

## Morning Embrace

### Chapter 5

Robin stood frozen.

Red-faced, staring at Lia, heart thumping.

Lia didn't move. She sat there next to Robin, facing her, waiting to see what Robin would do.

A kiss.

"Are-" Her mouth felt dry, throat tight. "Are you sure?"

Lia nodded her head. "As long as you do. If you don't, I completely understand. You don't have to-"

Robin leaned forward, pressed her lips to Lia's.

The next second was the most awkward of Robin's life.

Their lips touched and... didn't do much else. Lia was too taken aback, kissed mid-word, to react. And Robin, equally surprised by her own action, didn't know *what* to do. She blushed brightly, leaned back, saw the surprise in Lia's eyes, the flush on her face.

"I'm sorry!" Robin said quickly, looking away. It was only then, in that moment, she realised Lia had probably been joking. Didn't *actually* want a kiss. "I-"

"No!" Lia squeaked, taking Robin's hand. "Don't be!"

"I thought- I didn't-"

"It's okay!"

"I'm sorry, I-"

"Robin," Lia squeezed Robin's hand, lifted it. Robin turned her head, fighting down a rush of emotions, and looked at Lia. "It's okay..."

Robin gulped when Lia tilted her head down and kissed Robin's hand.

"I was just surprised, is all." Lia smiled, cheeks rosy. "I... I liked it. Thank you."

"You," Robin's chest constricted. "You did?"

Smiling, Lia nodded her head.

"Really?"

"Yes!" Lia giggled, smile widening. "It was a little shorter than I'd hoped, but we can work on that."

Then, amazingly, Lia winked at her.

"If you want," Lia said, leaning closer. "We can practice 'til the bus comes."

Robin's initial instinct was to agree. Then her anxiety kicked in, the dark voice that soured anything and everything it could. She opened her mouth to say 'yes', but a sudden tightness in her throat stopped her. A cold shiver rippled down her spine.

Without thinking, Robin glanced around. Searching for onlookers. Anyone who'd watch and snoop and judge.

*Stupid!* Robin scolded herself. *Who cares?!*

All day without worry, and her anxiety had chosen *now* of all times to rear its head.

But, despite not wanting to care what strangers thought, the idea of it – being seen, watched, laughed at – was sobering. A dark cloud over what was otherwise a bright, colourful moment.

When Robin's gaze returned to Lia, she saw concern on the pretty girl's face.

*Don't worry about me*, Robin begged mentally, her mask of impassivity wiping the emotion from her face. *Please, don't pity me.*

Lia didn't say anything. She squeezed Robin's hand reassuringly.

So many things spun around inside Robin's head. Things she wanted to say and do, things she wanted to be. Things she was terrified of. She opened her mouth, intending to say something – anything – but words refused to form.

Thankfully, in that moment, the bus decided to show up.

Robin pushed it all down, like she always had, and nodded to the oncoming bus.

Another good moment, ruined by Robin.  
*Stupid.*

When they arrived back in their dorm room, Robin collapsed onto her bed. Bag filled with gifts and goodies forgotten, the memory of the kiss and its aftermath fresh in her mind.

They'd barely spoken a word since then.

*You ruined it*, she told herself, not for the first time.

Across the room – Robin didn't dare look, for fear of attracting Lia's attention – bedsprings creaked as Lia sat down on her own bed. Her roommate let out a happy yawn, a sigh of relief as she stretched.

"I'm exhausted!" Lia hummed, as happy as ever.

"Mm'hm," Robin agreed.

"My feet are killing me!" Even Lia's complaints sounded happy and carefree. "And my back!"

Robin, wallowing as she was, didn't respond.

"Hey, about earlier..."

Here it was. The thing Robin had been expecting, and dreading, for weeks. The 'friendzone' chat, where Lia let Robin know she wasn't interested. Where she'd tell Robin that she wasn't interested in girls, or that she was and she just wasn't interested in Robin in particular. So many times, Robin had imagined the speech. The talk.

Lia wasn't a bad person. But even good people had standards.

And Robin? Well, she was... Robin. A frail, weird loser.

"The kiss, I mean."

Robin closed her eyes, braced herself, then sat up to look at Lia. Prepared for what she knew was coming.

"I liked it," Lia said.

Lia, who was blushing and smiling and looking down at her hands.

"I'm sorry if I asked too much," Lia continued. "I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable or anything. It's just," she inhaled a breath, looked up at Robin. "I like you."

Those words hit Robin like a truck.

