, and quickly drove away, narrowly avoiding the car that was turning into the driveway.

Once the car stopped, Sandi stepped out. "I'll be fine mother. I just want to see Quinn. I will call you when I am ready to come home." Linda said nothing, but just watched as her daughter walked up to the door, and knocked. After a moment or so, the door opened, revealing Quinn. Sandi stepped inside, and Quinn closed the door. Linda backed out of the driveway, and drove off.

"So Quinn, what have you been doing with all this free time?" said Sandi, sitting down on the couch.

"Catching up on beauty sleep." Said Quinn with a slight laugh. "How's the shoulder?"

"Casts are so unfashionable. They sell these wraps that cover them up, but Cashman's doesn't carry them."

"I'm sure they could order it." Said Quinn.

Sandi swallowed. "So, how are you doing?"

"Fine. Had to go to the emergency room a couple of days ago. Fell off a chair." Said Quinn.

"Balance issues?"

"No. Was trying to reach something on the top shelf in my closet. Lost my balance."

Sandi hung her head down. "Quinn... I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Sandi."

"No Quinn, it's not. I put you in the hospital, you almost died."

"It wasn't that bad Sandi. Besides, I'm fine now, and we are both sitting here talking about it." Said Quinn.

Sandi fell silent for a moment, then spoke up. "I want to start the Fashion Club again."

Quinn looked at Sandi. "Why?"

Sandi was silent again for a moment. "You, Stacy, and Tiffany... were the only friends I had. Being out of school, with no one to talk to, it reminded me of before I started the club. I had no friends."

Quinn was trying to avoid the Fashion Club issue. "Have you talked to Stacy and Tiffany since the incident?"

"No. They wouldn't want to talk to me anyway."

Quinn smiled. "Don't be too sure about that Sandi. I talk to Stacy and Tiffany on a daily basis, and they constantly ask me how you are doing, and if I have talked to you."

"Why don't they call me then?"

"Probably because they think you don't want to talk to them." Said Quinn.

"Hmm." Sandi paused for a moment. "So, what do you think about the club?"

"Sandi, do we have to have a club to be friends?" asked Quinn.

Sandi thought about it for a moment. "No, I guess not."

Quinn decided to push the boundary a bit. "Besides, you've been doing so well here lately, do you really want to go back to the way you were?" Quinn could see the flash of anger in Sandi's eyes, but it faded away just as quickly as it appeared.

"No." said Sandi confidently.

"Good." Said Quinn. "Let's find something to eat, and then we can see what can do about covering that cast."

It was lunch again, and instead of sitting at their table poking fun at the pseudo-food the school tries to pass off as lunch, Jane, Tilly, and Tristan were going from table to table, asking everyone if they had seen Daria. After talking to what seemed like every person in the cafeteria, they finally sat down. "I just don't get it. Where the hell is she?" Said Jane, snatching Tristan's lunch bag and pulling the peanut butter crackers from the bag.

"I don't know." Said Tilly, as she snatched the bag from Jane, and pulled the sandwich from the bag and began to eat it.

"Good thing I bring an extra." Said Tristan. He pulled another bag from his bookbag. "I take it Daria doesn't normally go missing?"

"No. She doesn't." Said Jane. "She doesn't even miss school when she is sick."

"I'm worried." Said Tilly.

"Does she have any places she likes to hide?" asked Tristan.

"The library, her room, my house." Said Jane, counting off on her fingers.

"I wonder if.. no, she wouldn't... would she?" asked Tilly.

"What?" asked Tristan.

"Don't know. When I picked my clothes up from her house the other day, I went through her drawers and didn't find anything." Said Jane.

"She could have gotten it somewhere else." Said Tilly.

"What?" asked Tristan again.

Jane ignored him. "Possibly, though I think Quinn has been keeping track of the stocks at their house."

"Will someone tell me what the hell is going on?" asked Tristan.

Tilly and Jane looked at each other, and sighed. "Daria has a slight alcohol problem." Said Jane.

"So, where did she drink at?"

"Home." Said Tilly. She was resting her head on her hand. "She doesn't go anywhere else." Suddenly, her head jerked up. "Wait... has anyone checked the library?"

"Yeah. Not there." Said Jane.

"How good did you check?" asked Tilly.

"Just walked in and walked around really quick. Asked the librarian, and she said she had seen here there earlier in the day, but she left before Daria." Said Jane.

"Is it possible she is still there?" asked Tristan.

"I wouldn't think so. They do a walk through to make sure there are no bums trying to find a dry place to sleep." Said Jane.

"We need to go check it out." Said Tristan.

"What about school?" asked Jane. "I think they will frown upon us just walking out."

"Give me twenty minutes. Meet out in the student parking lot." Said Tilly. She finished the rest of the sandwich, and got up.

"What does she have planned?" asked Tristan.

"Your guess is as good as mine." Said Jane. The bell rang, and everybody started leaving the cafeteria. Jane and Tristan got up, and followed the crowd out, heading to class.

The parking lot was busier than Tilly thought, with other students taking advantage of her unscheduled break to make a run for it. Jane and Tristan rounded the corner and walked up to her. "Told you give me 20 minutes."

"We're going to have to exchange notes." Said Tristan.

"Let's go. Before they decide to do a sweep and find us." Said Jane. They quickly started walking away from the school, towards the Lawndale Public Library. The walk, which usually wasn't too long, seemed like it took forever. They finally made it, and walked into the building.

"Aren't you three supposed to be in school?" asked a lady behind the counter as they walked in.

"Who are you?" asked Tilly.

"My name is Heidi, and I am the head librarian."

"We're on assignment for Mr. O'Neil." Said Jane.

"Uh huh." Said the librarian. "Does Mr. O'Neil know about this assignment?"

"Only if you tell him." Said Tilly.

The librarian shrugged and returned to her work. The trio fanned out, checking every square inch of the library. After walking around for a few minutes, they all met back by the reading tables. "No luck." Said Jane.

"Did you expect any?" asked Tilly.

"Not really. I was hoping we would find some clues or something." Said Jane.

"Did you find who you were looking for?" asked the librarian as she approached them.

"Who said we were looking for someone?" asked Tilly defensively.

Jane spoke up. "We are looking for her sister." She said, pointing to Tilly.

"Daria?" asked the librarian.

"Yeah. You know her by name?" asked Jane.

"Of course. She used to come in here quite often. However, over the past couple of weeks, I haven't seen her. Then, yesterday, she comes in. She looked different. I asked her where she had been, and she muttered something and kept walking." Said the librarian.

"Where did she go?" asked Jane.

"Over here." Said the librarian. She led them trio over to an aisle, and pointed. "She went down here."

"I know we asked this before, but did you see her leave?" asked Tilly.

“No. I leave around five. My assistant, Susan, stays until seven. We close at six, but we usually let Daria stay until Susan leaves.”

“Can we ask her?” asked Jane.

“Sure. I’ll be right back.” The librarian walked into the back room, and then came out with another person. “This is my assistant, Susan.” She turned to face her. “These girls are looking for Daria. Did you see her leave the other day when you left?”

“No. She was gone when I left. She came back to the table with a book. She sat for a while, then you left. I went to go process some late fees, and when I came back, she was gone, but her bag was still there. I went back into the back, and when I came out again, her and her bag were gone.” Said Susan. “Sorry I couldn’t have been more help.”

“Is there anywhere she could have hidden in here?” asked Jane. “Maybe she found a quiet, hidden place, and got locked in somewhere.”

“There aren’t any places in here for her to hide, and besides, I check all the rooms before I leave.” Said Susan.

“Damn.” Said Jane and Tilly in unison. “Do you know what book she was reading?” asked Jane.

“No, sorry.”

“Okay. Thank you both for the help.” Said Jane. The trio walked out of the door, and headed down the street. “Where else could she be?”

“I don’t know.” Said Tilly. They sat down on a bench.

“Has she done this before?” asked Tristan.

“Yeah, my brother found her behind the bleachers at the football stadium.” Said Jane.

“Someone slipped her Ecstasy.” Said Tilly.

“Ugh.” Said Tristan.

Jane was about to say something, when a familiar blue car pulled. “Jane.. Have you seen Daria?” Said Jake as he came to a stop.

“No Mr. Morgendorffer. We’ve been looking for her too.” Said Jane.

“Who’s that?” asked Jake, pointing to Tristan.

“That’s my male friend, Tristan.” Said Tilly. Both Jane and Tristan looked at each other, then back to Jake.

“Oh. Hey, why aren’t you three in school?”

“We have more important things to do.” Said Tristan. “I don’t know your daughter that well, but it is important to Tilly, so I am helping out any way I can.”

Tilly turned a shade of red for a moment. "We escaped for the day. We just left the library. They saw her there yesterday afternoon."

"Where could she be?" screamed Jake, pounding on the steering wheel.

"Jake, why don't you go home. We will call you if we find anything." Said Jane.

"Yeah... Maybe I should." Said Jake. He slowly drove away, not saying another word.

"Where the hell is she?" asked Tilly out loud, but of no one in particular.

"Has anyone checked the hospital?" asked Tristan.

Tilly reached into her bag, and pulled out a cell phone, dialing a number. "Where in the hell did you get that?" asked Jane.

"I've had it for a year or so. I only use it for important things. Normally stays off." Said Tilly. A few moments later she spoke to the phone. "Hello? I am looking to see if someone has been checked into the hospital. Her name is Daria Morgendorffer. She is five foot two, about a hundred pounds, brownish auburn hair. She wears black, round frame glasses, and was last seen wearing a green jacket, orange shirt, black skirt, and boots. Yeah, I'll hold." Tilly covered the mouthpiece. "They are checking." Tilly sat, tapping her foot, waiting. After a few moments. "Yes, I'm still here. Okay... okay. You even checked there too? Wow.. Okay, thank you." Tilly hung the phone up.

"Well?" asked Jane and Tristan in unison.

"Nothing. They even checked the morgue." Said Tilly.

No one said anything for a moment, until Tristan spoke up. "Well, it's good that she's not there."

"If she was there, we would at least know where she was." Said Jane.

They sat there, thinking where to go next. As they sat, another familiar blue car pulled up. "Hey." Said Trent as he rolled to a stop and turned the car off.

"Hey Trent." Said Jane.

"Any luck?"

"No." Said Tilly, her head in her hands.

"I've been looking for her as well. I don't know where she could be hiding." Said Trent.

Jane had been leaning back on the bench, thinking, when she jumped to her feet like she was stuck with a pin. "I think I might know where she is. Get in." They all piled into Trent's car. "Lawndale High." Said Jane.

"You got it." Said Trent. He started the car and drove off. Within a few minutes, they pulled into the parking lot. Jane jumped from the car before it stopped, and made for the main door. She pulled on the door, and it was locked.

"Damn it... It's locked!" said Jane as she furiously tried to open the door. Trent had parked the car, and the rest of the group exited the car and walked up to where Jane was standing.

"Locked huh?" asked Tilly. She pulled a small black pouch from her bag, and opened it, revealing lock picking tools. She studied the lock closely. "This is going to be tough. I've never done one like this."

Jane glanced around, looking for cameras. There was one by the door where they were, and it was panning towards them, but suddenly stopped. She looked puzzled, until she saw Tristan with a pair of wire cutters come around the corner. "Cures that problem." Said Tristan. He knelt down beside Tilly, putting his hand on her shoulder as he did. "Let me look at this." Jane looked at Tilly, who had turned two shades of red. Despite the situation, she had to smile. "I think I can get it." He pulled two tools from the pick set, and started to work the lock. A minute later, he twisted the cylinder, and the door opened. "Childs play. Cheap lock made to look hard." Jane snatched the door open, and started in, but stopped short.

"Cameras." Said Jane.

"Nope. I cut the main feed to the building. Once again, cheapness." Said Tristan.

Jane didn't wait for confirmation, and bolted down the hallway towards the stairwell, with Tilly, Tristan, and Trent close behind. Jane quickly sprinted up the two flights of stairs to the roof access platform. She tried to open it, but it was locked as well. She also noticed the lock was new, and not the usual one that was on the door. Tristan and Tilly came up, with Trent following. Tilly pulled a pin rake from the pouch, and within seconds, had the lock picked and the door opened. Jane shoved it open, and sprinted across the roof to the water tank shed. She pounded on the door. "Daria? Are you in there?" She looked down, and saw a piece of paper that was stuck under the door. She snatched it up and read it.

If anyone finds this, they will probably find my body on the other side of this door. I came here to hide, and managed to lock myself in here.

Jane noticed the new lock on this door as well. Before she could say anything, Tilly was already at the lock, and had it picked within seconds. She flung the door open, to reveal Daria, curled up into ball. She had tried to cover herself with her jacket, but it wasn't enough. Jane pushed past Tilly, and hurried to Daria, shaking her. "Daria... Daria... DARIA!" She didn't respond. Trent had pushed his way past Tilly and Tristan, and knelt beside Daria.

He took her hand into his. "Daria... " Jane shook her again. This time, she moved, but just curled herself even tighter into a ball. Trent leaned over close to Daria's face. "Daria.. wake up. Please... wake up." He gave her a light kiss on the cheek. She moved around a bit. Trent rubbed her hand. "Daria..."

"Trent.... " Daria said weakly. "I'll never get to know...." She stopped, as he eyes snapped open. "Trent?"

"Yeah." Said Trent.

Daria looked around, and slowly sat up. After a moment, she slowly stood up, leaning on Trent. Jane had stood up as well, saying nothing. As she turned to face Jane, Jane reached out and wrapped her arms tightly around

Daria. Jane said nothing, but started to cry. Daria held her friend tightly. After a minute, Jane broke her embrace with Daria, holding her at arm's length. "I was worried to death about you!"

"Thanks to Ms. Li, I ended up trapped up here." Said Daria.

Tilly approached Daria, and hugged her. After a moment, she stepped back. "Why didn't you yell for help?"

"I was locked in here. I turned off the water in here, hoping that someone would eventually come up here to find out why." Said Daria, picking up her belongings and packing them into her bag. "I didn't know how long I was going to be up here, so I was preparing for the worst." Trent stepped to Daria, and wrapped her in his arms. Daria wrapped her arms around Trent, laying her head on his chest. "I'm so glad to see you." Said Daria.

"I'm glad to have found you." Said Trent.

Jane took Daria's bag from her, and finished picking up Daria's things, all the while muttering incoherently. "Let's get you home, Daria." Said Jane aloud.

Daria stepped away from Trent, and took her bag from Jane. "Yeah. I'd like to go home now."

Trent pulled into the driveway at Daria's house. Daria got out, along with Jane. "Are you three coming in?" asked Daria.

"Nah. We're going to get Trent to take us home." Said Tilly.

"What about Janey?" asked Trent.

"I can walk home. Not like I've haven't done it before." Said Jane, closing the door.

"Okay... cool." Said Trent. He watched as Jane and Daria walked up to the house, and then he backed out of the driveway, and drove off down the street.

"Ready for this?" asked Jane.

"As ready as I..." started Daria, but she was cut off by Jake snatching Daria off her feet into a hug.

"Daria! I am so glad you're safe!" exclaimed Jake as he hugged his daughter.

"Dad.. can't... breathe..."

"Oh.. sorry kiddo." Said Jake, releasing Daria to the floor.

"Oh Daria... We were so worried about you. We thought you might have... well, you know..." started Helen.

"Fallen off the wagon?" asked Daria, as she pushed her way past her parents and into the house, dragging Jane behind her. They watched as she passed them and sat on the couch. Jake closed the door, and then he and Helen followed Daria, sitting down on the couch across from Daria and Jane.

“Where were you?” asked Helen.

“Managed to get myself locked into a water tank shed on the roof of the school.” Said Daria.

Helen looked confused at the response, so Jane continued. “We often go onto the roof to get away from study hall, pep rallies, and other school functions. I just happened to think about that, and the rest is history.”

“How did you get trapped on the roof if you two come and go from it so often?” asked Helen.

“Someone changed the locks.” Said Daria. “I noticed the lock on the shed door was new, but didn’t pay attention to the lock on the roof access door. I just went up to read in peace, and ended up being trapped.”

“Well, we’re glad you’re safe, kiddo.” Said Jake.

“Yes Daria, we’re glad your home.” Said Helen.

“Well, I’ve had enough fun for today. I think I am going to go take a shower and go to bed.” Said Daria, as she placed her hand on Jane’s knee, patting it lightly, as she got up.

“Fare thee well, Indiana Morgendorffer.” Said Jane, as she got up, and watched Daria walk up the stairs.

Helen and Jake turned to Jane. “Thanks for finding her, Jane.” Said Helen.

“No problem. Remember, I missed her too.” Said Jane, heading for the door. “Later.” She opened the door, and walked out, closing the door behind her. She stood on the other side of the door, and sighed heavily. She looked up, to see Trent’s car pull up to the curb. “Just in time.”

Another morning. Daria looked at the alarm clock. She could probably talk her parents into letting her stay home, but she had already missed one day of school, even though, technically, she was at school anyway, so would that count as being absent? She turned off the alarm, and drug herself to her feet. She went to grab her normal school clothes, but instead, she picked up jeans and shirt she had wore to snap Quinn out of her “brain” spell. She dressed quickly, and brushed her hair out. She looked at the dresser, where a select few cosmetics sat. She shook her head, and walked out of her room and across the hall, knocking on Quinn’s door. After a minute or so, the door opened. “Daria?”

“Hey Quinn. I need some... err... makeup help.” Said Daria, trying to smash down the feeling of vanity.

“Okay.” Said Quinn. She opened the door fully, and gestured for Daria to sit down in front of the dresser.

“What? No speeches? Comments?” asked Daria as she sat down.

“No.” Said Quinn. “I think we can just start out with lipstick, and see how that works.” Quinn opened a drawer, and picked a shade from the numerous selections. “A shade or two darker than your natural color should work for you.” She applied it quickly, with a practiced hand. Taking a step back, she looked at Daria carefully. “I think that will suffice. Mascara wouldn’t work very well with your glasses.”

Daria looked in the mirror. “Not bad.”

“See how that works for you. We can go from there.” Said Quinn.

“Thanks Quinn.” Said Daria. She got up, and walked out of the room, and downstairs. She went into the kitchen, grabbed her usual Sugar Tart from the cabinet. She was grabbing a soda from the fridge, when she heard a car horn outside. She walked to the window, to see Tilly’s car in the driveway. Daria grabbed her bag, and headed out the door. She walked up to the car as Tilly was rolling the window down. “Afraid to walk?”

“No, just felt like driving today.” Said Tilly. “Want a ride?”

“Sure.” Said Daria. She walked around to the passenger’s side, but saw Tristan sitting in the front passenger’s seat. She shrugged and opened the back door, and got in.

“Hey Daria. How you feeling after your adventure?” asked Tristan.

“Okay I guess. Just upset that I didn’t find the golden scepter.” Said Daria as she closed the door.

“Shall we go get Jane?” asked Tilly, as she backed out of the driveway.

“Sure.” Said Daria. Within a few minutes, they were pulling into the driveway at Casa Lane. A few moments later, Jane came walking out of the house.

“We hit Lawndale High in style?” asked Jane as she got in.

“Sure.” Said Tilly. Once Jane closed the door, Tilly backed out of the driveway, and proceeded to drive the short trip to the school.

“You two are sure spending a lot of time together.” Said Jane.

“Who? Us?” asked Tristan, looking over at Tilly, who was starting to turn a bit red.

