And I Opened Up My Eyes, I Saw The Sign

by dandelion3455

Summary

Chloe and Beca have never quite figured out their timing. But what happens when Amy's impending wedding practically forces the two girls together? Basically a slow burn that turns into a volcanic eruption and there's a lot of smut.

Notes

Hey, friends! So, I think this is going to be a lot of fun. We're looking at about 20 chapters right now, although that might be subject to change. Anyhow, this is where it all starts- I wanted to make sure to explain how things fizzled out with Beca/Jesse. Even though I totally don't believe Beca and Jesse belong together, I don't hate the dude and I think Beca and Jesse still mean a lot to one another as friends. I just wanted to let y'all know where I was at with that... and also, to let everyone know that we'll be losing Jesse as Beca's boyfriend pretty quickly. So here we are! Enjoy!
Beca took a sip from her yellow cup. She wasn't precisely sure to whom the cup originally belonged, as it was one her and Chloe had often fought over in college. Beca would use it for a few weeks until it disappeared from her room and Chloe would be drinking from it at a party the next night. Several weeks later, inexplicably, Chloe would notice it back in Beca's possession. This 'Battle of the Cup,' as it became to be known, went back and forth for a few years. Finally, when Beca started working at Residual Heat full time, Chloe relinquished the cup to Beca for good. Chloe wanted to make sure Beca had at least one thing by which she would remember Chloe.

Beca's phone buzzed. Frowning, she glanced down to see a text message from Jesse.

Text Message:
Jesse: Becaw, want to hang out after work tonight?
Beca: Yeah, sounds good!
Jesse: Great, I'll make dinner. It'll give me a great excuse to try out that pizza stone I got at TJ Maxx the other day.
Beca: Always the Maxxinista, Jess.
Jesse: Oh, but of course. And you, dear Be-caw, are my guinea pig.
Beca: Aw, I bet you call all the girls that.
Beca: Haha thanks. So I'll swing over there after work. Hopefully 7, maybe 7:30?
Jesse: Sounds excellent, I'm looking forward to spending some quality time with my soon-to-be-famous girlfriend! ;)
Beca: Alright weirdo, text you after work.
Jesse: Can't wait!

Beca put her phone down and got back to work without much thought. Work was more demanding than Beca had necessarily expected, not that she was complaining in the least. Since taking up work full-time with Residual Heat after graduation, Beca had worked hard, long hours. In her mind, she had a long way to go before she would ever be a music producer and she was still making up for lost time. If everything had gone according to plan, Beca would've left Barden after freshman year and moved to L.A. to start paying her dues. Of course, any sense of planning and convention flew right out the window the day the Bellas won Nationals at the end of Beca's freshman year. From that point onward, leaving Barden was a total non-option for Beca.

"Totally worth every moment," Beca thought, smiling to herself as she worked away on her laptop.

Currently, Beca was co-producing a track for Fifth Harmony. This was, by far, the biggest name Beca had the pleasure of producing for since becoming a full-time employee. She knew that successfully creating a hit song could fast track her career. Similarly, if this song fell flat, it would
probably be years before Beca so much as stepped inside the production booth. Her boss was really taking a chance on her, even if he still did call her Reggie. Fifth Harmony had been inside the studio just last week to record the audio for their track. Beca had been tasked with post-production of the track, which if she was being honest, was her favorite part. During post-production, you could play with the effects and move around the audio to create the best possible sound. Basically, it was her job to make sure the sound and message Fifth Harmony wanted to portray come across.

As always, when immersed with mixing, Beca lost track of time. Her phone began buzzing and she snapped out of focus.

"Shit!" She said, mentally kicking herself as she picked up the phone. "Hey, Jesse? I'm so sorry I lost track of time."

Jesse understood Beca's dedication to her job. In fact, her passion for music was one of the things he loved best about her. That being said, it still stung a little bit each time she blew him off. It wasn't the actual blow-off, but rather, that she never even took a second to call him or tell him that she was having to stay late at work. Sometimes he felt like she didn't prioritize their relationship the same way he did.

Jesse told Beca not to worry about losing track of time, and he meant it. Beca told him she was leaving work and would be over to his place shortly. Jesse hung up the phone before blowing out the single lit candle on his table. He had gone the extra mile by preparing a candle-lit dinner for Beca that night. Of course, nothing went according to plan, he thought, wistfully shaking his head. Reaching into his pocket, Jesse grasped the ring box, feeling to make sure it was still there.

"In good time," Jesse told himself, taking the ring box out of his pocket, and putting it in his dresser drawer.

Half an hour later, at 9:30, Beca came bursting through the door of Jesse's apartment. Jesse had moved in with Benji in an apartment near downtown Atlanta after graduation.

"Jess, I had no idea how late it was, I really must've lost track of time!" Beca said.

"Well, Miss Mitchell, I know just how you can make it up to me!" Jesse said with a wicked grin on his face.

"Oh no, that look. Do I even want to know what you're thinking right now?" Beca quipped.

"Two Words. Star Wars… Episode Five."

"I'm pretty sure even a person with a lobotomy could tell you that's really four words. You know this, yes?" Beca asked, lightly punching Jesse's arm.

"Oh Be-caw, always with the sarcasm. But yeah, buckle in, because this is going to be the most awesome movie nights of all movie nights." Jesse enveloped Beca in a large hug, and planted a smacking smooch on the top of her head before sitting down on the couch. Beca smiled, relenting. Although she hated movies, she liked that Jesse liked them. And he had been so patient and supportive with her these past few months as she adjusted to her job.

Plopping down on the couch next to him, she deadpanned, "Alright, let's get this party started."

After the movie began, Beca promptly fell asleep. She didn't mean to, honestly, but the long hours at work wore her thin. As the movie was ending, Jesse gently shook her awake.

"Hey there, Becs, as much as I know you want to hunker down and watch Star Wars Episode Six, I
think we'd better get you to bed." Groaning, Beca pulled herself up from the couch into a sitting position.

"Yes. Bed." Beca looked groggily around the room searching for her car keys.

"Dude, just stay here," Jesse reasoned. "You're tired. And besides, I love having my little Be-caw with me. You know, to cuddle, at night," he said, hugging her from behind and burrowing his face into her hair playfully.

"Oh my God, you're such a nerd," Beca said, smiling. "Look, I want to stay, but I gotta get into work early tomorrow and need to be at my place. With my clothes and stuff."

"Makes sense," Jesse said, letting go of Beca. "I could come stay with you," he offered sweetly.

Beca should have been flattered by this. She wanted to be flattered by this, but inexplicably, his offer raised her stress level even more. Honestly, the only thing Beca wanted was to have a moment to herself before crashing in her own bed alone.

"Jess, that's really nice, but honestly, I'm going straight to bed. How about this? Tomorrow's Friday, so after work, we'll have dinner and spend the whole evening together. Me and you. And then the next morning, we'll go out to breakfast. Anywhere you want. On me," she said, winking playfully.

Taking the hint, Jesse agreed. "Anywhere I want, you say? Hell yes, IHOP!"

"Anywhere but there," Beca groaned. Beca loved breakfast food, but Jesse was far more keen on IHOP than Beca.

As Beca was in her car driving home, she began to feel slightly guilty. Jesse was so supportive of her. And as of late, she felt like being in a relationship with him was a chore. Did she still love him? Absolutely. Was she still in love with him? Now with regard to that question, she wasn't so sure. Beca never felt the fireworks or rainbows, or whatever the hell people were prattling on about, when talking about "love." She thoroughly enjoyed Jesse's companionship, but if she was leveling with herself, she just didn't feel that unequivocal "loving" feeling. Sighing to herself, Beca made a mental note that she needed to try harder with Jesse. All relationships change and especially given the changes of moving from college to adulthood, it was probably normal that they were having some growing pains. Maybe if she just made more of an effort, things would be okay with them, Beca thought.

These thoughts came to an abrupt halt when Beca received a phone call. Looking down at her phone to see who was calling, Beca's heart skipped a beat. Chloe. She hadn't spoken to Chloe in a week.

"Hello?"

"Becs!" Chloe's infectious energy practically radiated from Beca's phone. "What are you doing?"

"Well, considering it's after midnight, going to bed because some of us have to work in the morning." Beca suddenly envied Chloe's job at the temp-agency and its lenient, stress-free lifestyle.

"Well, Becs, right now, I'm at The Sound Table with some friends from work. Becs, can you hear me, am I talking loud enough?"

Despite the strong EDM bass in the background, Chloe was, in fact, talking loudly enough. "Yes,
Chlo, loud and clear. Pretty sure the car next to me can hear you."

"Beccccccaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay, you should come out here. I miss you. I promise I'm not just telling you this because I'm drunk, which by the way I've had like four and a half drinks, but I promise I'm only slightly drunk. Like, totally fine. But anyhow, I just needed to tell you that I-" Chloe trailed off momentarily. To someone at the bar, Chloe said, "No, do not touch me…"

Beca pressed her ear closer to the phone. Chloe was now having a full-on conversation with someone at the bar. Was she okay? Listening on, Beca heard snippets of a conversation. Beca gleaned that some dude was coming onto Chloe and despite her requests, the dude wasn't leaving her alone.

Calling across the phone line, Beca yelled, "CHLO, CHLOE, CAN YOU HEAR ME?" After calling out several more times, Chloe finally returned to the phone line. Her earlier cheery mood had been replaced by a shaken and upset tone.

"Becs?" Her voice couldn't have sounded smaller if she tried. "Can you please come get me?"

In a heartbeat, Beca answered, "Absolutely. Stay put. And Chlo? Be safe. I'll be there in five."

Automatically, Beca pulled a U-Turn and high-tailed it to The Sound Table. She hoped to God that Chloe wasn't in trouble. Beca swore, if whoever this guy was so much laid a hand on her friend, she would end him.

The effect of Beca's illegally fast driving caused her to show up at the bar in record time. Pulling over to the side of the road, Beca didn't have so much as a chance to turn her car engine off before an energetic redhead with a larger-than-life personality threw herself into the passenger seat and launched herself across the center console to envelop the smaller girl in her arms. Chloe's greetings were never less than over the top, Beca had to admit. And somehow, despite Beca's resistance to human contact, Beca never seemed to mind when Chloe threw herself at Beca. Placing a quick kiss on Beca's cheek, Chloe settled into her seat. Beca tried to hide her embarrassment over the fact her face was turning scarlet by cutting to the chase with Chloe.

"Chlo, what the fuck happened in there?" Chloe's bright blue eyes dimmed a little bit.

Looking directly forward at the dashboard, Chloe started, "the bouncer kicked him out, and then you came and got me… it's okay now."

"Alright, I'm glad you're okay, but back up. I'm missing most of this story."

"I went out with some of my new friends from work. And we were dancing and having fun, you know, and these guys came up to us and started dancing with us. It was okay at first, but then I wanted them to go away… and when I left, this one guy grabbed my arm." Beca, who was now driving, cut her eyes over to a very distraught Chloe. Beca, not really knowing what to say, reached out and awkwardly patted Chloe's arm. Chloe grabbed Beca's hand and held it in her own.

Continuing, Chloe said, "I pushed him off of me and then he left me alone for awhile, but then when I called you he came back and started grabbing me… Inappropriately. And I told him to get away from me and he started calling me names and then that's when the bouncer made him leave." Sniffling, Chloe used her free hand to swipe away the tears that had begun flowing at this point. Beca's heart felt like it was hurting.

"Chloe, that's really awful. I'm so sorry. No person deserves to be treated that way and I'm so sorry it happened to you." Squeezing her hand, Beca continued, "Look, you're one of my best friends and
also an amazing person, inside and out. That pathetic fucker from the bar can never take that from you. Okay?"

"Thanks," Chloe sniffled, squeezing Beca's hand. "And Becs?" Normally a pet name which would cause Beca to groan, as all pet names would, but coming out of Chloe's mouth, it seemed okay. More than okay, really? Beca had secretly come to like when Chloe called her 'Becs.'

"Yes, Chloe?"

"Can I stay with you tonight?"

Not that Beca even momentarily considered saying no, but she shot a sideways look to Chloe. Chloe's eyes were even bluer, if that was possible, from the recent crying.

"I kind of took that as a given," Beca chuckled. Chloe's subsequent smile made Beca's heart leap. Beca, herself, couldn't help but smile back.
That night, Chloe had more or less stumbled into Beca's apartment, flinging her purse across Beca's living room. It hit a lamp, causing the lamp to fall over and hit the floor with a thud. Hysterically laughing, Chloe grabbed Beca's arm and apologized profusely.

"I swear I meant for it to land on the couch," she choked between sobs of laughter. Beca couldn't help but laugh right along with her. Until she noticed that Chloe had a death grip on her arm, which threatened to cut off Beca's circulation.

"Easy with the grip there, tiger," Beca complained. "You're going to leave a permanent mark there if you're not careful."

Composing herself from the earlier laughter, Chloe met Beca's eyes. Winking, she said, "Oh, you'd be so lucky."

Beca turned pink. She opened and closed her mouth several times, willing herself to say something, anything, but no words would come out. Chloe smirked. She loved when Beca got flustered like this. It was so adorable and unlike Beca's normal self, which was generally pretty quick with the dry wit. Pushing Beca's buttons a bit more, Chloe grabbed both of Beca's hands and leaned into her ear.

She dropped her voice to a husky whisper and continued, "Are you feeling lucky tonight, Becs?"

If Beca was red before, she was even redder now. After regaining normal breathing and floundering around with words for several seconds, Beca managed to deadpan and spit back, "Keep it in your pants, Chlo." Beca applauded herself for managing any kind of halfway intelligent retort to Chloe. Chloe too often got the upper hand in these situations, dissolving into fits of laughter at Beca's flustered responses.

Beca and Chloe eventually got ready for bed and without so much as asking, Chloe flopped down into Beca's bed and burrowed herself beneath the sheets. This wasn't anything unusual, as Chloe and Beca had shared a bed many a night over the years. Particularly in college, when they would come back to the Bella house after late nights out, they often woke up together the next day in the same bed. It had become a habit for them. Beca had realized, after a while, that this didn't bother her as much as she thought it might. Beca turned off the light and climbed into bed next to Chloe.

"Chloe?"

"Hm?"

"What were you going to tell me when you called me earlier tonight?" Beca wondered.

"I can't remember," Chloe lied easily. She had sobered up considerably since calling Beca earlier that night. She now had the clarity to talk herself out of that drunken profession.

"Night, Chlo," Beca whispered, deciding not to press the issue further.

Chloe responded by leaning over to plant a kiss on Beca's cheek, but at that moment, Beca turned her head to lay on her side. Instead of kissing Beca's cheek, Chloe inadvertently kissed the corner of Beca's mouth. They both froze, neither saying anything. Chloe's eyes searched Beca's...
inquisitively, while Beca remained frozen with fear. An infectious smile spread across Chloe's face.

