

You're Mine by Penny Brooks

#Chapter 81 - Read You're Mine by Penny Brooks

Chapter 81

Chapter 81

Chapter 81 Harper "Sooocoon." Sadie says a half hour later after I've changed my sheets with my cheeks heating every time while she gives me side eye. I'm not that bad of a friend, clearly we just had sex and that would be weird. "You guys...doing good?" | put on the duvet and laugh. "Define good?" "Great? Awesome? Does he make you want to run out into a random field and go all Disney on his ass while you sing about your feelings or...." Her voice trails off. I laugh. "It's at least not complicated anymore." | frown. "We talked, actually other than some weird texts he got after dropping me off at my house...| don't know...it was different, deeper." She snorts. "Deeper?" | scowl. "Not that way, it's just, we had some really good conversations and | finally feel like we're at a good place. | know it's easy to get insecure. | mean it's Easton and | just have a really good feeling | can't explain it any other way." Her face changes. Uh-oh trouble in paradise? "That's good, Harper." "Sit." | pat the bed. "And try to forget | just had sex here." "Yeah the floor is good!" She quickly sits on the floor and looks up at me. "Okay so it's your brother. | don't even know how to have this conversation with him sleeping a few doors down, even though | know he knows it's gonna happen because we're best friends." | get on the floor, grab a pillow and lean back against my bed. "Start at the beginning then."

She exhales. "Yeah that's not gonna be a short story and it's late..let's just say, things were going well because neither of us were taking anything seriously which is my fault because | didn't want to scare him away."

Yeah Ryan gets scared easily, | think to myself. "So what's wrong now?" "That's the whole issue!" She throws her hands up. "He's been amazing but not himself. | think | honestly freaked him out with this whole, 'hey let's be casual' thing and now we both don't know how to have the relationship talk." "Ah," | nodded. "Yeah | can see that, he's worried you're worried about the things he's worried about and—" "Everyone is fucking worried!" She hisses. "And | just want to be with him and enjoy him and..." She starts tugging her ponytail. "| want us to be official. Okay?" | smile, | can't help it. "Okay, so why not say that?" "Communication isn't our strong suit," she grumbles. "It's more like, oh look a mouth | should kiss it, oh look a dick | should—" "Yeah I'm good." | hold up my hand. "No need to get descriptive." "Sorry," She laughs. "But seriously his—" "Time out !" | interrupt. "Nope, not going there nope. Find a new best friend, ewwwwww my brother." We fall into fits of giggles and soon we're laying on the ground with pillows surrounding us and blankets, almost like a fort. "Life is crazy," | say. "If you would have told me all this months ago, | would've laughed in your face." "Yeah." She grips my hand. "High school, am | right? It's both the best and the worst."

| blow out a breath | didn't realize I'd been holding. "Right." She turns on her side and gives me a playful shove. "I have a good feeling though, about you guys, about me and Ryan, things are finally looking up. Blake hasn't started shit and Aisha just seems pissed at the world. Maybe they deserve each other." "Haha," | laugh but feel guilty because Blake really has been nice to me, despite what everyone thinks or believes. | frown. "Hey," She nudges me. "Promise me we'll get a good night's sleep and stop overthinking things? After all, that's what girls are so good at and our guys for all their dumb dumbness have been really good, you know? Maybe we should start trusting more and doubting less." Something makes my chest go tight. It's my paranoia. Because she's so freaking right. This whole time I've been questioning what's right in front of me. | nod, then grab my phone and send Easton a quick text to see if he's okay but also because | miss him and while he couldn't have stayed the night, | still would have liked more minutes by his side, touching, talking, laughing. Me: Get home okay? Easton: You know it, how's my girl doing? | smile. Me: Good. Hey thanks for those things you said today... just...| think | needed that. He takes a minute to get back to me then types out. Easton: I'd do anything for you...anything. Me: | know. Easton: Hopefully you'll never have to know the depths I'll

go to for you, Harper. Sleep tight, beautiful. Something about the way he says it has me frowning. Me: Sleep well too, I'll miss you. Easton: Damn cock blocking Sadie. | laugh and text him back. Me: Cut her some slack, she's feeling things. Easton: | am too...my dick getting hard and my heart missing you. Me: How can that be both romantic and offensive? Easton: It's a gift, welcome to relationships. My heart does a little skip as | stare at his text, the fact that he's acknowledging us again just solidifies the way | feel about him, because he gets it too, and he cares, and nothing is going to stand in the way of us being together. Fight me. Me: <3 "Shit I'm tired." Sadie yawns. "Let's go to bed before we get a second wind again, yeah?" "Yeah, yeah," | nod and mimic her yawn then plug in my phone and crawl into bed. {t was such a good night. | remember his hands on me, his mouth drawing out every feeling. | memorize everything he said, everything he did and ignore all the red flags that had me wanting to question him. It's fine. It's going to be fine. Because what else could possibly go wrong?