“Yes... you two.” Said Jane.

“We’re just friends.” Said Tilly, with a bit of irritation in her voice.

“Uh huh.” Said Jane.

“Oh look, we’re here.” Said Daria. They pulled into the parking lot, and Tilly found a parking spot and parked the car.

“I think there is something you aren’t telling us.” Said Jane, as she got out of the car.

Tristan looked over to Tilly, and then back to Jane. “No...”

“Yeah... I think there is.” Said Jane, with a smile on her face.

Tilly stepped out of the car, and turned to face Jane. “No.... there isn’t.”

“Uh huh.” Said Jane. She walked over to where Daria was, and leaned in to whisper, “I think Tilly and Tristan are a little more than friends.”

“So?” said Daria in a hushed tone. “If she wants to be more than friends, it’s her prerogative.”

“But why hide it?” asked Jane.

Tilly came up behind them, putting her hands on both of their shoulders. “Because, if I told you two about it, I would never hear the end of it.”

“Only for the first few days.” Said Jane.

“Weeks.” Corrected Daria.

“Oh, that reminds me. Daria, Trent wanted me to give this to you.” Said Jane, pulling a small folded note from her pocket. Daria took the note, opened it, and read it.

“What’s it say?” asked Tilly.

“Trent wants to take me out to dinner tomorrow night.” Said Daria.

“Really?” asked both Tristan and Tilly at the same time.

“Yeah. Says he had some Italian restaurant in mind. He also asked if you and Tristan wanted to go, sort of a double date.” Said Daria.

“We’re not dating!” exclaimed Tilly and Tristan at the same time.

Daria turned to Tilly. “If you want to go and bring Tristan, that would be cool. If not, no big deal.”

Tilly looked over at Tristan, who just shrugged. “I don’t know. I will think about it.”

“Alright then. Well... Shall we attend our daily dosage of education?” asked Daria, turning towards the school.

“If we must.” Said Jane. Tilly locked the car, and the foursome started walking towards the school.

“Can we actually have food to eat instead of this crap?” asked Jane of the cafeteria manager.

“We can only serve what Ms. Li supplies for us.” Said the manager.

“How about just a plain old peanut butter and jelly sandwich?” asked Jane.

“Sorry. Don’t even have that.” Said the manager. Jane shrugged, and took a soda. “At least this is real.” She paid for the drink, and walked back to the table where rest of the foursome were gathered.

“No protoplasm for you today?” asked Daria, as she pulled a package of crackers from her bag.

“Nope. I’m boycotting this place. Soda only... and whatever I can swipe from Tilly or Tristan.” Said Jane, eyeballing the bag that Tristan handed Tilly.

“Hands off Lane.” Said Tilly, as she reached into the bag and pulled a sandwich out.

“What was O’Neil’s problem this morning?” asked Tristan.

“Ms. Barch probably got a little too aggressive last night.” Said Jane.

Tristan shuddered. “That woman scares me.”

“I think she scares everyone.” Said Jane.

“Except Mr. Demartino. I think he could take her.” Said Daria.

“I don’t think anyone would want to take her.” Said Tilly.

“Except Mr. O’Neil.” Said Tristan. Tilly just nodded at Tristan.

“Attention students...” came the voice over the intercom.

“Uh oh.” Said Daria.

“Will Jane Lane, Matilda Seiler, and Tristan Mathiesen report to the principal’s office... NOW.”

“Uh oh.” Said Jane.

Tilly quickly finished her sandwich. “I thought you said you cut that camera cable Tristan.”

“I did.” Said Tristan. “Unless there was a backup feed I didn’t see.”

“Think we can skip out on it?” asked Jane.

“If it wasn’t for those guys...” said Tilly, as she motioned to three men in black suits walking towards their table. Tilly reached into her bag, and tossed Daria her cell phone. “I think we are going to need Helen here really soon.”

“Okay.” Said Daria. She took the phone and put it in her pocket. “Better hand me your makeup bag too.”

“Makeup bag?” asked Tilly, confused.

“Makeup POUCH.” Said Daria.

“Oh.” Said Tilly. She reached into her bag, and handed Daria a small black bag. Daria put it into the bottom of her own bag.

“Let’s go.” Said one of the men as they approached their table. All four stood up, but one of the men forcibly shoved Daria back down. “Just these three.”

Daria went to stand back up, but Tilly motioned with her hand to stay seated. "Just call Helen." She mouthed as she turned, and walked away with the men.

Once the trio and the guards were out of the room, Daria quickly headed out to place the call. "Hi.. Maryanne? This is Daria. I need my mom.. NOW."

The trio was sitting in chairs in front of Ms. Li's desk, with the guards standing behind them. Ms. Li looked up from the computer screen, to the guards. "You can leave." They looked at each other, and walked out of the room. "Now. Who wants to explain this?" Ms. Li turned the monitor around, to show the trio video of them running down the hall of the school. Tilly looked to Jane and Tristan, and held her finger to her lips. Jane and Tristan nodded, and crossed their arms. "How about this?" asked Ms. Li as she showed video of Tilly picking the lock to the roof access door. "Okay. Well, let's see if Ms. Seiler is in possession of these tools." She took Tilly's bag, and upended it on the desk. A couple of books, a notepad, a couple of pens, and a small blue drawstring bag fell out. "A HA!" said Li, as she picked up the little blue bag, opened it up, and upended it onto the desk. A couple of feminine products fell out, a small compact, and a tube of chapstick fell out. Tilly turned a shade of red as her personal items were on display. "How about Ms. Lane's bag then?"

"Ms. Li." Came the voice from the desk speaker.

"What? I told you I did not want to be disturbed!"

"Sorry, but there is a Helen Morgendorffer on the line for you."

Ms. Li cursed under her breath. She picked up the phone. "Hello Mrs. Morgendorffer, this is Angela Li, principal of.... I see no reason... I don't have... I know.. I know... FINE!" she punched a button on the phone, and slammed the receiver down. "You're on."

"Okay." Came Helen's voice over the speaker. "First off, Jane, Tilly, and Tristan, have you said anything?"

"No, we haven't Mrs. Morgendorffer." Said Tilly.

"Okay. Ms. Li, I am officially informing you that you are holding three of my clients. Therefore, you are not permitted to question them or search them until I am present. Have you already done so?"

"I have the right to search them while they are on this campus." Said Ms. Li.

"I take that as a yes. Regardless, further activity is to cease until my arrival. Any further actions will be considered harassment, and will result in a lawsuit being brought against the school, and you personally." Ms. Li cursed under her breath. "What was that?"

"Fine." Muttered Ms. Li.

"I will be there shortly." Said Helen. She didn't wait for an answer, and hung up the phone. "I'm going to own that woman and that school one of these days."

A few short minutes, and Helen Morgendorffer was walking into Ms. Li's office. The black suited guards were there again.

“Now that everyone is here.” Said Ms. Li, trying to hide the irritation that had been building.

“Not for long.” Said Helen. She pulled a few instant photos from her attaché case. “You say you have the right to search students on this campus?”

“Yes.” Said Ms. Li, leaning back in her chair.

“Could you show me where the state mandated signage is located?” Said Helen, laying pictures of the main entrance of the school on Ms. Li’s desk.

“They must have been removed by vandals.” Said Ms. Li.

“Then can you show me where they were? From these pictures, I don’t see any evidence of any kind of signage ever existing.” Said Helen.

“Well, we have Ms. Lane, Ms. Seiler, and Mr. Mathiesen on video in the hallways after hours.” Said Ms. Li, trying to regain the upper hand.

“Once again, can you show me the state mandated signage that informs of videotaping in progress?”

“I... Uh...” said Ms. Li, seeing her evidence crumbling before her.

Helen looked directly to Ms. Li. “So, that means any video that you may have is not submissible as evidence, and your search of Ms. Seiler’s personal belongings is also in violation of her personal right to privacy. Now, let’s discuss on how my daughter was able to access the roof of this school, and then become trapped up there.”

“She shouldn’t have been up there at all!” exclaimed Ms. Li. “She was trespassing as well!”

“Well, from what my daughter has told me, she attained access during school hours, so that means she was NOT trespassing. Now, with your failure to prevent student access to dangerous areas of the school, I feel that I will have no choice but to file a lawsuit against you and the school for failure to maintain a safe learning environment.”

“I.. uh...FINE! I will forget the trespassing and vandalism if you forget the lawsuit.” Said Ms. Li.

“That’s what I thought. So, I believe we are done here.” Said Helen, collecting the pictures she had put on the desk.

“Yes.. we are done here.” Muttered Ms. Li. She looked up to the trio. “You may return to class.”

“Not yet. Ms. Li, place Ms. Seiler’s items back into her bag.” Said Helen, arms crossed.

Ms. Li grumbled as she picked up the various items that she had scattered onto the desk, and shoved them back into Tilly’s bag, and then halfway tossed the bag to Tilly. She looked over to Helen. “Happy now?”

“For now.” Said Helen. She turned to look at the trio. “Let’s go.” The trio got up, and exited the room. Helen waited for them to leave, then turned to Ms. Li. “My advice to you... take early retirement.” Helen turned and walked out of the door, closing it behind her.

“Damn that woman!” said Ms. Li, slamming her fists on the desk.

School was over, and Daria waited for the trio by Tilly’s car in the parking lot. “I have a question.” Asked Daria as Tilly approached the car.

“And what might that be, o sister of mine?”

“Why didn’t we call your dad? Isn’t he a lawyer as well?” asked Daria.

“Yeah, but he specializes in corporate law.” Said Tilly.

“Can we leave now? I am ready to get away from this place for the weekend.” Said Jane.

“Long weekend.” Said Tristan.

“What?” asked all three girls.

“Monday is a teacher work day. We don’t have school.” Said Tristan.

“Really?” asked Jane.

“Yup.” Said Tristan.

Jane looked at Daria. “Why didn’t we know about this?” asked Jane.

“Probably too much going on.” Said Daria.

“That reminds me.” Said Jane. She turned to face Tilly. “Did you decide yet?”

“No. I will let you know by tonight.” Said Tilly.

“Uhh, okay.” Said Jane. Tilly unlocked the car, and they all got in, with Jane and Daria getting in the back seat. Tristan sat in the passenger’s front seat. Tilly started the car, and backed out of the lot, and headed down the road. After a minute or so on the road, Jane nudged Daria, motioning for her to look up front. Tilly had her left hand on the steering wheel, and the right hand was sitting on the armrest next to her. Tristan had his left hand also sitting on the same armrest.

“You think?” asked Daria.

“Maybe.” Said Jane. She sat in silence, watching their hands. After a minute or so, Tristan inched his hand closer to Tilly’s, until his hand was right next to hers. A moment later, he slipped his hand over her, intertwining his fingers with hers. Both Jane and Daria looked at each other, and then back to the front, waiting for Tilly’s reaction, but the only reaction she gave was to let him do it.

“Something is going on.” Muttered Daria.

“Nah.” Said Jane.

“Jane, you going to Daria’s, or are you going home?” asked Tilly.

“I think I’m going to go home. I need to make sure Trent is still alive.” Said Jane.

“Okay.” Said Tilly. Jane looked at Daria, and then back to the front, where Tilly and Tristan were now holding hands.

“Ehh.. I’m happy for her.” Said Daria. A few minutes later, they were pulling up in front of Jane’s house.

“Here you go.” Said Tilly.

“Thanks amiga. Remember to call me later.” Said Jane as she got out.

Tilly said nothing, but just nodded her head. Once Jane closed the door, she drove off, driving the next few blocks to Daria’s house. After a few moments, Tilly stopped in front of Daria’s. “Here ya go, sis.”

“Thanks. Have a good weekend.” Said Daria, as she got out.

“You too.” Said Tilly. She waited for Daria to close the door, and watched her walk to the house. After she went inside, Tilly drove off. She turned to Tristan. “Daria and Trent are going on a date tomorrow night.”

“Cool.” Said Tristan.

“They wanted to know if we wanted to double with them.” Said Tilly.

“Aren’t dates for people who are actually, I don’t know, dating?” asked Tristan.

Tilly held up her right hand, pulling Tristan’s with it. “I believe they probably think we are.”

Tristan quickly let go, pulling his hand back. “So, did we want to go?”

“I don’t know.” Said Tilly. She glanced over at Tristan, who was glancing over at Tilly.

“I’ll go with you if you want to go.” Said Tristan.

Tilly came to a stop in front of Tristan’s house. “If we go, they are going to assume we are dating.”

Tristan turned to Tilly, and took her hand into his. “You know, ever since the first day I saw you, I knew you were someone special. I’ll go along with whatever you want to do.” He leaned over, and gave Tilly a light kiss on the cheek, and then got out of the car. He closed the door and started to walk towards the house.

“Tristan, wait...” said Tilly, as she jumped out of the car. Tristan turned around to face her.

“What’s up?”

Tilly walked up to Tristan. "Ask me."

Tristan smiled, and once again took Tilly's hand into his. "Do you want to go to dinner with me, Trent, and Daria?"

"Sure." Said Tilly, with a girlish giggle.

"Cool." Said Tristan. He paused for a second. "Uhh, I assume you're going to tell me when and where?"

"Yeah. I'll call Jane and then I will give you a call." Said Tilly.

"Cool. Then I will see you tomorrow." Tristan leaned forward, gave Tilly a light kiss on the lips, and then walked quickly into the house.

Tilly just stood there, frozen. After a few moments, she turned and walked back to the car. She got into the car, and drove home, with a smile on her face.

Jane had just finished her shower, and was getting ready to settle down for the evening. She finished dressing, and as she sat down to turn the TV on, the phone rang. "That'll be Daria." She said to herself as she picked up the phone. "Yo!"

"Hey Jane... It's Tilly."

"Sup?" asked Jane as she was tossing covers off the bed looking for the remote. She found it on the floor and pointed it towards the TV to turn it on.

"Not much. Uhh... Me and Tristan want to go with Trent and Daria." Said Tilly. She could hear something clatter to the floor. "Jane?"

"Run that by me again?"

"Me... Tristan... date." Said Tilly.

"That's what I thought you said." Said Jane, picking the remote back up.

"So... are you going to tell me where and when?" asked Tilly. "I know you're the one planning this."

"Actually, no. Trent came up with the place, and the time." Said Jane.

"So, it's a go?" asked Tilly.

"I don't know. I need to talk to Trent. He was saying something about just him and Daria wanting to spend time together. Actually, it was my idea for a double date." Said Jane.

"Nice going Lane." Said Tilly. "Maybe you should ask Trent."

“Yeah. Lemme go find him.” Jane put the phone down, and walked out of her room, and downstairs, where Trent was sitting at the table. A notepad and a picture of Daria were sitting in front of him. “Hey Trent.”

Trent jumped a little, like Jane had scared him. “Whoa.. Oh, hey Janey.”

“Tilly’s on the phone. Her and Tristan were wanting to double with you and Daria tomorrow.” Said Jane.

“I was kind of hoping to spend some time with Daria.” Said Trent.

“Well, it was Daria who invited them.” Said Jane.

“Oh.” Said Trent. He sat, staring at the paper and picture on the table. “I’d like to spend some time alone with Daria.”

Jane went to say something, but thought twice, and just said “Okay. I’ll let them know.”

“Cool.” Thanks Janey.

Jane started to walk away, but then paused for a moment. “You might want to call Daria and let her know what’s up.”

“Yeah. Guess I should.” Said Trent.

Jane walked back up the stairs, and into her room. Sighing heavily, she picked up the phone. “Hey Tilly. Trent said he wanted to spend some alone time with Daria.” Jane paused... waiting for the onslaught. “Really? Okay. Cool. Hope you two have fun then. Later.” She hung the phone up, and then flopped down onto the bed.

“Daria! Phone!” came Quinn’s voice from across the hall.

Daria reached from under the blankets and picked up the phone. “Hello?”

“Hey Daria.” Came Trent’s voice.

“Oh... Hey.” Said Daria quietly.

“Uhh, Janey said that you wanted Tilly and Tristan to double date with us?”

“Yeah. I was going to ask you about it though.” Said Daria, still being a bit quiet.

“I kinda wanted to spend some time with just you.” Said Trent.

“Oh.” Said Daria, a bit louder than she wanted to.

“Is that cool?” asked Trent.

Daria thought for a moment. She thought having Tilly and Tristan there would help relieve any potential tension. “Time to step to the plate.” She said to herself.

“Daria?”

“Oh, sorry Trent. Yeah, that would be fine. Someone needs to make sure Tilly knows though, if she decides to go.” Said Daria.

“Yeah. Janey said Tilly was on the phone earlier, and she said she would tell her.”

“Okay.” Said Daria. “Well, what are you going to pick me up?”

“Not sure.” Said Trent.

“How about seven o’clock?”

“Seven... Yeah.. that sounds good.”

“Okay. Alright then. Where we going?”

“Place called Cariera’s.. Just opened up a few weeks ago.”

“Cool. Well then, I guess I will see you tomorrow at seven.”

“Cool. Later.” Said Trent.

Daria hung up the phone, and then crawled back under the blankets.

Morning came, with Tilly rolling out of bed, literally. She picked herself up, and looked over at the clock. “Damn. Nine in the morning, already?” She found the phone, and debated who to call first. “Might as well call Daria. It’s her date.” She bashed the number into the phone, and waited.

“Helloooo?” came Helen’s voice over the phone.

“Mrs. Morgendorffer, you’re way to chipper for this early in the morning.” Said Tilly, putting her glasses on.

“Well Tilly, I am often up way earlier than this. Did you want to talk to Daria?”

“Yeah.” Said Tilly.

“I think she is still asleep.” Said Helen, but a click was heard over the phone, followed by a raspy voice.

“He-hello?” came the zombie like, half asleep voice.

“Daria? Did I wake you?” asked Tilly.

“You can hang up, mom.” Said Daria. A click was heard. “It’s way too early for you to be out of bed.”

“Trust me. I wouldn’t be up if I hadn’t rolled out of it and hit the floor.”

Daria had to stifle a laugh. "So, you calling to wake me up because you are up?"

"No, actually, I wanted to see what time we were all meeting up for tonight." Said Tilly.

"Didn't Jane tell you?" Daria paused, trying to find the right words. "Trent wants me and him to spend some alone time together."

Tilly didn't respond right away. "Oh." Came her response after a few moments.

"I could just call Trent and cancel the whole thing." Said Daria.

"No. Don't do that." Said Tilly. "I will figure something out."

"I'm sure you will." Said Daria. "I'm going back to bed."

"Wait..." said Tilly.

"What?"

"Daria... I'm scared." Said Tilly.

"What?" asked Daria, not quite sure what she heard.

"Daria..... I'm scared... I've never been out with a guy before."

Daria paused for a moment. "Well." She paused again. "That makes two of us."

"I don't know what to do." Said Tilly.

Daria thought for a moment. She could have gone across the hall and asked Quinn. She had been on numerous dates. "Just be yourself." Said Daria. "That's all you can do." She could hear Tilly wanting to speak, and then stopping, and then trying to speak, and stopping. "Look, Tristan likes you, right?"

"I guess." Said Tilly.

"Well, from what I saw, I would say yes. Now, have you put on any kind of façade in front of him?"

"No. If anything, I tried to scare him away."

"Well, then he is expecting you to be you." Said Daria. She thought for a second. "And Trent is expecting me to be me."

"Huh?" asked Tilly, a bit confused.

"Just be yourself." Said Daria.

"Okay. Call me later and let me know how things go?"

