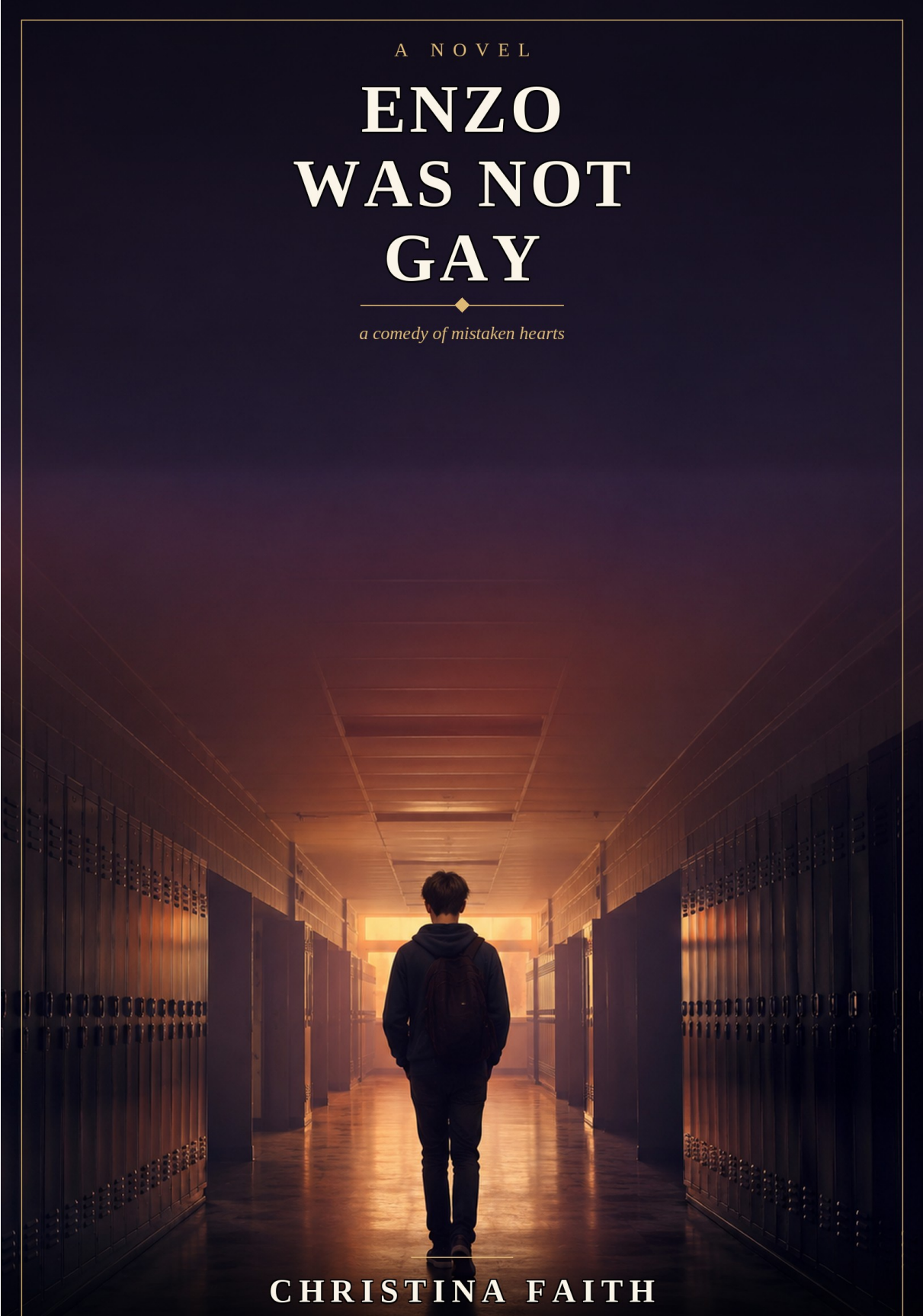


A NOVEL

ENZO WAS NOT GAY

a comedy of mistaken hearts

A photograph of a person with a backpack walking away from the viewer down a long, empty school hallway. The hallway is lined with rows of lockers on both sides. The lighting is warm and golden, coming from the end of the hallway, creating a strong silhouette effect and long reflections on the floor.