Chapter 82

Chapter 82 Easton The sound of my phone wakes me up.

Not the alarm that is set, giving me just enough time to shower and drive to school.

This is non—stop notifications— Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, texts—all going off at the same time.

There's so much buzzing, the vibration almost knocks the phone off my nightstand.

Still half asleep, | grab the phone and quickly scroll through the messages, trying to figure out what's going on.

It's too fucking early for something dramatic to have happened, I'm sure of that.

Except I'm wrong.

The second I see the Instagram post I'm tagged in, my back shoots up straight from bed, the blanket falls from my chest, my lips part as anger bolts through my body.

It's from WHGOSSIP, the account that was opened my freshman year, ran by someone at our school who loves to spread malicious rumors.

They've been quiet since the school year started, but now they have a tip to share, which has been posted to their main feed.

Atip that's all about me.

WHGOSSIP: Good morning, Washington High.

My gossip spies have been hard at work and have come across something deliciously scandalous.

You all know the perfect couple we've been seeing walk the halls.

Yes, I'm talking about the big man on campus and his favorite WHORE.

Well, it looks like things between them aren't as perfect as they seem.

We all know animals can't be tamed ...

Who's the mistress? None other than Mrs.

Scott.

Yes, friends, our school administrator is sleeping with the most popular guy at school, and he paid a visit to her house last night.

I wonder if she's teaching him about anatomy ...

even though he had plenty of experience on the subject long before the WHORE and Mrs.

Scott came into his life.

If you need proof, head on over to my Snapchat, there's a nice little photo of his Jeep parked outside her house.

Hey, WHORE, did you know he was sleeping with the school administrator or are you as surprised as us? Smooches, WHGOSSIP With hands that won't stop shaking, I click on WHGOSSIP's Snapchat account and see the photo of my Jeep parked outside her house.

It doesn't prove | did anything.

It certainly doesn't show me fucking her.

But it reveals enough, and my phone won't stop exploding with texts.

Ryan: | hope to fuck this isn't true ...

Julia: Damn, boy.

DAMN.

Leigh: Call me right now! Aisha: | knew you were fucking around on her, Harper has to be a dead fish in bed, but with HER— Mrs.

Scott—now that's a surprise.

Too bad it wasn't with me...

Ryan: You've got some fucking balls, you know that! Blake: | told Harper not to date you.

Going back for seconds with Mrs.

Scott, you sick motherfucker.

Hunter: Nice, man! So are her tits real? Parker: Hunter and | have a hundred bucks on whether you fucked her anal.

Come on, spill the news.

You fucked her in the ass, didn't you? Rachel: You really have slept with the whole school, haven't you lol Ryan: You're not going to write me back, asshole? Goddamn it! Whoever did this, whoever sent that photo, whoever shared it, I'm going to kill all of them.

| can't look at any more messages, this shit is completely out of control.

The second | toss my phone on the bed, getting it out of my sight, it starts ringing.

Hoping it's Harper, | grab it again and Leigh's name is on the screen.

| don't want to answer, but | get the feeling she'll keep calling until she reaches me.

And if it's not now, it'll be the second | step onto school grounds today.

"Hello—"

"Easton ..."

Her voice is so sharp, it can cut through my skin.

"Who did you tell that you came to my house last night? Because photos of your Jeep are all over the fucking Internet." | bend my knees, pressing my forehead against them.

"No one."

| take a breath.

"| told no one." "Was it you who submitted that photo to WHGOSSIP, then? You're the one who did this to me—"

| cut her off before she can continue and say, "It wasn't me.

| don't know who took the photo and | don't know who WHGOSSIP is." | rake my hand through my hair, pulling the strands from the roots.

"This fucks both of us, Leigh."

| can only imagine the look on Harper's face right now.

The tears streaming from her eyes.

The way her heart is breaking.

But it doesn't stop with Harper, my parents are going to chew my ass out if they find out, everyone at school are going to be fucking brutal with their shit talking.

This isn't going to end.

"Easton, do you have any idea how much trouble { 'm in? The school board has already reached out, they want to meet with me in an hour.