Her chest spasmed, lungs refusing to inhale or exhale. She was trapped in stasis, watching in slow motion as Lia's mouth continued to move – though the words were lost to the echo reverberating in Robin's head.

*I like you.*

As friends, not anything more. Robin was certain. And yet, that's not what Lia was saying.

"I've never," Lia shook her head. "I've never been in a relationship with a girl before. Heck, before I met you I didn't even know I was *into* girls. It's all so confusing and-"

Again, the silent noise in Robin's head blanked out the sound of Lia's voice. Relationship with a girl.

As in, a 'relationship'. With Robin.

*Pay attention!* Robin chided herself.

"I don't know," Lia sighed. "I'm still trying to figure it all out up here." She pointed at her head. "But, that kiss earlier. I don't regret it. Not one bit."

The pair met eyes, a meaningful look passing between them.

"If... If you're open to it," Lia said softly. "I'd like there to be more. Kisses. And..." She bit her lip, face crimson. "More. Stuff. Not right away or anything!" Lia added quickly. "I don't want to move too fast or make you uncomfortable or anything. But, like, I guess... What I'm saying is..."

Robin held her breath. Waited.

"Will you," Lia said, playing with her hands as she stared straight at Robin, "be my girlfriend?"

Robin felt like she was on a cloud. Untethered from the ground, from *reality*. She looked up at the ceiling for the millionth time that day, her thoughts drifting back to Lia like a paperclip to a very, very strong magnet. She'd been trying to read a book for the last four hours, ever since Lia had gone out to see some friends. And, in that time, she'd gotten through *maybe* three pages.

Girlfriend. She had a *girlfriend*.

Robin's head swam and spun at the fact. The reality of it. Every emotion imaginable flitted through her, from overwhelming joy and excitement to panic and dread. And, whenever she attempted to pick one of those emotions out, try to understand it, the sheer weight of the fact washed the thought away.

*I have a girlfriend.*

Her anxiety, of course, had plenty to say about that. None of it positive. But, for once, it sounded quiet and subdued.

*I have a girlfriend.*

How in the world had *that* happened?

*I have a girlfriend.*

Robin tried to distract herself again, returned to reading her book. Made it through two lines – which she'd already read earlier – before her mind dragged her away again.

She laughed.

There were too many things to think on, too many emotions. But, rather than it being overwhelming, Robin didn't mind so much. It was like a blanket of happiness covered everything, comforting the good and smothering the bad. The endless questions about the future didn't matter. All that mattered was the now.

Lia wouldn't be back for a while, most likely.

From what she'd said, her friends were very insistent that they spend time hanging around before Spring Break came to an end. And, Lia being Lia, she hadn't been able to say 'no'. She'd be out there now, spending time with a gaggle of girls.

Was she thinking of Robin?

The desire to text her, see what she was up to and if she was having fun, if Robin was on her mind, was definitely there. A tiny nagging, a want to be closer to Lia in any way possible. But Robin held off. She wasn't really the texting type.

Besides, she knew how much Lia's phone and messages stressed her. The idea that she'd be adding to that burden was enough to deter Robin.

"I need to do something."

Speaking the words aloud, hearing them, was good.

Robin sat up in bed, climbed off the mattress. She knew what she wanted to do, what she often wanted to but rarely did alone. But now was the time for it, if there was one. She put some clothes on, washed her face, left the dorm room.

Being locked away in the dorm room – in her bedroom back home – was comfortable. Easy. Simple. But also constricting.

A girl could only spend so much time surrounded by the same four walls before that room started to feel like a cage. And a caged bird, Robin did not want to be.

She picked a direction, walked, plastered a smile onto her face and made sure to share it with anyone she passed.

Embarrassing and uncomfortable. But good practice.

The way Lia walked around, held herself, smiled at everyone and was happy to talk and chat at meet people – Robin wanted that.

For now, her anxiety prevented her from talking to anyone, kept her walking fast to make it seem like she was busy. But she could smile greetings, nod her head at people. At least for a few minutes, before the effort of it all exhausted her and she lowered her head once more.

But she kept walking. No destination in mind. Just... Outside.

Out of the dorm room. Out of the building.

She breathed in the fresh air, followed a crisp, delicious scent to a mobile kitchen trailer serving bacon and burgers.

Half an hour later, she was sat on a low wall taking the last bit out of her burger. Enjoying the moment. Revelling in the sensation of cool air on her face and fingers, tingling and pleasant. She listened as a gentle breeze rustled plants and as people passed nearby, talking about this and that.

For the first time in... Ever, really. Robin felt like she could be who she *wanted* to be, rather than who she *was*.