CHRISTINA FAITH

ENZO WAS NOT GAY

a novel

Christina Faith

— **FREE PREVIEW** — *Chapters One through Four*

Christina Faith

VOLUME ONE: BELONGING

Chapter One

The North Star office had once been a supply closet, and it still smelled faintly of the toner it had stored for eleven years before anyone thought to put a newspaper in it. There was a window, technically. It looked out on the dumpsters behind the cafeteria, which Della Winthrop had once described in print as “Fennimore North’s only unfiltered water feature,” a line that had gotten the paper’s ad budget frozen for a month and made her, in Enzo’s private opinion, the single funniest person he had ever stood next to.

She was standing next to him now, arguing about a photo.

“It’s a good photo,” Enzo said.

“It’s a photo of the back of Coach Devane’s head.”

“It’s contextual.”

“It’s the back of a man’s head, Enzo. There is no context that redeems the back of a man’s head.” Della didn’t look up from the layout screen while she said this, which was a habit of hers he’d stopped noticing was unusual around the tenth time she did it — she could dismantle an argument and rebuild the sports page at the same time, the way other people could hum and drive.

“Fine. What do you want instead.”

“I want the one where he’s yelling. Readers deserve emotional honesty.”

“You just want the funny one.”

“I contain multitudes,” Della said, and swapped the photo before he could stop her, and it was, admittedly, the funny one.

Enzo let it go, mostly because arguing with Della about layout was one of maybe four activities in his life that felt entirely uncomplicated, and he had learned not to spend those lightly. School was not uncomplicated. Most of the people in it had opinions about him that arrived pre-

formed, the way a package arrives already taped shut, and he had gotten tired, sometime around February of freshman year, of trying to open other people's boxes to see what was actually inside. It was easier to let the box say what it said. FRAGILE. THIS SIDE UP. GAY KID, GOOD ONE, DON'T WORRY, HE'S FUNNY ABOUT IT.

The door to the closet-office opened without a knock, because Jonah Ashcroft did not believe in knocking, on the grounds — he had explained this once, at length, at a party — that a knock was a request for permission and permission was a “colonial-era construct” that had no place among people who trusted each other. Enzo had laughed at the time. He still thought it was a genuinely funny thing to say. He had simply, in the eighteen months since, run out of new places to put the laugh.

“There he is,” Jonah said, which was what he said most days, as though Enzo were a landmark he was pleased to have found again. He had a binder under one arm — Jonah always had a binder, class president was a full-contact sport at Fennimore North and he played it like he meant to go pro — and he kissed the top of Enzo's head on his way past, a gesture so practiced it had the texture of punctuation. “Hi, Della.”

“Jonah,” Della said, in the particular register she used only for him, which was polite in a way that had edges.

“You guys still doing the football preview? Devane's going to lose his mind about that photo.”

“That's the point,” Della said.

Jonah laughed — a real laugh, generous, he was good at being delighted by people, it was one of the things everyone liked about him and one of the things Enzo had mistaken, for a while, for being loved by him specifically — and dropped the binder on the corner of the layout table, which was a table Della had explicit, laminated rules about. She did not say anything. This, Enzo would think about later, longer than the joke deserved: that Della let Jonah break a rule she'd once made Priya cry over.

“I need your signature on the Homecoming resolution,” Jonah said to Enzo. “Formally. I know you already said yes but Whit wants documentation now that everything's — you know. Documented.”

“Since when does student council need documentation for a dance theme.”

“Since the ‘Under the Sea’ thing got called out for colonial ocean imagery,” Jonah said, entirely seriously, and Enzo had trained himself, over a year and a half, not to catch Della's eye in moments like this one, because if he caught Della's eye he would laugh, and if he laughed at Jonah in front of Jonah there would be a conversation later about whether he took Jonah's work seriously, and the conversation would not be a fight, exactly — Jonah did not fight — it would be a soft, patient, slightly wounded explanation of why the thing Enzo found funny actually mattered, delivered with the specific gentleness of someone who has decided in advance to forgive you, and it would leave Enzo feeling like the smallest, meanest person in the state of Ohio for the rest of the day.

So he didn't catch Della's eye. He signed the binder.