"Didn't mean to catch you there, Becs. I always figured our first kiss would be less… accidental," she said, winking.

Beca's whole body was tingling, from the tips of her toes, all the way up her spine. Her heart felt like it might beat out of her chest. She hoped Chloe couldn't hear that.

"Whatever you say, Beale," Beca said unequally. Fuck. Chloe had kissed her. Chloe had kissed her on the mouth. Sure, it had been an accident, but still. It was nice. Like, unexpectedly great?

Oh, no, Beca thought to herself. What could this mean? Surely nothing, right? I mean, sure, Chloe is attractive… really insanely attractive, but she's your friend, Beca. She's not into you like that. And wait a second, you're not into her like that. You've got Jesse, the world's best boyfriend. This whole thing just surprised you, that's all. That's why you feel this way right now, Beca assured herself as she settled into a restless sleep. Next to her, Chloe snoozed on.

The next morning, Beca woke up feeling more at peace than she could remember feeling anytime in the past few months. She looked over at her redheaded friend, curled up next to her and still fast asleep. At some point in the night, Chloe had draped her arm around Beca. Beca smiled to herself. It was really nice to spend time with Chloe again, though she hated the circumstances that brought her here. Beca carefully peeled Chloe's arm off of her and climbed out of bed.

Beca, who was running a bit late by this point, quickly got ready for work and scribbled a note on notepad for Chloe, "Chlo- Help yourself to anything you want. I think I have pizza in the fridge? Sorry I don't have real food, I'm not a real adult. Stay as long as you want, just lock up when you leave!"

After work that day, Beca told Jesse about her surprise houseguest from the previous night. Jesse, unpredictably, overreacted when he found out. Even throughout college, Chloe had been a bit of a sore point in their relationship and Beca never knew quite why. There were times during arguments when Jesse would accuse Beca of caring more about Chloe than him. Beca would always point out how ridiculous this was, as Chloe was Beca's best friend, the same way that Benji was Jesse's best friend. This inevitably led Jesse to mutter, "It's different," under his breath.

This same argument resurfaced today, again leading Jesse to accuse Beca of caring more about Chloe than him. Again, Beca pointed out that Chloe was her best friend, and again, Jesse muttered, "It's different."

"How is it different, Jesse? How?" Beca challenged. "Is it different because Chloe literally called me in a panic over some guy grabbing her in a bar? Look, I'm sorry that guys have it so easy and don't normally get assaulted in bars, but this is unfortunately a thing that happens. And what kind of shitty person would I be if I didn't go there and get her?"

"I'm not saying that," Jesse cut in, "Of course you should've gone to pick her up. It's super shitty that happened to her and I hate it. But what I'm saying is, why did she have to come back to your place to sleep with you afterwards? Like, you could've dropped her back off at her place. Stacie was there, right?" Stacie and Chloe had moved in together after graduation.

"Oh my God, you just don't get it," Beca began in frustration as she threw her arms over her head. "Chloe asked to stay with me, not the other way around. She had been through hell and back, I wasn't going to say no."
"How convenient for her," Jesse retorted.

"Jesus, listen to yourself!" Beca exploded. "No, seriously, do you hear yourself? Getting bent out of shape because my FRIEND needed to stay with me after getting ASSAULTED at a bar?" Jesse paused a second to let this sink in.

"Fuck, you're right," Jesse conceded, running his hands through his hair. "I'm really sorry, okay? I'm in no position to know what that would be like. I'm glad you're such a good friend to her. Can you forgive me?" Jesse asked.

"Yes, while still reserving the right to be kind of pissed about all this for a while longer."

"Noted," Jesse said, grabbing Beca's hand and kissing it. "I'm sorry. Would Ben & Jerry's make you more inclined to forgive me?" He asked sweetly.

"Well, it couldn't really hurt," Beca considered.

Several weeks passed and even though Beca and Jesse had made up from that argument, the wheels were in motion and the two continued to bicker over the smallest of things. Jesse would want to go out with friends and Beca would want to stay in. Beca wanted to order Chinese for dinner and Jesse was tired of having Chinese food three times a week. He wanted Chipotle. Beca wasn't spending enough time with Jesse. Jesse was being too needy. This continued until finally, the two sat down and talked about what was really bothering them.

"Beca, I just feel like our relationship isn't the same as it used to be. At first I thought we needed to move forward to fix it, but now I'm thinking I need to relax and step back. We've been through a lot of changes together these past few months and maybe we're still just trying to work out a new normal that works for us."

Beca, who was looking at the floor up until this point, dared to look up and meet Jesse's eyes. His poor, sweet puppy dog eyes. Beca felt riddled with guilt. Jesse was about the most wonderful guy a girl could hope for, so patient with her and so dedicated to making things work. She felt bad that she hadn't been putting forth the same level of effort.

"Jesse, I think you're right. You matter so much to me. I mean it," she answered genuinely. Continuing on, she said, "I know I've been busy with work and you've had a lot going on with grad school. And that's made things different with us since graduation. But I agree, we just need to settle into a new normal that works for us both. We don't need to rush our future, we can figure that out when we're ready. Right now, I just want to re-prioritize you and me."

Jesse, upon hearing Beca's words, couldn't have smiled bigger if he tried. Jesse felt glad that Beca had affirmed her dedication to him and their relationship. He almost couldn't believe that he was going to propose to Beca two weeks ago. It seemed so silly, in hindsight. He loved Beca, he really did, but they had a lot of figuring out to do together as a couple before he would be ready to ask her to spend the rest of their lives together.

Beca, on the other hand, sighed contentedly, feeling glad her and Jesse's heart-to-heart hadn't ended in a breakup. Beca could tell that Jesse had seemed on edge the past several weeks and she had braced herself for the worse case scenario with this talk. Beca and Jesse's relationship since graduation had been rocky. She was glad they had decided to work on things.

The following week flew by. When Beca wasn't at the studio working on that Fifth Harmony track, she was over at Jesse's. It was Friday before Beca realized that she hadn't spent the night without Jesse once that week.
"Hey, Jess?" She asked that Friday evening.

"Huh?" He responded from the couch, breaking his eyes away from the T.V. to meet her eyes.

"I'm glad we're fixing things between us and all, but I could use a change of pace tonight."

"You know, I was thinking the same thing. It's like we share a brain."

"Scary," Beca joked, shuddering.

"You know what we should do?" Jesse asked, not waiting long enough for Beca to respond until answering his own question. "We should get the Barden gang together tonight. I'm talking about a House. Party," he said, emphasizing the last two words of that sentence.

Shouting across the apartment, Jesse yelled, "Benji!" Several seconds later, a bedroom door across the apartment opened and a dove flew out. The dove flew from the bedroom into the living room. Another second later, Benji's head appeared.

"Yeah?" Benji asked.

Ignoring the dove that was now fluttering listlessly around the apartment, Jesse told Benji about his idea for the house party.

"Sounds great," Benji answered enthusiastically. "Emily and I were going to hang out tonight and I'm sure she'd be really excited to see everyone again."

"Beca?" Jesse asked, turning his attention towards her and putting on his best sad puppy-dog face.

With Benji and Jesse's eyes both on her, Beca sighed and answered, "Must we?"

Even though Beca acted begrudgingly grumpy, she was actually pretty excited about the party. Although some of the Bellas had moved away, a handful of them remained in Atlanta. There was still Stacie, Jessica, Emily and, of course, Chloe. She hadn't seen Chloe since that night about two weeks ago, but they texted or talked on the phone most days.

In delegating tasks to prepare for the night's festivities, Beca informed Jesse and Benji, "If we're going to do this, we're going to do it right. I'm going to make the most bomb-ass playlist for tonight, it'll knock your socks off."

Benji and Jesse, saying nothing, looked at Beca with bemused expressions.

"Yikes," she said, "I just sounded like my dad right there, didn't I?" Beca had a tendency for dropping lame one-liners when she got overly anxious or exited about something. Case in point: any interaction she had with Kommissar her senior year of college.

Laughing it off, Jesse said, "Alright, we'll leave Beca to the sock-knocking playlist. I'll pull the guest list together and run out and grab food. Benji, my man," he said, clapping Benji on the shoulder, "You're in charge of the party drinks."

"Hands in aca-nerds," Jesse instructed. The three put a hand in a pile, one on top of the other.

"And break!" Jesse joked enthusiastically. Beca, failing to suppress a smile, rolled her eyes and got to work creating a playlist on her laptop.

After a few minutes, Jesse interrupted Beca's laser focus on the playlist she was creating.
"Be-caw?" He asked from across the room.

"Yeah?" Beca asked, not bothering to tear her eyes away from her laptop.

"Just wanted to let you know that all the Bellas are a go for tonight. We've also got Donald and a few of the other Trebles. Emily may bring over a few of the new Bellas. I invited a few friends from class. Anyone you want to invite from work?"

"Nope," Beca answered as automatically as breathing.

"Really?" Jesse asked. "No friends from work?"

"That's a negative," Beca answered without any inflection.

"What about that hipster guy you work with? What's his name, Dax?"

"I'd rather be locked in a dark room listening to the Sock-a-pellas on repeat, so... that's a no," Jesse laughed.

"Okay then, I'm gonna run over to the grocery and pick up snacks for tonight. See you in a bit," he said, walking across the room and placing a kiss on Beca's cheek.

"Make good choices," she joked, sparing him a quick glance.

"I always do," he joked back, winking as he closed the door behind him.

Several minutes later, Benji interrupted Beca with his own set of concerns.

"So, about this party tonight, I'm buying alcohols."

Why did Jesse put Benji in charge of this, Beca wondered?

"Yeah, good assessment so far," Beca said dryly.

"So, what kinds of alcohols should I buy?" Oy.

"First, maybe let's just call it 'alcohol.' The 's' is superfluous. Second, I'd hit up the liquor store around the corner. Maybe get a keg and just a shitload of vodka. We can make jungle juice with the vodka."

"Alright, so a keg and one shitload of vodka. Got it." Beca nodded in agreement and turned back to her laptop.

"Hey, Beca?" Benji asked again after several moments of dead silence.

"Yeah?"

"Precisely how much is in a 'shitload'?"

"Want me to come with you, Benji?" Beca asked, sighing.

"Um, yeah, could you?"

"Alright, let's do it," Beca said, standing up. At the precise moment she stood up, the dove from Benji's bedroom fluttered by, coming mere inches from Beca's face.

"Jesus H. Chirst!" Beca yelled in shock. "Okay, we gotta do something about that bird before

The trip out for booze was fairly uneventful. Beca and Benji picked up exactly what they needed before heading back to the apartment. Once there, Benji began the process of making that jungle juice while Beca got back to work on the music. Several minutes later, Benji presented Beca with a red solo cup of liquid.

"Would you care to do the honors, Beca Mitchell?" Benji asked.

Beca took the cup from Benji and took a gulp of its contents. Immediately, Beca spewed the entire mouthful of liquid across the kitchen counter.

Choking and gasping, Beca managed to spit out, "What the hell, Benji?"

Benji took the cup from Beca, inspected the liquid, and took a small, conservative sip from the cup. He immediately realized his mistake as his face contorted into a look of pure disgust.

"I didn't add enough juice," he said, grimacing.

"You think?" Beca sputtered. "Good God, Benji, you actually just fed me varnish." Benji chuckled. It wasn't long before Beca was right there with him, laughing along.

At this moment, Jesse came through the front door of the apartment, grocery bags of snacks in either hand.

"What's so funny?" He asked, plopping the grocery bags on the kitchen counter.

"Ew, wet," he observed, after realizing that he had placed the grocery bags atop a very wet and sticky kitchen counter. Beca and Benji dissolved into further peals of laughter.

Meanwhile, Chloe had been having a pretty decent Friday by all accounts. Things went from good to better when she found out about the party that night. She shot a quick text over to Beca.

Text Message:

Chloe: I never thought I'd live to see the day where Beca Mitchell throws a party! Aca-believe it! ;)

Beca: Shocker, right? Please tell me you're coming.

Chloe: Of course I'm coming! I would never turn down a party serving jiggle juice!

Beca: Ah, that's where you're wrong. See, we're having jungle juice, not jiggle juice. Classic mixup, really. I hope you'll still be there anyway.

Chloe: You know, you're really letting me down here, but I think I can be convinced to come to your party... for a price.

Beca: Just tell me what I gotta do, Beale.

Chloe: Just save me a dance tonight and we'll call it even ;)

Beca: You've got yourself a deal. You happen to be speaking to the playlist overlord of the party right now, just so you know. I'll pick us out a good song.

Chloe: Wow, I totes had no clue I was speaking to someone so important.
Beca: You live and you learn, Chlo. Live and you learn.

Chloe: Haha, alright then Becs. Try to keep that ego in check. See you tonight!

Beca: See ya then!

Chloe chuckled to herself. Although she kept up with Beca well enough since graduation, she didn't see her nearly as often as she wanted. She knew Beca was busy with work. When she wasn't busy with work, she was usually with Jesse. The thought of that bothered Chloe, perhaps more than she'd like to admit. Shaking that unpleasant thought free from her head, a smile returned to her face as she ran over to Stacie's room and barged in, not bothering to knock.

"Woah, knock much?" Stacie asked playfully as Chloe made her grand entrance into the bedroom. "I could have been, you know," Stacie suggested with a wink, "entertaining."

"I would know if you were, ahem, entertaining," Chloe responded. "You forget, but these walls are paper thin," she said, tapping her knuckles on the shared wall between Stacie's and Chloe's bedrooms.

"Oh, trust me, I don't forget that," Stacie said, smiling seductively.

"And here I thought that I was the only one into exhibitionism," Chloe said, dropping her voice half an octave.

"Hardly the case, Miss Beale," Stacie challenged back, "I've done some things that would shock you."

Chloe giggled. Her and Stacie's flirty one-upmanship was all in good fun, nothing meant.

"As much as I'd love to continue this cat-and-mouse bit we've got going on, I've gotta ask, you're going to the party tonight, yeah?"

"Of course I'm going!" Stacie answered. "How else am I going to finally bag that sexy little music producer of ours?"

Chloe's face turned into a perfect combination of shock and pure jealousy. Stacie took the opportunity to pounce while Chloe's mouth was still hanging open.

"Do my eyes deceive me, or is that jealousy I see?" Stacie asked. Snapping her mouth shut, Chloe recomposed herself to seem less appalled than she felt.

"What? No. I'm totes not jealous! I mean, I'm just surprised is all. I never knew you thought of her that way. Since she's with Jesse and all."

"I'm well aware," Stacie began evenly, "and I don't think of her that way... often, anyways," she added as an afterthought. A gleam of panicked jealousy graced Chloe's face yet again before she concealed her mouth back into a pained smile.

Stacie started back up, "But I think you think of her that way. If looks could kill, I'd be dead seven times over right now. Level with me, Beale. You've got a thing for Beca and you've got it bad."