They're going to conduct an investigation, | could be terminated, do you know what that means?"

I'm sure they're going to want to talk to me and hear my side of the story.

They're going to want to check my phone for texts between us, they're going to look at the camera footage and see all the times | went to the office.

"| won't rat you out, don't worry." "Don't WORRY?"

Her yelling echoes in my ear.

"| could lose my whole fucking career over this." It sounds like she's blaming me, like this whole goddamn thing is my fault.

"Leigh, let's not forget that it was your ultimatum that brought me to your house last night."

"Fuck you."

Fuck me? This is all her fault ...

and I've heard enough.

"If the school board asks me, | won't tell them anything that's happened between us, you have my word, but | have to go, | have my own shit to deal with right now."

She laughs, a sound of pure evil.

"Easton, let me make one thing clear.

If you try to take me down, I'll not only bury you, but I'll bury the whore you're sleeping with."

The phone goes dead.

| stare at the black screen, but it doesn't stay dark for long, more texts making their way through, their words filling my head, not even bothering to look at who sent them.

Holy fuck, | can't believe you slept with Mrs.

Scott.

You fucking animal.

Is she good? Tight? Dude, you're my hero.

| stop scrolling and pull up Harper's text box, hoping | missed a message from her, but there isn't one.

Just the small, red heart that she sent me last night before she went to bed, a few hours after | left her place.

| don't know what the hell I'm going to say, but | hold the phone to my face and listen to each ring, her voicemail then picking up.

| try again and she still doesn't answer.

| pull up the text box, seeing if | can get her to respond this way, and | start typing ...

Me: Please call me.

We have to talk about this.

It's not what you think, Harper, | promise.

Chapter 83

Harper

Easton and Mrs.

Scott? Last night? He ...

cheated on me? Every time I read the post from WHGOSSIP, I feel like I get kicked in the heart again with the highest spiked heel.

This time, it's happening in the back of Ryan's car, the tears filling my eyes for what feels like the hundredth time this morning.

If Sadie hadn't spent the night and been with me when I got the news, I would have stayed home sick.

But she doesn't want me to hide and thinks that will only make me feel worse.

I don't know how I could possibly feel worse than this.

And nothing is making me feel better, not Sadie trying to distract me by singing in the front seat, not Ryan's insane driving as he speeds down the streets, not scrolling through Instagram and seeing everyone's comments on the post.

How could he do this to me? How could he hurt me this way? Every unanswered question bites harder into my heart.

"Put your phone down,"

Sadie says, turning around to look at me from the passenger seat.

"Stick it in your bag and don't look at it again until school is over."

She nods toward my backpack.

"Reading all that stuff, it's only going to make you feel worse, babe." "I know,"

I whisper, but I can't help myself.

I have to see it all.

I have to read their opinions.

I have to know what they know.

And the one person who probably knows more than anyone is driving, and he hasn't said a word to me all morning.

But I need to talk about it, I need more than just Sadie's opinion, I need to hear from someone who has inside knowledge.

"Ryan," I start and pause, trying to gather my thoughts.

"Do you think—"

"No."

I'm startled by the way he completely shuts me off.

"No, what?"

"I'm not talking about this with you."

I look at Sadie, silently pleading for her help.

She has a way with Ryan, she's able to soften him a little, something I've never been able to do.

"Ryan, please," she begs.

"Your sister is freaking—the— fuck—out over this, tell her something, that's the least you can do."

He looks at Sadie.

"The least I can do? I'm going to kill the motherfucker the second I lay my eyes on him—that's what I'm going to do."

Ryan is going to kill him.

Which means everything I fear must be true.

"He ...

admitted to having sex with her?" Sadie asks Ryan.

Ryan shakes his head.

"I haven't spoken to him, he won't return my messages." Easton has been texting and calling me, but he won't respond to Ryan? I don't know how that makes me feel, I just know this hurts.

Way too much.

Since I still haven't put my phone away, I read the texts he's sent me over the last hour.

Please call me.

We have to talk about this.

It's not what you think, Harper, I promise.

I need to talk to you.

Don't ignore me, please, baby.

I didn't do it, I swear to you, I didn't.

Call me before you get to school.

Sadie told me not to reply, not to answer his calls and I trusted she was giving me the right advice.

I mean, fighting about this before school isn't going to help.

It's not going to change the way I feel.

I can see the proof for myself that he was at her house.

What can he possibly say that will make this better? I look at Ryan in the rearview mirror and ask, "What about before we started dating?"

I pause again, the question proving to be harder than I thought.