“Sure.”

“Okay. Later.” Tilly hung the phone up, and thought about what her sister had just told her. “Be myself.” She said to herself. “I can do that.” She was about to go to the kitchen for something to eat, when the phone rang. “Hello?”

“Heya.” Came Tristan’s voice from the phone.

“Oh. Hey.” Said Tilly.

“Just wake up?”

“No. Just got off the phone with Daria. No double date.”

“Oh. Okay. Well, that doesn’t mean you’re getting out of going out with me.” Said Tristan.

Tilly thought for a moment. “Well, I was thinking about not going, but I think I will. So, where are we going?”

“It’s a surprise.” Said Tristan. “I will be there to get you around six thirty or so. Sound good?”

“Sure.” Said Tilly, a bit sheepishly.

“Okay, see you later.” Said Tristan.

“Bye.” Said Tilly, but she waited to hear the ‘click’ before hanging up. She heard it, and then hung the phone up.

Tristan was sitting at his computer, researching places to eat in town. He had heard mention of a place called Chez Pierre, but from what he had also heard, is that most of the dinners were over \$22. He didn’t mind spending that kind of money on Tilly... He really liked her, but he simply didn’t have the money. He opened the drawer of his desk, and pulled out a small bag. Emptying the contents onto the desk, he counted out the money he had. “Damn... \$53.” This was most of the money he had left over from saving his allowance. He shrugged, and figured he would try to make the most of it. He checked his email really quick, and then got up and headed into the kitchen. He grabbed a soda from the fridge, and sat down at the table, where his dad was sitting, reading his latest issue of his car magazine. “Mornin dad.”

“You’re up early. You’re usually not out of bed until later.” Said Joe, his father, as he was taking a sip from his coffee.

“Yeah. I have a date tonight.”

Joe about spit his coffee out, setting his cup and magazine down. “A date?”

“Yeah. A girl who started the same day I did. Her name is Tilly.”

Joe shook his head. “Not planning on anything scandalous, are we?”

“Nah. I like her.” Said Tristan.

Joe looked at Tristan, and then picked his magazine up. “I suppose you want to borrow the car then?”

“Yeah, actually I do.” Said Tristan. “Just don’t know if I want to use your truck, or mom’s car.”

“You could take the Jeep.” Said Joe, not looking up from his magazine. “After all, it’s supposed to be your car.”

“It’s not insured or tagged.” Said Tristan.

“Actually, it is.” Said Carol, Tristan’s mother.

“It is?” asked both Tristan and Joe at the same time.

“Yeah. I added it to the insurance and picked up the tags yesterday.” Said Carol. “The tag, registration, and insurance card are all on the counter.”

“Really? Cool!” said Tristan. He jumped up, grabbed the paperwork, the keys, and bolted out the front door.

“What did he need the car for?” asked Carol.

“He has a date tonight.” Said Joe.

“Really?” Said Carol.

“Yeah. A girl he met in school.” Said Joe.

Tristan came back in. “Dad, do you have some screws for the tag? I can’t find the ones that were on there.”

“Tristan? You have a date tonight?” asked Carol.

“Yeah. Girl I met in school.” Said Tristan.

“What did you plan to do?” asked Carol.

“Not sure. I only have \$50, and I am sure I will have to put gas in the Jeep beforehand.”

Carol thought about it for a moment. “Well, you haven’t been in trouble at school.”

“Yet... It’s only been a week.” Said Joe, still behind the magazine.

“If you promise to not spend too much, I will let you take my one credit card. It only has a \$500 limit on it.” Said Carol.

“Yeah.. I.. I would like that.” Said Tristan. He thought about it for a moment. “How am I going to pay you back?”

“Tell you what. You bring your date by here for us to meet her, and we won’t worry about it.” Said Carol. “How’s that sound?”

Tristan thought about it. "Okay." He said. He turned to his dad. "The screws?"

"Oh. Look in the garage, upper left drawer of my toolbox." Said Joe. Tristan didn't say anything, and walked away to complete his task.

"He must really like her." Said Carol, as she was fixing herself a cup of coffee.

"Apparently so. He's out of bed before noon." Said Joe.

"What do you think she's like?" asked Carol.

"Don't know, but we will find out soon enough." Said Joe. From outside, you could hear the sound of a vehicle being started that hadn't been started in a while. A few minutes later, Tristan came in.

"Well, it needs to be washed, and cleaned inside and out, but it will work fine." Said Tristan.

"Just no off-roading. If you get stuck, we don't have a way to get you out." Said Joe.

"Isn't your truck four wheel drive?" asked Tristan.

"Yeah, but I'm not going to get my truck dirty because you wanted to show off." Said Joe with a small smile.

"Thanks dad. Feel the love." Tristan looked at his dad, and then to his mom. "I'm gonna go upstairs and change, and then start working on cleaning that thing up."

"Just put everything back when you are done." Said Joe.

Trent had just come inside the house, and saw Jane sitting on the couch. "Hey Janey."

"You look like you've been working hard." Said Jane.

"Yeah. A little." Said Trent. He was covered head to toe in dirt.

"What have you been doing out there?" asked Jane.

"Cleaning the car up. Needed it." Said Trent.

"I don't think you've cleaned it since you've bought it." Said Jane.

"Yeah." Said Trent. "I'm going to go take a shower and get ready."

"Trent. Have you given any thought to what you're going to do after your dinner?"

"Nope." Said Trent, as he walked up the stairs.

Daria was flipping through her closet, deciding what she wanted to wear for the night. She glanced over to the clock. Six o'clock PM. She had already taken her shower, dried herself off, and was now standing in her underwear. Time seemed to be standing still, as she stood looking at the different outfits she had. The words she had told Tilly earlier in the day were still fresh in her mind. "Just be yourself." She went to reach for her usual outfit, but decided to change it up just a little. She pulled a skirt out that was longer than her usual, and then she reached for a light brown, button-up blouse. "Where the hell did this come from?" She held it up to her body, and paired it up with the skirt. "This isn't not me." She put the blouse back into the closet, and pulled a light brown t-shirt from the closet. She dressed, and then turned to look at herself in the mirror. "This is who I am." She looked to the clock again. 6:10pm.. "Damn." She said to herself as she pulled her boots on and tied the laces.

Tilly was standing in front of her closet. She didn't think, she just grabbed her every day outfit. "Be myself." She said to herself. "I can do that." She tossed them onto the bed, and then headed to the bathroom for a shower. While she was showering, she was noticing her hands trembling. "Relax Matilda. You're just going out to dinner with a friend." She continued her shower, trying to maintain her calm. She finished, got out, dried herself, and walked back to her room with a towel wrapped around herself. She put her clothes on, and spent a little more time drying her hair, and then brushed it out. She glanced over at the clock. 6:10pm. "Damn. He'll be here in twenty minutes." She went to put her boots on, but decided at the last minute to wear a pair of black athletic shoes instead. She stood up and looked at herself in front of the mirror. "That'll do." She grabbed her bag and keys, and headed to the living room to wait.

"What are you all dressed up for?" asked Sarah as Tilly came into the room.

"I have a date tonight." Said Tilly.

"Funny. Now where are you really going?" asked Sarah.

"I have a date tonight." Said Tilly.

"Oh, you and Daria going out?"

"No. Me and a guy I met in school."

Sarah looked at her daughter. "Now Matilda, I know I don't need to discuss the birds and bees with you."

"And you would be right." Said Tilly.

"What's his name?"

"Tristan. He enrolled at Lawndale the same day I did."

"Really." Said Sarah.

"He's supposed to pick me up at 6:30." Said Tilly. She looked up at the clock, and it said 6:20. "He should be here shortly."

"I would like to meet him." Said Sarah.

“Uhhhhhh.” Said Tilly, looking at clock. “This is going to turn bad.” She said to herself.

Tristan had spent the better part of the day cleaning up and out his Jeep. He did some basic maintenance, fixed a few things, and even did a little detailing work to the interior. He was about to take the Jeep down to put gas in it, when his dad came out of the house. “Tristan!”

“Yeah dad?”

“What time did you have to pick up your date?”

“6:30... Why?” asked Tristan.

“Because it is six now.” Said Joe.

“Damn!” Said Tristan. He glanced down at the gas gauge, and it showed a quarter tank. “Guess it will have to do.” He got out of the Jeep, closed the door, and went into the house. He went into his bedroom, grabbed a clean, grey t-shirt, and a pair of dark blue cargo pants, and then headed to the bathroom for a quick shower. A few minutes later, he emerged from the shower, and quickly got himself dressed. He put his shoes on, and then took a second to look at the clock. 6:10pm. He hurried to the kitchen, picked up the credit card his mother had left, placed it in his wallet, and made for the door. “Later Dad...” Said Tristan as he headed for the door.

“Whoa there sport.” Said Joe, causing Tristan to come to a skidding stop. “Come here for a second.”

“What’s up?” asked Tristan, walking back to where his dad was seated at the kitchen table.

Joe sighed. “Son, I know this isn’t your first date, and I couldn’t be there for the others. However, I am here for this one. I know you have made some bad choices, but I don’t want you to make any tonight.”

Tristan looked at his father. “Are you trying to give me ‘the talk’?”

“Son. You’re not stupid. You know what can happen.” Joe pushed a small foil packet across the table. “If you’re going to.....”

Tristan turned about three shades of red. “Daaaaaad.” Then he thought for a moment about what his dad had said.. Tilly... himself... He turned even redder. “Where’s mom?” He asked, trying to change the subject.

“She went to the store. She will be back in about 10 minutes. You are still going to bring your date by here so we can meet her, right?”

Tristan sighed. “Yeah.”

Joe looked at his watch. “It’s 6:20. You better go.” Tristan jumped up from the table, and made it about two steps when his dad spoke up. “Forgetting something?” Joe tossed the foil packet to Tristan, who caught it and shoved it in his pants pocket, and walked out the door. He got into the Jeep, started it up, and headed down the road.

Tilly was pacing the living room, looking at the clock. "Where is he?"

"It's only 6:25, dear." Said Sarah, as she was sitting on the couch reading a book.

"I know. I'm... I'm just nervous." Said Tilly.

"Just relax. Things will be fine." Said Sarah, as the doorbell rang.

"EEP!" exclaimed Tilly, jumping at the sound of the doorbell.

"Are you going to answer it?" asked Sarah.

"I... I can't." said Tilly.

Sarah smiled, as she got up and opened the door, revealing Tristan. "Mrs. Seiler I presume?"

"Yes. You must be Tristan." Said Sarah. "Won't you come in?" Tristan cautiously stepped into the house, looking for Tilly. On his second scan of the room, he saw her, sitting on the couch. He jumped at the sound of the door closing behind him. "Have a seat." Tristan sat next to Tilly, making sure to not sit too close. "So, Matilda tells me you two started school the same day."

Tristan looked at Sarah, then to Tilly, then back to Sarah. "Yes ma'am. I used to go to school in Florida."

"You don't have to call me ma'am, Tristan." Said Sarah. She glanced over at Tilly, who seemed to be frozen, and then back to Tristan. "So why did you move from Florida?"

Tristan paused for a moment. "Usual story, or truth?" He asked himself. He decided, and spoke. "My dad used to work for NASA, and got a better job up here with a aerospace contractor. My mom was a manager of a PayDay store, and didn't want to leave Florida. So my dad moved up here, and he would fly down every other week to see me and mom." He looked at Tilly, and then back to Sarah. "My mom finally got tired of being away from my dad, and put in for a transfer. They didn't have a position for her, but we came up here anyway."

"So what do you think of Matilda?" said Sarah. She glanced over at Tilly, who was now giving her mother the look of death.

Tristan didn't hesitate. "She is a very unique person." Tristan was hoping he didn't have to elaborate.

Sarah looked at Tristan, and was getting ready to say something, when Tilly spoke up. "Mom, we need to get going."

Sarah looked at the pair. "Okay. Well Tristan, I just want you to know that Matilda is our only child, and Mr. Seiler and myself would be *very* upset if she is hurt. You understand what I am saying, right?"

"Yes, I do, and you wouldn't be alone. I don't want to see her hurt either." Said Tristan. "Not to mention what Jane and Daria would do to me." He thought to himself.

A small smile came across Sarah's face. "Good. You two have fun." Tristan and Tilly stood up, and walked out of the house, with Tristan opening the door for Tilly, and closing it afterwards. They walked out to his Jeep.

"Wow, where did you get this?" asked Tilly.

"My dad helped me buy it. He drove it up here from Florida one weekend, and it's been sitting in the yard at the house ever since." Said Tristan as they walked out to the silver Grand Cherokee.

"I like it." Said Tilly. Tristan went to open the passenger's door for her, and she reached out and smacked his hand. "I appreciate the gesture, but I'm quite capable of opening my own doors, thank you."

"As you wish." Said Tristan. Tilly opened the door, sat down, and closed the door. Tristan walked around the other side and got in, and started the Jeep.

As he backed out of the driveway, Tilly turned to him and asked, "Where are we going?"

"I was thinking about going to that Italian restaurant that Daria and Trent were going to, but I also didn't want to intrude to them."

"Well, how about that steakhouse over by PayDay?" asked Tilly.

"I'm good with that." Said Tristan. "However, we have to make a couple of stops first."

"Where?" asked Tilly.

"First, I need to get gas. Second, my parents want to meet you." Said Tristan.

Tilly closed her eyes and sighed. "Another interrogation."

"You think you're not looking forward to it? I am definitely not looking forward to it." Said Tristan.

"Why?"

Tristan reached in his pocket and pulled out the little foil packet, and handed it to Tilly. "My dad handed me this before I left the house."

Tilly took the packet, and looked at it. She went to say something, then stopped, thinking, and then went to say something again, stopped, and thought some more. Finally she spoke, not looking at Tristan, but at the packet. "Were you intending on using this tonight?"

"No." said Tristan. "Like you said, we are just two friends going out to dinner together. Nothing more. My dad is just weird like that."

"So, what do you want to do with this?" said Tilly, tapping the packet on the her leg.

"Throw it out the window for all I care." Said Tristan. Tilly thought about it for a second, and then opened the glove box, tossed the packet in, and closed it.

“You might meet someone you want to use that with.” Said Tilly, crossing her arms. Tristan looked over at Tilly, who was just staring straight ahead.

“Great.” Said Tristan to himself. “Now she’s pissed at me.” He sighed as he pulled into a gas station. “This is going to be an interesting night.”

Daria was sitting on the couch watching TV. She looked up at the clock. “I wonder if Trent is going to be on time.” She said to herself. “I’m sure Jane won’t let him be late.” She sighed, and glanced over at the cabinet where her parents kept their liquor supply. “A drink would calm me down.” She stood up, and walked to the cabinet. Just as she put her hand on the door, the doorbell rang. Startled, Daria snatched her hand back, and thought she saw Helen peeking around the corner.

“I’ll get it.” Said Quinn as she appeared out of nowhere. She walked to the door, and opened it, glancing over at Daria, who simply just turned around and headed back to the couch.

“Hey Quinn. Is Daria ready?” came Trent’s voice from the doorway.

Quinn looked over at Daria, who was picking up her jacket. “Yeah, as much as she is going to be.”

Daria walked into the doorway. “Hey.” She looked at Trent, and noticed he was wearing basically the same clothes he normally wears, except they seemed “cleaner”.

“Hey Daria. Ready to go?” asked Trent.

“Yeah.” Said Daria. She turned to look at Quinn for a moment, and then walked out the door with Trent, as Quinn closed the door behind them. They walked to Trent’s car, and got in. “You cleaned the car out?”

“Yeah. Figured it was time.” Said Trent.

“Uh huh. Jane made you do it?”

Trent chuckled. “Yeah, but I found ten dollars, so it’s all good.”

“Alright then.” Said Daria.

“Let’s go. I’m hungry.” Said Trent.

“Yeah. Me too.” Said Daria. Trent started the car, and then backed out of the driveway, and then drove away. They rode in silence for a minute or two, until Trent spoke up.

“You like Italian?” Asked Trent.

“Let’s just say it is a staple food around our house.” Said Daria.

“Do you want to get something else?” asked Trent.

“What did you have in mind?”

"I was thinking pizza." Said Trent.

Daria thought for a minute. "I'm good with that."

"Cool." Said Trent, as he turned down a street and headed to town. "Pizza Forrest?"

Daria turned and looked at Trent, to see a small smile on his face. "Let me think about that... No."

Trent chuckled. "Pizza King it is."

Jane was sitting on her bed, watching TV, and sketching into her book. "I hope Trent and Daria have a good time." She said to herself, as she sketched out a scene similar to the famous "Lady and the Tramp" scene, but with Daria and Trent instead. She had just finished the rough outline, when the doorbell rang. "Who could that be?" She set her sketch book down, and went downstairs. She looked through the peephole, and then opened the door. "Hey Jesse. Trent isn't here. He is on a date with Daria." She noticed that Jesse was holding a pizza box and a bag with sodas.

"Yeah. Trent told me. Thought I would drop by and keep you company while he was gone. I brought pizza and some Ultra Colas."

Jane smiled, but wondered if Trent set this up. "Cool. Come in." Jesse walked through the door, and Jane closed it behind him. "Set it in the kitchen." Jesse walked into the kitchen, and set the pizza on the table. Jane followed him in, and they both sat down at the table.

"It's pepperoni and extra cheese." Said Jesse as he flipped the box open and took a slice. Jane also took a slice, after taking a soda from the bag and opening it.

"So. Trent put you up to this?" said Jane through a mouthful of pizza.

"He told me you would be here." Said Jesse. He looked at Jane. "I can go if..."

"No no... That's okay. I was just wondering." Said Jane.

"Trent must really like Daria. He cancelled Spiral practice tonight to go out with her." Said Jesse.

"Yeah." Said Jane.

"Isn't she younger than you?" asked Jesse.

"Yeah, by a few months." Said Jane.

"Trent don't care?" asked Jesse.

"Do you?" asked Jane. "I'm just as old as Daria, and your just as old as Trent."

Jesse thought for a moment. "No."

“Good.” Said Jane. “Because I would hate to have to send you home without your pizza.” She finished her slice, and reached for another. “What did you have planned for the rest of the night?”

“Was going to just head home.” Said Jesse.

“Wanna stay and watch TV?” asked Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Jesse, as he grabbed another slice.

“Cool.” Said Jane.

Tristan pulled into the driveway at his house. “We’re here.” He looked over at Tilly, who was still sitting with her arms crossed. “Shall we go in and get this over with?” Tilly didn’t say a word, and just got out of the Jeep. “Great.” Said Tristan to himself. He got out, and as he walked forward, Tilly met him around the front of the vehicle, and they walked together to the front door. Tristan glanced over at Tilly, took a deep breath, and opened the door. He stood there, waiting for Tilly to walk through the door. After a second, he walked through the door himself, and then she followed through. “Dad? We’re here.”

“I’ll be in there in a second.” Came Joe’s voice from the back of the house.

Tristan walked over to the couch and sat down, and Tilly sat down on the opposite end. He leaned over to her. “If you’re going to be like this all night, I can just take you home.” She turned to look at him. He sighed, and sat back up, just as his mom and dad walked into the room. Tristan took a deep breath, and waited for the fireworks to start. Joe and Carol walked to the other couch, and sat down. “Mom... dad.. this is Tilly.” He turned to Tilly. “This is my mom Carol, and my dad Joe.”

“Nice to meet you.” Said Carol. She looked at Tilly carefully. “Tristan thinks very highly of you.”