“Thank you,” Jonah said, and meant it, and kissed him again, properly this time, quick and warm, a kiss with nothing performed in it at all, which was the maddening thing, which was the thing Enzo could never quite explain to himself in the fifteen minutes before he fell asleep most nights: that none of it was fake. Jonah wasn’t acting. Jonah loved him, actually, uncomplicatedly, the way he loved causes and binders and the sound of his own persuasiveness. The problem — if it was a problem, Enzo still wasn’t sure some nights that he was allowed to call it a problem — was not that Jonah’s love was fake. It was that Enzo kept reaching for something underneath his own end of it and finding the same flat, friendly, entirely genuine fondness he’d feel for a good roommate.

He had a word ready for that feeling. He had had the word ready for a year and a half. He did not let himself use it, because the last time he’d gone looking at a feeling that closely, freshman year, at Miles Petrakis’s house, with the lights low and Instagram open and eleven people watching, the looking itself had turned into an announcement he never remembered agreeing to make.

“I have to get to Calloway’s office,” Jonah said, checking his phone. “Belonging Council. We’re doing a whole thing about the vending machines.”

“The vending machines,” Della said.

“They only stock the diet stuff. It’s a body-image issue.” Jonah was already moving toward the door, binder reclaimed, energy undimmed; he moved through the world like a man who had never once considered that a room might not want him in it. “Love you. Bye, Della.”

“Bye,” Della said, to the door, since he was already gone.

The office was quiet for a second in the particular way it got quiet after Jonah left it, a kind of settling, like a room exhaling. Della went back to the layout. Enzo looked at the photo of Coach Devane yelling, which actually was very funny, and tried to locate, physically, somewhere in his chest, the thing he was supposed to be feeling and generally reported feeling and had in fact told four hundred people at a rally two years ago that he felt, with his whole heart, no asterisks, no notes.

“You’re doing the face,” Della said, without looking up.

“What face.”

“The math-test face. Like you’re checking your work.”

“I don’t have a math-test face.”

“You’ve had it since sophomore year. You get it every time he leaves the room.” She said this lightly, the way she said most things that mattered to her, camouflaged inside something that sounded like a joke, and Enzo — who had known Della Winthrop since they were nine years old, since she’d shown up at his ninth birthday party in a Batman costume nobody had told her wasn’t a costume party and simply refused, for the rest of the afternoon, to acknowledge that this was strange — did not, in that moment, or for a long time afterward, think to ask himself what it would mean if she was right about the face, or why she’d bothered to learn it in the first place.

"I'm fine," he said.

"I didn't ask if you were fine."

"You implied it."

"I implied you look like you're doing long division in your head every time your boyfriend says he loves you, which, if I'm wrong, great, ignore me, we have a paper to lay out and Devane's going to call the principal about his forehead by third period." She dragged the photo two pixels to the left, which did not visibly change anything, and Enzo understood this was a door she was closing on purpose, on his behalf, so that he wouldn't have to decide in front of her whether to walk through it.

He was thankful for that, the way you're thankful for shade before you notice you're hot.

"It's a good forehead," he said instead. "Very expressive."

"It's his whole personality," Della agreed, and that was that, for now — the two of them elbow to elbow over a dead man's supply closet, laying out a newspaper nobody outside the building read, while three hundred feet away Jonah Ashcroft sat in a beige office explaining to a man with the actual job title *Dean of Student Belonging* that the vending machines were committing a body-image issue, and somewhere underneath Enzo's sternum a feeling he had decided, at fourteen, belonged to somebody else's story continued quietly not going away.

Chapter Two

Marchetti dinners operated on a decibel level that Enzo's health teacher, Mrs. Fenn, would probably have flagged as hazardous, if Mrs. Fenn had ever been invited, which she had not, because Enzo's mother had strong opinions about teachers who assigned journaling as thirty percent of a grade.

"Thirty percent," Carla Marchetti said, spooning peas onto Theo's plate with the specific violence of a woman finishing an argument she'd started before anyone sat down. "For *feelings*. You cannot grade a feeling, Frank."

"You absolutely can," said Frank, not looking up from the chicken he was carving with the unhurried competence of a man who built decks for a living and treated every task, including dinner, like a load-bearing structure. "It's called a report card."

"That's not the same thing."

"It's the same *format*."

"Dad," said Gia, who was sixteen and had spent the entire dinner so far scrolling under the table in a way she believed was undetectable and was not, "nobody says format like that anymore."

"I will say format however I want in my own house that I built."

"You didn't build the house, you built the deck."

