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AKA **wattpad** SENSATION XxSKATER2GIRL16xX

Gold Rush

She's with the band...

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About the Book

When hot, talented, uber-famous boy band Gold enroll at the prestigious Oakwood Academy, Iris is determined not to get distracted. She's class president and a scholarship student, and she can't let her grades drop. Besides, there are plenty of other girls who are desperate to get close to Gold - including Iris's best friend, Chloe.

But on their first day at Oakwood, Iris is asked to show Gold around - and finds out gorgeous lead singer Rian will be sharing her locker . . .

Surrounded by fans and paparazzi at every turn, Noah, Luke and Rian love that Iris treats them just like normal guys. But being friends with three of the most famous people in the world comes with its problems. And when Iris begins to realize she has feelings for one of them, things get even more complicated . . .

Gold Rush

Jordan Lynde

RHCP DIGITAL

Track One

'Iris! Hurry up!' my best friend Chloe urged, pulling on my arm feverishly, tugging me towards the school gates where a massive gaggle of girls were standing. 'They'll be arriving any second!'

'Chloe, I really need to go to the library to print out my essay,' I complained, trying to release my arm from her death grip. 'Besides, it's freezing.'

Chloe glanced at me, her chocolate eyes lit up with excitement. 'You can print your essay later. This is a once-in-a-lifetime event!'

'Chloe, it's going to happen every day for the rest of the year,' I told her, rolling my eyes.

'I know! But Iris, it's Gold! I know you like them as much as I do!'

'Yeah, I like them,' I admitted and successfully yanked my arm away from her. 'But this essay is due first period and they'll be around all day—'

'Oh my God!' Chloe suddenly shrieked, cutting me off. 'It's them! Look! Iris, look! It's Gold!'

Letting out a soft sigh, I followed Chloe's pointing finger, and my eyes landed on a sleek, black limousine. How inconspicuous. Chloe clutched my arm again, her nails digging into my pale skin as a chauffeur climbed out of the vehicle and opened the back passenger door. As he did, Chloe let out an excited squeal.

After a moment, a mop of blond hair the exact same shade as Chloe's appeared as a young man climbed out of the limousine. A few locks of his messy hair fell in his face, and he quickly brushed them out of the way with his hand,

revealing his piercing green eyes. Even from a distance, I could see their dazzling color.

‘Noah! It’s Noah!’ Chloe cried, looking at me with wide eyes. ‘Look!’

I couldn’t help but laugh at Chloe’s reaction. Even after knowing her for four years, how overexcited she got about something was still funny. She was like a puppy. ‘Chloe, I know who he is,’ I told her.

Noah Alexander, eighteen, high school senior, and the bassist in the extremely popular boy band Gold. It was hard *not* to know who he was. His handsome face was plastered all over the covers of magazines like *Rolling Stone*. In person, though, he looked a lot taller than in the photos — at least six feet. Even more attractive, as well.

Noah’s eyes swept over the crowd of girls by the school gate, a grin spreading across his face. He waved excitedly, trying to acknowledge everyone. Then a second person emerged. Chloe gasped, squeezing my arm painfully again. ‘Iris! It’s—’

‘Luke Parker,’ I interjected, knowing what she was about to say. ‘I know who he is too.’

Luke Parker, seventeen, also high school senior, and Gold’s drummer. He had shaggy, dark hair that gave him the striking look of a bad boy, lip piercing and all. Just like Noah, Luke looked a lot better in person. He wasn’t as tall as Noah, but he was still at least a good four inches taller than my five-foot five. Luke blew kisses to the crowd and I smiled, pleasantly surprised that he seemed just as friendly as Noah.

Now the only person left in the limousine had to be the most famous band member of the three: Rian Drew, Gold’s lead singer and guitarist. At eighteen, he was a senior like the other two boys, and just as handsome. Excited squeals and screams came from the audience as messy, pecan blond hair appeared, quickly followed by a slender body. Bright cerulean eyes darted around the crowd of girls as

Rian took them all in, looking confused. His lost-puppy-dog expression earned an *aww* from Chloe.

Then he looked past everyone and directly at me. My eyes widened in surprise when our gazes locked and I immediately looked down, my heart skipping a beat. With a shake of my head, my brunette locks fell in front of my face, cutting off all contact.