Bold. Confident. Outgoing.

Happy.

Nodding to herself, she tossed the burger's greasy wrapping in a nearby bin. Headed back to the dorms. Promised herself that she'd get out more. Enjoy more the world. And life.

Robin shot up in bed when she heard a key in the lock.

The story she was *attempting* to read was instantly forgotten as the dorm room door swung open to reveal Lia, smiling and humming. In the same instant she entered, Lia saw Robin sitting on her bed and her smile widened.

Eyes drawn to that beautiful smile, Robin couldn't help but notice something that hadn't been there earlier.

Lia's lips. They were soft pink, a few shades brighter than their natural colour, and lusciously glossy. Plump, full lips made even more pretty by the smile on Lia's face.

Pink.

Had she done that for Robin?

As Lia closed the dorm room door behind herself, Robin hopped to her feet. She had the vaguest notion of what she was about to do, but didn't formulate the thought. She acted before she could stop herself, striding over to Lia.

The instant Lia turned to face Robin again, Robin put her hands on Lia's hips and kissed her. Pressing her lips to Lia's plump, glossy, pink ones.

Like last time, Lia froze in surprise. But, unlike then, Robin didn't shy away.

She was feeling too good. Too energised.

Hands resting on her *girlfriend's* hips, Robin pressed her lips to Lia's and waited. Either Lia would push her away. Or she wouldn't.

The instant of surprise passed.

Lia's lips met hers, parted. She tilted her head, places her hands on Robin's shoulders.

And, for several long seconds, they clumsily kissed.

Robin's experience kissing – making out with – others was... limited. Very much so. And Lia, she knew, was in a similar boat. It took them a couple of seconds to relax, test the waters with their tongues. Each movement tentative and cautious, neither one knowing exactly what to do, both wanting to participate.

Somehow, Robin's hands found their way to Lia's butt. Lost in the moment, she gave a little squeeze.

The tiny gasp that Lia let out set something afire inside her.

Still their lips locked, mashed. Tongues dancing, finding a flow. Their hands roamed and explored, touching and caressing and feeling. Their breathing hot and heavy in a room that was all of a sudden dense and stuffy.

When she heard bedsprings, felt hair falling down the sides of her face, Robin realised she wasn't on her feet anymore. She was on her back, on a bed – whose, she had no idea.

And still they kept kissing. Breaking one kiss only long enough to gasp for air before diving into the next.

Robin's mind fogged, emptied.

She wasn't sure where she ended and Lia began. Whose hands were where, who was touching what. She wasn't even certain who was on top and who was underneath.

Strawberry. Moist and delicious.

Perky softness under her fingertips, gasps and panting in her ears. Words that Robin could barely hear, and certainly couldn't recall.

And heat. So much heat.

Filling her insides, radiating out. She felt like a furnace. Molten. And electrical; surges of energy coursing through her, setting her nerves vibrating and her senses in overdrive. She could hear everything and nothing, taste the faintest wisps of strawberry, salt, something sweet. Her skin was on fire.

More than anything, there was the overwhelming *need*. A hunger, a craving, like nothing Robin had ever experienced before.

She felt like she was drowning and suffocating both at once.

When they finally broke apart, the room was noticeably dimmer. Evening leading into night.

But that wasn't possible. Sunset was over an hour away.

Wasn't it?

Robin lay in bed, panting. Gasping. Chest rising and falling. Her eyes gazing deep into Lia's.

The pink lip gloss had vanished over the course of *however* long it'd been. But they still shone with saliva. Still looked pretty and alluring, almost demanding Robin kiss them some more.

Lia's hair was messy and tangled, wet with sweat.

Likewise, her clothes were dishevelled and crumpled, much like Robin's own. Her blouse in particular had come unbuttoned at some point to reveal the pale skin beneath, a valley shadowed by the dimming daylight.

*Did I do that?*

Robin tried to recall, found she could barely remember anything from the moment they'd started making out.

And yet, despite the skin showing, the slightly askew bra, Robin had eyes only for the girl's face. Lia's stunning eyes, her plump lips that were parted as she panted.

Robin smiled at her, and Lia smiled right back.

"Welcome back," Robin said, dumbstruck by Lia's beauty.

"Thank?" Lia's grin widened. She shifted slightly, lifting her hand to her face; fingertips to her lips. She glanced down at those fingers momentarily before returning her gaze to Robin. "I guess that settles it."

"Hm?"

"I'm gonna have to wear pink more often."

Robin burst out laughing.