Chloe plopped down on Stacie's bed and sighed. She could deny away until the cows came home, but she knew it would do nothing to convince either Stacie or herself.

Frowning a bit, Chloe admitted, "Okay, I might have a small thing for Beca."
"Small?" Stacie asked. "I can see that toner from miles away."

"How did you know?" Chloe asked incredulously.

"It's in your eyes," Stacie answered simply. "The way you look at her when you're dancing with her, joking around with her, basically interacting with her at all. I can just feel the sexual tension."

"That obvious, huh?" Chloe asked as she raised her eyebrows.

"Well, to me. But you know," Stacie joked, "that's because I'm more well-versed in the language of love than your average Joe."

"Right. Well riddle me this, love guru, what do you do when the person you love loves someone else?" Chloe asked. She didn't realize the depressing tone her question had taken until the words were already out of her mouth. She looked over at Stacie sadly.

Stacie sat down next to Chloe and wrapped her arms around her. "Chlo, I never said anything about being in love with her. Are you?"

Chloe nodded, her eyes welling up with tears.

"She's the first thing I think about when I wake up, the last thing I think about before I go to sleep. And all of the moments in between. And call me crazy, but I could swear that sometimes I feel a tiny bit of that love reciprocated. Just enough to keep me holding on. Stace, I've never felt this way about someone before, but I just feel it deep in my bones. She's it. We're supposed to be together. But she's with Jesse. And he's awesome, I mean they make total sense together. And I love her so much that if she's happy with him, that's enough for me. It just stings sometimes, is all," Chloe finished, sniffling and forcing a small smile.

"Chloe," Stacie began, hugging her friend tightly, "I honestly had no idea you were feeling this way. This is a lot to bear, much less, to suffer with in silence. Look, I also want Beca to be happy. But do you know what is equally as important to me?"

Chloe shook her head.

"Your happiness," Stacie continued. "I'm not convinced that her and Jesse are going to end up together. But that's a decision Beca and Jesse will need to make in their own time. But here's what I can say. You don't deserve to be in agony over something you can't control. As much as I would love to see you and Beca together, that's just not in the cards right now. You've gotta move on and try to find happiness elsewhere. You deserve that."

Chloe nodded. "Thanks, Stace, you're absolutely right." Brightening up a tad, she shot Stacie an appreciative smile.

"So that said," Stacie questioned, "Are you sure you want to go to this thing tonight? I'll stick back with you if you don't feel it's a good idea to go."

"Of course I want to go!" Chloe exclaimed, straightening up and beginning to return to her cheery self. "Look, I've been semi-successful in dealing with being in love with Beca for years now. I can handle tonight, I'll just… back off a little. And besides, I really miss my friends and want to see them."

Standing up to leave, Chloe shot one last look back to Stacie. "Thanks though, for you know, watching out for me. I'm lucky to have you as a friend."
"You got it!" Stacie said back. Watching Chloe leave her room, Stacie couldn't help but feel a bit worried for her friend. She just wasn't sure how successfully Chloe would be able to start moving on from Beca, and the last thing she wanted to see was for one of her friends to get hurt.

Much to Stacie's surprise, Chloe perked up considerably after their earlier conversation. It was amazing, really, how Chloe could go from anguishing heartbreak to cheery excitability in a matter of hours. Jessica, Emily, and a handful of new, college-aged Bellas had come over to Stacie and Chloe's apartment for a pregame. Chloe, true to form, shrugged off her problems and turned her undivided attention to enjoying the company of her friends.

At one point during the pregame, Stacie caught Chloe's eye and, eyebrows raised, shot Chloe a questioning look. Non-verbally, she was asking, Are you okay?

Chloe came over to Stacie, and patting her arm, answered, "It's good. Being around my friends makes this all so much easier. It shows me there's still so much love in my life, despite... everything."

As if her brain was simply done thinking about her heartbreak, a sly, enthusiastic smile broke across Chloe's face. Grabbing Stacie's hand, she insisted the two go take shots with the newer Bellas. "Without Amy here, someone's gotta corrupt them, right?" She asked rhetorically.

Most of the girls were solidly inebriated by the time they arrived to Jesse and Benji's apartment for the party. The Lyft driver kept offering to pull over to the side of the road for Jessica, who perhaps, pre-gamed a little too hard.

"No, no, no, no, no," Jessica protested sloppily, "I never throw up from drinking. That's Ashley. ASHLEY!" She screamed into her phone.

"Uh, you have to dial her number before you can talk to her," Emily said, grabbing the phone out of Jessica's hands and scrolling through Jessica's contacts for Ashley's name.

Finally, the girls arrived to the party. Stepping into the apartment, Chloe realized that a lot of the party guests had already arrived. She recognized about ten Trebles and several High Notes, among a whole lot of other people she didn't know. Chloe assumed these must be Jesse's neighbors and friends from grad school. She looked over to the kitchen and saw Emily enveloping Benji in a huge hug.

Young love, she thought with a smile on her face. She saw Jesse behind them, pumping a keg and filling solo cups for the party guests. She scanned the crowd for the face of the one person she really wanted to see. Finally, Chloe noticed Beca over in the corner of the living room, cup in hand, chatting with Donald. Beca glanced over and met Chloe's eyes. Beca's face immediately brightened as she shot Chloe her signature, tight-lipped smile.

Chloe's heart skipped a beat as her insides felt themselves turning to jelly. Beca looked hot in her black leather jacket and high heeled boots. Really hot. And here Beca was, smiling. At her. In spite of herself, a huge smile crept across Chloe's face. She dashed over to Beca and right as she was about to pull her into the biggest of hugs, Chloe stopped herself. Even her alcohol-induced brain could tell her that she was falling back into a giant trap.

Back off from Beca tonight, remember? You have to move on, she told herself.

Instead of giving Beca the bear hug that had become their customary greeting, she gave Beca a shorter, less-consuming hug. Beca didn't realize until the hug ended way too early that she missed the absence of Chloe. Something was different... something was off.
"Hey, Chlo," Beca said, "Is everything, you know, okay?"

"Better than okay!" Chloe answered sweetly. "I'm here at the hottest party of the year, surrounded by my closest friends, what more could I want?"

Before Beca could say anything, Chloe added, "Hey, this ginger needs her jiggle juice... ahem, 'jungle juice,' pardon. So, I'm gonna go, but we'll catch up later, yeah?" Chloe immediately dissipated into the crowd of the party.

Beca turned back to Donald and uneasily picked up where they left off in the conversation. To herself, she wondered, What the hell was that? I think Chloe was being weird, why was she being weird? She can't be mad at me, I mean we were texting just a few hours ago and everything was fine.

Beca felt a sinking feeling in her stomach. She made a mental note to find Chloe again in a bit and feel out what could be going on.

The party wore on and by any objective indication, everyone was having the time of their lives. The playlist was a smash hit among the party-goers and about half of them were dancing in the living room and singing along to the music. Some of the High Notes were out on the porch, doing what High Notes are known best for. A riveting game of beer pong was happening in the kitchen. Beca and Stacie turned out to be the dream team when it came to beer pong, as they had just won their fifth game in a row. As Beca sunk the ping-pong ball into the final solo cup, the entire audience of people watching the game erupted into a loud cheer.

"Up high, short stuff!" Stacie exclaimed above the roar of cheers, reaching up to high five Beca.

Beca high-fived her hand and answered, "Hey, you sound just like Amy. You know, I miss Amy. Like I'm glad her and Bumper are happy in Nashville, but I just, you know, miss her, you know?" Beca had consumed more than several drinks by this point in the night and Stacie's face was coming in and out of focus. Beca leaned on the table for support.

"Yeah, definitely," Stacie agreed. "I miss her, too."

"You know who else I miss?" Beca slurred, still leaning on the table for support. Answering her own question, she continued, "Chloe. Where even is she?"

"Oh, she's here," Stacie answered, taking a sip of her drink and scanning the room for her, "Somewhere."

"Well, yeah, I know, but she's, I don't know, different tonight. Like she's still her, but she's different. Does that sound right?"

"I'm sure she's fine," Stacie said, touching Beca's arm reassuringly. "She's Chloe. She's probably, I don't know, chatting up some of the younger Bellas and reliving the glory days! I promise, Becs, Chloe's fine," Stacie lied, cringing internally. She hated lying to Beca, truly. But she couldn't be the one to tell Beca about this, especially while she was with Jesse. Did Stacie want Beca and Chloe to be together? Of course she did. But they needed to work things out on their own.

"I'm gonna go find her," Beca stated resolutely, seeking off into the crowd. Stepping into the living room, Beca nearly tripped over Jessica, who was sitting on the floor next to a potted plant.

"BECA!" Jessica yelled excitedly.

"Jessica! I'm so glad to see you!" Beca exclaimed, momentarily forgetting her mission. "You're
here! And you're hugging a... potted plant," she finished, smirking.

"Yeah, this is my new friendddddddd," Jessica trailed off, 'feeding' half of her beer to the potted plant.

Emily walked up and cut in the conversation. "Beca!" she squealed. The two embraced.

"Hey, you... tall drink of water," Beca joked. The greeting might have been interpreted awkwardly were it not for the fact that both of the girls were drunk. "How have things been?" Beca asked.

"Good! Really busy with the Bellas, and of course, I miss you two," she said, nodding towards Beca and Jessica. The three caught up a while longer until, finally, Beca excused herself from the conversation to find Chloe.

Beca scanned the crowd for Chloe and after about five seconds, her eyes landed on the backside of a redhead, who was deep in conversation with Jesse. After initial elation over having found Chloe, Beca realized that this redhead was not, in fact, her redhead. She was some other girl. Beca figured she was probably one of Jesse's new friends from grad school. Beca kept searching. Finally she spotted Chloe in the middle of a group of people dancing. But who was that dude she was dancing with?

Beca pushed her way to the middle of the dance crowd. Over the sound of her own playlist, she called out Chloe's name. Chloe turned around, separating herself from the guy she was dancing with. "Hey, Beca!"

"Hey, yourself. Whoever made the playlist for tonight is some sort of musical genius, am I right?" Beca joked.

"I think it's aca-awesome!" Chloe responded, grinning.

"Are we ever going to stop using the word 'aca'?" Beca asked sarcastically. She secretly loved that this was a thing Chloe did, but wouldn't be caught dead admitting that.

"Aca-never! Come on Beca, I know you love it!" Chloe winked.

"That's debatable," Beca responded, taking a sip of her drink. For a few moments, neither girl said anything, the melody of music flowing between them covering up the silence of unspoken thoughts. Finally, Beca continued, "So, when are we going to cash in on that dance I owe you?"

"Oh, Beca," Chloe responded cheerily, "You don't have to do that, you know I was just messing with you, right?" She asked.

Beca's brows furrowed and a confused expression crossed her face. Just as she was opening her mouth to say something, Jesse grabbed Beca's shoulder from behind and gently wheeled her around to face him. "Jesse, what the-" Beca began.

"Beca, this is my friend Olivia," Jesse interrupted, pointing to the redheaded girl with whom he had been engrossed in conversation. "She's one of my best friends from school."

Beca whipped her head back around to glance at Chloe. She had gone back to dancing with that sleeze-bag douche. Suppressing a scowl, Beca turned back to the conversation with Jesse. Extending her hand, she shook hands with the other redhead. This girl was petite, beautiful, and just had the kind of aura where you could tell she ate rainbows in her spare time. Like Chloe, but more... cartoonish? Like she stepped straight out of a Disney movie?
"Your boyfriend has told me so much about you," Olivia began, "Like how you produce music! That's really awesome. Jesse and I both want to create scores for movies! So, you and I have a lot in common!" Olivia said, beaming.

"Huh?" Beca asked.

"Because, Beca," Jesse said, "You're both creating art with music. Just in different ways. It's pretty cool."

"Yeah, for sure," Beca said distractedly.

"Well, anyhow," Olivia prattled on, "We have every class together and there's a group of six of us that hang out all the time. I swear that even though I haven't met you yet, I practically know you already after hearing all of the wonderful things Jesse has to say about you. He's a lucky guy."

"Indeed I am," Jesse agreed, grinning.

What Beca wanted to say was, That's funny, Olivia, because Jesse has never mentioned you and by the way, could you leave me alone because I really don't like people that much? Nothing personal, it's just people in general.

What Beca actually said was, "That's really nice of you to say, I'm glad Jesse's made some good friends like you in grad school." Olivia and Jesse both smiled.

Before Olivia could continue wasting more of Beca's time, Beca politely excused herself from the conversation and strode back over to Chloe. At this point, Beca was on the warpath. She did not know what kind of coy game Chloe was playing, but she was not having it.

Perhaps approaching Chloe with her anger was a mistake, especially by this point in the night. It was well past one in the morning and most of the party guests were skunked. Stacie and Emily were standing on the coffee table, dancing with each other and loudly shouting the lyrics to the Spice Girls song that was playing. Jessica was now throwing up in the potted plant and Benji was trying to comfort her and give her water. One of the new Bellas was full-on making out with a High Note. And that left Chloe, sexily dancing with the unknown guy.

"Chloe!" Beca angrily barked as she made her way over.

"Beca, what's going on?" Chloe asked in a genuinely concerned tone, stepping away from the guy.

"We," Beca began, frantically motioning between the two of them with her hand, "Need to talk." Beca's hand motioning had caused a big splash of beer to fly out of Beca's solo cup and into the carpet.

Chloe shot the guy an apologetic look, dismissing him. Sighing, Chloe turned back to Beca, giving her her undivided attention. "Okay, Beca, I'm here. Let's talk."

"Okay, that's the first thing!" Beca shot out. "You're calling me "Beca"?"

"That's your name, isn't it? I really don't understand what's going on," a stressed Chloe confessed, running a hand through her hair.

"You never call me 'Beca', unless you're really mad at me. You always call me 'Becs.'" Was Beca always this astute, Chloe wondered?

"So I've been racking my brain, just trying to figure out what I did to make you so mad at me, and
you know what? I'm coming up empty. So please, just please, enlighten me so I can apologize and we can go back to normal."

Chloe swallowed. She couldn't tell Beca. This was neither the time nor place. "I'm not mad at you," Chloe answered honestly.

Beca softened up a bit but the hurt tone was still evident in her voice. "I feel like you've been avoiding me all night."

"Beca, I-" Chloe began, before she was interrupted by a dove flying right between the small space separating Beca from Chloe.

Beca cursed and shrieked. Chloe shrieked and ran straight into Beca's arms. The poor, confused dove fluttered off into Jesse's bedroom. The velocity at which Chloe ran into Beca's arms sent the two flying backwards and toppling to the floor. Beca's drink went flying out of her hand and halfway across the room. Chloe landed on top of Beca, her face burrowed in Beca's armpit. Chloe didn't know what to do other than laugh. Maybe it was because emotions were running high with her, that she began crying from laughing so hard. Hearing Chloe laugh, Beca immediately broke down. Pretty soon both of them were sharing a fit of giggles.