“Yeah. He usually doesn’t get out of bed until noon on the weekends, but he was up at seven this morning.” Said Joe.

Tilly turned to look at Tristan, the hardness that was in her eyes disappearing. “You did?”

“Yeah.” Said Tristan. “I had to clean the Jeep up, then get ready.” He glanced over to Tilly, who had slid closer to Tristan.

“So, tell us a bit about yourself.” Said Carol.

Tilly looked back at Tristan’s parents. “I was born in Highland, Texas, but I’ve lived in Maryland most of my life. We lived in Edgewood, but moved to Lawndale a week or so ago. Other than that, there isn’t much to tell.”

“Have any brothers or sisters?” asked Joe.

“Yeah. I have two sisters.” Said Tilly, glancing at Tristan.

“Do they go to Lawndale High?” asked Carol.

“Yeah.” Said Tilly. She turned to Tristan. “Do they know?”

Tristan was about to answer, when Joe spoke up. “Know what?”

“Tilly has a twin sister named Daria, and a younger sister named Quinn. Tilly was adopted.”

Joe and Carol looked at each other for a second, and Carol put it all together. “Your birthparents gave you up for adoption because they couldn’t afford two kids?”

Tilly looked with a bit of astonishment at Carol. “Yeah... how’d you guess?”

“Heard of it before.” Said Carol. “Well, we won’t keep you two any longer. Have fun, and stay out of trouble.”

“We will, mom.” Said Tristan as he stood up. Tilly stood up with him.

“It was nice to meet you Tilly.” Said Carol.

“Nice to meet you, too.” Said Tilly as she walked out of the door ahead of Tristan. He walked through the door, and closed it behind them.

“She seems a bit stiff.” Said Carol to Joe.

“Tristan is happy. That’s all that counts.” Said Joe.

Tristan and Tilly got into the Jeep, and backed out of the driveway. “Let’s go get something to eat.” Said Tilly.

They drove along for a few minutes. “That went better than I thought it would.” Said Tristan.

“How’s that?” asked Tilly.

“I thought for sure they were going to question you to death.” Said Tristan.

“It was weird how your mom knew about my adoption.” Said Tilly.

“Mom is smart like that.” Said Tristan.

“Like mother like son.” Said Tilly, with a small smile on her face.

Daria and Trent walked into Pizza King, and sat down at a table. “I’ll go get us a pie. What do you want on it?”

“The usual.” Said Daria. Trent nodded, and walked away. He came back a few minutes later with a couple of drinks, and sat down.

“So how’s Quinn?” asked Trent.

“She’s doing better. I think she will be going back to school next week sometime.” Said Daria.

“Cool. What about that Sandi chick?”

“She’ll survive. She was over at the house the other day visiting with Quinn. They seem to be okay with each other.”

“Cool.” Trent took a drink from his soda.

“What’s Jane doing tonight?”

Trent smiled. “I called Jesse and told him Jane would be there by herself, and asked if would he go share a pizza with her.”

“You know Jane has a thing for Jesse.”

“Yeah. I think he likes her too, because he jumped at the chance.” Said Trent.

“Think they will end up together?” asked Daria.

Trent thought for a second. “Nah. I don’t see Jesse settling for one girl.”

Daria thought for a moment. “I don’t want to see Jane hurt.”

“Neither do I. Did I ever tell you why I am so protective over Janey?”

“No.”

“When I was younger, me and Janey walked to a grocery store. We went inside and while I was getting something off a shelf, she disappeared. I looked all over the store for her, and finally found her by the fruits and vegetables. She was eating grapes. I didn’t want to lose her again.”

“She’s lucky to have a brother as good as you.” Said Daria.

Trent went to say something, but before he could open his mouth, the guy at the counter called out their order number. “Pizza’s ready.” Trent got up and went to go get the pizza. He came back a minute later with the pizza, and two plates. He sat the pizza down, took a plate and put a slice on it, and handed it to Daria. He then sat down, and took a slice for himself.

“Thanks.” Said Daria as she cautiously took a bite of the steaming hot pizza. They sat and ate the first slice in silence, both finishing about the same time.

“What do you want to do after this? We could go see a movie.” Said Trent.

“We could do that.” Said Daria.

“Cool.” Said Trent. “They have a couple of sci-fi movies at Playhouse 99.”

Daria just nodded and took another slice. “Sounds like fun.”

Tristan pulled into the parking lot of the steakhouse, and found a parking spot. He shut the Jeep off, and got out, walking around to meet Tilly at the front as she got out. They walked up to the doors, and walked in.

“How many?” asked the hostess.

“Just the two of us.” Said Tristan.

The hostess looked at a chart, marked something down and grabbed a couple of menus. “Follow me.” She led them through the restaurant, and to a table. Tristan pulled a chair out for Tilly. She looked at him for a moment, but accepted the gesture and sat down. Tristan walked around to the other side of the table, and sat down himself. The hostess placed the menus in front of them. “Your waitress will be with you in a moment.”

Tristan and Tilly picked up their menus, and started browsing them. After a moment, Tilly set her menu down. “This place is expensive.”

“Yeah, but I’m okay with it.” Said Tristan.

“You can afford this?” asked Tilly.

“I have it covered.” Said Tristan.

Tilly was getting ready to say something, when a young woman with blonde hair walked up. “Hi! My name is Winry, and I will be your waitress tonight. Can I start you two off with something to drink?”

“Yeah. I’ll have iced tea.” Said Tristan.

“I’ll have an Ultra Cola.” Said Tilly.

“Okay. Have you decided what you would like to order, or do you need a few minutes?” said Winry, writing down the drink order.

Tristan looked up at Tilly, who just shook her head “No.”. He turned to Winry. “No.. Give us a few minutes.”

“Okay. I will get your drinks and be back in a few minutes.” Winry turned from the table and walked away.

“I don’t know what to order.” Said Tilly.

“Order what you want.” Said Tristan.

After a few minutes, the waitress came back, and placed their drinks onto the table. “Are you ready to order?”

“I am.. What about you, Tilly?”

“Yeah.. I guess.”

They gave their orders to Winry, who jotted them down onto her notepad. “Okay. I will get these put in right away.” She walked away again, heading towards the kitchen.

“What did you want to do after this?”asked Tristan.

“I don’t know. I might be too full to move, and just go home.” Said Tilly.

“Well, we can do that if you want. Let’s see what happens after the meal.” Said Tristan, as he took a sip from his drink.

Daria and Trent stood in front of the Playhouse 99. “Two tickets for *The Matrix*.” Said Trent as he pushed a twenty across the counter. The ticket agent handed him two tickets and his change. He handed one of the tickets to Daria, and they walked into the theater.

“This should be interesting.” Said Daria. She turned to Trent as they handed their tickets to the host. “You’re not going to fall asleep, are you?”

Trent chuckled and coughed. “Anything is possible.”

Daria smiled as they walked towards the concession counter. “Popcorn.... I need popcorn, with butter. A lot of butter.”

“What size?” asked the kid behind the counter.

“Large.” Said Daria. “And a large Ultra Cola.”

“For you sir?” asked the kid.

“Just a large Ultra.”, said Trent. The kid turned and gathered the order, and then came back and set it on the counter. Trent paid for their order, and then headed to the auditorium where the movie was being shown. They said nothing as they walked down the corridor. Trent stepped in front of Daria, holding the door open for her. Daria merely nodded as she walked through the door to the auditorium. They found a pair of open seats towards the back, and sat down.

“I don’t go to the movies too often.” Said Daria.

“Neither do I. Last time I came here, was to bring Janey to see *Aladdin*. She kept complaining about the quality of the artwork.” Said Trent, as he took a little of Daria’s popcorn.

“Figures.” Said Daria. “Leave it to Jane to complain about animation.”

“Yeah, and she was only 12.” Said Trent with a chuckle.

Daria was about to say something, when the auditorium lights dimmed down, and the movie started. Daria was taking a handful of popcorn, when she felt Trent place his arm across the back of her seat. “Trent,” she whispered, “It’s okay. You can put your arm around me.”

“Oh...” he whispered, moving his arm down to lay across Daria’s shoulders.

“Why didn’t he just do it instead of being sneaky?” asked Daria of herself. She felt Trent’s fingers rubbing her shoulder. “Don’t argue... just enjoy it.”

Jane was sitting on her bed, while Jesse was studying one of Jane’s paintings. Jane was looking for the remote for the TV. “Whoa.. This looks like Trent and Daria.”

“Yeah. It was something I was working on.” Said Jane, not looking up from under the bed.

“You do any requests?” asked Jesse.

“I’ve been known to.” Said Jane. “What did you have in mind?”

“Can you do a portrait of me? I want to send it to my mom for her birthday.” Said Jesse.

“Sure.” Said Jane. “Let me get my supplies.” She reached under the bed, and pulled out a large, wooden box. She set it on the bed, and then she grabbed her sketchbook. “How do you want to be?”

“How about just sitting?” asked Jesse.

“That works.” Said Jane. “Where?”

“Anywhere.” Said Jesse.

“Okay.” Said Jane. She grabbed a nearby stool, and placed it in the center of the room. “Sit here.” Jesse sat on the stool. Jane walked over and moved Jesse around a little, until he was in a position she liked. “Ready?”

“Yeah.” Said Jesse.

“Here we go.” Jane walked back to the bed, sat down, picked up her sketchbook and pencil, and started to sketch.

“Can I get you two anything else?” asked Winry, Tristan and Tilly’s waitress.

“Not for me. I’m done for. How about you Tilly?”

“No thanks. I’m ready to go comatose.” Said Tilly.

“Okay. I’ll be right back with your check.” Said Winry, as she picked up their empty plates, and walked away.

“I needed that.” Said Tristan.

“That was good.” Said Tilly.

“Here you go.” Said Winry, as she handed Tristan the check.

"Here." Said Tristan as he handed the check back to Winry, with the credit card. Winry looked at the credit card, and then back to Tristan, and then walked away.

"What was that about?" asked Tilly.

"Probably the name on the card." Said Tristan.

"Who's card did you steal?"

"My mom's." said Tristan. "She said I could use it to pay for dinner."

"So I have your mom to thank for this?" asked Tilly.

"No. Even though she did say that I didn't have to worry about it, I am going to pay her back. I haven't had a chance to make enough money to pay for it myself." Said Tristan.

Tilly opened her mouth to say something, but before she did, Winry walked up with the card slip and the card. "Just need you to sign one copy, and you two have a good night."

"Thank you." Said Tristan. "You too." Tilly just nodded. Tristan scribbled his signature on the slip, put the card back into his pocket with the receipt, and clipped the pen to the card slip. "Ready to go?"

"Yeah." Said Tilly. They got up, and walked towards the door.

"Have a good night." Said the hostess as she held the door open for them. Tristan paused, and let Tilly walk ahead of him. He followed behind, nodding as he walked through the door. They walked across the parking lot, and got into the Jeep after Tristan unlocked the doors.

"Ready to go home?" asked Tristan as he backed out of the parking spot.

"Yeah." Said Tilly. "I'm tired and full. Time for a food coma."

"I agree with you there." Said Tristan, as he drove down the road. They drove in silence for a minute, until Tristan spoke up. "Are you mad at me?"

"No."

"You don't show it." Said Tristan.

"I'm fine." Said Tilly.

"Okay." said Tristan. "You just seem like you're upset with me."

"I think you'd know if I was upset." Said Tilly.

"Sorry, but I just have this feeling." Tristan said. Tilly said nothing, and remained silent for the rest of the ride to her house. Tristan pulled into the driveway. "Well, we're here." He reached over and took her hand. "Are you sure you're okay?"

“Yes. I’m fine.” Said Tilly. Tristan thought for a moment, and then leaned across and gave Tilly a light kiss. Before he could pull away, Tilly placed her hand on his shoulder, and held him to her, returning the kiss. After a second, she let him go, and pulled back. Tristan sat back, with a bit of a confused look on his face. “If I were mad at you, I would have beat you senseless for doing that. I’ll see you later.” She took his hand and squeezed it, and then got out.

Tristan watched as she walked away, and into the house. She turned and waved to him, and then closed the door. “Wow.” He said, as he backed out of the driveway, and drove off down the street to his house. He backed into the driveway, and into the side yard where the Jeep normally sat. He shut it off, got out, locked it up, and went into the house.

“How did it go, Tristan?” asked his mother as he closed the door.

“It went okay I guess.” Said Tristan.

“You guess?” asked his mom.

“Yeah. She was pissed at me, then fine. Then she found out I was using your card to pay for dinner, and then I thought she was mad at me again.”

“So? Is she?”

“I don’t know. She let me kiss her.”

“And?”

“She kissed me back.” Said Tristan.

“Then I don’t think she is mad at you.” Said Carol.

“That’s what she said. She said if she was mad at me, she would have beat me senseless for doing that.”

“She’s a nice girl, but it felt like she was hiding something.” Said Carol.

“Don’t know.” Said Tristan. He handed the card and receipt to his mother. “I am going to go to my room and watch TV.”

“Okay. Good night.” Said Carol.

Tristan smiled, and then headed to his room. He closed the door behind him, and leaned against the door. “One of a kind.” He said with a smile on his face.

The auditorium lights came up, signaling the end of the movie. “Daria?” Said Trent quietly as he gently shook her shoulder.

“Huhwha?” she said, sitting upright. She went to rub her temples, and noticed her glasses were gone. “Where’s my glasses?”

“Right here.” Said Trent, handing Daria her glasses.

“How long was I asleep?”

“Most of the movie. I looked at you about twenty minutes into the movie, and you were asleep.”

“Why didn’t you wake me?” asked Daria.

“You seemed like you needed it.” Said Trent. “I know sleep.”

“Yes you do.” Said Daria. They both stood up, and walked out of the theater and to Trent’s car. They got in, and Trent started the car.

“Where to?”

“Home I guess.” Said Daria. Trent didn’t react, instead, he was drumming his fingers on the steering wheel. “Trent?”

“Uhhh.. nevermind.” Trent reached down and put the car in reverse, backing out of the parking spot.

“Okay. What did you want to ask?”

“It’s not important.” Said Trent, as he was looking back. He stopped, and put the car in drive, and headed out of the parking lot, and into the street.

“Trent?”

“It’s not important. Don’t worry about it.” Said Trent. He glanced over at Daria, who had a stern look on her face. “Really. It’s okay. Don’t worry about it.”

“As you wish.” Said Daria. They rode in silence until they pulled into the Morgendorffer driveway.

“Thanks for going with me tonight.” Said Trent.

“It was fun.” Said Daria.

“We should do this again sometime.” Said Trent.

Daria thought for a moment. “I’d like that.” She said quietly.

Trent leaned over and kissed Daria, and she returned the gesture. “I’ll see you later.” He said after they separated.

Daria stepped out of the car, and walked around to the driver’s side. “Thank you for tonight.” She turned and walked into the house, closing the door behind her.

“I need a nap.” Said Trent to himself, as he backed out of the driveway and headed down the street.

"I like that." Said Jesse, admiring Jane's handiwork. "Nice frame, too."

"Thanks." she said, standing back and admiring the portrait from a distance. "Though I can't take credit for frame. My sister Penny made it."

"I think my mom will love it." Said Jesse. He looked at the clock on the dresser. "I think I better go. Trent will be back soon."

Jane took the work and slid it into a cardboard box that was sized perfectly for the frame. She handed the box to Jesse. "I'll walk you downstairs." They walked out of Jane's room, and down the stairs to the living room and front door. "Thanks for coming over."

"No problem. Maybe we can go out sometime." Said Jesse.

"Maybe." Said Jane, as she opened the door. "Let me know what your mom thinks of the portrait."

"I will." Jesse stepped through the doorway. "Later."

"Later." Said Jane, as she closed the door. She stood there for a minute, and then headed to the kitchen to see if there was any leftover pizza. There were two slices left. She put them into the microwave, and put the box into the trash. By the time she did that, the microwave beeped, and she retrieved the pizza and sat at the table. There was a soda left, so she opened it, and took a drink. She had finished the first slice, and half the soda, when she heard the front door open.

"Janey?" Came Trent's voice from the living room.

"In here." Said Jane.

Trent walked into the kitchen, and sat down at the table with Jane. "Order a pizza?"

"I know, Trent."

"Oh..." Trent looked down at the table for a second. "He wasn't supposed to tell you."

"It's okay Trent. We had a good time. We ate, we went upstairs, he tied me to the bed..."

Trent's head popped up and a look of shock appeared on his face. "WHAT?"

Jane started laughing. "Trent.. I'm kidding." She saw the look disappear from Trent's face.

"Not funny, Janey." Said Trent.

"Things went fine. We ate some pizza, and then he asked if I could do a sketch for him for his mother's birthday." Said Jane. She quickly changed the subject. "So, how did your night go?"

Trent took a moment. "It went okay. We ended up going to Pizza King instead. Went and saw a movie. Daria fell asleep halfway through it." Trent smiled, remembering Daria leaning against him, asleep.

“Sounds like fun.” Said Jane.

“Yeah.” Said Trent, looking down again.

“You say yes, but your eyes say no.”

“I was going to ask her something, but I decided not to.”

“What were you going to ask her?” asked Jane.

“It’s not important.” Said Trent.

“If it wasn’t important, you wouldn’t have said anything.” Said Jane.

“You brought it up.” Said Trent.

“So I did. What were you going to ask her?”

Trent took on an annoyed look, but knew there was no escaping his sister’s questioning. “I was going to ask Daria to sleep with me.”

Now it was Jane who took on Trent’s earlier look of shock, but she was feeling mixed emotions inside. “What?”

“Not sex. Just sleeping.” Trent looked back down at the table. “It’s something you have to experience Janey. I can’t explain it.”

“I bet I can.” Muttered Jane to herself. She looked up at Trent to see if he had heard. “Why didn’t you ask her then?”

Trent looked at Jane. “Wouldn’t be right.” Said Trent. “I’m going to go to bed. Night.” He got up from the table, and started to walk away. He stopped just short of leaving the kitchen, and turned around. “I know you do, Janey.” Trent turned and left the room, just as Jane spun around.

“Damn him.” Said Jane, as she picked up the other slice of pizza and took a bite.

Daria walked into the house, closing the door quietly behind her. She was hoping to avoid any questioning by her parents or Quinn. She set foot on the first step, when her mother’s voice sounded from the kitchen. “Daria? Is that you?”

Daria sighed. “Yeah mom. I’m going to head up to bed. I’m a bit tired.” Daria held her breath, waiting for the inevitable.

It didn’t come. “Okay sweetie. Good night.” Said Helen.

Daria exhaled. "Damn, that was close." She said to herself, as she climbed the stairs, and walked the short walk to her room. She stepped inside, and pushed the door to, but not closed. She stripped off her clothes, and put her robe on and turned to head to the bathroom.

"You can thank me later." Said Quinn, who was now standing in the doorway.

Daria was surprised by Quinn's presence. "For what?"

"Mom and dad. I had a talk with them about a half hour ago. Told them to not bug you with questions."

"Why?"

"Because I knew you wouldn't want to have to explain your entire night to them. I know what it was like to be on my first date."

Daria looked at her sister. "Thank you."

"You can show me your thanks tomorrow by telling me how it went." Said Quinn. "Good night." She turned and went back into her room, closing the door behind her. Daria smiled, shook her head, and headed to the bathroom for her shower.