"I built the deck *and* the house has a deck on it, which makes it a system, which makes me the architect of a system, which means I can say format." Frank set down the carving knife with the air of a man who considered the matter settled. Marco, fourteen, laughed so hard he inhaled a pea and had to be thumped on the back by Gia, who did it harder than strictly necessary. Theo, six, watched all of this the way he watched most things, with the calm, slightly superior patience of the family's only member not yet fully radicalized into an opinion-haver.

Enzo loved his family with an intensity that occasionally embarrassed him, in the specific way that things you can't take credit for tend to embarrass you. He hadn't earned the Marchetti dinner table. He'd been born into it, the third of four, the quiet one, the one who watched the traffic patterns of a room before he entered it — a habit his mother said he'd had since he was two, standing in doorways doing what she called "casing the joint," which she found hilarious and which had in fact, Enzo thought, turned out to be the most useful skill he owned.

"Jonah says hi," he offered, into a lull, mostly because it was Tuesday and Jonah came up on Tuesdays; the Marchettis had a rough weekly rhythm to which topics got aired, the way some families had a rotation of chores.

"How's the Homecoming crusade going," Frank said.

"Frank."

"What. I like the kid. I think the vending machines are gonna survive the semester, that's all I'm saying."

"He's *earnest*," Carla said, in the tone of someone defending a decision she'd made a while ago and no longer entirely remembered the reasoning for. "There's nothing wrong with earnest."

"I didn't say there was anything wrong with earnest. I said the vending machines are gonna be fine."

Enzo ate his chicken and let it wash over him, the specific comfort of being talked about in the third person by people who loved him and had opinions but no real stake in the outcome, the way you might talk about the neighbor's home renovation. Nobody at this table had ever once asked him to defend Jonah, or defend himself, or explain the thing that had happened freshman year in a way that made it make sense, because by the time it had happened, it had already been explained to them, by him, in a single stiff, over-rehearsed sentence he'd delivered standing in this exact kitchen with his hands flat on the counter like he was bracing for a car crash: *I think I might be gay, and I wanted you to hear it from me.*

His mother had cried, briefly, and told him she loved him seven times in ninety seconds, which had felt at the time like relief and only years later would strike him as its own kind of pressure — a love so instantly, publicly, thoroughly *available* that there had never been a comfortable moment afterward to say *actually, hang on, I'm not sure*, because taking it back would have meant taking back her tears too, unspending something she'd already spent on him gladly. His father had said, "Okay," and then, after a pause exactly as long as it took to think about it, "you still want to come to the lake in August?" which had been, Enzo understood even then, its own kind of love, offered in the only currency Frank Marchetti reliably dealt in: nothing changes, kid, get in the truck.

Nobody at the table that night, or in the two years since, had ever asked him the question underneath the question. Nobody had said: *how do you know*.

He hadn't known. That was the part he had never said out loud, not to his parents, not to Priya, not to the four hundred people at the rally, not — especially not — to Jonah. He had known that he liked being looked at with relief instead of confusion. He had known that "gay" was a door with a crowd already standing on the other side of it, applauding, and "I don't actually know what I am, I think I might just be a person who gets scared and performs feelings he isn't sure he's having, please give me eleven years to work this out privately," was not a door. It didn't even have a shape. Nobody claps for a shrug.

"You're doing the face," Gia said, kicking him under the table, not unkindly.

"I don't have a face."

"Everybody in this family has exactly one tell and yours is that one," Marco said, delighted to have identified something, at fourteen, that made him feel briefly older than everyone. "Della says it too. I heard her say it at the game."

"When were you talking to Della."

"She sits behind us at games. She talks to Mom the whole time."

Enzo looked at his mother, who was suddenly extremely interested in Theo's peas.

"She's a very *observant* girl," Carla said, to the peas.

"Mom."

"I'm just saying! She notices things! It's a lovely quality in a friend."

"We're not — she's not —" Enzo heard himself starting three different sentences and finishing none of them, which was unlike him, he was good with sentences, it was more or less his one professional skill, and Gia, watching this happen with the merciless delight of a younger sibling clocking a live wound, grinned into her water glass and said nothing at all, which was somehow worse than if she'd said something.

"Anyway," Carla said, in the tone of a woman closing a door she intended to reopen later, at a time of her choosing, "eat your chicken, your father worked very hard on this chicken."