"Beca, Beca!" Jesse called out, leaning down to help Chloe and Beca off the floor. "Are you okay?" He asked seriously.

Beca, suppressing a final giggle, locked eyes with Chloe, who was beaming at her. "Couldn't be better," Beca answered, not breaking eye contact with Chloe.
CHAPTER 3 (October 18, 2015)

On the afternoon of October 18, Jesse and Beca broke up. They had tried to make it work, but it became clear that they were growing apart. Maybe it didn't so matter who did the "dumping" because the problems were clear. Ultimately, the decision to split felt mutual.

"Beca, I don't know what to say, it's not like anything is actively wrong. Maybe that's what makes this so hard to come to terms with. We make a lot of sense together. We get along really well and I always have a lot of fun with you. Honestly, I couldn't, and still can't imagine my life without you." Sniffing and wiping his nose with the back of his hand, Jesse continued on, tears streaming down his face.

"It's just, that even though nothing is wrong, that doesn't make this right. We don't have the 'spark.' Your eyes don't light up when you see me. My eyes don't light up when I see you. Feel free to jump in at any time, here," Jesse offered desperately.

"We love each other about as much as two people could love one another without actually being in love," Beca finished. She, too, was crying. Her and Jesse were sitting next to each other on the porch of his apartment. She grabbed his hand. This did nothing to help the sobs coming from either of them. They sat like that for a long time, holding hands, staring straight ahead, and crying together.

Finally, when the crying subsided, Beca took a deep breath and looked over at Jesse. The late afternoon sun was reflecting off his tear stained cheeks. She didn't want to remember their relationship this way. Him this way. Apart from infrequent moments, their relationship was actually a pretty happy one. It just wasn't the right one. Beca thought back over the events of the past month, which had led to this point.

If Beca had to pinpoint the exact moment she knew, she would tell you the night of that party from about a month ago. Beca had spent the evening obsessing over the behavior of a friend whom she believed to be mad at her. Meanwhile, Jesse had been chatting up an attractive redhead all evening and Beca did not feel one pang of jealousy. In fact, it did not even occur to Beca that she maybe should feel threatened by Olivia. When this realization had dawned on Beca the next morning after that party, that was the moment she knew that her and Jesse did not belong together.

The problems between Beca and Jesse continued to become more evident after that night. Beca was working long hours at the studio. A few days after that party, Beca finally finished post-production on the Fifth Harmony track. She handed it off to her boss, who was duly impressed with Beca's hard work and ingenuity.

"This, right here, Reggie, is the sound of success. Dax, get in here!" He yelled across the hall.

Dax came padding into his office, swallowing a bite from his avocado toast. "Yeah?" He asked while chewing.

"Get that out of my sight," Beca's boss said, referring to the avocado toast. "Listen to this." He began playing Beca's track. "You hear that?" He asked Dax, who nodded along cluelessly.

"That's a hit. That's art. That's the sound of money landing in this studio's pocket. That's what you, Dax, should be doing for me. Reggie gets it." He said, clapping Beca's shoulder. "Meanwhile,
you're over here eating toast with an avocado on it."

"Avocado toast," Dax corrected.

"I don't care what in hipster hell it is," Beca's boss answered. "I need you to go make me a hit. Now!" He said, clapping his hands.

The approval over Beca's song didn't stop there. A week later, a large gift basket arrived to the office with Beca's name on it. Fifth Harmony and their band manager had been so impressed that they personally sent a gift basket over to Beca as a thank you. As good as things were at work for Beca, with newfound success came more difficult projects. Beca's boss was beginning to get Beca more involved with the more famous talent at Residual Heat, keeping Beca too busy to enjoy much free time.

During the free time she had, she found herself too tired to keep up with Jesse. He was loving grad school in more ways than one. In addition to continuing his education in music theory, he was still living the life that many students know and love so well. He was going out to bars multiple nights per week, staying up late to hang out with friends, and going to Taco Bell at three a.m. Beca didn't blame him, not a bit. But she was beginning to move past this phase of life. Did she still enjoy the occasional night out? Sure. Did she still love Taco Bell? Hell yes, bring it on. But her life was taking on additional meaning. She was beginning to find purpose and meaning in her career, and that was just something Jesse wasn't yet experiencing.

The divide in the relationship didn't end there. Beca and Jesse were also experiencing problems with their physical relationship. Beca guessed one would say that her and Jesse had never been 'hot and heavy.' Their physical relationship was fine, good even, for the first few years of their relationship. The sex was never explosive, but it suited Beca just fine. As far as Beca could tell, Jesse seemed just fine with it as well. Around the time of graduation, things took a turn for the worse. It wasn't sudden, but gradually, the sex and physical romance dwindled. By the time of their break up, Beca and Jesse hadn't been intimate in over a month.

So, the pieces were all there. And when they put together the puzzle, Beca and Jesse knew it was time to end it. After having the break-up talk and sitting together in silence for some time, Beca wiped the tears off her cheeks and stood up.

"Now what?" She asked. "I don't really know what I should be doing right now. Like how are we supposed to end this break-up?" She asked, feebly attempting humor.

Jesse jumped in, letting go of Beca's hand and standing up from his chair. "Well, you're welcome to stay as long as you want," he said sincerely.

"Don't take this the wrong way, but if I stay here, I'm probably going to keep crying and I don't think my tear ducts are capable of handling much more."

"Understood, and honestly, I feel the same way."

"So this is it then? I'm going to leave right now. And then what?"

"I hope we'll stay friends," Jesse answered softly.

"I know we'll stay friends," Beca affirmed. "I agree with what you said earlier. I can't imagine my life without you either," she finished, giving a small nod towards Jesse.

"Come here," he said, pulling Beca into a hug. Beca hugged him back. When they finally broke apart, they offered one another sympathetic smiles before Beca finally left Jesse's apartment.
The afternoon had faded into evening and the sun was beginning to set as Beca climbed into her car. She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. In a way, she felt free. Free to start looking for what had been missing with Jesse. On the other hand, she felt scared. She had been dating Jesse since she was nineteen and she was afraid she wouldn't know how to live life without dating him. Would she be too lonely? Did she need him more than she thought she would? What if she was making a mistake and she didn't figure that out until it was too late? There was a great amount of fear in this uncertainty.

Without really thinking what she was doing or why she was doing it, Beca turned the key in the ignition of her car and began driving on autopilot. She didn't know until she arrived there, that she had been driving to Chloe's apartment.

Beca softly knocked on Chloe's apartment door three times. A few moments later, she opened the door and after an initial moment of shock, the famous Chloe Beale smile spread wide across the redhead's face. She looked perfect, Beca thought. Her red hair fells in loose curls around her face. She was wearing workout clothes that hugged in all the right places. And looking into her baby blue eyes, which sparkled with happy recognition over seeing Beca…

Wait, what am I even thinking? I'm clearly in a strange place emotionally, Beca deduced, shaking the thoughts of Chloe free from her mind.

"Now do my eyes deceive me, or is this Beca Mitchell here at my door?"

"No deception, just showing up here, unannounced. I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time?"

"Not at all! Stace is out on a Bumble date, so I hope you're okay with it just being you and me," Chloe said winking.

"Well, in that case, I guess I'm out of here," Beca joked, pretending to turn around and leave.

"Oh, Becs!" Chloe said, grabbing Beca's wrist and proceeding to envelop the smaller girl in an all-consuming hug.

While Beca was cloaked in Chloe's embrace, her muffled voice squeaked out, "We broke up."

Chloe froze. Did she just hear what she thought she had heard? Surely not. "Wait, what did you say?" Chloe asked, taking a step back, while keeping her arms wrapped around Beca's waist.

"Jesse and I just broke up," Beca said, her steely-grey eyes meeting Chloe's concerned gaze.

"Oh no, Becs, I'm so sorry," Chloe said soothingly.

Internally, she was waging a war against herself. Seeing Beca upset broke Chloe's heart. Her friend was hurting and that truly pained Chloe. That being said, a tiny part of Chloe felt elated. Now, finally after all these years, Chloe could imagine a future where her and Beca could be together. She squelched this creeping excitement quickly.

Beca is hurting and a true friend doesn't find pleasure in her friend's pain, Chloe admonished herself.

The past month had been difficult for Chloe, to say the least. Chloe had tried her best to put Beca at arm's length the night of that house party. That plan had come crashing down when… well, when she literally came crashing down on Beca. The way Beca smiled at her. It tore apart that thin wall Chloe had put up like a forest fire burning through a piece of paper. She was back to square one. Worse than square one, really. Chloe continued to feel more for Beca with each passing day.
Which meant that Chloe was doing the opposite of falling out of love with Beca.

Even though Chloe knew that Stacie had given her good advice, taking the advice was easier said than done. Things more or less had gone back to normal with Beca and Chloe. They texted all the time, talked on the phone often, and saw one another at least several times per week. When they had seen one another, Chloe flirted constantly with Beca and touched Beca pretty much whenever the opportunity presented. Chloe would always sit with her leg touching Beca's. She played with Beca's hair, held her hands, hugged her, kissed her cheek. Plainly, Chloe couldn't stop acting the way she had always acted around Beca. She was just in too deep.

Chloe sat Beca down on the couch. Chloe sat down next to her, and swinging Beca's legs over her own, Chloe cradled her. "Tell me what happened, Becs."

Beca told her the whole story as she saw it. She told Chloe that they were growing apart. Their interests were different, their physical relationship was suffering, that their romance was gone. "In the end, we just realized that we were really good friends," Beca finished.

"Are you feeling okay with this?" Chloe asked, bracing herself for the answer she didn't want to hear.

She was pleasantly surprised to hear Beca answer, "Actually, yeah. I mean, this was a mutual thing. He's just not the one. And I'm not his one... that is, if you actually buy into the whole 'soul mate' bullshit."

Chloe chuckled softly. "I actually do buy into the whole 'soul mate bullshit,' to use your elegant terminology," she said assuredly.

Beca turned her head sideways so she could look Chloe in the eye. "You realize that's a thing Disney created so that they could sell more movies, yes?"

"Beca, you're so cynical," Chloe teased.

"Nice. Insulting the girl who has just been dumped."

"Sorry, Becs, but I happen to be one of those crazy fools who believes there's that one person out there for everyone."

"So, what I'm hearing is that Disney has done a fine job of brainwashing you," Beca joked.

"Now who's insulting?" Chloe asked laughing.

"Fair," Beca conceded. "Okay, so let's be real for a second. You really honestly believe in the idea that every person has a soul mate?"

"Yes," Chloe answered simply as she twirled a strand of Beca's hair around her finger.

"Right. So let's say Jesse was my soul mate. And as of today, that ship has sailed. What if I realize he's my soul mate and it's too late? Like, say, he's now dating some other girl and I missed my chance? Am I just out of luck forever? The universe just says, 'too bad, Beca, you wasted a good thing and now you're alone forever?'"

"Becs," Chloe began, squeezing Beca into a hug and resting her head atop Beca's head, "That's not how it works. If Jesse is your soul mate, you're his as well. It has to work both ways. If you're meant to be together, at some point, you will be. It may take some time to work out the kinks, but I don't, I can't, believe that the world is that cruel."
"That kind of makes me feel better," Beca mused.

"It makes sense you're scared right now. This was a big decision and it's normal to be wrestling with the 'what if's.'"

"Tell me about it," Beca answered. "This was the hardest thing I've ever done. He was perfect on paper, you know? So each time I felt unhappy with our relationship, I'd talk myself out of breaking things off. And then I'd question that decision to not break up. And then I'd question that decision. And that next decision. It was a vicious cycle, really. Ultimately, it was a gut thing. I suppose no amount of logic can explain why, deep in my gut, I just knew it wasn't the real deal."

"Well-said," Chloe answered, chewing her bottom lip and musing over Beca's words.

"Anyhow," Beca finished, "I can't talk about this anymore. I feel like I'm high, only instead, I'm stuck in an emotional labyrinth. And someone swallowed the key."

Chloe turned on a playlist that Beca had made for her as a graduation present. Chloe wouldn't admit this to Beca, but she listened to the playlist more than a normal amount. It was one of the more thoughtful presents Chloe had ever received. The playlist mostly included songs that incorporated shared memories of the two friends. Lots of songs were ones the Bellas had performed at some point or another. Many songs were ones that Chloe and Beca had listened to together while sharing headphones in the quad. Some were songs sung along to in car rides, in bars, or pre-gaming for parties. A few song didn't match the others, in Chloe's opinion. She never asked Beca why, for instance, that she included "Make You Feel My Love" by Adele.

The blare of "Poker Face" by Lady Gaga filled Chloe's speakers. Standing up, Chloe gestured for Beca to take her hand. Beca begrudgingly obliged and let herself be dragged off the couch. The two spent the rest of the evening happily singing and dancing along to the playlist of their greatest hits.

At one point, "Titanium" began playing. Beca chuckled, her cheeks tingeing pink.

A sly smile crept over Chloe's face. "My lady jam."

Beca swallowed, pushing away thoughts she didn't want creeping in her head. Deadpanning, she said, "Yes, this was the moment I knew you were a complete and total weirdo."

"Mmmhmm, so that's why you checked me out in the shower that day?" Chloe asked, knowing the exact response it would elicit.

Beca's cheeks turned beet red. Okay, Beca could admit she looked down that day in the shower. But it was accidental, she swore. I mean, someone had just barged into Beca's shower for God's sake! Indignant, Beca protested, "You looked down too, don't even try to play that card."

Chloe shrugged nonchalantly, continuing to dance to the song.

"And besides, you said you were confident about 'all that,'" Beca continued, motioning with her hands towards Chloe's body.

"Oh, I am!" Chloe said. "The human body is a beautiful thing, every scar, freckle, bit of cellulite. All of it!"

Beca nodded in agreement. "So," Chloe began again playfully. Beca knew the tone of Chloe's voice well. Chloe was getting at something and Beca was not off the hook from this embarrassing conversation yet. "You are fully admitting you checked me out in your shower that day?"
"Oh, God. Stop," Beca insisted weakly, cracking a small smile. Shit, she did just admit that, didn't she? Beca glanced over to Chloe, whose face was smug. Beca sighed. What could she do? Chloe had bested her in this particular showdown.

The next song after that was "Bo$$" by Fifth Harmony. "Becs, the next Fifth Harmony song is totes going to be a hit! I swear, I just know it's going to be one of those songs that you'll hear everywhere you go."

Beca wasn't supposed to, but she snuck a copy of the song home with her and let Chloe listen to it. Chloe had always been a collaborator in college, as the two worked closely together as Bella co-captains. Beca trusted her musical opinion above anyone else. In fact, Chloe was the first person Beca came to with the news of her success with Fifth Harmony at Residual Heart. Chloe was literally jumping up and down with excitement when she heard the news. The two spent the evening eat the entire contents of the gift basket from Fifth Harmony.