Daria woke to Quinn pulling at her blanket. "Time to tell your story." Said Quinn. Daria grabbed the blanket and tried to keep it from being pulled off, but it was too little, too late.

"Fine." Said Daria as she threw the blanket off. She sat up in bed, and reached for her glasses. She found them on the floor, next to the bed. She looked at them for a moment, shrugged, and put them on. She looked up at Quinn. "Nothing happened. We ended up going to Pizza King instead of the Italian place. Then we went and saw some movie called *The Matrix* at Playhouse 99."

"That's it?" asked Quinn.

"Yeah. I didn't see much of the movie. I fell asleep against Trent."

Quinn sighed, and sat down on the bed in front of Daria. "Daria. I don't know how to tell you this." Quinn looked around the room, down at the floor, and everywhere else except at Daria.

"Tell me what, Quinn?"

Quinn looked up from the floor, and into her sister's brown eyes. "Daria. I think maybe you should reconsider your relationship with Trent."

Daria stared at Quinn for a moment. "What?" was all she could get out.

"I think you need to reconsider your relationship with Trent."

"Based on what?" Said Daria, trying to keep control of her growing anger.

“You’re 17. He’s 22. There is a big age difference right there.” Quinn paused for a second, not believing what she was about to say. “You’re a smart person. Trent isn’t. You’re not a chronic narcoleptic. He spends most of his day in bed. You know what you want to do with life, while he doesn’t. You’re in high school. He hasn’t been in school for four years.”

Daria went on the immediate defense. “You constantly date guys who are older than you.”

“Not as much as you think.” Said Quinn. “Most of the guys I do date, are from Lawndale High, so they are close to my age.”

Daria felt her fists clenching. “Get out.”, she said through clenched teeth. “Get out before I throw you out.”

Quinn went to speak again, but decided against it. She easily could overpower her older sister, even as she was still healing, but she wasn’t going to risk it. “Okay. I’m going.” She stood up, and walked to the door. She paused, turning to face her sister. “Just consider it. I know you don’t want to hear it, but you’ve heard it. Now you’re mind won’t let it go until you think it through. You see Daria, I know you better than you think.” Quinn quickly exited the room.

Daria sat on her bed, trying to let the anger boil off. She stood up, and paced around her room. She stopped in front of her dresser, looking at the cheese block and heart replica. In a moment of rage, she flung them across the room, with the heart replica breaking apart on impact. She turned and walked to where the models landed, and stared at them for a moment. She then spun around and headed for the door. She was going to take this out on the person who caused it. She flung the door open, and stepped into the hall. She made it halfway across before feeling an arm across in front of her. She looked up, to see Jake and Helen. Daria looked at them briefly, and then tried to force her way past her father. She was going nowhere.

“Daria? What’s wrong?” asked Helen, in a stern, yet motherly tone.

“I’m going to kill Quinn.” Said Daria, in a eerie monotone.

“I know you want...” started Helen, but Daria cut her off.

“No, I am going to kill her. Literally.” Daria said, trying to push past her father again.

“Now Daria..” started Jake, until he felt Helen’s hand on his shoulder.

“Daria. Let’s talk.” Said Helen, grabbing her daughter by the shoulders, and steering her towards the bedroom. Daria fought the whole way, but her mother was stronger than she looked. Helen guided Daria into the bedroom, and sat her down on the bed. “Now young lady, we are going to have a talk about this. When I get your side of this, then I am going to have a talk with Quinn.” Helen grabbed the computer chair, and sat down. “Now. What happened.” Daria just looked at her mother, as if she were trying to look through her. “Daria...” Daria closed her eyes, and took off her glasses. With her eyes still closed, she slowly recanted what Quinn had told her minutes before. Helen listened intently, making mental notes. Once Daria had finished, she opened her eyes and looked at her mother. “Done?” asked Helen. Daria merely nodded. “Okay, to be honest, yes, Trent is a bit too old for you.”

Daria blinked. “That’s all you have to say?”

“Daria, I want you to be happy. If Trent makes you happy, then so be it. Yes, me and your father are not exactly thrilled of the age difference between you two, but from what I have heard from Jane, from you, and from Trent, we are fairly confident that he wouldn’t do anything to hurt you.” Helen looked her daughter in the eyes. “And if you decided that you wanted to end your relationship with him, I am sure he would not think any less of you.” Helen saw the anger starting to creep back into Daria’s eyes. “I’m not saying you should. I am just saying you have options.” Helen stood up. “I am going to go talk to your sister.” She walked out of the room, and into the hallway. Jake was still there. Helen knocked on Quinn’s door, but didn’t wait for an answer. She walked in, closing the door behind her.

Jake decided to go in and talk to Daria. He walked in, and saw Daria kneeling on the floor, picking up the pieces of the heart replica, putting it back together. “Hey ki... Daria.” Jake chuckled nervously. “It’s a good thing that is made to come apart.” Daria just nodded. Jake just stood there. He was trying to think of something to say. Daria stood up, with the reassembled model in her hand, and put it back on top of the dresser. Jake bent down, and picked up the cheese model, walked over to the dresser, and placed it. Jake placed his hand on Daria’s shoulder. “Anything you want to talk about Daria?” Daria stood there for a second, taking her glasses off, and setting them on the dresser. Jake was about to step back, but before he could, Daria spun around and wrapped her arms around her father, and buried her face in his chest. Before he could say anything, Jake could feel wet spots forming on his shirt and feel his daughter’s body shaking. He simply wrapped his arms around Daria. “It’s okay to cry sometimes.”, he said in a hushed tone. “Everyone does it. I do it.” Jake stood there, holding his daughter. He couldn’t remember a time when she had shown such emotion, especially to him. After a minute or so, Daria pulled away, wiping her eyes with her shirt. “Want to talk?”

Daria nodded as she wiped her eyes. “Quinn was right. She knew once I heard it, I would start thinking about it.”

“About what?” asked Jake. Daria quickly recapped what Quinn had said. Jake nodded. “Daria, you have to do what makes you happy. If you want to have a relationship with Trent, then do it. You have to decide what you want to do. No one else can make that decision but you.”

“Quinn had some valid points.” Said Daria, voice still a bit uneven.

“Do what you think is right. Whatever you decide to do, me and your mother will support you.”

“I don’t want to hurt Trent.”

“If he cares for you as much as he says, then he will understand and accept your decision.” Jake heard the door open across the hall. “You have to decide what is best for you. Not me, your mother, Quinn, Jane, or whoever. Only you, Daria. “

“Thanks dad.” Said Daria.

“Anytime kiddo.” Said Jake, smiling at his daughter. He turned, and left the room, running into Helen in the hallway.

Helen pointed to the wet spots on Jake’s shirt. “What happened?”

“Me and Daria had a talk.” Said Jake.

Helen took on a look of frustration. "Great. Now I have to go in..." started Helen, but Jake raised his hand as to say "Stop".

"She's fine." Said Jake. Helen looked to Daria's room, and back to Jake. "She's fine..."

Tilly was in the kitchen, having a bowl of cereal. She was waiting for her parents to come downstairs, and for the interrogation to begin. They weren't home when she arrived home from her date with Tristan last night. She thought for sure, with it being her first date, that her parents would be up and waiting. She was running over the previous night's events in her mind, making sure that she would be able to answer all of her parent's questions. She sat, eating her cereal, just staring at the wall. She was so deep in thought, she didn't even see her parents walk into the kitchen. It was when her mother spoke that she snapped out of the trance. "Good morning, sweetie." Said Sarah.

Tilly blinked, and shook her head. "Oh.. Didn't see you walk in."

"We walked right in front of you." Said James as he poured himself a cup of coffee.

"Lost in thought?" asked Sarah.

"Yeah." Said Tilly. She took another bite of cereal, and then put the spoon down. "Okay.. let's have it."

"Have what?" asked Sarah.

"The game of twenty questions."

"About?" asked James.

"My date last night?"

James looked over at Sarah, then back to Tilly. "We figured you would tell us when you were ready."

"Uh huh." Said Tilly, picking her spoon back up.

"Anything we need to know?" asked Sarah.

"Like?" Said Tilly before taking another bite of her breakfast.

"Like when you're due date will be?" said James.

Tilly dropped her spoon, and she turned to look at her father. "Excuse me?"

Sarah turned to James. "Where did that come from?"

James had a smile on his face, but it slowly faded as the two women in his life stared at him. "Sorry. Bad joke gone wrong."

Tilly retrieved her spoon. "I should smite you with my spoon." She acted like she was lining up to throw her spoon at her father, but set it back down at the last second. "Nothing happened. We went to dinner. He was sweet, I got pissed. A good time was had by all."

"What did you get upset about?" Asked Sarah as she took a seat across from Tilly.

"He paid with a credit card." Said Tilly.

"What's wrong with that?" Asked James.

"It was his mother's card." Said Tilly.

"So?" was James response.

"I don't know. I guess I expected him to pay for it, not his parents."

"Did you ever consider that maybe he borrowed the money from his parents, and will be paying them back?" James asked as he took a sip from his coffee.

"Actually, that's exactly what Tristan said he was doing." Said Tilly.

"And let me guess. You didn't believe him." Said Sarah. Tilly said nothing. "I'll take your silence as confirmation." She paused. "You didn't give him a rash of crap over it, did you?"

"Well..." started Tilly.

"She did." Said James.

"Matilda....." started Sarah.

"He kissed me." Said Tilly softly.

James set his coffee cup down. Sarah just sat there. "And?" both of her parents asked in unison.

"I let him."

Both of her parents just sat in silence. After a minute, Sarah spoke up. "Matilda....." Tilly buried her face in her hands. "Matilda, please listen to me. I know you are a very intelligent girl, so I am not going to go into the typical 'Birds and the Bees' speech. However, I want you to think through everything. I know this is your first boyfriend..."

"He's not my boyfriend." Said Tilly flatly.

"You went on a date. You let him kiss you. Someone mentions his name and you blush. You obviously have feelings for him. What's wrong with considering him your boyfriend? That doesn't mean you're going to have sex or anything..." Sarah paused when she saw Tilly's face turn red. Sarah turned to James. "Honey... would you give me and Matilda a few minutes alone?"

"Sure." Said James. He picked up his coffee cup. "I'll be watching TV." He quickly exited the room.

Sarah waited for James to leave the room, and a few more seconds to make sure he was out of earshot. "Now, is there anything you want to tell me? You're father is out of the room."

"No." said Tilly.

"Matilda, I mentioned the word sex and you turned red. That struck a chord."

"I plead the fifth." Said Tilly.

"Matilda Lynn..." Started Sarah, but Tilly's glare stopped her. Sarah recollected her thoughts. "I just want to know if you have done anything."

"No." said Tilly, in a deadpan monotone.

"Sweetie.. I just worry about you. This is your first boy.. err, male friend, and I..."

Tilly sighed. "If something happens, I think Tristan will have it covered, or should I say his dad will."

"Huh?" asked Sarah.

Tilly sighed again. "When he picked me up, he told me he wasn't looking forward to me meeting his parents."

"Why?"

"Before he left his house, his father gave him a condom." Tilly saw her mother's face go pale white. "We didn't do anything. Matter of fact, I asked him if he planned on using that last night, and he answered no. Then I got mad at him."

"Wait. Let me see if I follow this. He told you he had a condom. You asked him, basically, if he was planning to take advantage of you, and he said no. You then got mad because he said no?" Tilly just blankly stared at her mother. "Once again, your silence is confirmation enough. Look sweetie, just admit it... you like him. If you decide you want to be just friends, that's fine. If you want to date him, that's fine too. I just want you to know that you don't have to do anything you don't want to. I understand you're a teenage girl, and that you have all these feelings...."

"Mom... you're starting the talk." Said Tilly.

"Oh.. Sorry." Sarah got up from the table. "Go ahead and finish your breakfast. I'm going to see what your father is up to. He is being really quiet."

"It's mush now." Said Tilly, poking at the remnants of her breakfast. Shortly after her mother left the room, she walked over and picked up the cordless phone. She dialed the number from memory. "Hello? Oh, hi Mr. Mathiesen. Is Tristan up? He is? Yeah, I'd like to. Yeah, I'll hold on."

Tristan had been out of bed since 7 AM. It was now 9 AM, and he was hard at work on his Jeep, cleaning it up, fixing a few small things, and doing some maintenance. He was just finishing vacuuming the floors when his father came outside. "Whatcha doin?"

"Cleaning up the Jeep. It needs it." Said Tristan, as he closed the back hatch.

"You'll clean up your Jeep, but not your bedroom?"

"I clean my bedroom.."

"Only when you can't find something." Said Joe as he stood watching his son.

"It gets cleaned, though." Said Tristan as he walked into the open garage to get some tools.

Joe stuck his head into the Jeep through the passenger's front door. "Not bad. Looks better than the day I bought it." He turned and went into the garage. "Now what are you doing?"

"Oil change, tune up, filters, and serpentine belt." Said Tristan, as he gathered some hand tools.

"You need any help?" asked Joe.

"Nah. I got it." Said Tristan. After he gathered the tools he needed, he headed back outside to start work. He crawled under the Jeep with a few tools and a drain pan.

"I'm going back in the house." Said Joe. He walked back towards the house, but stopped halfway. "Oh. I know why I came out here for now. There's someone on the phone for you."

Tristan came flying from under the vehicle. He bolted past his dad and into the house. He picked the phone up and put it to his ear. "Hello?"

"About time." Came Tilly's voice from the other end.

"Sorry, was outside working on the Jeep. What's up?"

"Nothing. Just decided to see what you were doing."

"Just working on the Jeep. Hoping mom and dad will let me drive it to school."

"Why? It's not that far of a walk." Said Tilly.

"Okay. I need it for the next time we go out."

"Who said there will be a next time?"

Tristan was taken aback. "Uhhhhh.."

"Relax. There will be a next time." Said Tilly.

"Okay. Cool. You know, I enjoyed spending time with you last night." Said Tristan.

“Err..ummm.”

“What?”

“I had a good time with you, too.” Said Tilly.

“I’m glad.” Said Tristan. No words were said for a minute. “Tilly? Is there something wrong?”

“No. Uhhh.. How do I ask this without coming off creepy?”

“Just ask it.”

“Do you mind if I come over?”

“All I am doing is working on my Jeep.” Said Tristan.

“I don’t mind.” Said Tilly.

“Sure. You know where I am.”

“Okay. I’ll be there in a few minutes.”

“See you then.” Said Tristan. He hung the phone up, and went back outside to continue his work. He started by draining the oil. As he waited for it to drain, he loosened the oil filter, and removed it. He crawled from under the vehicle, and removed the oil fill cap, and the dipstick. He gathered the six quarts of oil and the new filter. He filled the new filter about half full of oil, and applied some of the oil to the gasket. By the time he had done this, the old oil had drained out. He crawled back underneath w/ the new filter. He wiped down the sealing surface, and then installed the new filter. He then cleaned the bottom of the oil pan, and installed the drain plug. Just as he had finished that, someone lightly kicked his foot. He looked out from under the Jeep, to see a pair of legs. He crawled out from underneath. “Hey!” said Tristan.

Tilly was taken aback for a second. “Hi.” After a second she smiled and laughed softly.

“What?”

“Nothing. Never had anyone outside of my family that was so happy to see me.”

“I’m always happy to see you.” Said Tristan. “I’d give you a hug, but I’m dirty.”

“That’s okay. I’ll settle for a kiss.”

Tristan wiped his hands on a rag, and leaned forward and gave Tilly a light kiss. He stepped back. “You want a chair to sit in? Something to drink?”

“I wouldn’t mind a chair, and I don’t need anything to drink right now.”

“Okay.” Tristan went into the garage, and brought out a chair and set it in the shade. “Here ya go.”

"Thanks." Said Tilly. She sat down. Tristan smiled, and went back to work. "So, you know how to cause mayhem, work on computers, and can work on cars too?"

"Yeah." Said Tristan as he worked. "I learn a lot by reading, and once I've read about, I try it, and when I do it, I remember how to do it."

"I know nothing about cars. I know some about computers. I can cause my fair share of mayhem. So.. what *are* you doing?"

"I am just finishing up the oil change. " said Tristan as he poured the last quart of oil in the motor. "I still have to do a tune up and change the air filter."

"Sounds like fun." Said Tilly.

"Eh... it's something to do." Said Tristan, as he put the oil cap back on, and then started to do the tune up.

Tilly got up, and walked over to where Tristan was working. "What are you doing now?"

"Pulling the spark plugs." Said Tristan, as he removed the wire, put the tool on the plug, and began to unscrew it.

Tilly looked at Tristan, but he didn't see it. "So..."

"So what?" asked Tristan.

Tilly paused for a moment. "Might as well just come out and ask it." She said to herself. "Are we dating?"

Tristan looked up. "I don't know. Are we?"

"I... err..."

Tristan looked back down at his work, and then back up at Tilly. "So I will be formal and ask." He cleared his throat. "Matilda Seiler... will you go out with me?"

Tilly smiled. "Yes, but under one condition."

"What's that?"

"Don't call me Matilda."

"Deal." Tristan went back to his work. "So, does last night count as our first date?"

"I would say yes."

"So, that makes me your boyfriend?"

"Yes." Said Tilly.

"And you're my girlfriend..."

“Yes.”

Tristan looked up at Tilly and smiled, and then back down to his work. “From the first day I saw you, I wanted to get to know you. I didn’t expect this.”

“I didn’t expect this either. I’ve always been happy without anyone.. happy by myself. Then my sisters, the Lawndale, then you.”

“I wasn’t looking forward to leaving my friends in Florida. However, meeting you here has more than made up for it.”

“Did you date anyone down in Florida?”

“No.” Said Tristan. “I had female friends, but nothing official. They were mostly friends I knew in school. What about you?”

“Like I said before, I was happy by myself. I didn’t have friends, much less boyfriends.”

“Any guy would be crazy to not want to date you.”

Tilly smiled. “What are you trying to say?”

He looked up at her. “I think you’re very attractive.”

Tilly blushed. “There are girls who look better than me.”

“For example?”

“My sister Quinn.”

“She’s cute... but not what I would consider attractive. Looks aren’t everything. You have it all.”

“How’s that?”

“You’re beautiful, you’re smart, and you’re not afraid to speak your mind.”

“Speaking my mind has gotten me into a lot of trouble.” Said Tilly.

“I like that quality.” Said Tristan. He straightened up. “That’s done.”

“That was quick.” Said Tilly.

“This is an easy vehicle to work on. Doesn’t take long.” He took his old parts, and walked over to the trash can beside the house, and put them in the can. Tilly stayed where she was, but followed Tristan with her eyes. He grabbed the new air filter from the garage, and walked over to the Jeep, opened the air box, removed the old filter, put the new filter in, and closed up the air box.

“That was even quicker.”

“That’s simple.” He put the old filter in the box the new one came in, and walked over and put it into the trash. He came back to the Jeep, unclipped his keys from his pants, got into the Jeep, and started it. It started right up, and ran smooth.

“Nice.” Said Tilly.

“Thank you.” Said Tristan. After a few minutes, he shut it off, and got out and checked the oil level and checked for leaks. Satisfied, he closed the hood. Tilly took a step back as he did this. He looked over at Tilly. “I’m going to go clean up, want to come inside and wait?”

“Sure.” Said Tilly. They started walking to the house, but stopped when they heard someone calling their names. They turned around to see who it was. It was Jane.

“Hey you two!” said Jane as she ran up to them.