"I bought this chicken pre-carved," Frank said. "I just cut it more."

"You *architected* it," Gia said, and the table dissolved into the particular chaos that was, Enzo thought — watching Theo attempt to feed a pea to the dog under cover of the noise, watching his father fail to hide a laugh, watching his mother reach over without looking and steady Theo's cup before it tipped, a gesture so practiced it barely registered as a gesture at all — the only kind of church he'd ever fully believed in.

He did not think, that night, about the word he wasn't using. He rarely let himself think about it at the dinner table; the table was for peas and Devane's forehead and whether format could be a verb. But it followed him upstairs anyway, the way it always did, and sat on the end of his

bed while he did precalc homework, patient, uninvited, entirely unbothered by how long he was willing to make it wait.

Chapter Three

The Office of Student Belonging occupied what had once been the in-school-suspension room, a fact the school had not advertised and Priya Anand brought up at every available opportunity.

“They put Belonging where they used to put detention,” she said, falling into step beside Enzo at a pace clearly designed to make him hurry, “and I don’t think that’s an accident, I think that’s a Freudian slip made out of load-bearing drywall.”

“You say this every time.”

“It gets truer every time.” Priya had known Enzo since sixth grade, since the two of them had been assigned a joint project on the Erie Canal and discovered, with the seriousness twelve-year-olds bring to small discoveries, that they found the exact same things funny, which had turned out to be a rarer and more durable foundation for a friendship than almost anything else Enzo had. She was headed, this year, toward a debate scholarship at a school in Massachusetts she referred to only as “the one that will take me,” and she had a gift for saying true things in a voice that made them sound like jokes, which meant most people laughed instead of flinching, which meant she’d gotten away with more honesty in four years of high school than anyone else Enzo knew.

“Whit wants to see me,” Enzo said. “Apparently there’s a *survey*.”

“There’s always a survey. Last year it was the survey about whether the cafeteria felt ‘affirming.’ The year before that it was the survey about pronoun buttons, which, incredible design flaw, by the way, making the button optional and then measuring how many people didn’t opt in as a proxy for how unsafe the building is. That’s not data. That’s astrology with a clipboard.”

“You should run for something.”

“I am extremely busy resenting the people who did.” She stopped outside the door, which still had the little wire-mesh window from its detention days, giving the Dean of Student Belonging’s office the ambiance of a room where you might, if things went badly, be strip-searched for gum. “You want me to wait?”

“I’ll survive Whit.”

“That’s what the last kid said,” Priya said, and left him there, grinning, which was the specific gift she had, leaving you funnier than she’d found you.

Whit Calloway’s office had a beanbag chair in it — Enzo had never seen anyone sit in the beanbag chair, in three years, it existed purely as a signal, the way a fireplace in a hotel lobby exists to suggest warmth nobody is meant to actually use — and a whiteboard on which someone, presumably Whit, had written BELONGING IS A VERB in handwriting too neat to have been spontaneous.

“Enzo!” Whit said, standing to shake his hand with both of his own, a gesture Enzo had once seen a politician do on television and had assumed, until meeting Whit, was satire. “Thanks for coming by. Close the door, if you don’t mind — not because this is *sensitive*, just, you know. Sacred space.”

“Sure.”

“So.” Whit sat back down and steepled his fingers, a pose Enzo suspected he had practiced. “Homecoming’s coming up, obviously, and Jonah’s doing incredible work on the resolution, incredible — but I wanted to talk to *you*, specifically, about something a little different. We’re putting together the fall issue of the Belonging Newsletter — new initiative, goes home with every family, very high visibility — and I was hoping you’d be willing to write a piece. Your story. The coming-out story. Freshman year, the whole journey. Kids need to see that.”

There it was. It arrived, these days, with a kind of predictable weather-pattern regularity — every fall, some adult with a laminate badge wanting the story again, the freshman-year story, packaged and handed out like a pamphlet, and every time Enzo felt the same specific vertigo, standing at the exact center of a sentence that had started as an accident and had somehow, in two years, become a civic resource.

“I don’t know if I have anything new to say about it,” Enzo said, which was true, and also not the actual objection, which he did not have a sentence for yet, not one he trusted enough to say out loud in a room with a beanbag chair in it.