"Yeah, I'm real pumped about it, but we'll have to see if others agree," Beca answered above the sound of the song.

"You're going to be famous!" Chloe shouted back, elated.

"That remains to be seen."

Chloe pushed Beca lightly, rolling her eyes.

The last song they listened to that night was Bruno Mars' "Just The Way You Are." By this point, both Chloe and Beca were thoroughly tired from dancing. Beca leaned into Chloe tiredly and Chloe wrapped her arms around Beca. Resting her head on Beca's shoulder, the two swayed gently in place to the beat of the music.

"Do you remember this song?" Beca asked sentimentally.

"Of course I remember," Chloe whispered. She remembered everything when it came to Beca. This was the night that Beca had taken the Bellas to the pool and introduced them to idea of layering songs on top of one another. It was the first time that the Bellas had truly worked together to utilize their each of their individual talents. This was when the Bellas first discovered their 'sound,' Chloe thought. This moment meant more to Chloe than Beca knew.

The two finished the dance in comfortable silence, leaning heavily into one another and swaying along. When the song finished, Beca looked up at Chloe, who looked back down at her lovingly. Chloe's eyes sparkled, but in a subdued manner. Just like the time at that campfire when they sang "When I'm Gone' and re-discovered their 'sound,' Beca thought.

In this moment, with their eyes locked on one another, Chloe wanted to just close the gap and capture Beca's lips with her own, more than anything. She wanted to feel Beca on her. It seemed the more of Beca she had, the more she craved. Too much of her was never enough. Chloe swallowed, forcing herself not to look down at Beca's lips. The moment was otherwise perfect, but Beca had been through a break-up today. Chloe wanted the right moment, not one where Beca was emotionally overloaded. Blinking, Chloe forced herself to step back from Beca, ending what could have turned into a moment.

"Can I stay with you tonight?" Beca asked with vulnerable honesty.

"I kind of took that as a given," Chloe said, hoping that Beca would catch on. Beca, remembering that she had said this very thing to Chloe several months before, smirked back and shook her head.
"I can't say I'm shocked, but I can say that I wasn't anticipating it to happen so soon," Aubrey said. Chloe was Face-timing her best friend, who was in North Carolina running her famous corporate resort. Chloe missed seeing Aubrey as often as she did in college, but Aubrey was busy. Her business was an enormous success. Despite the busyness of Aubrey's life, the two called and texted often, which sort of bridged the distance between the friends.

Chloe chewed her bottom lip. "I know," she added after a moment's pause. "I wasn't expecting Beca to drop that kind of news on me either." Chloe's face contorted a bit. She had a question she wanted to ask Aubrey, but didn't know how to ask it in a way that didn't make her look seem callous.

Aubrey, it appeared, had read Chloe's mind. "Chlo, it's okay," Aubrey soothed. "It's okay to feel hopeful right now."

"What?" Chloe asked.

"Your face speaks volumes. Just because you're sympathizing with Beca over the pain of her breakup doesn't mean that you can't also be thinking about a future with her. You're a good friend, Chlo. You were there for me when I threw up on stage and nearly ruined the reputation of the Bellas. You stood loyally by my side. You also have done the same for Beca. You selflessly helped her the other night when she needed a friend to lean on. You're not taking advantage here. You're not selfish. If anyone deserves love, it's you. Give Beca a little time to regroup and then, I say go for it."

"First Stacie, now you. I never told you I wanted to 'go for it' with Beca. Why does everyone seem to think this?"

Aubrey laughed dryly. "Don't you though?"

Chloe sighed. "More than anything."

Aubrey nodded. "I still think she's a little hobbit with an attitude, but you know that. And you also know that I've come to respect, and sort-of like Beca. Mostly, I like that she makes my best friend happy. I want you to be happy, Chlo. Go for it."

Chloe took a deep breath. This was the first time that she had seriously considered the possibility of confessing her feelings to Beca. For the past three years, Chloe had considered the idea lightly, all the while knowing that she would never say anything because Beca was with Jesse. With Jesse out of the picture, the possibility suddenly became realistic. Chloe could really say something now. And with that knowledge, came a healthy dose of fear. Chloe could really say something now.

"I'm scared," she confessed to Aubrey in a small voice.

"Scared of rejection or scared of something else?"

"Everything, all of it," Chloe admitted. "Mostly scared of rejection, yes. If Beca didn't want me
back, I don't see how I could take it. But a little bit of me is scared that she would want me too. I just... I just love her so much and don't want that love to ever end."

Aubrey was shaken. She knew Chloe lusted after the ear-spiked alt girl, but love? This was news. Aubrey let this realization sink in. Chloe loved Beca. Irrevocably. And was scared that either way this played out, their love would somehow end.

"My father always said," Aubrey began, attempting to impart wisdom upon Chloe, "That he who doesn't take chances never learns to tie his shoes." It never occurred to Aubrey that her father's wisdom was ambiguous at best. At worst, it was completely nonsensical. To Aubrey, this phrase meant that you'll never get anywhere in life if you don't take chances on the things that scare you. To another person, perhaps this saying would indicate that Aubrey's father was a few fries short of a Happy Meal. Luckily, Chloe embraced the former meaning.

"You're right," she agreed, "I can't let fear hold me back from something that could be truly meaningful."

Chloe then asked Aubrey the logical follow-up question. "But when? I don't want to make moves before Beca's ready."

"You said that this break up was mutual, right?"

Chloe affirmed.

"And you said," Aubrey continued, "That Beca wasn't in love with Jesse and hadn't been, at least since some time ago?"

"Right."

"Well, it seems to me that Beca is fine. Her grief is probably more tied to the change in what has been her routine, and less tied to actually losing Jesse. Give her a week or so to recollect her thoughts. Then I think it's more than appropriate to move forward," Aubrey answered simply.

Why was it, Chloe thought, that Aubrey could make such simple sense of a problem that Chloe had been agonizing over all night?

"Halloween," Chloe stated. "That's like a week away. That'll give Beca enough time, right?"

"Absolutely," Aubrey agreed.

The next day, when Beca was at work, her boss called from across the room, "Reggie!"

Beca looked over at her boss, who was beckoning her over. Beca walked over and her boss led the two of them into his office. Sitting down in a chair across from her boss's chair, she wondered just what she had done wrong. In fact, given her recent praise on the Fifth Harmony song, she felt, if anything, that she was doing rather well.

Beca met her boss's eyes. "Reggie," he began. "I've been around for awhile, seen things, learned things. One thing I've learned is to spot rising talent when I see it." He looked at Beca expectantly, who raised her eyebrows back in return, inviting him to land the plane, so to speak.

"You've got that talent. I knew it that day when Snoop Dogg came to the studio, I still know it now. So here's the deal. You hanging on to what I'm gonna say?" Her boss asked.

"Like a hangnail," Beca answered. She cringed at herself, cursing her propensity for awkwardness
in these sorts of situations.

"Don't do that. Don't make jokes. That is not a good thing to do in this industry."

"Right. Won't happen again," Beca apologized.

"So here's the deal," her boss continued, as if the joke had never happened. "Fifth Harmony loved what you did with 'Work From Home.' Really, it's new, it's fresh... anyhow, so they've reached out to me, and they want you. I'm inclined to give them you."

"What? That's amazing, that's... Wow! I can't... believe... wow, so what does this mean? Are you asking me to produce the whole album?"

"Woah, let's slow down. You'll be on the production team, a co-producer. But honestly, your influence matters a lot to the band, so it's more than likely that you'll have as much artistic freedom as you want with this project. Within reason, of course," her boss added.

"Of course!" Beca responded excitedly. Never in her wildest dreams did she expect her career to receive this level of notoriety so quickly. Beca figured she would have to work for at least a few more years before landing such a wonderful opportunity.

"Now that that's settled, let's talk logistics," her boss continued, matter-of-fact and unfazed by Beca's excitement over the news. "The songs are written, we've got pre-production going and we're getting Fifth Harmony in the studio in three weeks. After that, you'll be working tirelessly to finish the album. It's going to drop in May, 2016, so time is of the essence."

"I understand," Beca affirmed.

"Great, so that only leaves us with one unresolved matter, which is that you'll be moving to Los Angeles," her boss said nonchalantly, while thumbing through some papers on his desk.

"Wait a minute, I'm doing what?" Beca asked in utter shock.

It hadn't occurred to Beca's boss that this knowledge was anything other than casual. He looked up from the stack of papers and said, "Fifth Harmony wants to stay in Los Angeles to work on the rest of their album. So you'll be going over to our LA office."

"This is all very sudden," Beca confessed. "Not that I'm not totally willing to do it, because I am," Beca backtracked, reaffirming enthusiasm for the project. "It's just, could you tell me when I'd be leaving, when I'd be coming back... the details?"

"Well, we really need you over there the beginning of November. You'll be staying indefinitely, I'd think." Her boss noted Beca's shocked facial expression and continued on, "Don't worry, Residual Heat will pay for your lodging and expenses until you're able to find an arrangement that works for you over there."

"Well, thanks, I appreciate that," Beca acknowledged, "But why, if I may ask, am I moving there permanently?"

"It's simple, really. You've demonstrated an aptitude for producing in the pop music genre. Our LA office is more geared toward that particular genre. You belong over there, not here. That's where you're going to make a bigger name for Residual Heat, as well as a name for yourself, Reggie," her boss reasoned. Beca declined to point out the irony over the fact that Beca's name was not Reggie.

So that was that. Beca figured out the thorny details of the move with several of the corporate
employees from Residual Heat. She was flying out to Los Angeles on the morning of November 1st. They were going to lodge Beca in a loft nearby to the studio for three months, giving Beca ample time to find a place of her own. She would be employed through the LA office.

It was such a big change. On one hand, Beca was beside herself with excitement. Her hard work was paying off and she was finally settling into the career she had always dreamed about having. LA was where most of the pop music scene was located and it made sense that she would have to move out there at some point or another. On the other hand, this move was a giant leap of faith. And sudden, at that. On top of everything else Beca was facing with her breakup with Jesse, she was now expected to pick up and move to LA in a week's time. She didn't know anyone in LA. Hell, she wasn't even positive that they would appreciate her talent in the LA office.

Leaving the office that day, her boss called out to Beca, "Hey Reg, we'll see you at the Halloween party next week, right?"

"Oh, I don't know about that. I'm moving the next day, so I'll probably be really busy with that," Beca answered clumsily.

Beca's boss looked at her like she had cockroaches crawling out of her ears. After a few beats, Beca sighed. "Right. This dead silence between us suddenly makes me reconsider what I've just said. I'll see you there."

Spending time 'after hours' with co-workers was one of the last ways Beca wanted to spend Halloween evening. Really, Beca also kind-of hated Halloween, in general. Unfortunately for her, she wasn't left with much of an option on the matter. Part of working in the entertainment industry meant occasionally having to entertain. Residual Heat had rented out the entirety of a trendy club in downtown Atlanta. In addition to Residual Heat employees, current clients, prospective clients, and other important business, social, and political figures were invited to the bash. Beca knew that important people would be present, but precisely who, she was unsure.

If Residual Heat was requiring Beca's attendance at their Halloween soiree, they sure as hell were going to let her invite a friend. Not that they would have turned away an uninvited, attractive girl showing up to the party anyway, Beca figured. Automatically, Beca pulled out her phone and called Chloe.

"Hey, Becs!" A cheerful Chloe exclaimed from the other end of the phone.

"Hey," Beca answered back.

"What's going on?"

"Not much, driving home from work. Listen, I've gotta go to this Halloween party at work, and um, I don't know how to really say this... but you're coming too," Beca said. "Believe me, the fact I have to go at all is bad enough, so I seriously don't know how I'd make it through the evening unless you were there too."

Chloe blushed. Beca had no idea how cute she was. "Well, Miss Mitchell, you give a tempting proposition, but a girl expects to be 'wooed' a bit more when asked out on a date."

"You're such a weirdo," Beca quipped back, lightly rolling her eyes. "I would never do the dis-service of taking you on a date to a work-related Halloween party. C'mon, Chlo, please acknowledge I have more game than that."

Chloe smiled, letting the realization of Beca's words sink in for a moment. She leveled the playing
field by firing back, "Uh huh, but you'd take me on a date somewhere else?"

"Oh my God, that's not what I meant!" Beca always ended up eating her own words around Chloe, she felt.

"I'm not putting these words in your mouth, Becs," Chloe flirted.

Beca was glad that Chloe wasn't in the car with her to see Beca's face heating up. "Alright maybe I really do have no game. Not that I'm trying to use my nonexistent charm on you, because I'm not… Please put me out of my misery over here and just say you'll go to this damn thing with me, won't you?" Beca spat.

Chloe was having a lot of fun with Beca. "I'll go... but you're going to have to ask me again. Really lay the sincerity on me this time, will ya Becs?"

Beca was silent. Chloe feigned a dramatic sigh, waiting for Beca to respond.

"Fine," Beca huffed. "Chloe Beale, I love you and could not imagine having to spend this terrible night at this terrible Halloween party without you. Will you please go to this atrocity with me next Saturday night?"

Chloe beamed, ignoring Beca's cantankerous behavior. Beca had said she loved her. Of course, Beca didn't mean it that way, but it still didn't stop the butterflies from spreading in the pit of Chloe's stomach.

"Since you asked so nicely, of course I'll go with you Becs!"

"Thank you," Beca answered in an exasperated tone. Secretly she was thrilled.

A few seconds later, Chloe squealed out.

"What?" Beca asked dryly.

"I have the perfect costume for us!" Chloe exclaimed, unable to mask any part of her excitement.

"Dare I ask?"

"Becs, you're totes gonna love it. I promise."

"Will I, Chlo, will I really?" Beca asked sarcastically. Chloe knew fully well that Beca neither enjoyed Halloween, nor dressing up in costume. In fact, it had been Chloe's steadfast persistence each year of college that convinced Beca to attend Halloween costume parties at all.

"Of course you will! You love 'The Fox and the Hound,' don't you?" Chloe goaded.

"No. I don't," Beca answered automatically.

"You so do!"

"Do not. You love it. I tolerate it... because you love it."

"Don't be such a grump, Becs!" Chloe teased. "Just come over to my place tomorrow morning so we can go shopping for our costumes."

"God, first Halloween, now shopping? The things I put up with for you," Beca said flatly. Chloe beamed, her nose crinkling at the bridge.
Beca didn't know why, but she couldn't bring it upon herself to tell Chloe the news of her impending move at any point that week. Telling Jesse, her family, and Amy had been no problem. It was different with Chloe. It just never seemed like the right time. Surely, this was a conversation to be had in person, not over a phone, Beca acknowledged. Whenever Beca actually saw Chloe that following week, the words sat readily on the edge of her tongue, waiting to be spoken. Beca just couldn't open her mouth to say them. It was too hard. Chloe was happy and Beca didn't want to bring her friend down. Further, Beca was happy and didn't want to consider the reality of what was about to happen. Before Beca knew it, a full week had passed and it was Halloween night, exactly one day before Beca was expected to move across the country.