'You totally just made eye contact with Rian!' Chloe whispered excitedly.

'It was an accident,' I muttered, slowly raising my eyes back to the limousine.

Rian wasn't looking my way any more and I relaxed a little. All the band were dressed in my school's mandatory school uniform; navy blue, plaid slacks; a white shirt; a solid, navy blue blazer; and a matching tie. I'd always thought guys looked good in our uniform, but the way they wore it made it look more than good. They made it look drop-dead gorgeous.

Noah started talking, but Chloe and I were too far away to hear what he was saying. 'Let's go closer,' Chloe urged.

I shook my head and once again unlatched her arm from mine. 'Go by yourself if you want. I've really got to hurry to the library and print out my essay. Besides, I'm getting frost-bitten.'

Chloe rolled her eyes. 'You take school so seriously.'

'That's because some of us actually have to get good grades to go here,' I reminded her. 'Not all of us are rich.'

Chloe frowned. 'Oh, yeah, I always forget you're here on scholarship. Sorry.'

'Forget it,' I murmured, pulling my jacket around me tighter.

'But I bet you're glad you studied so hard to get in,' Chloe continued, sending me a cheeky grin. 'Who would have guessed out of all the schools in America, Gold would choose Oakwood Academy.'

‘Who knows?’ I responded, shrugging. ‘I don’t see why they transferred, though. Who transfers halfway through their senior year? It seems a waste to me . . .’

Christmas break had just ended, and today was the first day back. It was also the first day of Gold’s arrival. Why they were suddenly transferring to my private school, I had no idea, but most of the girls here were very excited about it, and even some of the guys. All Christmas break people in my grade had been posting statuses and tweeting about how Gold was coming to our school.

‘Oh my God! They’re coming this way!’ Chloe cried, reaching for my arm again.

Ducking left, I managed to avoid her. When I glanced at the gates, I saw the trio coming towards us, the crowd of girls following. For a second I watched the group with an amused smile, but then I turned and started heading back to the school building. I didn’t want to get tangled up in that.

‘Hey!’ Chloe called frantically. ‘Where are you going?’

‘Essay,’ I responded, waving my hand dismissively. ‘I’ll see you at lunch.’

Chloe grumbled something I didn’t quite catch. It sounded like *spoil sport*, which made me laugh quietly. Passing through the school’s marble entryway, I hurried to the left and up the stairs to the colossal library. It probably held every book known to man. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if it contained more than that. My footsteps echoed in the polished halls as I hastened down them, earning curious looks from the few students milling about. Apparently they didn’t have an essay to hand in first period.

‘Hello, Iris,’ the librarian, Ms Barnes, said with a smile as I entered the library, relishing its warmth. ‘What’s up?’

I held up my flash drive. ‘Printing out an essay.’

‘Feel free to use the computers in the back.’

‘Thanks.’

She continued to smile at me as I made my way towards the computers. As soon as my back was turned, I let my own smile drop. Even though she seemed nice, Ms Barnes could be incredibly vicious. If there was one thing you didn't want to do, it was get on her bad side.

The computer I sat at was already on, so all I had to do was stick my flash drive in and open my Word document. I scanned it quickly for any noticeable errors, then made sure I had the proper formatting, font size, and page alignment. My English teacher was a stickler for MLA format, and I'd lose points if I wasn't careful. When I was satisfied with how my essay looked, I hit the PRINT button. As soon as I heard the printer at the front of the library going, I quickly logged out of the computer.

Loud, raucous laughter filled the room just as I pulled my flash drive out of the Mac. Grimacing, I prayed for the poor souls who were making the racket. Ms Barnes was going to eat them alive. However, when the laughter continued, I turned to see what was going on. Ms Barnes never allowed so much noise.

A small gasp of surprise left my lips when I realized the trio from Gold were in the library. They were standing around the front desk where Ms Barnes, and the printer, were. I quickly glanced at the clock on the wall. Five minutes until class started, and I still needed to go to my locker. I didn't want to go get my essay with the boys up there, but within a minute I was boldly walking up to the front desk.

'Excuse me,' I mumbled, sounding quieter than I'd meant to.