“That’s the thing, it doesn’t have to be new! Authenticity isn’t about novelty, it’s about *resonance*.” Whit said this the way a man recites something he has said in exactly this order many times before. “Kids are struggling right now, Enzo. The data on youth mental health is — it’s a crisis, frankly, and stories like yours, kids who found the courage to just *be who they are* despite everything — that’s not just nice, that’s *intervention*. That’s suicide prevention, literally, statistically.”

Enzo thought about saying: I don’t actually know if I found anything. I think I found an exit that had a lot of people cheering on the other side of it, and I walked through it because the alternative was standing in a hallway not knowing, forever, in front of everyone. He thought about saying: I’ve never once, in two years, been asked whether the story is true, only whether it’s useful, and I would like, please, for one single adult in this building to care about the difference.

He did not say either of these things. He said, “Can I think about it?”

“Of course, of course, no pressure, sacred space” — Whit tapped the desk twice, a closing gesture, apparently — “but for what it’s worth, Jonah already said you’d probably be into it. He’s very proud of you, you know. Wants the whole school to see what he sees.”

“Right,” Enzo said. “Great.”

He walked out past the beanbag chair nobody sat in and the whiteboard that said belonging was a verb and found Priya exactly where he’d left her, leaning on the lockers with the specific posture of a person timing how long a conversation had taken.

“Four minutes,” she said. “Fast, for Whit. What’d he want.”

“He wants me to write my coming-out story for the newsletter.”

“Oh, hell.” Priya’s face did something complicated — sympathy, mostly, but under it, Enzo thought, a flicker of something more careful, an old worry she’d never quite voiced, not once, in two years, though he sometimes suspected she’d come closer to it than anyone. “Again? He asked you literally last October.”

“He asks every October.”

“You should tell him the real version.”

“There isn’t a real version. There’s just the version.”

“There’s a version where a fifteen-year-old kid who’d had, if I recall, one and a half wine coolers, got asked at a party whether he’d ever *thought about it*, by Miles Petrakis, of all the immortal geniuses, and said ‘I mean, maybe, I don’t know,’ because that’s what you say when someone corners you with a phone camera already up, and then forty people had it on their Story by Monday and the GSA had a *banner* by Wednesday and nobody —” Priya stopped herself, visibly, the way she did when she felt she’d gone somewhere Enzo hadn’t invited her, and softened. “I’m just saying. There’s a version where you never actually said the sentence Whit wants in the newsletter. You said a maybe, out loud, once, and everybody else wrote the rest of it for you.”

Enzo didn’t answer. Down the hall, through the crowd changing classes, he saw Miles Petrakis for the first time in what felt like months — Miles didn’t run in his circles anymore, hadn’t since sophomore year, when the two of them had had one stilted, humiliated conversation in a Kroger parking lot that had ended with Miles saying, miserably, “I didn’t think it was gonna go anywhere, man, I was just messing around,” and Enzo saying, because it was the kindest true thing available, “I know. It’s fine.” It had not, strictly, been fine. It had also not, strictly, been Miles’s fault, not entirely — Miles had lit a match, that was all, in a room that had turned out to be already full of gas, built over years by people with much better intentions than his, and Enzo had never worked out how to be angry at any single person for it, because the anger, when he tried to aim it, kept refusing to land on one target and instead spreading out over the whole architecture of the thing — the party, the phones, the banner, the newsletter, Whit’s beanbag chair, his own fifteen-year-old need to be seen as brave rather than confused — until it wasn’t anger anymore, just a low, permanent hum, like a refrigerator you stop hearing.

Miles caught his eye across the hallway and did the thing he always did now, a small, apologetic nod, not quite eye contact, and kept walking.

“You okay?” Priya said.

“I’m fine.”

“You’re doing the face.”

“Does *everyone* know about the face?”

“Everyone who’s paying attention,” Priya said, not unkindly, and looped her arm through his, and steered him toward Chem, and let it go, which was its own kind of mercy, the specific mercy of a friend who knows exactly how far to push a door before backing off and simply standing next to you in the hallway instead.

Chapter Four

Della’s mother had a theory that you could tell everything about a person from what they did with a Sunday, and Della, who did not entirely believe her mother’s theories on principle, had nonetheless never managed to disprove this one, mostly because her own Sundays gave her away completely: she spent them at the desk in her bedroom window, which faced the Marchettis’ driveway, ostensibly doing homework, actually tracking, with the low-grade permanent vigilance of a woman monitoring a volcano, whether Jonah Ashcroft’s car was parked in it.