“What are you up to?” asked Tilly.

“Out for a run. What are you two doing?”

“Working on my Jeep.” Said Tristan. “Tilly came by to watch.”

“Really? Sounds like something a boyfriend and girlfriend would do.”

“That’s right.” Said Tilly.

Jane looked at them both. Tristan and Tilly looked at each other, and smiled as they looked back at Jane. “Wait... You two are going out?”

“Yes.” Said Tilly and Tristan at the same time.

“That is wonderful!” said Jane. “Daria is going to flip.”

“Uhhh.. I’d prefer if you didn’t tell Daria.” Said Tilly. “I want to tell her myself.”

“Sure.” Said Jane. “Well, I am going to continue with my run. You two have fun.” She walked up to Tristan and Tilly, placing one hand on Tilly’s shoulder, and the other on Tristan’s. “I’m happy for both of you.” She dropped her hands. “You two have fun.” She turned and walked back out to the sidewalk.

“Thanks Jane.” Said Tilly.

“Catch ya later, Jane.” Said Tristan. Jane waved as she started running down the sidewalk.

Tristan turned to Tilly. “Let’s go inside and get something to drink, and I’ll get cleaned up. We can go for a ride.”

“Where to?” asked Tilly as they walked up to the house.

“Well, we’re both new to Lawndale. We can go exploring.”

"Sounds fun." Said Tilly with a smile on her face. She reached down and grabbed Tristan's hand, holding it.

"My hands are dirty." Said Tristan.

"I wash." Said Tilly. Tristan looked over at Tilly, and stopped. She stopped and looked at him. He give her a light kiss.

"I'm really happy to be with you." Said Tristan.

"Me too." Said Tilly. They turned and continued their walk into the house.

Daria came slowly down the stairs, and walked into the kitchen. Helen was sitting at the table, with a folder in one hand, cup of coffee in the other. "Hi sweetie. How're you feeling?"

"Okay I guess." Said Daria, as she took a Ultra from the fridge, a Sugar Tart from the cabinet, and sat down at the table with her mother.

"Are you planning to stay inside all day?" Her mother asked her.

"I was thinking about it." Said Daria. A moment later, Quinn walked into the room. "On second thought, I might go over Tilly's." She got up from the table, and walked away, taking her soda and Sugar Tart with her.

Helen just stared at Quinn. "What?" was all Quinn could say.

"I really think you need to go up and apologize to her." Said Helen.

"But mo-om!" Whined Quinn. Helen just glared at Quinn. "Alright." Quinn turned and left the room, and went back upstairs. She stopped in front of Daria's door, and knocked.

"Go away." Came Daria's voice, almost sounding like a low rumble of thunder.

"Daria. I need to talk to you." Said Quinn.

"GO.... AWAY..." shouted Daria.

"C'mon Daria." Said Quinn. She opened the door slowly, making sure she wasn't about to be ambushed.

"I told you to go away." Said Daria, as she was putting her jacket on.

"Daria, I just want to say I'm sorry." Said Quinn.

"Uh huh. Come back when you mean it." Said Daria as she brushed past Quinn, down the hall, and down the stairs. She opened the front door, and then slammed it behind her as she left.

Quinn slowly slinked down the stairs, and back to the kitchen. "I tried to apologize, but she told me to come back when I meant it."

“Try taking her advice then.” Said Helen. Quinn just stared blankly at her mother for a moment, and then turned around and went back upstairs.

Daria walked down the sidewalk, made it about half a block from home, when someone came up behind her and startled her. “AAAAGH!” She said as she jumped and turned to see who was behind her.

“Nice to see you too, *amiga*.” Said Jane.

“Out for a run I see.”

“Yeah.” Said Jane. “What are you up to?”

“Nothing. Just getting out of the house before I kill Quinn.”

“You? Kill Quinn? Never!” said Jane with a smile. “What did she do this time?”

“It’s not important.” Said Daria. “Want to walk with me? I’m going to see Tilly.”

“Sure, but she’s not home. Last I saw her, she was at Tristan’s.”

“Really?” asked Daria, with a bit of stretch to the “ea”.

“Yeah. We can go over to his house.” Said Jane.

“Sure.” Said Daria. They started walking down the sidewalk, with Jane occasionally running in place for a few seconds, then returning to walking.

“So, what has you out of bed before noon on a Sunday?”

“Like I said, I wanted to avoid a murder rap.” Said Daria.

“What did Quinn do that was so bad? You usually just tune her out and be done with.”

“I’d rather not talk about it.” Said Jane.

“C’mon Daria. If it’s bad enough to get you out of the house on a Sunday, then I want to hear it.”

“No.”

“C’mon Daria...” Jane whined.

“No.”

“It will help you feel better if you tell me.”

“Thanks Dr. Freud, but no thanks.”

“C’mon...”

Daria stopped. Jane kept walking for a couple of steps, and then came back. "Quinn said I should break up with Trent."

"Okay." Said Jane.

"That's it? Okay? You have tired since we went to Brittany's party to get me with Trent. Now that I am, you just say okay?"

Jane stepped close to Daria. "You have to do what makes you happy."

"That's the same thing my dad said."

"Well, it's good advice." Said Jane. Daria looked down at the ground. "Daria?"

"I don't want to hurt Trent." Said Daria. "More importantly, I don't want to hurt you."

Jane took on a look of surprise. "If you and Trent do decide to split up, you're not going to hurt me. As for Trent, he will understand." She paused for a moment. "Are you considering it?" Daria nodded slightly. "You want me to talk to him?" Daria shook her head "no". "It'll be fine, Daria".

"Let's go see if Tilly is still at Tristan's." Said Daria. Jane smiled, and they started walking again. They walked along, not really saying much. Within a few minutes, they were walking up the driveway at Tristan's house. They stepped to the door, and Jane knocked.

After a few moments, Tristan came to the door. "Hey!"

"Hi." Said Daria.

"Yo." Said Jane.

"Hey!" said Tilly as she walked up to the doorway.

"We were going to wander around the neighborhood, maybe go get a pizza. Wanna come?" asked Daria.

"Nah. Not really." Said Tilly, glancing back at Tristan.

"Why not?" asked Tristan.

Tilly turned to Tristan, and lowered her voice. "I'm here with you."

Tristan didn't change his voice level. "I'm just going to be sitting around the house. Go have fun with Daria and Jane."

"You can come if you like." Said Daria.

"Nah. I'm good. I have a case of microwave burritos in the freezer. I'm set for at least a few hours." Said Tristan.

"You sure?" asked Tilly.

"Yeah. Go on. I'll see you tomorrow at school." Said Tristan.

Tilly looked at Jane and Daria, and then back at Tristan. "Okay. See you tomorrow." She reached down and squeezed his hand, and then turned back to Daria and Jane. "Let's go." They walked down the driveway, and down the sidewalk. Tristan watched them walk down the sidewalk and out of sight. He smiled, shook his head, closed the door, and headed for the kitchen.

"I need to stop at home and change." Said Jane. She looked over at Daria, who just turned stone white. She leaned in so only Daria could hear her. "Trent hasn't gotten out of bed since last night. I'm sure he won't be up until later tonight." Daria sighed softly in relief. "You have to tell him sometime."

"Tell him what?" asked Tilly.

"Damn." Cursed Jane to herself. "Daria is thinking about breaking up with Trent."

"Okay." Said Tilly.

"Okay?" Daria and Jane said in unison.

"Yeah. Are you happy with Trent?" asked Tilly.

"I guess." Said Daria.

"Were you happier before Trent?" asked Tilly. Daria didn't answer. "Would you be happier without him?"

"I really like him." Said Daria. "I don't want to hurt him."

"I told you before Daria, you're not going to hurt him. He *will* understand." Said Jane.

"Nrrrgh." Muttered Daria.

"Oh look, we're here." Said Jane as they arrived in front of Casa Lane.

"Great." Said Daria. They all walked up to the house, and walked in. Daria paused just inside the door. "I'll wait down here."

"I'll be down in a few. I'm going to grab a quick shower and change." Said Jane. She walked upstairs, and passed by her own room, to Trent's. "Trent?" "Trent?"

"Huh?"

"Daria is downstairs." Said Jane with a blank face.

"Huh? Oh." Said Trent, still half asleep.

"I think she had something she wanted to tell you." Said Jane.

“Oh... cool.” Said Trent. Jane turned and walked away, with a devilish grin on her face. Trent looked up for a second, and then laid his head back down. Within seconds, he was snoring again.

Jane put her hand on her doorknob, and could hear Trent snoring down the hall. “Damn him.” She said to half aloud. She entered her room, and grabbed some clothes, and headed to the shower.

Trent rolled over onto his back, and his eyes snapped open. “Daria’s here?” He laid there for a moment, and then got out of bed, and put a shirt on, and then he walked out of his room, and downstairs.

Daria and Tilly were sitting on the couch, waiting for Jane. “How did your date go last night?” asked Tilly.

“Okay I guess. We had pizza instead of the Italian place, and then we went and saw *The Matrix*.” Said Daria, as she picked at the bottom of her jacket. “What about you?”

“Dinner, dancing, hot monkey sex.” Said Tilly with a grin. Daria immediately looked up at Tilly with a look of surprise, shock, and horror all mixed in one. “Relax, I’m kidding. He did have a condom with him though.”

“He thought he was going to get lucky?” asked Daria.

“No. His dad made him take it.” Said Tilly with a smirk.

“No way.” Said Daria. She looked down at her hands, and then spoke. “Have you....?”

“What?” asked Tilly.

Daria looked up, and into Tilly’s eyes. “Uhhh... nevermind.” She said, looking back down to her hands.

“Oh... *that*?” Asked Tilly. Daria nodded her head slightly. “No.” She said in a low, flat voice. “Last night was my first date with a guy. Hell, Tristan is really the first guy I’ve been interested in.”

Daria kept her voice low, and her gaze down. “I was never really interested in anyone. Then Jane came along. For the first time, there was someone I truly wanted to be around. Then there is Trent.”

“What about him.” Asked Tilly.

“He’s mysterious, interesting, handsome....” Daria paused, trying to think of other things to say. After a moment, she sighed heavily. “Maybe Quinn was right.”

“I don’t know what to tell you sis.” Said Tilly, placing her hand on Daria’s knee. “I wish I could help you.” Tilly let her hand sit for a moment, and then pulled it back. “Have you ever given thought to your relationship with Jane? Maybe there is more there than just friendship.”

“No.” said Daria. “Just friends.”

“Uhh... I beg to differ. You see her and your eyes light up. You’re around her and you seem very happy, almost bubbly.” Now Tilly was looking down at her hands. “Did you ever consider you like Trent as a way to get closer to Jane?”

"I like guys." Said Daria flatly.

"If you're as much of me as I am of you, then your mind should be open to all possibilities." Said Tilly. She sighed heavily, and then took the gamble. "I know about some of the times you and Jane have spent together."

Daria's head popped up, and she had the deer in the headlights look. "How did you find out about..."

Tilly cut her off. "Well, to begin with, you just confirmed it." Daria buried her face in her hands. "That and the time you were drunk. You said some things."

Daria looked up at Tilly. "Maybe I do like her."

"No... you don't like her... you *love* her. You didn't care about anyone until she came along, and she made you whole." Said Tilly. "Love doesn't mean sex. Love is a feeling between two people who care for each other deeply."

"I...I..." stammered Daria.

"Hey Daria..." came Trent's voice from the base of the stairway.

"Hey Trent."

"Hey." Said Tilly.

"What are you two doing here?" asked Trent.

"We're going to go get some pizza. Jane had to come home and change first." Said Daria. She didn't know how long Trent had been standing there, but she hoped it hadn't been long.

"Ahh... Cool. You know, Janey really enjoys being around you Daria. It's almost as if you two were dating.. <cough cough>." Said Trent. Tilly shot Daria a "I told you so" look.

"Yeah. I'm really glad I found Jane here." Said Daria. Tilly nudged Daria, but Daria ignored her. "She's one of the best things that had ever happened to me." Daria was hoping Trent would just go away for right now.

It didn't happen. "Can I talk to you for a minute?" asked Trent. "Alone?"

Daria turned pale white. "Uhhh.. Sure."

"I'll go see what Jane's up to." Said Tilly. She got up and bounded up the stairs.

Trent sat down on the chair across from Daria. "You know, Janey really likes you."

"Yeah, I know." Said Daria.

"I mean, *really* likes you." Said Trent.

“Trent, just say what you have to say.”

“I think you and Jane are meant to be together.” Said Trent.

“We are. We’re practically sisters.” Said Daria.

“No. I think you and Jane are meant to be together, like how we are together.” Said Trent. The normal slowness in his voice was replaced by a steadiness and firmness.

“Trent, are you saying I should be dating Jane and not you?” asked Daria.

“Daria, I know you and Jane are more than friends.” Said Trent.

“Trent... just say what is on your mind.” Said Daria.

“I think we should end this here before one of us gets hurt.” Said Trent.

Daria looked at Trent blankly, and stood up. “I understand.” She turned and walked towards the door. “Can I ask one question?”

“Sure.” Said Trent.

“Was it me?”

Trent stood up and walked to Daria. “No. You did nothing wrong. You’re smart, attractive, funny, and great to be around. However, I just don’t want to risk hurting you.”

Daria lowered her head. “You’re hurting me now, Trent.” She said quietly, just barely above a whisper.

“I’m sorry Daria. I’m just afraid because of our age difference, that I will do something to hurt you, whether it be physically or otherwise. I can’t take that risk.” Said Trent.

Daria looked up at Trent. “That’s not it.”

Trent smiled. “You’re right.” He sighed. “Last night, me and Janey were talking. I told her I wanted to sleep with you.” Daria took on a look of mild shock. “Not sexual, just sleeping. Anyway, I told her it was something that had to be experienced. She knows that feeling. She has slept with you. Daria, Janey loves you.”

“Trent....” Started Daria, but he cut her off.

“Daria. I’m not mad. Yeah, I’m not happy about this, but Janey is more important to me than anything. I will give everything to make her happy.”

“So this is it?” asked Daria.

“Yeah.”

"I guess I have to thank you for your honesty." Said Daria. "I've heard from Quinn about how she had dumped numerous guys with numerous excuses, all of them lies. Just today, she said I should break up with you, based on our age difference. Maybe she knows something I don't."

"Despite her shallowness and being superficial, she's a smart girl. Almost as smart as you." Said Trent.

"Thanks Trent." Said Daria.

Trent stepped forward, and took Daria into his arms. "I'm sorry for this."

"It's okay, Trent." Said Daria. They stood like this for a minute, and Trent let Daria go. "Would you tell Jane and Tilly I had to go."

"Yeah." Said Trent. With that, Daria turned and quickly left the house. Trent walked into the kitchen, and took a bottle of scotch and a glass from above the refrigerator. He poured himself a glass, and after observing it for a moment, downed it in one shot.

"Where's Daria?" asked Jane as she noticed Tilly standing in the doorway of her bedroom.

"Downstairs with Trent." Said Tilly.

"I thought he was asleep." Said Jane.

"Apparently he woke up." Said Tilly.

Jane smiled. "Maybe they will talk."

Tilly studied Jane for a moment. "From what I have been told, Trent is a heavy sleeper. The only way he would have known Daria was downstairs if he was told."

"What?" asked Jane, feigning innocence.

Tilly took a step into the room. "Did you tell Trent we were here?"

Jane looked Tilly in the eyes. "Yes."

"Why?" asked Tilly.

"They needed to talk." Said Jane. Downstairs, the door was heard closing. They looked at each other, and headed downstairs. They stood in the living room. No Daria, and Trent was in the kitchen. They walked in, and found Trent with the bottle of scotch in his hands.

"Daria said she had to leave." Said Trent as he poured himself another glass. A tear was seen running down his cheek.

Tilly turned to Jane. In a flash, she grabbed Jane by the shirt with both hands, and slammed her into the wall. Her voice was a low and deep rumble, with a female overtone. "So help me, if she is even remotely hurt, I will make sure you regret your mistakes."

Jane looked into Tilly's eyes, and swore she saw flames. "I just told Trent that Daria was here."

Trent stood up, and placed his hand on Tilly's shoulder. "It's okay Tilly."

Tilly let go of Jane's shirt, and turned away. "Where did she go?"

"She didn't say. She just said she was leaving." Said Trent.

Tilly was looking around the room, breathing slowly and deeply, trying to calm herself. Jane was trying to calm down after being pinned against the wall by a girl who was smaller than herself. As she looked around, her gaze fell upon the bottle in Trent's hand. "Trent? Was she crying when she left?"

Trent wiped his face. "No. She was surprisingly calm."

"What?" Asked Jane. Tilly snatched the bottle out of Trent's hand, and thrust it towards Jane. Jane took the bottle from Tilly. "Oh no." Coming to the same conclusion as Tilly, she dropped the bottle, grabbed Tilly by the arm, and headed for the door. Once Jane cleared the house, she broke into a full run for Daria's house, with Tilly following close behind.

Daria walked into the house, and up the stairs without a word said. She headed to her room, but stopped short as she heard Quinn's voice from across the hall. A flame of anger sparked in her as she turned towards Quinn's room. She threw the door open, to reveal Quinn on the phone. Quinn saw her sister. "Sandi, I'll call you back." She hung the phone up and stood up. "Daria?" Daria charged at Quinn, but didn't make it far. In the few steps from the door to where Quinn was standing, the anger had quickly faded away. In motion, she continued forward, stopping when she was inches from Quinn. "Daria? Are you okay?" Daria shook her head no. "Do you want to talk about it?" Again, Daria shook her head no. Quinn looked into her sister's eyes, and saw the look that she had seen in so many guys' eyes shortly after she dropped the bomb on them. Without warning, she wrapped her arms around her sister, and pulled her in close. Daria laid her head on Quinn's shoulder, and started crying. Quinn just held her sister, smoothing her hair and rubbing her back. "You or him?"

"Him." Daria managed to stammer out.

"I'm sorry, Daria." Said Quinn. "I'm sorry."

Jane and Tilly reached Daria's house. They knocked on the door, but received no response. They threw open the door, and quickly scanned the room. Not seeing Daria, they ran up the stairs. Just as they were to throw open the door to Daria's room, they heard noises from Quinn's room. They turned, and pushed the door open, revealing Quinn and Daria. Quinn looked up, and saw Tilly and Jane. Quinn waved them away. Tilly and Jane looked at each other, and Jane pointed across the hall, to indicate they would be in Daria's room. They turned and walked across the hall, and Tilly sat on Daria's bed, and Jane sat on the floor.

"At least she wasn't drinking." Said Tilly.

"Yeah." Said Jane, looking down at the floor. Daria's phone rang. Jane picked it up. "Daria's answering service."

"Hey Janey." Came Trent's raspy, but slurred voice over the phone.

"Hey Trent." Said Jane.

"How's Daria? Is she okay?"

"Yeah, she's fine. She's with Quinn. Sisterly bonding."

"Cool. Janey.... Tell Daria I'm sorry."

"I will Trent. I will." Jane hung the phone up. "Trent was worried about Daria, and said he was sorry."

"Not as sorry as you would have been if we got here and she had a bottle in her hand." Said Tilly.

Jane stood up and turned to Tilly. "Look, you need to chill. Maybe I shouldn't have told Trent Daria was there, but it was bound to happen sooner or later."

Tilly took to her feet. "Daria means a lot to me. I'm not losing my sister that I just found. Not you, not anyone is taking that away from me!"