"Do you know if they were sleeping together then?"

"How can you ask me that?"

He stops at a light, glaring at me from the mirror.

"I don't know the girls Easton fucks, my God."

But he does, they're best friends.

The same way Sadie and I know everything about each other.

Silence fills the car the rest of the way to school, and I'm not surprised to see Blake the moment I walk into the building.

He's always there for me.

"Come here," he says, pulling me into his arms, hugging me.

"Damn it, Harper, I hate that he did this to you."

I don't pull away.

I need this—the sympathy, the protection, the comfort, especially when today is going to be so hard once the whispers and laughs and stares set in.

"I don't know if it helps to hear this, but Mrs.

Scott didn't show up to school, so I don't think you'll have to see her today."

Knowing that I won't have to pass her in the hallway should give me some relief, but it doesn't.

Everything hurts.

And it stings even more when I hear, "Mrs.

Scott must have a better pussy than Harper,"

from some asshole walking by us.

"I think I'm going to be sick." I try to wiggle out of his arms.

"Leave me alone, Blake."

His grip tightens.

"You need someone to be by your side today, you can't do this alone.

I'm going to help you through this, Harper."

I barely feel my feet when he starts walking me down the hallway, stopping at my locker.

I hold the padlock, trying to remember the code to unlock it, my brain so jumbled.

"You know, I really didn't think Easton was fucking her anymore.

I thought he stopped once you two got together." I freeze.

"He was with her?"

I try to breathe.

"In the past?" "He bragged to all of us about it.

How do you think he made honor roll?"

He rubs my shoulder, going as low as my elbow.

"I guess fucking the school administrator earns you straight A's." He then moves higher to my neck.

"There's someone out there who's much better for you, Harper." I'm so nauseous, if a trashcan suddenly appeared, I'd throw up in it.

I can't believe Sadie convinced me to come in today and that I listened to her.

"You have to find it interesting that after he punched me in the face, he didn't get suspended." I finally see the bandage across his nose, the bruising under his eyes—things I missed earlier because I'm too mentally occupied.

I lean against my locker, trying to recap every time I saw Easton go into the front office, something that seemed so innocent in the past, but now seems to matter.

And that's when it hits me, how nasty he was to me when I stopped him in the hallway, right outside the office door.

Had he kissed Mrs.

Scott only seconds before running into me? Was that the reason for his attitude, that he was consumed with guilt? "I can't believe he would do this to me,"

I whisper, unable to stop the tears.

Blake catches one before it drips down my cheek and pulls me in for another hug.

Just as I'm wrapping my arms around him, I glance up and see Easton.

He's rounding the corner, hurrying down the hallway.

Heading straight for me.

Chapter 84

Easton

"I kept your secret, you motherfucker,"

Ryan spits at me, stopping me when I'm halfway down the hallway, my eyes glued to Harper and the way Blake is fondling her.

I try to ignore Ryan and move out of the way, but he stops me again and says, "Nice try, asshole."

He's in my face, making it impossible to focus on anything but him.

"You have some explaining to do before I'm done with you."

"What do you want, Ryan, I need—"

"I didn't tell Harper that you fucked Mrs.

Scott.

I saved your ass, I don't know why I even bothered, but now you owe me some fucking answers.

If you're still hooking up with her, then what the hell are you doing with my sister?" As students pass us, I can feel their eyes on me, judging me for WHGOSSIP's post and probably thinking Ryan is defending his sister's honor.

I guess I deserve that.

But at least Ryan is keeping his voice low, preventing anyone from hearing what he's saying except for me.

"I promise I'll explain everything to you, but I need to talk to Harper first." "Nah." He shakes his head.

"You're not getting anywhere near her unless you answer me."

I grind my teeth together, knowing every second I'm standing here, Blake's hands are touching more of Harper.

"I didn't fuck her, I swear on my life.

Now, I'm going to go talk to your sister and explain everything."

This time, he doesn't get in my way, and I rush down the rest of the hallway, glaring at Blake.

That vulture likes to prey on the weak and vulnerable—I'm sure that's how Harper is feeling at this moment.

When I got to school a few minutes ago and immediately started looking for her, I expected him to be with her, so this isn't a surprise at all.

"Harper, can I talk to you?"

I'm standing only inches away from her, wanting so badly to reach for her.

She says nothing, she just stares at me with red, swollen eyes.

Eyes that tell me she's been crying, the thought breaking my goddamn heart.

All I want to do is pick her up and wrap her in my arms and fill her with the truth.