It was not parked in it today. Della noted this fact, disliked herself for noting it, and returned, with real effort, to her AP Government reading.

She had been nine years old the first time she decided Enzo Marchetti was the most interesting person she had ever met, on the basis of a single sentence he’d said to her at his own birthday party, after she showed up in a Batman costume nobody had told her wasn’t a costume party: *You can be Batman if you want, I don’t see why not.* No other kid at that party had said anything like it. Every other kid had laughed, or asked her why, or simply stared, the particular unblinking stare of children encountering a rule violation they didn’t yet have language for. Enzo had just — allowed it. Handed her the world’s smallest, easiest permission slip, at nine years old, with the same unbothered generosity he still had, seventeen years old now, signing homecoming binders and letting people believe things about him that made their lives simpler.

She had not, at nine, understood this as love. She had understood it, correctly, as the beginning of a friendship, and had spent the following eight years building that friendship into something so load-bearing — Enzo was the person she called first, the person whose handwriting she could identify from four feet away, the person she had watched, once, at twelve, throw up from nerves before a piano recital and had held his hair back for without either of them ever mentioning it again — that by the time she understood it as love, sometime around fifteen, taking the second thing apart from the first had felt less like a discovery and more like demolition. You couldn’t just remove the beam. The house came with it.

She had told exactly one person: her older sister, Marisol, over the phone, sophomore year, in a conversation she still thought about with a kind of wincing fondness.

“So don’t,” Marisol had said, with the specific bluntness of a twenty-two-year-old who has recently discovered therapy and wants everyone to benefit from it whether they asked or not.

“Don’t what.”

“Don’t be in love with your gay best friend. It’s a bit. It’s been a bit since 2003.”

“I’m not — I didn’t *choose* it, Mar, it’s not a bit, it’s just —” Della remembered, with real precision, how hard it had been to finish that sentence, and how she’d finally landed on the only honest end of it available to her: “I don’t think it’s actually true. I don’t think he actually knows. I think everybody decided for him and he’s too nice to correct four hundred people at a rally.”

“Della.” Marisol’s voice had gone gentle in the specific way that meant she was about to say something Della wouldn’t like. “Even if you’re right — and I’m not saying you’re right, I’m saying *even if* — that’s not your business to fix. That’s not a thing you get to sit around waiting on. You’ll turn into one of those women who spends her whole twenties on a guy she swears is *this close* to figuring it out.”

Della had not argued the point, because there was nothing to argue; Marisol was correct, on the facts, on the ethics, on the general shape of the warning. She had simply filed it away, the way she filed most warnings she agreed with and had no intention of following, and gone back to being — this was the word she used, privately, for the specific discipline it required — *useful*. Useful was safe. Useful was co-editing the paper with him, elbow to elbow, three feet from his actual boyfriend’s binder. Useful was learning to read the math-test face and never once asking what equation he was solving. Useful was a Sunday spent not looking at a driveway, mostly successfully, while doing reading on the separation of powers, which felt, some days, like a subject she was personally qualified to teach.

Her phone buzzed. Enzo.

you up for column brainstorm tmrw. i have Feelings about the belonging newsletter

Della looked at the message for longer than it required. She had gotten, over eight years, extremely efficient at translating Enzo’s texts, the way you get efficient at a language you’ve been speaking your whole life — *I have Feelings*, capital F, meant something specific had happened, something that had gotten under the usual jokes, and the fact that he was bringing it to her first, before Jonah, before Priya even, was a fact she was careful, every single time, not to make more of than it was. He brought her the real things because she was good at layout and better at editing and best, probably, at listening without flinching. That was the whole explanation. It did not need another one.

always up for your Feelings, she typed back. bring donuts, i’m not doing this on an empty stomach

deal

She set the phone down, face-up, on the desk, next to the reading on separation of powers, and looked out the window one more time at the empty driveway, and told herself, with the specific firmness of a girl who has had a great deal of practice telling herself things, that she was not waiting for anything. She was simply, as it happened, positioned near a window.

Want to keep reading?

Enzo has just made his first honest choice of the year — writing his own column instead of the one the school wanted from him. What happens next changes everything: a stolen video, a truth he can no longer avoid, and a girl who has waited eight years to hear him say it back.

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