"And you think I would do that? Daria is as much as my sister as she is yours! That girl means everything to me. EVERYTHING TO ME! Before her, I had no one, except for Trent. Daria makes me whole, and I'll be damned if I do anything to lose that!" Snapped Jane. Tilly sat back down on the bed. After a moment, Jane joined her, sitting next to her. "The day I met Daria, it seemed like for once, I had a reason to be. She makes me happy, and I make her happy. A few months after she was here, she told me that she was happy to have met me. It was a rare moment for Daria. She showed me emotion for the first time. We've done so much in so little time. I can truly say I love her."

Tilly looked at Jane. In a lowered voice, she said "I'm sorry. I didn't know."

Jane put her arm around Tilly's shoulder and pulled her close. "It's okay amiga. Remember, we are all sisters. *Tres amigas hasta el final* is what I said back then, and it's true now. I know you only want her to be happy. So do I."

Tilly was about to say something, when she looked up and saw Daria and Quinn standing in the doorway. "You okay Daria?" Daria just nodded. She walked over and stood in front of Jane and Tilly. Jane slid over and patted the now empty space between them. Daria sat down, and Jane put her arm around her.

Tilly looked at Daria. "I think I will head home."

"No." Said Daria. "I need both of you right now. Let me go wash my face real quick and we'll go get that pizza. I need the distraction." Daria looked up at Quinn. "You can come if you want, Quinn."

“Sure!” Exclaimed Quinn. “I’d love to get out of the house.”

“Think we can get your mom to drive us there?” asked Jane.

“Mom and dad left earlier.” Said Quinn.

“Mom’s SUV is still in the driveway.” Said Daria.

“They went in Dad’s car.”

“Think your mom would be mad if we borrowed her SUV?” asked Jane.

“Who’s gonna drive? I don’t have a license.” Said Daria.

“I do, and so does Jane.” Said Tilly.

Daria smiled, and picked up the phone. She dialed her mother’s cell phone. “Hey mom. We’re going to go get pizza in town. Since we are taking Quinn, can we take your SUV?... I know I don’t have a license. Tilly is going to drive.... Yeah... Jane has her license too.... Okay... we will be careful.... Thanks....” Daria hung the phone up. Tilly, Jane, and Daria stood up, and made for the door. “I’ll be down in a minute.”

Quinn, Jane, and Tilly walked downstairs. Quinn took the keys to her mother’s SUV, and handed them to Tilly. A few moments later, Daria walked down the stairs. She wasn’t wearing her usual outfit. She had on the outfit she wore when she had to snap Quinn out of her “brain” phase. The only difference was she had her glasses on. Quinn saw her first. Jane and Tilly were facing the other way. Quinn grabbed Jane, and spun her around to face Daria. “Uhhhhh.”

Tilly turned around at the same time. “Whoa!”

Jane walked up to Daria. “Wow Daria! You look awesome!”

Quinn stood there smiling. “She does, doesn’t she?”

“I thought a slight change was in order.” Said Daria. “We ready?”

“Yep!” Exclaimed Tilly, holding up the keys.

“Let’s go.” Said Daria.

“Daria? Is that you?” asked Brittany as she stood in front of the table.

“No. It’s Ben Franklin in drag.” Snapped Daria without pause.

Brittany took on a look of shock for a moment. “You look good like that.”

“Thanks, Brittany.” Muttered Daria as she took a slice of pizza and put it on her plate. Brittany smiled, and walked away, over to where Kevin was seated in a booth on the other side of the restaurant.

“Who’s the new girl?” asked Kevin after Brittany sat down.

“That’s Daria.” Said Brittany.

“Whoa!” said Kevin. “She looks good.” He saw the scowl on Brittany’s face. “But not as good as you babe!”

Jane had just taken a slice of pizza for herself, when she looked towards the door. “Uhh, don’t look now, but the ex-Fashionistas are here.” She turned to Quinn. “You want to try to hide now, or do you have a good enough excuse for being seen with us?”

Quinn shrugged the comment off, and took a bite from the slice of cheeseless pizza in hand. “Hey! There’s Quinn!” came Stacy’s voice.

“Sandi is with them.” Muttered Tilly.

“So.” Said Quinn. She looked right at the trio as they walked towards the table.

“Hey Quinn...” said Tiffany slowly.

“Hi Quinn!” said Stacy excitedly.

“Hi Tiffany, Stacy... Sandi? What are you doing out and about?” said Quinn.

“Stacy and Tiffany called and invited me out to get pizza.” Said Sandi. She eyed the group that Quinn was with. “I didn’t know you were out with your cousin’s friends. We’ll leave you alone.”

Quinn went from a smile to a scowl. “Sandi... Sandi.. Sandi... This is Jane Lane, this is Tilly, and you already know Daria.”

Sandi looked surprised for a moment. “That’s Daria?”

“Yes.” Said Quinn. Sandi didn’t say anything else, and just walked away. Tiffany followed suit, but Stacy stayed at the table for a moment.

“You look good, Daria.” Said Stacy quietly as she smiled. She then turned and hurried after Tiffany and Sandi.

“Looks like the Fashion Club is back .” said Jane.

“Only three out of the four.” Said Quinn. “I’ll hang around with them, but I am not getting drug back into Sandi’s dictatorship.”

“Maybe she’s changed.” Said Tilly.

“I don’t think so.” Said Quinn. She watched as across the room Sandi was barking orders like a military commander. “Or not.” She turned back to her own table. “So Daria, you interested in wearing an outfit like this to school one day?”

“Probably not.” Said Daria. “I think this is a one time thing.”

“So far, you’ve received a ton of compliments.” Said Tilly. “Why not dress up a little?”

“Because this isn’t me.” Said Daria. “I just felt like a change for today.” She looked down at herself, and then turned to Jane. “Did you even know I had boobs?”

Jane about choked on her pizza. “What?”

“This shirt shows off my body more than my usual outfit.” Said Daria. She looked over at Jane. “You can’t even tell you have any.”

“Hey... there’s a nice pair of B’s under this shirt and jacket.” Said Jane. “And you’re welcome to inspect them anytime you want.” She said to herself. She spoke aloud. “I wear what I wear because it is comfortable. I’m not out to impress anyone.”

“And neither do I.” said Daria. She looked down at her outfit. “Normally, anyway.”

“You do look good in that, Daria.” Said Tilly.

“You do.” Said Quinn.

“I don’t know.” Said Daria, turning a bit red. “Let’s just finish our pizza.”

Daria was up in her room. She could hear Jane and Tilly coming up the stairs. She quickly pulled the shirt and jeans off that she had on moments before. She looked at the shirt and jeans on the bed. She then turned back towards the mirror, standing there in her underwear. “If it wasn’t for the boobs, you couldn’t even tell that I am a girl.” She said to herself. “Why in the hell did I decide to wear that outfit out in public for in the first place?” She had grabbed her usual skirt and pulled it on when a knock was heard on her door. “Whom may I say is calling?”

“It’s me.” Said Jane.

“Enter.” Said Daria, as she grabbed her shirt. She turned to see Jane standing there, seemingly staring at her chest. “Didn’t know I had boobs?”

“We discussed this earlier.” Said Jane.

“Precisely.” Said Daria. She pulled her shirt on, and then put her usual jacket on. “And now I don’t.”

“It’s the jacket.” Said Jane. “They hide them quite well.” She took off her own jacket, and then her shirt, revealing the black lacy bra underneath. “See? I have them too.” She said, looking down at her chest. She looked back up, to see Daria’s gaze lingering, her face reddening. “You didn’t know *I* had them?”

Daria shook her head, and turned away. “Of course I knew. I just don’t think about it every day.”

“I think about yours every day.” Said Jane to herself. She pulled her shirt back on, and then put her jacket back on. “Daria?”

Daria turned around. "Huh wha?"

"Nothing." Said Jane. She was going to say something when she heard Tilly's voice from downstairs.

"Hey! They are running a Sick Sad World marathon!! It's on for the next four hours!"

A smile came across Jane's face. Daria smirked. "Shall we?" asked Jane.

"One question."

"What?" asked Jane as she placed her hand on the door knob.

"Why black lace?"

Jane spun around. "Huh?"

"Why black lace? Why anything fancy?" asked Daria deadpan.

"Why do I wear it?" asked Jane.

Daria nodded. "It's not like you are showing it to anyone and everyone."

"Never know when I might need to flash someone to get what I want." Said Jane with a smirk, but it didn't shake Daria. "I don't know. I've never really shown my underwear to anyone. Maybe the occasional guy who gets to second base." Jane thought for a moment. "Maybe because it makes me feel..... pretty?" Daria just stared at Jane for a moment. "And before you ask, yes, the underwear match the bra."

"You already know what I wear." Said Daria. "It's comfortable and functional."

"Maybe you should try something a little more `frilly'. We're not talking outright leather or anything, but just something different." Said Jane. She opened her mouth to say something else, when Tilly's voice rang out from downstairs again.

"It's starting! Get down here you two!"

"Let's not keep her waiting." Said Jane. "We can talk more about it later if you want."

"Maybe." Muttered Daria as she followed Jane out of the room and downstairs.

Monday at school, and Daria was walking the halls by herself. She left the house early, to avoid Jane. She had already been to her locker, picked up her books for her first few classes, and then headed to the library. Here, she could, for all intents and purposes, disappear from the school population. While she sat in plain sight, no one would acknowledge her. Occasionally, she would see Jodie, or the rare occasion, she would see Andrea or Jennifer Burns. They would look in her direction, and just keep going. Today was different. "Hey Daria." Said Jodie as she walked up to the table.

Daria put her book down. "Hi Jodie."

"Where's Jane?"

"Don't know." Said Daria. "Didn't walk with her. She should be getting here in about ten minutes or so." She said, looking at her watch briefly.

"You two usually are inseparable." Said Jodie. She looked down at Daria, who had picked her book back up and began reading again. "Would you like me to leave you alone?"

"Yes please." Said Daria.

"Okay. See you." Said Jodie. She took one last look at Daria, and walked away.

"Didn't think she would ever leave." Said Daria to herself. She kept reading her book, looking up occasionally. She figured the first thing Jane would do when she arrived at school, was come looking for her. Jane knew Daria would hide out in the library, but even she wouldn't bother her while she was here.

"She left early." Said Quinn.

"Did she say why?" asked Jane?

"No." said Quinn as they walked along.

"I don't understand her sometimes." Said Jane.

"Hey! Wait up!" came Tilly's voice from behind them. They stopped and turned, to see Tilly and Tristan come running up. "Where's Daria?"

"She's already at school." Said Jane flatly.

"She didn't wait for you?" asked Tilly.

"No." Said Jane coldly.

Tilly tapped Tristan on the shoulder, and pointed to Jane. "Occupy her." She whispered.

"Got it." Said Tristan. He walked up ahead. "So Jane, I want to re-decorate my bedroom. I want it to be a statement of individuality, but also mildly soothing."

"Why soothing?" asked Jane, not noticing that Tilly and Quinn had fallen back.

"I have trouble sleeping at night." Said Tristan.

"Quinn, what did Daria do last night after we left?" asked Tilly when she was sure Jane was out of earshot.

"I got up to get a drink, and remember you and Jane leaving. I got a drink, talked to mom, and went back upstairs. Right before I walked into my bedroom, Daria came out of the bathroom, and went straight into her bedroom, then closed and locked the door. The light was on for a few minutes, and then it went out." Said Quinn.

"She was pre-occupied the entire night." Said Tilly. "Every time I looked over at her, she was either staring off into space, or at some seemingly obscure point on the wall. She was avoiding Jane like the plague."

"I don't know. Maybe she feels guilty about breaking up with Trent, and doesn't want to talk to Jane about it." Said Quinn.

"Don't know. There is only one person that knows, and she isn't here." Said Tilly.

Jane turned to see that Quinn and Tilly had fallen behind. "Come on, slow pokes."

"Oh, sorry." Said Tilly. They picked up their pace, catching up to Jane and Tristan.

"Cool. We can work it out on how to do it one day." Said Tristan.

"Okay." Said Jane, who turned her attention back to her mission.

Daria looked down at her watch. It would soon be time to leave to go to class. There, she would have to confront Jane. She sighed heavily, and continued to read. As she read, she noticed her hands were starting to turn red. "Not again." She said to herself. She put the book down, and looked at the back of her hands, and saw the redness on the back of her hands, and started to creep up her arms. She shoved her textbooks into her bag, and quickly got up and headed out of the library and into the hallway. She looked up, and saw Quinn walking down the hall. She knew if Quinn was there, then Tilly, Tristan, and even Jane would be there somewhere. She looked around, and made for the side exit. Once outside, she started her walk towards home. "I'll call mom when I get home and she can call the school." She said to herself, as she took the long way through the faculty parking lot, and then to the street back home. She had walked about halfway home when she felt the presence of a car slowly creeping up behind her.

"Hey Daria." Came the raspy voice.

Daria spun around, to see Trent. "Damn. From bad to worse." She said to herself. "Hey Trent."

"Ditching school today?" Trent asked.

"Don't feel good." She said.

"Want a ride home?"

Daria thought for a moment. "Yeah sure." She said. She got into the car with Trent, and he slowly drove away.

Trent looked over at Daria, and noticed her face was red. He then glanced at her hands, and saw they were as well, red. "You okay?"

“Yeah... no.” Daria said, looking at the floorboard.

“Last time I saw you turning red like this is when me and Janey came over to take you out. I think it’s where I first learned you had a thing for me.” Said Trent.

“Yeah.” Daria said quietly.

“Who’s the lucky guy?” Asked Trent.

“What?” Daria popped her head up and looked at Trent.

“Who’s the lucky guy?” Trent repeated. “Must be a guy you like, or have strong feelings for, and don’t want to tell him.”

“Something like that.” Daria muttered.

Trent reached over and put his hand on Daria’s. “It’s okay Daria. I’m not mad we broke up.”

Daria felt the warmth of Trent’s hand on hers. She smiled slightly. “Thanks, Trent.”

“So, you have feelings for someone, and you can’t tell them.” Said Trent.

“Yeah.” Said Daria quietly.

“I can’t say I know how you feel, but I know someone who does.” Said Trent.

“Who?” Daria asked.

“Janey. She really likes someone, but she’s afraid to tell that person.” Said Trent. “She has talked to me about it a couple of times.” Daria tensed at the mention of Jane’s name. She knew Trent had to feel it. “She came home last night, and she seemed to be really down.”

“Oh.” Daria said, looking back down to the floor again.

“But she seemed better this morning.” Said Trent.

“What were you doing up this morning?” Daria asked, trying to change the subject to anything except Jane.

“Had to go pay bills this morning.” Said Trent. “Stayed up all night so I wouldn’t be late.”

“Easier that way.” Daria said, remembering the whole swap meet debacle.

“Yeah.” Said Trent. “We’re here.” He said as she pulled into the driveway. She looked up, and saw her mom’s SUV still in the driveway. “Daria...”

“Yeah Trent?” Daria asked.

Trent went to speak, but then thought about it. “Hope you feel better.” He finally said.

“Thanks.” She said. She got out, and walked around the front of the car. She was about halfway up the walk when she heard the car door close behind her. She turned, to see Trent walk up.

“Daria. I need to tell you something. It’s important.”

“What’s that?” asked Daria. She heard the front door to the house open behind her. She turned to see her mother walk out of the house. She turned back to Trent.

“Janey... she... I think she... I’m not sure, but I think....”

“Trent?” asked Daria. She could feel her mother standing behind her.

“Daria! What are you doing home?” Helen asked.

Daria turned around to face her mother. “Rash.” Was all she said.

“I saw her walking, and gave her a ride home.” Said Trent.

“Thank you Trent.” Helen said, smiling. She looked back to Daria. “Are you okay? Do you need to go to the doctor?”

“No mom. I just need to rest.” Daria turned to Trent, but he was already back in his car, and backing out of the driveway. “Damn.” She said to herself. She turned and walked into the house, with Helen close behind.

“You go upstairs and lie down. I’ll call Eric and tell him I’m not coming in today.”

“It’s okay mom. I’ll be fine.”

“Are you sure?” Asked Helen.

“Yeah. I just need to rest.”

“Okay Daria. If you need anything, call me. I’ll call school and let them know you are home with a... you’re not feeling well.”

“Thanks.” Daria said. She headed upstairs, and into her room, closing the door behind her. She dropped her bag on the floor, and quickly undressed, and put on her night shirt and shorts. She drew the curtains closed to darken the room, and then she crawled into bed, pulling the covers up. She looked around the room, and out of everything in her room, she noticed the red jacket laying by the closet door. Daria quickly pulled the covers over her head, and then rolled over to face the wall. She forced her mind to go blank, and tried to sleep. After fighting for what seemed like an eternity, Daria finally drifted off to sleep.

“Where the hell is she?” asked Jane aloud to no one in particular during lunch.

“Dunno.” Said Tilly. “Quinn did say she left before us, but if she was here, we would have seen her.” Tilly picked at her lunch nervously. “I hope she isn’t back on...”

“NO!” Shouted Jane. She looked up, to see most everyone in the cafeteria looking back at her. She hung her head down, and lowered her voice. “No. She had better not be.”

“What happened between you two the other day?” Jane now was the one picking at her food. She looked at Tilly, and then to Tristan, and then back to Tilly. Tilly turned to Tristan. “Give us a few minutes, will you?”

“Sure.” He said. He stood up, kissed Tilly on the forehead, and walked through the crowds and out of the cafeteria.

“I hate it when he does that.” Said Tilly, as she watched him walk away. “I’m not a big one for public displays of...”

Jane blurted out what was on her mind. “I think I’m in love with Daria.”

“Well, she is your best friend.” Said Tilly.

“No... I mean love. Not like sisterly love, I mean like how Tristan loves you.”

“Tristan doesn’t love me. He just likes me a lot.” She looked up, and met Jane’s gaze. “Uhhhhh. Why do you think that?”

“Because, she is all I think about. I go to sleep, and I think about Daria. I wake up, I think about Daria. I take a shower....”

Tilly put her hand up. “Spare me the gushier parts. Maybe you just need some time away from her?”

“No.” Said Jane. “I don’t think it’s that. I think I’m in love with her.”

“So then tell her.” Said Tilly.

“She doesn’t feel the same way.” Said Jane.

“How do you know?” asked Tilly. “Have you asked her?”

“It’s obvious. She’s not into girls.”

“You don’t know until you ask.” Said Tilly.

“If she said no...”

“If she said no, then you know, and you can get on with your lives.”

“No... I can’t.” Said Jane. “I.. I just can’t.”

Jane jumped up from the table, and bolted from the lunchroom. Tilly grumbled, but was right behind her, and as soon as they were outside, she grabbed Jane, and spun her around. “You need to tell her.”

“I can’t.” Said Jane, who shook Tilly’s grip and ran down the hall. Tilly went after her, but Jane was able to quickly outrun her.

“Damn runners.” Said Tilly, standing in the middle of the hallway, bent over, hands on her legs, trying to catch her breath. She looked up to see Tristan casually walk up.

“You need more exercise.” Said Tristan.

“Shut up.” Tilly said.

“Okay, then you don’t want to know.”

Tilly straightened up. “Know what?”

“Where Daria is.”

“Where is she?” Tilly asked.

“Home.” Said Tristan.

“How do you know?” Asked Tilly, as she started walking towards her locker.

“Eavesdropping around the office.”