"Easton, don't you think you've done enough damage?"

I had no intentions of saying anything to him, not wasting a fucking breath on that cocksucker, but I've had enough of his relentless attempts of making me look like a piece of shit in front of Harper.

"I'm only going to say this once,"

I tell him.

"If you get in between me and my girl again, I won't stop at one punch.

I'll break every bone in your fucking face."

His arm slips across Harper's shoulders.

"So, she's your girl now?"

My hands clench into fists, my patience running so thin.

"Blake, I'm warning you, leave now or I'm going to start swinging." He glances at Harper.

"If you need me—for anything—you know where to find me." Once he's gone, I say in a softer voice, "Please talk to me." She takes several seconds to respond, "I don't know what to say, Easton."

What you did ..."

She pauses to take a deep breath, her eyes filling, "it hurts in ways you can't even imagine."

You cheated—"

"No."

I didn't."

That's not what happened at all."

I go to grab her and stop myself, knowing she'll back away from me.

"Can we go somewhere and talk? I want to tell you the whole story and I can't go another second without you hearing it."

When I see her hesitation, I add, "You always ask for communication and transparency and that's what I'm going to give you, just give me a chance."

The bell rings, which means we only have a few minutes to get to class.

"I'll get detention if I'm late,"

she says.

"We can serve it together." I move next to her, placing my hand on her lower back.

"Come on, let's go." She's quiet as we hurry down the hall and up the three flights of stairs to a padlocked door where I turn the wheel several different ways until it opens, stepping us out onto the roof.

"I want to ask you how you knew that code, but I don't think I really want that answer,"

she says.

Instead of replying, I lead us to the side, along the ledge that wraps around the air conditioning unit, giving us a perfect place to sit.

I wait until she's settled and facing me.

"I'm going to tell you everything and I swear every word of it is the truth."

"Okay."

"Leigh—"

I stop myself, shaking my head, "I mean, Mrs.

Scott, and I started flirting last year.

It began as just innocent conversation, and she would help me out when I needed it."

She wraps her arms around her stomach.

"Like giving you a higher grade or getting you out of trouble."

My fingers clench again.

"Is that what Blake told you?" "Yes."

That fucking dickhead.

"She didn't change all my grades," I admit, "but she altered a few.

And, you're right, when I'm late to class or I want to leave early, she gets me dismissed." "So, that's how you got us out of school." She rocks forward and back.

"And why you weren't suspended when you punched Blake." Another nugget of information I'm sure Blake spilled.

"Yes, Harper, and that's how things were for a while between Mrs.

Scott and me."

I place my hand on the back of her calf, breathing the anger through my nose.

"I slept with her at the end of last year.

It was fun and wrong and taboo as hell, and then she felt guilty because of my age and her husband, and she cut things off."

I immediately see the pain in Harper's eyes and it kills me.

"But the flirting continued and so did the favors—but that's it, I swear to you, it hasn't been any more." "Until last night." And I would do anything—fucking anything—to take that whole night back, to even rewind things and not have punched Blake so I wouldn't have landed myself in trouble.

"Harper ..."

I keep my hand still but rub my thumb across her calf muscle.

"When you watched her haul my ass into her office, she gave me an ultimatum.

I could either go to her house and fuck her or she was going to suspend me and tell your parents I took you out of school that day, earning you a suspension as well."

I look down, hating Leigh more than anything at this moment.

"I didn't want you to get in trouble because of me, and I couldn't risk losing you."

When I glance back up, a tear is falling from her eye.

Her lips quivering.

"So, you went to her house ..."

Another tear falls. "And you fucked her."

Chapter 85

Harper

"But I didn't fuck her, baby,"

Easton says, his hand moving to my face.

"I didn't touch her at all." I want to push him away, but the sound of his voice is what I cling to.

The softness, the rawness, the truth I see in his eyes.

"I couldn't do it,"

he continues.

"I got to her house, I told her how much you mean to me, and that I'm willing to take whatever punishment comes my way but to leave you out of it." The ache in my stomach turns to something else.

Relief? Tingles? There's so much emotion running through me, I'm not sure I can differentiate my feelings anymore.

But I know I need to hear something again, I need to hear it over and over until it sinks in.

"You really didn't have sex with her?"

He shakes his head.

"No, baby."

His other hand joins my face.

"I didn't kiss her, I didn't touch her—nothing happened between us."

His stare deepens.

"I care about you, Harper, more than you think I do." I fall against his chest and his arms wrap around me, his scent, his warmth, his breath—all giving me so much comfort.