All three boys turned and I quickly dropped my eyes to the ground so I wouldn't have to look at them. I'd probably blush or do something stupid. Still, I felt their eyes on me and it took all I had not to return their gazes. If there was one thing I didn't want to do, it was embarrass myself by staring at them. And it would be hard not to: they were Gold, after all.

‘You need something, Iris?’

‘Essay,’ I said, automatically looking up at her. Unsurprisingly, my eyes drifted, and I found all the boys staring curiously at me, and then somehow I was locking gazes with Rian.

‘Whoa,’ he started, his eyes widening slightly. ‘I can see where you get your name from. Blue iris, huh? That’s my favorite flower,’ he added with a lopsided grin.

My mouth went dry. A member of Gold had complimented me. But instead of saying thanks, like I should’ve, I just mumbled a ‘sure’ and turned back to the librarian. ‘Can I have my essay now? It’s in the printer . . .’

‘I’ll get it for you.’

My eyes shot back up to Rian, who was still grinning at me. For a moment I stared into his blue eyes, mesmerized. When he blinked I managed to pull my eyes away from him and forcefully focus on my shoes. Damn, it was hard not to stare.

A piece of paper appeared in front of me, and I recognized it as my essay. Once again, I looked up, expecting to see the arm attached to Rian, but to my surprise, it was Noah. He shook the paper in my face and I quickly took it so it wouldn’t get wrinkled. ‘Thanks,’ I said with a small smile.

Noah shrugged. ‘No problem.’

‘I’m going to my homeroom now,’ I said, looking at Ms Barnes. ‘I’ll probably see you later today.’

Ms Barnes held up a hand. ‘Hold on a minute. After I finish printing out these boys’ schedules, would you show them to their homerooms? I think it would be best for them to go directly there and not wander in the hall.’

I stared at the librarian incredulously. She wanted me to bring the boys to their homeroom? Me, who could barely look at them? Why couldn’t she get one of the other girls to do it? I quickly glanced around the library and realized that I was the only other person in here besides Gold and Ms Barnes. ‘Wait, where are all the other girls?’

Rian pointed to the library entrance, where a large group of girls stood, staring at us with wide eyes. 'Right there.'

'Er . . . why are they just standing there . . .?'

'We asked them to wait while we got our schedules,' Noah told me. 'They actually listened to us too! Usually our fans follow us everywhere - even when we ask them not to.'

Ms Barnes smiled at him. 'Ah, that's because the students have been warned not to bother you guys while you're here. If anyone causes you a problem, just tell a teacher. Weren't you informed of that?'

'Yes, but I didn't actually think anyone would listen,' Rian mused, staring at the girls. A couple of them waved enthusiastically at him. He waved back.

'I guess being mobbed at the gates doesn't count then?' Luke asked, speaking for the first time.

I blinked, a little surprised. His voice was deeper than I'd expected. I hadn't ever watched an interview with all three boys, so this was the first time I'd heard him speak.

'If you really want we could try to stop that,' Ms Barnes started, looking unsure. 'It's hard because not all the teachers are here when most of the students arrive . . .'

'No, no, it's fine,' Rian assured her, shaking his head. 'It's nice. We know we're not normal students, so there's no need to make a hassle trying to get everyone to act like we are. People will calm down eventually.'

Somehow I doubted that. But he could hope.

'But about our homerooms?' Noah asked.

'Oh, right! Iris, would you mind?' Ms Barnes said, turning to me.

I nodded. If it were any other student, I wouldn't have a problem. I shouldn't treat Gold differently. 'Yeah, that's fine.'

'OK, good,' Ms Barnes replied, holding up a pile of paper. 'Now, I don't know who's who, so, Noah Alexander . . .?'

'That's me,' Noah said, shaking his blond hair out of his face. Ms Barnes smiled and handed him his schedule.

'Luke Parker?'

'Me,' Luke responded, holding out his hand.

'And so you must be Rian Drew,' Ms Barnes declared, turning to Rian.

Rian made a sound of agreement, taking the paper from her. I glanced at him out of the corner of my eye. He happened to glance at me at the same time, and our gazes met. A smile came onto his face and I quickly turned away, swallowing nervously. This was *way* weird.