“Nice.” Smiled Tilly. “We need to get out of here.”

“If you’re planning another impromptu fire drill, I wouldn’t. Too close together.”

“Well, then there is just old fashioned walking off campus.” Said Tilly, as she headed for the main entrance.

“Why... What’s going on?” Asked Tristan.

“Nothing you need to worry about. Where’s Jane?”

“She went off that way.” Said Tristan, pointing down the hall.

“Gym.” Muttered Tilly, as she grabbed Tristan and started down the hall. A few moments later, they were standing by the doors, watching Jane running laps around the gym with her headphones on. She ran past them, and didn’t even acknowledge them being there.

“She gets into this, doesn’t she?”

“Yeah. Daria said this is how she relieves stress. She runs... She’s quick too.” Said Tilly, remembering how easily Jane had slipped away from her earlier. Jane did another pass by them. “Need to get her attention.” Tilly muttered. A devilish smile came across Tristan’s face. Tilly looked up. “Without causing harm.” Tristan nodded, and took the bottle of water he had in his hand, and spilled a little on the floor in front of him. He then took and walked about five feet past where he placed the water. Jane came down, and she made eye contact with Tristan. She shifted her gaze to over his head, and she hit the water, and went sliding across the floor. Tristan reached out and grabbed Jane, keeping her from hitting the floor. For a moment, Jane didn’t resist, as she was just glad she didn’t fall, but then she looked up and saw Tilly coming at her. “Hold her.” Commanded Tilly.

“Dah.” Nodded Tristan, holding Jane at the arms.

“Let go of me, dammit.” Said Jane, struggling to break free.

“STOP.” Commanded Tilly, in a shockingly deep and loud, but calm, voice. Jane fidgeted, but stopped fighting to get free. She walked up to Jane, and got as close to Jane as she possibly could without touching her. She looked directly into Jane’s blue eyes. “Now, you’re going to tell Daria what’s on your mind and what you’re feeling.”

“I... can’t...” Said Jane through clenched teeth.

Tilly’s gaze never shifted. “You’re going to tell Daria what’s on your mind and what you’re feeling. You owe it to yourself, and to Daria.” The bell rang. “Are you going to talk to her?” Reluctantly, Jane shook her head yes. “Good. We’ll see you after school. Let her go, Trist.”

“Dah.” Said Tristan as he let Jane go. She took a moment to collect herself.

“Do you know where she is?” asked Jane.

Tristan went to open his mouth, but a quick glare from Tilly caused him to close it again. “No. We don’t.” The gym began to fill with students for gym class. Tilly turned and walked away. Tristan stood there for a second, looked at Jane, shrugged, and walked away, following Tilly out of the gym. Jane shook her head, walked over, grabbed her bag, and headed out the door to her next class.

“Attention students,” Came Ms. Li’s voice over the intercom. Tilly and Tristan both looked at each other.

“Funny, haven’t heard her on the intercom in a while.” Said Tristan to Tilly in a hushed tone.

“Quiet you.” Said Tilly.

“It has come to my attention that student of Laaawndale High are causing undue disruption to their fellow classmates.” Continued Li. Tristan pretended to polish his fingernails on his t-shirt, while Tilly rolled her eyes. She glanced over at Jane, who was frantically drawing, then erasing, then drawing again. Tilly playfully smacked Tristan in the back of the head, and pointed to Jane. Tristan tried to get a view of what Jane was drawing, but couldn’t see it. He shrugged. “This has caused Laaawndale High to fall short of its mandated instruction time. Therefore, every student will be required to stay an extra 30 minutes a day for the rest of the semester, starting today. Good day!” The intercom clicked off.

Tilly looked up at the clock. “Thirty minutes? What the...” She was interrupted by the sounds of Mr. DeMartino stalking down the hall.

“Stay an EXTRA 30 minutes with these POTATO CHIP bags called students?” Said DeMartino to himself, but out loud at the same time.

“Li’s gonna get it.” Came a voice from the back of the room. The class turned to see Andrea with a rare smirk on her face. “This won’t last long.”

She was right. A few minutes later, Li's voice came back on the intercom. "Attention students. I, err, an error was made in calculating the total hours of instruction time. All students are to leave at their normally scheduled time. That is all." You could almost hear the growl in her voice in the last sentence.

Before a comment could be made, the bell rang. Tilly and Tristan turned back from Andrea to look at Jane, but she was already out the door. "She's gonna outrun us." Said Tilly.

"Us?" Said Tristan? "I only run when chased."

"Or when I tell you to." Said Tilly with a growl. "Move!"

"No." Said Tristan, not moving.

"Let's go.. NOW!"

"No."

Tilly growled. "Either you come now, or don't come at all!"

"Would you just stop? For one moment in your life, can you not try to run everyone's life for them? You know, I like you Matilda," Started Tristan. He paused when Tilly's expression changed at the use of her given name. He continued, "I really like you, but if this is how you're going to treat me, forget it. I have two parents at home. I don't need a third here!" He didn't wait for an answer, and brushed past Tilly and out into the hall. Tilly just stood there, stunned for a moment, before turning to the hallway. To her left, walked Tristan down the hall. To her right, walked Jane down the hall. She mumbled to herself, and made her decision.

Tristan stalked down the hall, grumbling to himself. He walked up to his locker, and after fishing the key for the lock out of his pocket, unlocked the door and flung it open. He opened his bookbag, and threw a couple of books in the locker, and slammed it closed. As he did, a small piece of paper fluttered to the ground. He reached down to pick it up, and paused when he read what was on the back:

To Tristan:

I don't do pictures. However, I had someone
take this picture of me... for you.

Tilly

Tristan flipped the picture over, and saw that it was indeed a picture of Tilly, with a small smile on her face. He opened his locker, and placed it back into place on the inside of the locker door. "What the hell did I just do?" He said out loud, but to no one in particular. "The first girl I could truly relate to, the first one I could truly call a friend, a girlfriend, and I just set fire to that bridge." He closed his locker, but dropped the padlock. He bent over to pick it up, but as he reached for it, a black boot stood on it. He immediately recognized who the boot belonged to. He slowly straightened up, and came face to face with Tilly.

No words were said for a minute, until Tilly broke the silence. "Girlfriend?"

"Yeah... I guess. You're a girl... and a friend... or you were a friend."

Tilly looked into Tristan's eyes. "Still am."

Tristan placed a hand on Tilly's shoulder. "I'm sorry."

"No. I should be the one apologizing. I became a little over controlling and I think it's because with everything that's going on, plus having real friends for the first time, I..." Tilly paused, looking down, and swallowing. She looked back up, and continued, her voice lowering to just above a whisper. "I don't want to lose them."

"I know." Tristan said, lowering his voice to a similar volume. He took his hand off Tilly's shoulder, and brushed her hair back out of her face. In a single, fluid movement, he stepped forward, and gave Tilly a small kiss. Not sensing any impending doom, he gave Tilly another kiss, but this one a little longer and deeper, and she returned the gesture. After a moment, he pulled back. Tilly's eyes remained closed for a moment, and then she slowly opened them. She opened her mouth to speak, but no sound came out. He slowly bent down, and while keeping his eyes on Tilly's face, picked up his lock. He quickly locked his locker. "Now, let's go see if we can catch Jane before she gets too far away." He turned to run down the hall for the exit, but Tilly was still standing there. "Tilly? Matilda?"

Tilly snapped back to reality at the sound of her name. "Yeah... yeah, let's go."

"Who are you?" asked Daria of the cloaked figure that stood in front of her.

"Who I am is not important. The question you should be asking is who you are."

"I know who I am." Daria said, as she looked around. She was in the black room again, with the yellow lines. "I'm on a Holodeck again, so I must be dreaming."

"Dream or nightmare, they are all the same." Said the voice. "Computer, arch." The familiar beige arch appeared. "Load program Jane one."

"Program complete." Said the computer voice.

The cloaked figure looked over to Daria. "Never hurts to vent your feelings. Even if this is a dream."

Daria sighed. "I have to stop watching sci-fi shows." She shook her head, and looked at the cloaked figure. "This isn't anything," she paused, "weird, is it?"

The cloaked figure shook his head. "No. Computer, run program."

The only things that changed, is another person appeared in the room. Jane. "Hey amiga."

"Hi." Said Daria, looking down at the floor.

"So, is there something you want to talk about?" asked Jane. She looked over towards the arch, and towards the cloaked figure. "Privacy?"

“You know how to run this.” Said the cloaked figure to Daria. He raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and disappeared in a flash of light. “The dream will end when you end the program.”

“Computer, provide two chairs.” Daria said. Two chairs appeared, one across from the other. Daria looked at them. “Something more comfortable, please.” The two original chairs disappeared, and two more appeared, this time with more padding and a bit larger. Daria nodded, and then sat down. It was then she realized that she was still wearing her night clothes, while Jane was dressed as normal. “Computer, can you provide me a blanket. Just a common fleece blanket, full bed sized, forest green in color.” The blanket materialized in front of her. She picked it up, and covered herself with it. “Better.” She said to herself. She looked up, and Jane had pulled her chair closer, and sat down.

“What’s on your mind, amiga?” asked Jane.

“A lot.”

“Okay. I’m all ears.”

“Jane, have you ever felt that you loved someone, but never could bring yourself to tell that person?” asked Daria.

“Yeah. Like how I had a crush on Jesse.”

“I think I am in love with someone, but I can’t tell them.” Said Daria.

“Me.” Said Jane. Daria stared at Jane blankly. “I take your silence as confirmation.”

“I can’t describe it. Sometimes, it’s a hormonal urge, and then sometimes it’s an undying friendship.” Said Daria.

“Well, to be honest, I was your first true friend.” Said Jane. “You said it yourself, you really didn’t care about anyone until you came to Lawndale and met me.” Daria nodded, and Jane continued. “Daria, is it possible you just *in lust* with me?”

“What?” asked Daria.

“Lust. You’ve never really experienced love, or love of this type, so maybe it just you feel so close to me, that you’re in lust with me.” Said Jane.

“I don’t know.” Said Daria.

“Well, it’s your head that is generating all of this, so you must be battling it out. Perhaps you need to discuss this with the real me, not the dream version of me.”

“I can’t.” said Daria.

“Why not?” asked Jane. “It’s no different talking to me than to the real me. Besides, if the real me didn’t feel the same about you, don’t you think that we are good enough of friends that I would let you down easily, and not just say no and go running, screaming into the night?”

“Hmmm. Possibly.” Said Daria, looking down at the floor. “I don’t want to risk losing Jane over this.”

“So you’re going to risk losing her over the psycho behavior?” Said Jane.

“I don’t know what you mean?”

“Come on Daria. You run at the slightest conflict, you hide at the slightest hint of emotion.”

“Jane understands.” Said Daria.

“Does she?”

“I would think so. She knows me.”

“Does she?”

“Yes. She does.” Said Daria.

“Then why are we having this conversation? If she knows you, then she would know the answer.” Said Jane.

“Well, we really don’t discuss these things.” Said Daria.

“Why not?”

“I’m not comfortable discussing these things.” Said Daria.

“Let me ask you something. Do you love Jane?”

“As a....” Started Daria, but Jane cut her off.

“I know you love her as a friend, a sister even.” Jane said. “Computer, remove my clothes.” A moment passed and Jane’s clothes disappeared, and she stood up. “Tell me how you feel now.”

“Agghh! Computer, put her clothes back on.”

“Unable to comply.” Came the computer’s response.

“Not going to work. You’re going to have to deal with this.”

“Computer, end program.”

“Unable to comply.” Came the computer’s response.

Irritated, and trying to ignore Jane, Daria stood up. “Computer. Arch.” The computer complied, and the arch interface appeared in the room.

“See, you can’t even face me. What does that tell you?” Said Jane, following Daria to the arch.

Daria tapped a few commands into the keypad. The status display just flashed a “Invalid Command” on the screen. “They make it look so easy on TV.”

“DARIA!”

“WHAT?” snapped Daria, as she spun around to face Jane. “What do you want from me?”

Jane looked down to the floor. “Nothing. Goodbye, Daria.” She turned and walked away. “Computer, end program and delete.”

“NO!” shouted Daria, but it was too late. Jane vanished in mid-stride, along with the chairs and blanket. “Jane. Jane... please... come back.” Daria said. She looked down at the floor. She just stared at the black tiles lining the floor. “Anytime now.” She said to herself, remembering that the cloaked man said she would wake up with the program ended. “Computer, if I have to stay here, can I at least have a bed and the blanket back?” The computer complied, and a bed appeared, fully made, and a blanket that was the same type as Daria had before, appeared at her feet. She picked the blanket up, and slowly walked to the bed. She laid down, and covered herself with the blanket. “Computer. Turn off the lights.” The room went dark, except for the lights on the display of the arch.

“Daria?” came a voice that sounded distant. “Daria?”

Daria sighed, and sat up. “Computer, lights.”

“What are you talking about?” came the familiar voice. The lights came on.

Daria looked around. She wasn’t on the Holodeck anymore. Quinn was standing at the door to her room. “Oh. Hey Quinn.”

“Daria? Are you okay?” Asked Quinn.

“No. I’m not.” Said Daria, quietly. She turned and set her feet on the floor, but was still sitting in bed.

Quinn walked over and sat next to her sister. “Trent or Jane?”

“Jane.” Said Daria.

Quinn looked at Daria. For the first time in a long time, she saw actual sadness and confusion in Daria’s eyes. “I’m sorry. I don’t know what to tell you anymore. I’ve tried to help you. I keep telling you to be honest. Tell the truth. It’s what you do best.” Quinn sighed. “Yet.. Nevermind.” Quinn said, standing up.

“Please. Don’t go.” Said Daria, her voice sounding almost child-like.

Quinn looked at Daria, and then sat back down. “Daria, you have to tell Jane, either yes or no. If you don’t, well, I don’t want to think of the outcome.”

“I know.” Was all Daria said.

Tristan felt like he had been standing at his locker for an eternity, when Tilly finally emerged from the other end of the hall and walked toward him. "About time you got here." He said as she came within earshot.

"Sorry. Unavoidably detained." Said Tilly. "Where's Jane?"

"Right here." Came Jane's voice from down the hall. She sounded worn down, aged beyond her years. "Let's just get this over with so I can go back to the self-esteem class."

"Self-esteem class?" asked Tilly as the trio walked down the hall.

"Yeah. It's a little class that Mr. O'Neil teaches. I had been in the class six times before..." Jane paused. "Daria moved here. It's how I met her."

Tilly stopped in the hall. "Jane. Let me ask you something."

"What?" Asked Jane, still sounding worn.

"If Daria tells you that she is not interested in you that way, are you going to not be her friend anymore?"

Jane sighed. "No. No... That's the last thing I want to do is lose her. I can't lose her."

"What do you mean?" Asked Tilly.

"Nothing. Let's just get out of here." Jane said, as she started walking again.

Tilly followed behind, but kept talking. "What do you mean you *can't* lose her?"

"Nothing." Said Jane. "Forget I said it."

"Jane?" Asked Tristan, in a calm voice. "What's wrong? Why can't you lose Daria?"

"Did Tilly ever show you her wrists?" asked Jane of Tristan.

Tristan turned and looked at Tilly. "What is she talking about?"

"You're not derailing this, Lane." Said Tilly, irritation creeping into her voice.

"Go on, Matilda. Show him." Said Jane.

"Show me what?" Asked Tristan. "Tilly?"

"I'd rather not talk about it here." Said Tilly, more irritation creeping into her voice.

"Can dish it out, but can't take it?" Asked Jane.

Tristan stopped, and grabbed Tilly's wrists. He flipped her hands palm up, so he could look at them. "What's this?" Asked Tristan, pointing to the scars.

"Go on, tell him Matilda." Said Jane.

Tilly sighed. "When I was younger, I was committed for 72 hours. I was strapped to a bed, and I was fighting to get out. I apparently cut myself trying to get free."

"Tell him why you were committed." Said Jane, now stopped.

"I got into something I shouldn't have." Was all Tilly said.

Tristan looked from Tilly's wrists, and up to Tilly's face. "Did you try to commit suicide?"

Tilly glanced at Jane, and then back to Tristan. "The truth?" She took a deep breath in, and let it out slowly. "Yes."

Jane's jaw hung agape. "Oh my..." was all she said. "Tilly... I... I didn't know." She paused. "You told me it was because you got into something bad."

"Well, that's partially true." Said Tilly, looking into Tristan's eyes, but speaking to Jane. "I did get into something I shouldn't have, and the scars are from being restrained to a bed." She sighed again. "I was in middle school. I used to get picked on almost every day. I hated it. I didn't want to be there. I just wanted it all to end." She paused. "Well, one day, this girl comes up to me, and tells me that I should just kill myself, that I would make the world a better place if I did. She hands me this little packet. Tells me to mix it with a soda, and go to sleep, and that would be it."

"You did?" asked Jane.

"Yes." Said Tilly, still not taking her eyes off Tristan. "I went home that night, and mom and dad were having an argument about something. I don't remember what. I walked in the house, and they didn't even acknowledge me. So, I just figured they wouldn't miss me, and I got a glass of ice water from the fridge, poured the packet into the water, and stirred it. It looked and smelled like blue Kool-Aid." Jane just stood there with a blank look on her face. Tilly continued. "I drank it down. I don't really recall how it tasted. I put the glass on the counter, and started to walk to my bedroom. I never made it." She looked away from Tristan, pulling herself away from him, and walking to the bank of lockers nearby. "I don't remember much of anything after that. Just what I was told." Tilly had her arm against the wall, and was resting her head against her forearm. Tristan walked up to her, and went to place his hand on her. She pushed him away. She spun around, eyes red, tears streaming down her face. "I put my parents through hell that week." She wiped her eyes on her sleeve. "I just wanted to die." Tristan wrapped his arms around Tilly. She put up no resistance, collapsing against him, with her face buried in his shirt. "I just wanted to die." Tristan just sat there and held the crying girl. After a minute or so, she raised her head up. "I didn't have friends. No one liked me. No one talked to me. I was alone." She looked up at Jane. "You have the one thing I didn't have. A friend. A friend who cares deeply for you. That is why I fight so hard, to keep you two together." She paused again, calming down a little. "I see in Daria now what I saw in myself back then. I don't want her to go down the same path I did. That's why when she started drinking, I became concerned."

Jane just stared at Tilly. "I... I don't know what to say."

Tilly looked up at Tristan, smiled, and pushed away. "We need to go. We need to get to Daria's."

"Yeah." Said Tristan.

“Y..Yeah.” Said Jane. She walked over to Tilly, and pulled her into a hug. “I’m sorry Tilly, I really am.”

Tilly accepted the gesture. “It’s okay Jane. You’re upset. I know how that goes.” She pulled away. “I’ve never told anyone the full story.” She looked at Tristan, and then back to Jane. “I never had friends, much less friends this close.”

“Or a boyfriend.” Said Tristan, putting his arm around Tilly.

“Yeah.” She said, putting her arm around Tristan.

“Let’s go.” Said Tilly. The trio walked the rest of way down the vacant hall, and through the doors at the end.

Angela Li sat at her desk, watching the screen as they exited the building. She hit a button on the keyboard, and the video skipped back, and then started again. “Did you try to commit suicide?” Came Tristan’s voice from the speaker.

“Yes.” Came Tilly’s voice.

Angela Li hit the stop button on the keyboard. “Suicidal.” She said, with a devilish grin. “Miss Seiler, what shall I do with you?”