This morning, I didn't know if I'd be here again with him and now I can't imagine being anywhere else.

My eyes close and after a few seconds I ask, "How are we going to get out of this mess?"

"It's my mess, not yours."

I squeeze him tighter.

"You're not in this alone."

"I am because there's no way I'm dragging you into it.

You got enough shit from WHGOSSIP, you don't need anymore."

I bury my face in his neck.

"What's going to happen?"

"Mrs.

Scott called me this morning and told me she has a meeting with the school board.

I'm sure they're going to drag me in and ask all the questions, but I'm not going to rat her out for anything.

The last thing I need is for anyone to press charges and for this to go to court." "Does that mean things between you two will go back to the way they were?" He kisses the top of my head.

"After this is over, things will be cordial, but I assure you I won't be asking for any more favors.

Which means, we're definitely getting detention for being this late to class." I tilt my neck back to look at his face, more relief flooding through me.

"I can live with that."

He scans my eyes, back and forth, his hands holding my face steady.

"We all have skeletons in our closet, Harper.

You've just met one of mine."

I hated hearing that he slept with Mrs.

Scott.

She's so much older than us and married and all the guys think she's so hot—things I'm trying not to focus on, those layers will only make me feel worse.

But we all have a past and his is just much more sexual than mine.

"It doesn't change how I feel about you, but I'm pretty sure you're going to have to explain this all to my brother."

I wince at the thought of Ryan's face this morning on the way to school.

"He wants to kill you— again."

"I need to talk to Blake, too." My eyes widen.

"Blake?"

"Every time I turn around, he's there, trying to get with you.

I've had enough of it, it needs to end or we're just going to keep fighting."

"He does seem to always be there."

His hand lowers to my hip.

"He wants you, Harper, and I can't blame the bastard, you're the hottest girl in our school."

He kisses the end of my nose, a gesture so sweet it makes my chest pound.

"But no more games with him, I'm putting a stop to it, he needs to set his sights on a new girl."

"Is that conversation going to involve fists?"

He smiles.

"I'll be good.

Promise." I feel so much more settled than when I was walking up here to the roof, but there are still things I'm worried about.

"Do you think Mrs.

Scott or the school board will notify my parents about the day we left school? I know that sounds so trivial considering what you're about to face, but I want to prepare myself for what's to come."

I sigh.

"I hate surprises, Easton, and I feel like there's a new one every second." "I don't think you have to worry.

I think she's more focused on me right now." His face moves closer.

"But if I hear something, I'll give you a heads up."

He comes even closer.

"Now, kiss me before I fucking explode."

His lips crash against mine and my body lights on fire.

His scent, his touch, his all-consuming presence—it surrounds me and pulls me in and I'm completely lost.

"Harper,"

he moans.

It's a sound I can't get enough of, a security I've needed since the post was released.

His tongue slides out of my mouth, and he separates us.

"As much as I don't want to ever leave, we have to go to class." "I know."

My stomach leaps as I think of all the stares I'm going to get, the rude comments, the assumptions that are so far from the truth.

"I fear there's going to be a lot of drama today."

I swallow, the tightness returning to my chest.

"Everyone is going to be talking about you and Mrs.

Scott and you cheating on me and—"

"Fuck what they all think.

This is about us and only us."

His thumb grazes across my skin.

"Don't listen to them, promise me."

I want to be able to ignore everything I'm going to hear, but if it continues like the nastiness I heard this morning, I just don't know if I can.

" try," [tell him.

He gives me a small kiss again, and then he takes my hand and brings me back through the door that leads to the stairwell and down a flight to the hallway where both of our classes are located.

He stops outside my classroom door, our fingers linked, his eyes fixed on mine.

"I need to hear you say we're all right."

He brings our bodies together.

"I need to hear it one more time before I go to class and not see you for another hour."

I know that feeling.

That need for reassurance.

"I'm yours, Easton."

I smile, something that feels so good after so many tears.

"All yours." He gives me the quickest kiss and I hurry inside my classroom, apologizing to the teacher as I take my seat.

Sadie is sitting in the desk next to mine and looks at me and mouths, "Easton?"

I nod and mouth back, "We're all good."

Her grin tells me she's just as relieved as I am.

But there's still something off.

Something that's bothering me.

Something I just can't put my finger on.

I glance to my right and I catch Aisha's stare, a tightness in my stomach immediately erupting.

It only gets worse when that bitch smiles at me.

Because I know that gesture is a warning and something terrible is about to go down.