'So, Noah and Rian should be in your homeroom, Iris, and Luke is next door, in Ms Hallet's room,' Ms Barnes said, running a hand through her bushy hair in a failed attempt to smooth it down. 'Now hurry, or you'll be late.'

I started walking towards the library exit, gesturing over my shoulder for the boys to follow me. Their footfalls told me they were obeying, so I sped up a little. The girls parted like the Red Sea as we exited. Yes, definitely *way* weird.

'Thanks for waiting!' Rian said brightly. 'We're off to our homerooms now - you guys should head there as well. Classes should start soon, right? Don't want to be late!'

A couple of the girls agreed while others groaned. Rian had to promise he'd talk to them later in order to get them to disperse. I was impressed, but then I remembered the school had basically threatened us with detention if we bothered the boys too much.

Suddenly I felt a tug on my hand. I turned to face Noah, who was frowning. 'What?'

'Can we stop at our lockers first?' he requested, looking down at his schedule. 'Luke, Rian, and I all have them in a row, so it will only take a minute.'

'What's your locker number?'

'Um, 1034.'

I blinked in surprise. My locker number was 1035.

'So can we?' Noah repeated, giving me a pleading look. 'Please?'

'You don't have to say please,' I muttered, averting my gaze yet again. 'We can stop by. Luckily for us, our lockers

are right outside our homeroom.'

'*Our* lockers? So we're locker buddies?' Rian chirped, and I glanced over my shoulder to where he and Luke were walking side by side.

I cracked a grin at him. Locker buddies. I liked the sound of that. 'Guess so.'

He grinned back. 'You should feel special. You're locker buddies with Gold.'

'Don't be too modest,' I teased. Secretly, I was pleased. It was kind of exciting to be locker buddies with the band. Maybe we would end up becoming friends. Chloe would probably cry tears of joy.

The trip to the lockers took longer than it should have. Every few seconds we were stopped by a bunch of tittering girls, and the boys had to promise them they'd talk later. I was impressed by Gold's attitudes. They were extraordinarily amiable, never once refusing a handshake or a hug. They didn't even seem to care when we came across the handful of students who seemed to have no idea who they were.

When we finally made it to our lockers, I stopped in front of mine, spreading my arms out. 'Here we are,' I told them. 'This is yours, Noah,' I began, pointing to the locker to the left mine.

Luke silently went to the one to the right of mine, and began to spin the combination. Noah did the same to his and I stood awkwardly in front of mine while Rian stared at me with an eyebrow raised. I stared back for a few seconds until he finally cleared his throat. 'Can you move over a little?' he asked, jerking his head to the side. 'I need to get to my locker too . . .'

My eyebrows furrowed and I checked behind me quickly to make sure I was standing in front of my locker. 1035. I turned back to Rian, shaking my head slightly. 'You might want to re-check your schedule; this is my locker.'

Rian pursed his lips, his gaze turning to the piece of paper in his hand. After a second he looked back at me, his expression puzzled. 'It says my locker is 1035.'

'Let me see your schedule,' I demanded, holding out my hand.

'Sure.'

He placed the paper in my hand, and I quickly scanned over it to where his locker number was located. Confusion ran through me when I realized that it did indeed say his locker was 1035.

'Um, I think they messed up,' I said, handing the schedule back to him. 'This is *my* locker.'

A small smirk appeared on Rian's face. 'It is, is it?'

I nodded. 'Yep. Since Freshman year.'

Noah laughed. 'Well, I guess you two will be taking locker buddies to the next level, eh?'

I narrowed my eyes at Noah in confusion. 'What do you mean?'

'Since you have to share the locker,' Noah explained. 'You're like, extreme locker buddies.'

'Share?' Rian and I uttered at the same time, glancing at each other.

Noah nodded. 'You're not going to refuse to let him use it, are you?' He raised an eyebrow at me.

I immediately shook my head. 'No! I won't, but this is my locker . . . I'm sure if we talk to someone in the office then —'

'Aw, are you going to separate us?' Noah whined. 'It'd be so handy to have all of our lockers in a row!'

'But . . .'

Rian nudged my shoulder. 'Come on, it won't be that bad. You'll be sharing a locker with the lead singer of Gold. You should feel like the luckiest girl on earth right now.'

'But,' I repeated pathetically, knowing there was no way I could win this fight.

