

The Locker Room Excerpt

This map is useless.

Easy to read, my ass. I need a magnifying glass to make out any of the color-coded buildings on this thing and unfortunately, I left my magnifying glass in my other skirt. That was sarcasm, if you didn't catch it.

Standing next to a wonky-looking tree, I try to act as casual as possible—hip popped out, interested glances, the usual—as I hide a school map beneath the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, while off-handedly looking for the MacMillan building. But the wind—though subtle—isn't making things easy.

Recently transferred from Cal State, Fullerton, I'm attempting to avoid making a fool of myself on the first day of fall classes at my new school, Brentwood University.

Unfortunately, I'm way out of my element.

For one, I know nothing about this school other than they have the best library sciences program in the country. Making the transfer a no-brainer for me the minute I realized I wanted to be a librarian. I dabbled in business at Cal State, but who was I kidding? I had no right trying to figure out micro-and macroeconomics.

A California girl through and through, Illinois is nothing like the palm trees and beaches I've grown up with. Don't get me wrong, there are trees here, huge, plush, green trees everywhere, the kind of trees Bob Ross made dance on his canvas. But the smog . . . I have no idea where that is. Breathing fresh air almost feels wrong. And apparently pizza is a big deal here. I've heard at least three separate arguments since I've moved about which pizza in town is best. Let's all be friends and be grateful there is good pizza here.

And even though this is a "small" school town outside Chicago, it's larger than life with boisterous personalities and ivy-covered buildings that cause me to believe I'm walking on the hallowed grounds where the prosperous were educated.

Plus, I had to buy leggings for all my skirts, because the temperature doesn't call for bare legs out here.

The wind picks up again, lifting my skirt and map at the same time. Not wanting to be known as the resident flasher on campus, I save the skirt—because even though I have leggings, I chose not to wear them today—and tamp it back down on my legs as the map lifts from my book, floats into the air, twirling and swirling only to smack a passing guy right in the face.

Whap .

"What the—?" He startles and I jump into action.

“I’m so sorry,” I say, scrambling to hold my skirt down while clutching my parted book at my chest.

The map is slowly peeled away and a pair of beautiful light blue eyes peek past the paper first, followed by the sharpest jawline I’ve ever seen, defined and tense. Light scruff matches his dirty-blond hair that is swept to the left and cut short on the sides. Dressed in a green Brentwood baseball sweatshirt and wearing a jaw-dropping smile, he chuckles and hands me the map while eyeing me up and down.

Why is he so familiar?

Those eyes.

“Not a problem, but you could have asked for help if you were lost. Slapping me with a map is an aggressive tactic, effective, but aggressive.”

That voice, that smirk. I know it from somewhere.

Feeling a light blush creep up my cheeks, I say, “Not used to the wind.”

He nods and thumbs behind him. “Lake Michigan. It’s a bitch in the winter.” He studies me for a second and then nods at my map. “Where you headed? I can help.” There is the smallest southern drawl in his voice, nothing strong, but enough to tell me he’s not from Illinois.

I know that voice. I remember specifically thinking it was hot.

Tamping down my map and folding it in my book that I snap shut quickly, I say, “I promised I’d figure this all out on my own, but looks like I might need a little help after all.”

“Don’t blame yourself; this campus is a maze with no rhyme or reason. I was lost my entire first semester. Can’t tell you how many times I was late to class.”

“That’s reassuring.”

He tilts his head to the side and gives me a small once-over. “I know you.” I don’t say anything and just as his eyes land on my chest, a smile creeps over his face, a light bulb lighting in his head. “You’re the girl who helped me find my room on Saturday.”

Oh.

Shit.

It’s the yellow-door baseball guy.

He leans forward, hands stuffed in his pockets and says, “I never forget a good pair of tits.”

As if I wasn’t blushing enough already.