Beca was swinging by Chloe's apartment to pick her up on the way to the Residual Heat Halloween party. As Chloe opened the door to greet her, Beca froze. She stood in stunned silence, her eyes slowly raking down Chloe's body, and then back up to her face. Chloe looked great. Really, really great. She was wearing a burnt-orange, form-fitting dress that came down to her mid-thigh. She paired the dress with a pair of black stiletto heels. She completed the outfit with an orange feather boa and a pair of fox ears. A blush crept across Beca's cheeks as she realized what she was doing and how creepy it was.

"You look..." Beca trailed off, losing the ability to finish the thought.

A seductive smile spread across Chloe's face as her heart fluttered over Beca's flummoxed comment. "Thanks, Becs, you look pretty fire-hot yourself," she said, winking.

The pink shade of Beca's cheeks turned scarlet. Beca really did look hot, Chloe mused. She was wearing these brown leggings that showed off Beca's sexy figure, a white V-neck t-shirt that showed just enough cleavage to get Chloe's heart pumping, and a brown leather jacket that made Chloe feel weak in the knees. Of course the outfit wouldn't be complete without the dog ears Chloe had bought for Beca and insisted she wear. The dog ears sat on top of Beca's head as her loose, brown curls hung down her shoulders.

Swallowing, Beca desperately tried to regain any amount of chill over the situation. Why was she so nervous all of a sudden? This was just a party, right? A party with her best friend, Chloe. Also, was it really hot outside, or was it just Beca?

"Right. So, you ready to hob-knob with a bunch of losers and have a mediocre evening with yours truly?" Beca asked sarcastically.

Beca wasn't prepared for Chloe to fling herself at Beca and embrace the smaller girl in an over-the-top, all-consuming hug. "Becs, this is going to be the best Halloween ever!"

Beca hugged Chloe back and in spite of herself, let a smile slip. "Well there is an open bar, so that helps matters considerably."

Chloe kissed Beca's cheek, grabbed her hand, and pulled her towards the car. Chloe was legitimately anticipating this evening. Not only was she excited over the possibility of meeting celebrities, but she was exhilarated to be spending this night with Beca. Tonight, somehow or another, Chloe was finally going to tell Beca how she felt about her. Sure, Chloe was fearful over the realistic possibility that Beca wouldn't reciprocate, but at least by the end of tonight, Chloe would know. And knowing was always better than not knowing.

Beca sighed. Chloe's hope was Beca's dread. Beca was so glad that Chloe was accompanying her to this thing. But Beca knew that tonight would be the last time she would see Chloe for a while. Of course they'd still be friends, but Beca would deeply miss seeing her best friend as frequently as she did. It felt like she was losing a part of herself. Everything was so easy with Chloe; being with her
felt like everything was always going to be alright. And what was worse, Beca had to break the news of her move to Chloe tonight. It wasn't going to be pleasant, but Beca vowed to finally rip off the Band-Aid by the end of the night.

There was already a full party greeting them when Chloe and Beca finally made their entrance into the club. Hundreds of people were drinking, dancing, and mingling inside the club. Chloe could sense Beca's tension and took her land, leading Beca gently inside.

"Let's get you a drink, yeah?" Chloe asked, although it was more of a statement and less of a question. Beca nodded in agreement.

The two wove their way through the crowd and toward the bar. As they were approaching the bar, a guy in a soccer costume who Beca vaguely recognized stopped her. He seemed about her age. Where did she know him from, she pondered?

He stuck out his hand and by way of introduction, said, "Josh. Remember me?"

That's right, Beca remembered. Josh. He was a semi-famous artist with the record label. Beca had worked on a couple of his songs. She got the sense that he was a little too interested in her, but luckily had avoided situations where that could become a problem with Josh.

"Yeah, for sure!" Beca said, feigning friendliness.

"Yeah, well just so you know, I loved the work you did on my songs," he complimented.

"Yeah? Well it is my job, so... I guess you're welcome?"

"I'm starting to book more gigs, too. Next month, I'm opening for Kings of Leon," Josh added happily.

Beca was over this conversation already. She knew Josh wasn't intending to sound egotistical, but she wasn't keen on continuing to discuss his career. Schmoozing clients was not something Beca enjoyed.

"I'm really happy for you," she said sincerely. "I'm sure this is just the beginning of your success," she added as she began to politely leave the conversation.

"I hope so!" Josh responded, roping Beca back into the conversation with him. Beca raised her eyebrows and remembering that she was speaking with a client, plastered a fake smile on her face.

"Listen, I don't normally do this," Josh continued, "but I'd love to take you out to dinner one night. Would that be something you're interested in?" He asked hopefully.

Josh really was a good-looking guy, Beca thought. His blond hair swooped across his face, accentuating his boyish good looks. Most girls would fawn over him, Beca figured. For some reason, Beca found herself disinterested. The cogs in Beca's brain were turning, trying to figure out the words to say.

Luckily, she didn't have to think very long because after a second, Chloe stepped in to save the day. Holding a drink in each hand, Chloe handed one off to Beca. Chloe placed her now-free hand lightly on Beca's cheek and after quickly dropping her cerulean-blue eyes to Beca's lips, leaned in and kissed her. Her lips felt perfect, brushing against Beca's lips firmly, but with an edge of softness. Beca leaned in, automatically reciprocating the action.

Beca remembered the one other time Chloe had kissed her, which been several months ago and an
accident. If that still got Beca's heart pumping, then Beca needed new words altogether to describe her current state-of-being. Her heart was pounding and her stomach was doing somersaults. She felt like she could melt into a puddle on the floor and that would be perfectly okay with her. Chloe's lips made contact with Beca's for about three seconds before Chloe gently pulled away. Beca was left internally gasping, missing the contact. Her brain could not begin to wrap itself around what had just happened.

"Sorry babe, they didn't do Sazerac's so I got you this instead," Chloe said breezily. Chloe herself did not know how she was managing to sound so aloof, because every cell in her body was screaming. She just kissed Beca and Beca just kissed her back. She felt Beca's response. She wanted nothing more than to pin Beca against the nearest wall and pick up where they left off, but knew that it was neither the time nor place.

"Uh, yeah. Fine. Good. It's good," Beca stammered. She was quite obviously flustered to the point she couldn't complete sentences.

Josh, taking the hint, apologized profusely for not knowing that Beca was in a relationship. Chloe and Josh laughed it off while Beca tried to focus on breathing like a normal human being. After several more minutes, he left and Chloe and Beca were alone.

"So, that was... something," Beca said, not knowing how to finish the thought.

"Mmhmm, sure was," Chloe agreed in a cheerful, yet casual tone.

"Well, uh, thanks for saving me."


Beca and Chloe spent the next hour or so mingling with the party's guests. There were no big names present, but a number of minor celebrities and important figures in the entertainment industry. Beca was more appreciative than ever that she had brought Chloe with her tonight. Chloe, who according to Beca, had never met a stranger, did a great job of striking up a conversation with anyone and everyone. She gushed about Beca's talent and knew exactly what to say without making it sound like a weird sales pitch. Beca didn't know how she could have mingled with these strangers without Chloe's help. She was truly amazing, Beca thought.

At one point in the evening, Beca was comfortably settled talking to a guitarist from a small rock band out of Savannah, Georgia. She was really, cool, Beca thought. She was down to earth, easy to talk to, and had a lot of advice about the industry. Out of the corner of Beca's eye, she could see Chloe talking to a man in a suit. His Halloween costume was James Bond, Beca surmised. Douche. Beca didn't like to generalize about people, but she could just tell that this guy took himself way too seriously. If the costume wasn't enough, his demeanor said it all. He touched Chloe strongly on the arm.

Beca's eyes shot daggers at 'Mr. Bond,' who did not even remotely notice Beca's glance. The guitarist with whom Beca had been talking cleared her throat. Beca whipped her head back around to face her. "I'm so sorry, that was rude-" Beca began before she was interrupted.

"Go get your girl," the guitarist said.

Beca was confused. "What? Wait, no, she's not, I mean, we're not... you know, dating."

The other woman apologized. "I'm sorry for assuming, I just figured. Well nonetheless, you'd better go save her." Beca agreed and promptly turned her attention to Chloe.
Sauntering up to Chloe, Beca took Chloe's hand in her own. Chloe looked over at Beca adoringly. This did not deter James Bond, whose eyes never left Chloe. Who did this guy think he was, Beca thought? Beca raised her eyebrows, silently asking her friend if she needed saving from this guy. Chloe nodded with her eyes.

"Wanna go dance, Chloe?" Beca asked aloud.

"Yes, Beca, I'd love to!" She answered.

To the James Bond, Chloe said, "Nice meeting you, I hope you enjoy your night, but I'm going to dance with my girl!" Beca stole a glance back at the guy. He did not seem pleased that Beca had led Chloe away from him.

Beca and Chloe spent the next hour or so dancing. Especially once they had consumed several drinks, their dancing became looser and more daring. Chloe, in particular, became more boisterous once drunk. Not only did she make friends with everyone on the dance floor, who, by the way, came to adore the Fox and the Hound's infectious dance moves, but Chloe also became much friendlier with Beca.

As "Low" by Flo-Rida played in the club, Chloe turned to face Beca and threw her arms around Beca's neck as she started dancing on Beca. Beca, who had little inhibition left herself, placed her hands on either side of Chloe's waist, moving Chloe's hips to the beat of the music. Chloe rolled her hips into Beca. Beca bit her lip and suppressed a groan. Chloe smiled seductively at the effect she was having on Beca and repeated the action. Beca groaned out loud this time.

One hand stayed on Chloe's hip as the other traveled to the small of Chloe's back, pulling her in closer. Beca's eyes were hazy with lust, slowly scanning the length of Chloe's body. Chloe's breath hitched. Beca leaned into Chloe's ear, her breath hot on Chloe's skin. As Beca was about to say something, they were interrupted by James Bond.

James Bond placed his hand on the back of Chloe's shoulder and was attempting to spin Chloe around to dance with him. Chloe swatted his hand away. Undeterred, James Bond asked, "Sorry, I didn't mean to grab you, but was wondering if you'd share a dance with me?"

"No thanks," Chloe slurred, turning back to face Beca.

"I just think you're really attractive and-

"Dude, back off. She said no," Beca came to Chloe's defense.

"I don't think I was talking to you. I was talking to your friend," James Bond retorted.

"Alright, let's calm down," Beca began, although she felt anything but calm in this moment. Stepping between Chloe and James Bond, Beca conveyed all of the calmness she could muster and said, "Chloe is not my friend, she's my girlfriend. And I'm not mad that you're into her, I mean, I'm obviously into her too. Right? She's really hot."

James Bond nodded in agreement. Beca continued evenly, "But here's the thing. If you don't leave her alone, then I'm going to get mad. So are we cool?"

Chloe stood next to Beca, floored at what Beca was saying to this guy. Chloe didn't tear her eyes from Beca, even when the guy responded.

"But she's not into guys?" The guy wasn't doing a good job of swallowing his pride and was being insanely offensive, to boot.
"Chlo?" It took Chloe a second to register that Beca was now talking to her.

"Huh?" Chloe asked.

"Are you looking for a dude?" Beca asked innocently.

"Nope, I'm really not," Chloe said, leaning into Beca.

"Alright then," Beca said, patting James Bond's arm. "I think it's settled. Have a good one, man." Beca said casually.

"Look, I'm not going to pretend to understand what you two are doing together. But if she's looking for something real, she can come find me."

"Right," Beca mused, "Something real. Just so you know, Chloe and I are about as real as it gets. She's the person I want by my side both when I'm at my best and at my worst. How rare is that, right? That there is one person in this crazy world that you always want to be with. That you care about so unconditionally. That you respect and admire more with each passing day. If that's not real, then what is?"

Chloe couldn't believe her own ears. Despite her drunkenness, Chloe wondered if even a portion of what Beca had said was true. For someone that found the idea of soul mates insane, Beca was describing essentially that. Chloe was ready to tell Beca what she needed to say.

James Bond took the hint and finally left Beca and Chloe. Beca turned around to face Chloe. Chloe was looking at Beca adoringly, her blue eyes piercing into Beca's dark blue ones. Beca's heart skipped a beat. Maybe it was that speech Beca had given, or maybe it was Chloe looking at her like that. Beca had to tell Chloe what she needed to say, she couldn't keep putting this off.

"I have something to tell you," Beca said. Chloe was about to say the same thing, but Beca had beaten her to the punch. Beca pulled Chloe in, and the two began slow dancing to Jay Z's "Young Forever." Beca broke the news to Chloe and Chloe's heart shattered.

The song played from the speakers above, perfectly capturing the mood as it wrapped a melancholy blanket of nostalgia around the girls.

"Let's dance in style,
Let's dance for a while,
Heaven can wait we're only watching the skies.
Hoping for the best but expecting the worst,
Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?
Let us die young or let us live forever."

"So that's it, you're just leaving tomorrow?" Chloe asked in a small voice.

"Yeah, I guess so. I wasn't expecting my future to start so soon, but when opportunity knocks, ya know?" Beca asked rhetorically.

"It's just. Wow. This is all really sudden." The girls became silent, letting the realization set in, the music continuing to play overhead.

"Do you really want to live forever?"
Forever, and ever.
Forever young I wanna be, forever young.
Do you really want to live forever?
Forever, forever young.
So we live life like a video, when the sun is always out and you never get old.
And the champagne's always cold,
And the music's always good-
"I mean, it's so great for you, it's what you've always wanted," Chloe added, futilely trying to lighten the mood. Beca nodded, the music again bridging the gap in conversation.
"Cuz there is no tomorrow,
Just some picture perfect day to last a whole lifetime and it never ends.
Cuz all we have to do is hit rewind-
If Beca was being honest, she sometimes wished she could hit the "rewind" button on the past few years. Not to change the past, of course, but to relive it. The past she had shared with the Bellas, shared with Chloe. This chapter was coming to a close and she knew it.
"It is," Began finally agreed. "Scary, but good." This time, Chloe nodded in silence.
"I'm really gonna miss you," Beca added sweetly, tearing up. Tears immediately flowed like a faucet down Chloe's cheeks, as Chloe leaned in to embrace the smaller girl.
"Forever young, I wanna be forever young.
Do you really want to live forever?
Forever and ever.
Forever young, I wanna be forever young.
Do you really want to live forever?
Forever, forever-"
"When did you find out?" Chloe finally managed to choke out.
Beca sighed, wiping the tears that were rolling down her cheeks. "Last week."
It felt like a blow to the face. Last week? Beca knew about this for a whole week and didn't bother to tell Chloe until the night before she was moving across the country? Hurt didn't begin to describe how Chloe felt in that moment.
"What?" She stammered angrily.
Beca registered Chloe's angry response as her own face flashed confusion. "What?" Beca asked back.
"Last week?"