‘Thank you for your understanding,’ Rian interjected, reaching an arm past me, and beginning to spin the combination for the lock. ‘I don’t use a locker much, so it won’t be that bad.’

I chewed on my bottom lip, not saying anything. It’d be so much easier if Rian just asked for a locker change. It was my locker, after all.

‘It won’t be that bad,’ Rian promised me with a happy smile. ‘You’ll see. I’ll be an awesome extreme locker buddy.’

Nodding, I smiled right back at him. I had a feeling the last half of my senior year was going to be the most interesting four months of my life.

Track Two

'Er . . .' I stared into my locker, not sure whether to be amused or irritated. It was only lunchtime, and my locker was already filled with papers. Rian's blazer hung on one of the hooks, and two of his books were on the top shelf. I didn't mind that. It was the papers. They were all disorganized, littering the bottom of my locker. Letting out a sigh, I stooped down to shuffle them into one pile.

'Hey!'

Immediately I stood straight up, smashing my head against a rather hard chin. I winced, rubbing the sore spot.

'Ow . . .'

The person behind me chuckled, and I turned to see Noah. 'Hi,' he said with a grin. 'You have a hard head.'

'You have a hard chin,' I responded, wrinkling my nose at him. 'Um, what's up?'

Noah's expression turned sheepish and he shuffled on his feet. 'I can't seem to find the cafeteria . . . could you help me?'

How cute. 'Of course,' I responded with a laugh. 'Hold on, let me just set these papers up here.' I stood on the tip of my toes and shoved Rian's papers onto the top shelf.

'What are you doing?' A new voice, not Noah's, demanded.

I glanced over my shoulder to see Rian staring at me curiously. 'Cleaning up your mess,' I told him with a frown. 'I thought you said you didn't use your locker that much?'

Rian shrugged. 'I don't want to carry around books or useless paper.'

'Can you try to keep them at least a little more organized then?' I asked, pushing a lock of my hair behind my ear.

Rian smirked. 'I don't know, can I?'

I opened my mouth to respond, but before I could, a high-pitched voice cut me off. 'Oh my God! It's Rian!'

'Hi Rian!'

Rian shut his eyes for a moment, letting a small sigh out through his teeth. Noah chuckled, bumping his hip against Rian's. 'Ladies' man already?' he joked.

Alli, a girl from my homeroom, came up to us, her eyes wide in excitement. 'Noah! Hi!'

'Hello,' Noah responded, flashing a grin at her.

'Are you going to lunch now?' she asked, her eyes darting back and forth between Noah and Rian, completely ignoring me.

Noah nodded. 'Yep.'

'Want to sit with me?'

'Sorry,' said Noah, suddenly putting a hand on my shoulder. 'I've already promised to sit with my locker buddy today.'

Alli's eyes finally flicked to me, her face falling slightly. 'Oh ...'

I gave her a sympathetic look.

'Maybe another day?' Rian interjected.

She brightened up immediately. 'Of course! Just let me know!'

'Will do,' Rian responded with a warm smile. 'Alli, right?'

'Right!' she chirped giddily. 'Um, have a good lunch!'

'You too,' Rian and Noah responded together, waving as she scampered off with her friends, who had been watching the conversation.

I smiled at the boys. 'Surprisingly, you guys are really nice.'

Rian raised an eyebrow. 'What? Did you think we were going to be snobs?'

'Maybe a little,' I admitted. 'But you've definitely proved me wrong. You're really nice to your fans.'

'Are you a fan?' Noah asked casually. 'It's cool if you're not,' he added quickly. 'I'm just wondering.'

'Well, I'm not *not* a fan,' I answered offhandedly. Would they care if I were a fan or not? Would they think I just wanted to be friends with them because they were famous?

Rian chuckled. 'So, I take it you are a fan?'

I cleared my throat, offering a half-smile. 'Yeah, sorry.'

'Dude, don't apologize!' Noah cried, his eyes widening slightly. 'It's awesome that you're a fan. Thank you!'

'Don't thank me,' I muttered, embarrassed.

'I'm hungry.'

I jumped a little, looking over my shoulder to see Luke suddenly standing behind me. He was like a ghost! 'W-why don't I show you guys to the cafeteria?' I said, trying to calm my heart.

'Thanks, Iris,' Luke said and I blinked at him in surprise. He remembered my name? Ms Barnes had only mentioned it once, and we'd never given each other formal introductions. It was kind of nice.

'This place is huge,' Noah complained as we made our way down the hall. 'It's pretty much impossible to locate anything. Without the girls to show me to my next class, I'd never make it on time.'

I laughed. 'You'll get used to it.'

'But you've been here for four years, haven't you?' Rian pointed out. 'Aren't you a senior too?'

'Yeah, but I got used to it pretty quickly,' I responded with a shrug.

'You're a senior?' Noah asked. 'Does that mean we might have classes together?'

'Obviously not the first three,' I said. 'But maybe in the next four we might have one.'

He looked excited. 'Want to see my schedule?'

Before I could respond, Rian cut in, 'How about during lunch? I'm starving.'

On the trip to the lunchroom, at least twenty girls asked Gold to sit with them at lunch. I wasn't sure when they had decided it, but they told each girl they were sitting with me at lunch. I didn't know *why* they wanted to sit with me, but I wasn't about to tell them no.

'This place is awesome,' Noah said, setting his lunch tray down at the table I always ate at. 'They serve Chinese food for lunch!'

'And it actually looks edible,' Rian added, taking a seat next to me.

Luke appeared at the table a few moments later. 'They gave me six soup choices,' he commented solemnly. 'It was hard to choose between them.'

I glanced at Luke's tray. There were three bowls of soup and a cheeseburger on it. I would've laughed, but I wasn't sure if it would offend him or not. He'd sounded pretty serious about it being hard to choose . . .

'So,' Noah started, stabbing a fork into his pork fried rice. 'Have you guys heard that the students have been told not to ask us for autographs? I guess that's another rule.'

Rian pursed his lips. 'My English teacher first period asked me for an autograph. I guess it's OK for the teachers to ask, huh?'

'A teacher? That's weird,' Noah replied with a laugh.

There was a sudden gasp from behind me, and I turned around to see Chloe staring at me, her eyes as big as saucers. Noah and Rian both grinned at her, and a blush appeared on her face. I couldn't help but grin at her too. She continued to stand stock-still until I gestured for her to sit down next to me.

'Rian, Noah, Luke, this is Chloe,' I said. 'She's my best friend.'

'And a huge fan,' Chloe interjected excitedly. 'It's so awesome to meet you!'

'You too,' Gold responded simultaneously.

Chloe grinned at the boys before turning to me and beaming. 'So how did you all become friends so quickly?' she asked, turning to face everyone again.

'We're locker buddies,' Noah explained. 'Rian somehow ended up having to share a locker with Iris.'

Chloe's eyes widened again. 'Like boyfriends and girlfriends do?'

'Chloe! No!' I hissed, feeling my face heat up.

Luke immediately choked on his soup. He thumped his fist on the table, his eyes watering. Noah quickly slammed him on the back with his hand, only causing Luke to choke harder. Rian rolled his eyes at the pair, a smirk playing on his lips. 'Boyfriend and girlfriend, huh?' he commented in an amused voice. 'Well, I don't mind,' he continued, leaning towards me. 'What about you?'

I leaned back away from him, watching him warily. 'What are you . . .?'

'Rian! Don't pull out your playboy moves already,' Noah scolded.

Rian held up his hands innocently. 'Chill, I was joking.'

A piece of paper was suddenly waved in front of my face, and I realized it was Noah's schedule. I took it and glanced down his list of classes. 'Do we have any classes together?' he asked eagerly.

'Umm,' I hesitated, looking at the period numbers. 'Chemistry and music class.'

'Oh! That means you have chemistry with me too,' Chloe told him, her eyes bright and star-struck.

Noah grinned. 'We have *chemistry*, huh?'

Chloe blushed again and shook her head. 'N-not like that!'

Rian heaved a sigh from my other side. I turned to give him a questioning look, but he just smirked again and said nothing.

'How about you, Luke?' Chloe asked.

Luke averted his gaze and pulled out his schedule. 'Uh, I have chemistry and music with Noah . . .'

'So you're with us!'

'What about sixth period?' I asked.

'English,' he responded.