"Yeah, Chlo, last week."

"So you've known about this for a whole week and didn't bother to let me know until tonight, one day before you're supposed to leave?"

Beca sighed. It was kind of shitty, she could admit that much. But this was a big decision, a big change. Opening up to people wasn't one of Beca's strong suits. She just need to process this all a bit before sharing with Chloe. Beca didn't really understand why, nor did she endeavor herself to find out, but the very reason she wanted to tell Chloe this news was the very reason she didn't. She wanted to share the exciting news with Chloe, but she knew that doing so made the situation real. Final. It meant that she was leaving her best friend and moving away. Those were emotions Beca wanted to put off feeling for as long as possible.

"I'm sorry, Chloe, I just, um, didn't know how to tell you," Beca fumbled clumsily around her feelings.

"Beca, I thought we were best friends. I just don't know why you would keep something like this from me." The hurt and anger in Chloe's voice was apparent.

"God, I don't know either. I'm sorry, okay? So, so sorry. But it was just one week, so, um, does it really matter in the grand scheme of things? It's not like I kept this from you for a whole school year, like I did with the Residual Heat internship back in college. Like, one week doesn't change anything, right?" Beca reasoned.

If only Beca knew. One week mattered tremendously. One week ago, Chloe made the decision that she was going to finally confess her feelings to Beca. For a week, Chloe had been going over it in her mind, again and again, figuring out exactly what she would say. How she would say it. Hoping, above all things, that at the end of this night, Beca and her would finally be together. Chloe had let herself feel hopeful. Now it all came crashing down. Why hadn't Beca just told her?

"Of course it matters, Beca," Chloe said angrily, not bothering to stop the tears flowing down her cheeks. "It tells me that you don't think enough of me to fill me in on the important things happening in your life."

"Chloe, that's not it at all," Beca fought back. "You're my best friend. Of course I want you to know about these things," Beca said sincerely. "I just, well, I didn't think you'd take the news well. I didn't want to hurt you."

"Hurt me? God Beca, I'm always on your side, rooting for you every step of the way, you know that!"

"I know, it's just, I'm moving on and I didn't want to-"

"To what? To rub it in my face that you're moving on and I'm not?" Chloe supplied.

Beca stood in stunned silence. I mean, Beca didn't want to point the finger, but Chloe had been working at a temp agency since graduation and had no current plans to attend grad school, find meaningful employment, become interested in a particular career path, find a hobby that wasn't partying… anything. This wasn't the first time that Beca had noticed Chloe at a stand still. Chloe was smart as a whip, but had spent seven years at college for Christ's sake. In Beca's opinion, Chloe needed something to work toward. Chloe had so many gifts from which the world could benefit, but she wasn't using any of those talents even halfway productively. But of course, this...
wasn't the ultimate reason why Beca held off telling Chloe about Beca's move. Beca herself would not realize the true reason until some time later.

Beca's lack of immediate response to the contrary affirmed Chloe's accusation. "That's it, Beca. I'm leaving and I don't want you to dare come after me."

The final chorus of the song played out. Beca didn't see this fight coming at all. In hindsight, she should have handled things much differently. Beca sighed. She knew Chloe and knew well enough to give her space that night. Beca vowed to go over to Chloe's apartment and smooth things over before the flight to Los Angeles the next morning.

Per Stacie's suggestion, the next morning, Beca came over with flowers. She had bought a dozen Cali lilies, Chloe's favorite. Instead of placing them in a vase, she placed the bouquet inside the yellow cup. The cup would belong to Chloe now. Although Beca knocked on the door and called Chloe about a dozen times on the phone, there was no answer. Beca delicately placed the floral arrangement on the mat by Chloe and Stacie's front door and left to catch her flight.

Chapter End Notes

Alright... So that was a lot. Like, it made me sad to write. As much as I wanted to just let Chloe and Beca go ahead and be together, it's not the right time yet. I think Beca has to work on how she communicates with others. And I think Chloe needs to find meaning in something apart from Beca/the Bellas. We'll get there, I promise! Seriously, it's all uphill from here... or downhill. Whichever of those things mean that things are gonna get better.
Hey friends, I want to sincerely thank each of you so much for all of the support you've shown me thus far. It means a lot and I'm so fortunate to be writing as a part of such a wonderful fandom :)

The top was down on her convertible, her long hair blowing behind her in the wind. Her sunglasses reflected the afternoon sun as she exited off the highway. The radio blared, "Now, coming at you from KIIS-FM Los Angeles, it's Petey Q. You're listening to the latest, greatest sound, right here, straight out of LA. I've got here with me today, John Smith and Gail Abernathy-McKadden-Feinberger, semi-successful and questionably-famous a-capella commentators. Tell me, guys, what brings you to the station today?"

"Well, Petey," Gail began, "We're here to discuss famous pop-producer Reggie Mitch and her rise to fame. She-"

Beca cut the radio off. She absolutely hated publicity. In fact, even listening to her own songs on the radio made her cringe. It felt icky, like she was self-obsessed. Beca's phone buzzed. Looking down, she noticed the ever-growing number of messages on her Barden Bellas group text. Amy's engagement. Last night, Amy and Bumper had finally gotten engaged. This morning, Amy had sent around a YouTube video of the engagement. Beca hadn't enjoyed a free moment yet to see the video, but given the enthusiastic response from the other Bellas, Beca knew that it had to be good.

As Beca pulled onto her street and then into the driveway of her house, she cut the ignition on her red convertible, chucked her sunglasses on the passenger seat, and strode inside. Greeting her, as she walked through her front door, was the radio blaring through her too-expensive (but totally worth it) surround sound system.

"-Yes, Gail," John's voice roared through the speaker, "Did you know that Reggie Mitch began her career as an a-capella singer in the all-female group Barden Bellas, out of Barden University in Atlanta?"

"Oh, John, I sure did! Back when I was a part of the Menstrual Cycles, the idea of a female a-capella singer achieving that level of fame seemed just out of the question!" Gail answered eagerly.

"Well, I'm sure we can both agree that the only thing worse than an all-female a-capella group would be an all-female Supreme Court, am I right?"

For fuck's sake. "JESSE!" Beca bellowed through the empty halls of her new house.

"Yeah?" A far-away voice came from upstairs.

Beca stomped up the stairs deliberately, a boot-clad foot hitting each stair with a pound. There were a handful of rooms on the second floor, and Jesse could be in any of them.

"Marco?" Beca asked helplessly.

"Polo!" Came a reply from the first room on the left.
Stepping in the room, Beca asked Jesse, "What in living fuck are you blaring through my speakers?"

A head popped out from behind a large stack of boxes in the middle of the room. "It's you, Becaw!" Jesse answered cheerfully. "Everybody wants a piece of Reggie Mitch," he added, pointing upwards toward the sound system near the door of the room. "Listen," he instructed.

Beca tuned back into the radio DJ's, whose voice was cutting across the speakers, saying, "Now we take it back to where it all began for Reggie Mitch. Enjoy the sounds of 'Work From Home' by Fifth Harmony."

The intro to "Work From Home" began playing on the radio.

"Ugh, just cut it off," Beca pleaded to Jesse. "You know I can't listen to my own stuff. It's like an actor telling everyone his favorite actor is himself. It's weird."

"No can do, Becaroo," Jesse said, laughing at his own lame play on Beca's name. "I'm spending all this time moving you into your new home. You owe me this one. Besides, I'm working from your home, so this song couldn't describe my situation any better."

"Dude, gross! You know that song isn't actually about working from home, don't you?"

"Yes, but the point stands. I'm so kindly moving you into your new home because you're too busy working... not from home," Jesse added, cackling to himself.

"Ugh, fine!" Beca groaned loudly, throwing her hands in the air in defeat. "I'm going downstairs and ordering dinner."

"Be down in a few!" Jesse called out to Beca, who was already stomping down the stairs just as dramatically as she had stomped up them.

Meanwhile, across the country, "Work From Home" was blaring through another I Heart Radio station in Atlanta. Chloe was about to leave the florist shop, and this particular florist insisted on listening to Top 40 radio at all times. Not that Chloe generally minded, she loved pop music more than any other genre. This particular song, however, reminded Chloe of a certain someone, which consequently, invoked some negative feelings and emotions that Chloe tried at all costs to avoid.

"Could you please cut to another station?" Chloe pleaded kindly to the florist.

"No can do, Baby Blue," the florist said, laughing at her own personal pet name for Chloe. Her eyes really were that blue, the florist thought. "This happens to be one of my all-time favorite songs. I especially love it because I can't work from home!" The florist added, dancing along in place to the tune of the song.

"Alright, that's fine," Chloe answered, forcing a plastered grin onto her face. She thought about pointing out to the florist that "Work From Home" wasn't really about working from home, but she resisted.

"Well, I'm finishing up this form now, and I'll be out of your hair," Chloe said sweetly, filling out an inventory form for the flowers she needed.

"No hurry there, Chloe, I know you want this to be perfect," the florist answered, pushing the glasses up the bridge of her nose, and swiping the gray bangs out of her face. "I can't believe the wedding is next Saturday. The time has just flown by."
"It really has," Chloe agreed, not looking up from the inventory form. "I guess when you love someone, why wait?"

"My thoughts exactly," the florist agreed. "That's why we both got into this business, right?"

"Definitely," Chloe affirmed, nodding her head. "Planning weddings and experiencing the love two people share has got to be one of the most rewarding jobs out there. I'm lucky."

"Maybe one of these days you'll experience some of that love first-hand," the florist commented. Chloe flashed the florist a genuine smile and said, "Oh, I don't know about that. I'm really loving my life the way it is right now," Chloe answered honestly. This florist, Chloe thought, was constantly trying to set Chloe up with her son. Chloe was having none of it.

"Well if you change your mind, my son would love to take you out, I'm sure. And he's a real gentleman, too, not one of those-" Chloe zoned out. She had heard this bit too many times from too many people. Chloe wasn't interested in love. The last time she had been interested in love, her heart was broken and the turmoil had nearly killed her. Through the help of friends and family, she was able to pick herself up and get her life back on track. She definitely wasn't ready for love again just yet.

The florist finished her speech and Chloe, who hadn't been paying attention to any of it, assured the florist that she would let her know when she was ready to date. Leaving the store, Chloe sighed in relief as she stepped into the chilly October air. Another task completed. Only about two thousand tasks left to complete for the upcoming wedding.

In the past year, Chloe had become an event coordinator, and a successful one, at that. It turned out that many of her skill-sets lent themselves to such a career. She was warm, friendly, a good communicator, and attentive to the needs of others. Further, the attention to detail that made her an asset to the Bellas also made her an asset in this industry. Chloe had gained considerable respect in the Atlanta area and was beginning to take off. This wedding was her first one as an event coordinator and it was a marriage between two prominent lawyers in town. Its potential success could open up further business for Chloe, which meant Chloe really had to take things seriously.

As Chloe was driving home from the florist shop that day, she was looking forward to an evening alone. Stacie, who was now in her third year of med school at Emory, had just recently moved in with her boyfriend, Marcus. The two had met in school and Marcus was a resident at Emory. Chloe never thought Stacie was the type to settle down and become monogamous with anyone, but Marcus broke the mold. The two made a handsome couple, Chloe had to admit. They had explosive chemistry, challenged one another intellectually, and most importantly, loved and respected one another. By all accounts, they were the perfect match.

When Stacie moved out three months ago, Chloe thought about getting another roommate. Flo, who had initially moved home after graduation, was finally back in the United States and had just begun working on her PhD at Georgia Tech. Jessica was still in Atlanta, working as a sales representative for a pharmaceutical company. Emily was beginning her senior year of college and kept busy captaining the Bellas, who were competitive as ever in the ICCA circuit. Chloe, who saw her in-town friends on a fairly regular basis, ultimately decided against finding a new roommate. She could always see her friends when she needed the company of other people.

Even among the friends outside of Atlanta, Chloe kept in touch pretty well. There was only one Bella with whom Chloe had lost touch. Chloe strongly considered reaching out to Beca a number of times over the past two years, but each time, stopped herself. Thinking about Beca forced Chloe to relive debilitating pain and reminded her of the despair she experienced in the aftermath of Beca's
departure. No, she did not, could not, bear to hold onto that pain. Of course Chloe heard from Beca in group texts sent among the Bellas, and the two were always perfectly cordial with one another in that situation. But Chloe had not engaged individually with Beca since that Halloween night so long ago.

Chloe looked down at her phone. Amy and Bumper had gotten engaged the night before. Lots of Bellas were sending congratulatory messages on Amy's recent engagement. Smiling, Chloe shot off a quick congratulatory text of her own, before dialing Aubrey. Atlanta traffic was horrible, so a chat on the phone with her best friend would make the drive pass more quickly.

"Bree?" Chloe asked when her friend had picked up the phone.

"Chloe, I know it's only been a few days, but I feel like so much has happened since we last talked," Aubrey began. The two spent the next half hour catching up on their respective jobs. Aubrey was busy with work. Her corporate camp was so successful that she had incorporated and expanded to add two new locations. One of these new locations was in Vermont and the other, near Los Angeles. Aubrey was still mostly working out of her primary location, though frequently traveled among the three locations. Aubrey was even considering adding a fourth location in Texas.

Finally, around the time Chloe arrived home from work, the two began discussing Amy's engagement. "I can't believe we haven't talked about this yet! Isn't it so exciting that they're finally engaged?" Chloe asked. Aubrey agreed.

"Is having an engagement video an industry standard now?" Aubrey asked, referring to the YouTube video of Amy and Bumper's engagement announcement.

"No, not really," Chloe answered, "But I think it's a totes adorbs idea," she added sweetly.

"You'll be eating those words when you watch that video, Chlo."

"What? Not adorable?"

"Not remotely."

"Hold on, let me pull it up on my computer," Chloe said, putting the phone on speaker before setting it down and pulling up the YouTube link on her computer.

"You're lucky you're not at work. I watched that video at lunch today while surrounded by dozens of employees," Aubrey said sourly.

The YouTube video began playing, and Chloe kept Aubrey on the line to listen along as Chloe watched Amy's engagement video for the first time. It started out with a slideshow of photos. Most photos were of Amy and Bumper in college, several including the other Bellas as well. Pat Benetar's "We Belong" played in the background during the slideshow of pictures.

How sweet, Chloe thought, that they played 'their' song.

After about a minute and a half, Pat Benetar faded out and Nicki Minaj's "Anaconda" faded in. The slideshow of sweet pictures was no more. Blinking, Chloe focused on a video clip of Bumper and Amy at Olive Garden. He was proposing! Chloe squealed. This was too cute.

"Just wait for it," Aubrey's cutting remark came from the phone.