'I have English sixth too!' Chloe chirped. 'I can show you the way after chemistry, if you want.'

Luke stared at her for a second before ducking his head. 'Yeah, thanks.'

'Do you have sociology sixth period?' Noah asked me.

I shook my head. 'No, photography.'

'Damn. Looks like I'm alone. Unless Rian has sociology six period?' Noah said, his response turning into a question as he turned to Rian.

'I have Chemistry, photography, then music,' Rian listed off.

Noah looked shocked. 'I'm alone!'

Rian raised an eyebrow at me. 'Wait. I have the same schedule as you, right, ultimate locker buddy?'

'Yeah,' I responded, furrowing my eyebrows. 'What were the odds?'

'Class prez! There you are!'

I turned in my seat to see Nick, the vice president for our class, coming towards me. I held in a groan as realization shot through my mind. Crap. It'd totally slipped my mind that there was supposed to be a student council lunch meeting today. Gold had distracted me.

'Class president?' Noah repeated, looking surprised. 'You're president of the student council?'

Rian whistled. 'So you're little Miss Popular?'

I blushed, shaking my head. 'No, that's not it. The student council is based on grades here—'

'So you're Miss Smarty Pants?' Rian interrupted, looking amused. 'Hmm, I think I chose the wrong locker buddy.'

'What's wrong with being class president?' I snapped, a little offended.

Rian shrugged. 'I'm more of a party-er.'

'Who says I don't party?'

Rian gave me a surprised look and I shot a grin at him. Just because I was smart didn't mean I couldn't have fun.

Nick cleared his throat. 'I'm going to excuse you from skipping our meeting today,' he started amiably, 'but our class advisors want to talk to you about Snowball. They want you to meet with them after school today. Dimitri, Ricardo, and myself will be attending as well. Are you free?'

'What's Snowball?' Noah asked in a whisper.

For the first time, Nick seemed to notice that I was sitting with Gold. His eyes widened in surprise, and he turned to me. 'You're friends with Gold, Iris?'

'Um, we're—'

'Locker buddies,' Noah told him. 'Closer than friends.'

I half-shrugged at Nick's confused face. 'I don't know either.'

'So what's Snowball?' Noah asked.

Nick turned to him, shaking his shaggy brown hair out of his face. 'It's a dance for the seniors.'

'A dance?' Rian repeated, sounding interested. 'When is it?'

'Right before February break,' I informed him. 'Nick, tell Ms Streaker and Ms Dawson that I'll be there.'

Nick saluted to me. 'Will do. Enjoy your lunch. And don't worry, I won't tell anyone you skipped out on the meeting to eat lunch with Gold.'

'I didn't mean to skip it,' I protested loudly, but Nick was already walking away.

I felt a tug on my hair and I turned to see Rian watching me, amusement in his eyes. 'Skimping on responsibilities? That's not very president-like.'

'I wasn't skimping! And let go of my hair,' I demanded, slapping his hand away.

Noah and Luke chuckled from across the table as a scowl appeared on Rian's face. Doing my best to ignore the boys, I

turned to my lunch, picking up a cucumber slice. From the corner of my eye I could see Chloe grinning at me. I studiously ignored her.

‘So since you’re class prez, does that mean you have the best grades in your class?’ Noah asked curiously.

‘Um, no,’ I responded, dropping the cucumber back onto my tray. ‘There’s a few people ahead of me, but they didn’t want to be on student council.’

Rian cocked his head to the side. ‘And you do?’

I shrugged. ‘Why not? I like organizing activities for our class. It’s better than letting someone who thinks doing a rope-course activity is fun decide for the whole class.’

‘I like the way you think,’ Noah said. ‘When Snowball comes around, I want you to be my date, OK?’

I looked at him in surprise. ‘What?’

‘You don’t want to?’ he questioned, giving me a puppy-dog look.

I shook my head quickly. ‘No, that’s not what I mean. It’s just . . . It’s like, a month and a half away. You might find someone else you want to take. We barely know each other—’

‘I know you more than anyone else in this school though,’ Noah pointed out.

‘But you’ll make more friends.’

‘And?’ Noah asked, raising an eyebrow.

‘But—’

Rian sighed. ‘Noah, she’s trying to tell you she doesn’t want to go to the dance with you.’

Noah looked at Rian, hurt flashing across his face. ‘No need to put it so bluntly, dude.’

‘I never said that!’ I protested, frowning at Rian. ‘I’m just saying that we met today, and I bet you there are tons of girls in this school that are more than willing to go with you.’

Noah made a face. ‘Not interested.’

‘Not interested? There are some pretty attractive girls here . . .’

He waved me off. 'So does that mean you're not willing to go with me?' he asked, frowning deeply, once again giving me his best hurt-puppy eyes.

'That's - that's not what I meant,' I said, faltering a little. He was too cute!

Rian started laughing, shaking his head. 'Iris, it's OK. Noah is just giving you a hard time.'

Noah grinned at me and I scowled back at him. 'Seriously though, I would go to the dance with you when the times comes,' he told me. 'All you have to do is ask.'

I sighed, stabbing my fork into my salad again. 'Let's just drop it.'

The rest of lunch passed quickly, and soon the five of us were trudging down the science wing hallway, towards the chemistry room. Rian and Noah were joking loudly, their voices reverberating through the narrow hallway. Luke trailed silently behind us, listening to Chloe as she went on about how cool it was he could play the drums. One of the earth science teachers glared at us as we walked by — they still had a class going.

'It's Gold!' one of the freshmen in the class cried shrilly.

Noah posed dramatically by the door, winking at her. Luke rolled his eyes and shoved him forward. I peeked at the teacher, who was glaring again. A sheepish grin made its way onto my face and I quickly slipped past. We went to the back staircase and climbed up it, coming out on the second floor of the science wing.

'It's the first door on the right,' I called out to Rian, who almost walked by it.

He stopped, glancing back at me momentarily before grabbing the door to the chemistry room and pulling it open. He entered, and Luke and Noah quickly followed, Noah holding the door open for Chloe and myself. I thanked him, and he shut the door after us. The chemistry teacher, Mr Callaghan, stared at Gold as they stopped at the front of the classroom.

‘What do we have here?’ the teacher asked, squinting at us. ‘Transfer students?’

‘They’re Gold, Mr Callaghan,’ Alli, the girl from earlier, informed him.

‘We’re the *band* Gold,’ Noah clarified with a grin. ‘We just transferred here today.’

‘Oh,’ Mr Callaghan grumbled. ‘Well, welcome to the school.’

Ten minutes later we were all situated, the class starting. The girls in the classroom were talking in excited whispers, glancing at all the members of Gold – all of whom happened to be seated around me. Rian was directly behind me, while Luke and Noah were on either side. Funny how the universe worked sometimes. Fortunately, Chloe was placed directly in front of me.

‘So, since it’s a new semester, I’m going to be assigning new partners,’ Mr Callaghan told the class, holding a piece of paper out in front of him.

‘Why can’t we choose partners?’ someone from the front complained.

Mr Callaghan gave them a flat look. ‘Because last time I did that someone, and I’m not mentioning any names . . . Matt and James,’ he said, staring at a pair of boys who were grinning sheepishly back at him, ‘decided it would be funny to set fire to a pile of essays.’

There were a few snickers throughout the class and I ducked my head, hiding my grin. That was definitely a fun class.

‘So we’ll start with Alli and Matt,’ Mr Callaghan started. ‘No complaining,’ he added as Alli let out a groan.

I listened carefully as Mr Callaghan went through the list of names. Chloe glanced over her shoulder, giving me a worried look. I didn’t really hate anyone in my class, but I didn’t exactly like everyone either. Chloe and I had been partners since day one. And change wasn’t my thing.

‘Chloe and Luke,’ Mr Callaghan stated.

If I wasn't so upset about Chloe and I being separated, her expression would've been comical. I could tell she was unhappy that she wasn't my partner anymore, but I figured she was more excited about the fact that a member of Gold was now her partner. She kept switching between frowning and beaming.

'Iris and Rian,' Mr Callaghan continued.

My eyes widened. 'Huh?'

A few of the girls near me turned and gave me envious looks. I felt my hair being tugged at again, and I turned around to see Rian smirking at me.

'Locker buddies and chemistry partners, eh?' he commented, letting my hair slide through his fingers. 'This is going to be fun.'