Chloe kept watching as she saw Amy accept the ring and the two lean in to kiss one another. Wow,
that was some kiss. And they're still kissing. What the? Chloe saw Amy flounder around for the breadsticks, still lip-locked with Bumper. Finding a breadstick, she brought it up to their faces and the two began sharing the breadstick 'Lady and the Tramp' style. Instead of cutely kissing when their lips met at the center of the breadstick, they began making out again. Bumper was laying Amy down on the table as they continued kissing. Swinging her arms wildly, she sent the salad bowl flying across the room. He was climbing on top of her. Oh, my! Chloe felt like she was violating Amy and Bumper's privacy by continuing to watch this video.

"Aubrey!" Chloe gasped, covering her hands with her mouth.

"Yeah, just wait until the video hits the four minute mark. They get kicked out of Olive Garden."

"Oh my goodness!"

"Yeah," Aubrey agreed flatly, not knowing what else to say.

"Do you think YouTube is going to remove this video?" Chloe asked.

"I think that's likely."

"Wow. Just, wow... Well, I'm glad they're so in love," Chloe said, ever the optimist.

"That's one way to look at it. If you want to cut the video, Chlo, you can. The only other important thing from it is their announcement of an engagement party. Amy and Bumper are hosting an engagement party this New Year's Eve in Nashville. Amy wants us all there."

Later the same afternoon, Beca sat next to Jesse at her kitchen counter, in stunned silence. The two friends had just watched Amy's engagement video. Jesse's mouth gaped open. Beca wanted to wash her eyes out with soap.

"Holy fucking shit," Beca said, after about twenty seconds of stunned silence.

"I don't think I'll ever be able to un-see that," Jesse answered.

"I know I won't," Beca responded.

"I used to love Olive Garden."

"I don't think I'll ever eat a breadstick again," Beca said.

"Wow, that's some big talk, coming from a girl who exclusively eats carbs," Jesse joked.

"Shut up," she said, lightly punching Jesse in the arm.


Beca sighed. "I'm not going to be able to make it to the party," Beca told Jesse.

"Wait, why not?"

"I have that charity event, remember?"

"No, you never said anything about that," Jesse pushed back.

"No, I most certainly did. Remember, I told you about it two weeks ago? It's that event Nickelback
is hosting and I agreed to DJ it even though I don't like Nickelback because I care about helping
sick children? And when I asked if you wanted to go, you told me, and I quote, 'I'd rather stab my
eardrums with garden shears?' Remember that?" Beca asked.
"Oh, that's right," Jesse said, laughing. "I did say that."
"You're still laughing at that joke, aren't you?"
"Sometimes I'm in awe at my own hilarity," Jesse answered, still laughing.
Beca suppressed a smile and rolled her eyes. "You're such a nerd," she said, standing up from her
kitchen chair and beginning to walk towards her back porch. The back wall of Beca's house was
covered in large, glass windows, overlooking the valley. A sliding glass door could be accessed
from Beca's kitchen, which led to an elevated porch.
"Love you, too!" Jesse called back to Beca.
"Get back to work. Earn your keep. Stop being such a damn freeloader!" Beca yelled back jokingly
as she stepped out onto the porch, closing the door behind her.
Jesse shook his head, smiling. It was nice of Beca to let him stay with her. It was nicer that she had
outright refused to accept even a penny in rent from him. In order to make it up, Jesse insisted that
he helped move Beca into the new home she had purchased. Beca had little to no free time, so this
was the least he could do. He would, after all, be crashing in her guest room indefinitely. Since
finishing up his graduate program, Jesse had landed a job scoring movies and TV shows with a
studio in LA.
Beca stepped out on her back porch. Even though she had lived here for the past month, Beca
hadn't yet grown tired of the beautiful landscape her porch offered. Beca sighed, still disappointed
that she would be missing Amy's engagement party. Beca didn't normally DJ at clubs or parties…
it wasn't her thing. Although 'Reggie Mitch' was in high demand and constantly pestered to DJ for
celebrity events, Beca nearly always declined. This was not to say that she wasn't a good DJ
because she was. Beca just preferred to be behind the scenes, producing for celebrities from the
comfort of a sound booth. Beca would occasionally make an exception to this general rule for
charity events. As it happened, Beca had agreed to DJ a charity event hosted by Nickelback on
New Year's Eve. Nickelback was not Beca's favorite band, but she was willing to put this personal
opinion aside. The event was all for a good cause, she reasoned.
Beca considered responding to the group text message, but felt it would be too impersonal, given
that she couldn't attend the party. Beca picked up the phone to call Amy. If there was one lesson
Beca had learned the hard way, it was that bad communication damaged relationships. Beca
couldn't change the past, but could at least guarantee the future.
"Hello?" The Australian answered, yawning.
"Did I catch you at a bad time, Ame?" Beca asked.
"Ah, I just woke up from a two-hour nap, but don't worry about that. I'll get the rest of my beauty
sleep later," she responded.
Beca stopped to consider Amy's statement for a second. "Wait, aren't you at work?"
"Yeah, but it's okay. No one's gonna fire my sexy, fat ass."
Beca coughed to suppress a laugh. Amy and Bumper were in Nashville kick-starting their musical


careers. Amy and Bumper sung vocals for the band they had started. They filled venues at bars and concert halls most evenings. Despite the fact that their band, The Crying Dingoes, was becoming quite well known locally, each Amy and Bumper held an odd collection of day-jobs to provide for their lavish lifestyle. Amy and Bumper didn't do anything small, so needed the supplemental income from these jobs.

"Right. So no one cares when they show up to the dentist to have their teeth cleaned and the receptionist is asleep at the front desk?"

"Ah, Beca, you have to keep up. I ditched that prison yard ages ago."

"We talked two weeks ago."

"Right, well, I had to get outta there. Bumper and I may have accidentally been caught with my pants down in the dentist chair and people maybe didn't respond so well to it. But who wants to work with a bunch of pricks, is what I say."

Beca raised her eyebrows, rubbing her thumb and forefinger across her eyelids. "Good God, Amy, that's... that's-"

"Bananas, right?" Amy supplied. 'Bananas' was not the word that came to Beca's mind, but she didn't dare correct Amy.

"But anyhow, things are much better now, I'm- HEY! Make like crocodile traps and snap those mouths closed!" Amy screamed out.

Beca jolted backwards, startled by Amy's sudden yelling. "Ame, what's going on?" Beca asked cautiously, not sure if she wanted to hear the answer.

"These kids are busting my lady balls over here, short stack," Amy answered. "Whoever told me that substitute teaching third graders was easy deserves to be punished in hell."

"Oh, Lord," Beca said dryly, secretly appalled over the fact that Amy was molding the minds of today's youth. Beca had a suspicious feeling that Amy wasn't going to hold this job for very long either.

"You could say that again," Amy agreed.

"Alright, well I'm going to pivot, if that's okay. I'm actually calling because of your message from yesterday. Most importantly, congratulations!" Amy and Beca chatted excitably about the engagement for several minutes.

Continuing on, Beca added, "Well that brings me to the bad news, Amy. I've already booked a gig for New Year's Eve and won't be able to break away. Nickelback is hosting a charity event that night and I've already signed the contract to DJ. I'm so sorry, I never would've booked it if I had known."

"Ah, short stack, it won't be the same without you, you know that?"

"I'm so sorry," Beca repeated sincerely.

"Well I know better than to ask you to skip your gig, so I won't. But we will be in touch about this later, okay? Fat Amy is going to work this out for you, don't you worry."

"Wait, Amy, what are you planning on doing?"
"Don't worry yourself about this, I happen to know most of Nickelback... intimately," Amy added.

Beca cringed. "Amy, please don't-"

"Oh I'm sure I can straighten something out with them," Amy interrupted. "Plane tickets to Nashville and backstage passes to meet The Crying Dingoes should clear things up quickly, I'd say. We'll talk later Beca, okay?"

"Wait, Amy-" The line went dead. Amy had hung up the phone. Beca thought about trying to stop Amy from what she was about to do, but decided against it. Beca figured that Amy was full of hot air and that she would drop the matter after a couple days. Beca's mind briefly wandered toward Amy and the band members of Nickelback. Did they really-

Ack! Beca thought. She did not want to picture any of that.

Two months passed. Beca broke the news to the other Bellas that she wouldn't be able to attend the New Year's Party. Beca, Amy, and the other Bellas still communicated regularly among themselves and Beca had all but forgotten her conversation with Amy about Nickelback. One afternoon, Beca was working at the studio when her phone rang.

Picking up, She heard Amy's voice. "Great news, short stack," Amy said by way of greeting. "I spoke with Chad Kroeger and it's all sorted out, just like I said it would be. He's agreed to cancel the gig for New Year's Eve."

"Dare I ask how you finagled that?"

"Oh don't worry, I didn't offer them my goodies. No, no, I'm a one man lady these days, Beca."

"My mind didn't go there... until just now," Beca responded.

"So it turns out that Chad is a huge fan of The Crying Dingoes, just as I suspected. So I sent him a few boxes of free merchandise and am flying him down to Nashville to see our concert and get the full experience. Easy peasy, all taken care of."

"Well that's great, Ame, but I'm still not sure I feel okay with cancelling the gig. I mean, it's not very professional."

"Oh Beca, don't worry about that. They were so thrilled over my generosity, that Chad said he was more than happy to reschedule the event for the next day. I'm sure he'll be giving you a call to work out those details soon. No harm, no foul, as they say in Tasmania."

"They say that everywhere."

Ignoring Beca's comment, Amy continued, "Well the cogs in my brain have been turning, and I think I've come up with a good idea. Since you won't be DJing for Nickelback, you can be the DJ for a few songs at our engagement party! And of course, by DJ, I don't mean deaf jew."

"Oh, Amy, I don't know about that. I want to go to support you. I don't want any part of that night to be about me," Beca pleaded.

"Oh, Beca, come off it. Of course the night will still be about me... and Bumper. I just want you to be the surprise DJ, is all. We'll get you up there on stage, have you DJ a few songs. It's the least you can do, after I spent all this time clearing your schedule."

Beca sighed. Amy was incorrigible. "Fine, whatever you want."
Because I love you guys, I wanted to go ahead and give you all some resolve when it came to the Chloe/Beca conflict. From here on out, we're really going to start moving forward, so yay, exciting! Thank you for the nice comments and support. It certainly keeps me motivated to keep writing.

CHAPTER 6 (December 31, 2017)

It was New Year's Eve. Beca was about to leave Los Angeles and had just gotten off the phone with Stacie. All of the other Bellas had been trickling into Nashville over the past day and were now all accounted for. Even Chloe, Stacie confirmed. Beca didn't pose this question to Stacie, but somehow or another, Stacie knew that Beca was wondering. Beca sighed.

"What's up?" Jesse asked, struggling to zip his suitcase shut.

Beca wanted to deflect and make a snarky and sarcastic comment about how much Jesse had packed for a two-day vacation to Nashville. She surprised even herself by refraining, and instead, offered the truth. "I haven't seen Chloe in two years, Jess."

Jesse turned his attention away from the battle of man versus bag and looked up at Beca. "I know. What's running through your head right now?"

"I feel like I might be sick," Beca answered honestly.

"You're not gonna pull an Aubrey Posen on me, are you? I'll step away," Jesse warned jokingly, taking one step back from Beca.

"Ew, no. I'm not really gonna barf, okay? I just have that sick-to-my-stomach dread."

Regaining seriousness, Jesse answered, "I know it doesn't help to hear this, but I think it's totally normal you feel that way. I mean, Chloe was an important part of your life and things really fell apart last time you saw her. It's normal to fear the unknown right now. Like, is she going to act like nothing happened when she sees you or is she going to spit fire at you and totally hate your guts?"

"Thanks, Jess," Beca held out her hand to cut him off before he could continue down the path he was heading. Beca didn't want to keep hearing about how angry Chloe probably felt toward Beca.

"Sorry," he said sincerely. "I just, I get why you're scared. But, uh, hey… It's gonna be okay." He said.

"I hope so," Beca mused.

"It will," Jesse affirmed. "I promise. Right now, all you're afraid of is the unknown. Once you see her, you'll be able to scope things out and respond appropriately. If she's mad, you'll apologize. If she's not mad, you'll pick back up where you left off. Just remember, right now, all you have to fear is the unknown. The rest you can take care of."
"Somehow, that's actually really helpful to hear."

"Wow. You just half-complimented me!"

"Don't get used to it," Beca shot back.

Jesse was right, Beca thought. Beca was apprehensive over the unknown. She was scared to death to see Chloe, knowing that they had never patched things up from that fight. Beca figured when she saw her later that day, Chloe would either ignore her or act friendly as if nothing had happened. Of course Beca hoped that Chloe's actions would be that of the latter. But even if Chloe ignored her, Beca thought, she would find a moment to give Chloe her apology.

Beca had been rehearsing an apology in her head for two years now. She thought about just picking up the phone to call Chloe, but each time stopped herself. Beca tried to apologize the morning she left town. She had even left flowers on the doorstep. Chloe hadn't responded to Beca's gesture. She didn't want to hear from Beca. So she took the hint and gave Chloe space. But enough was enough. At some point or another, Chloe and Beca would have to see one another again. And that day was today. If Chloe didn't want to forgive Beca, well, I guess Beca was just going to have to deal with that. But Beca wouldn't be able to put this all behind her until she laid it all on the line with Chloe a final time.

Seeing the worry on Beca's face, Jesse finished the conversation by gently reassuring Beca, "You're fearing the worst. I promise it's going to turn out better than you think." Beca shot Jesse a small, yet appreciative smile.

Jesse really believed his advice was true. Two years was too long to hold onto any grudge. Chloe and Beca had meant a lot to one another, and after tonight, would continue meaning a lot to one another. Even when Beca and Jesse were dating, Jesse had always suspected that Beca and Chloe's friendship ran a bit deeper. He couldn't tell you Chloe's feelings with certainty, but he could tell you that Beca's unyielding care for Chloe was written all over her face. It was more than just friends. It always had been. Of course, Beca had not admitted this and Jesse wasn't inclined to question Beca about it. Especially given Beca and Chloe's falling out, the name "Chloe" was a word rarely spoken among the two friends.

"Alright, let's get this party started," Beca said, checking the time on her phone. The two needed to get to the airport quickly to catch their flight to Nashville. Picking up his oversized duffel bag, Jesse followed Beca out the door.

Meanwhile, the other Bellas, who were now all accounted for in Nashville, were hanging out at their hotel. Although they all kept in touch, it had been some time since many of them had seen one another. The Bellas were enjoying some time to catch up.

"What time is Beca getting here?" Emily asked Stacie. Stacie had just gotten off the phone with Beca.

"Should be around seven or so," Stacie answered. Amy and Bumper's engagement party was at eight, so Beca and Jesse would be cutting it close to get to the party on time. But that was the life of a famous pop-producer, Stacie figured. Beca's talents were in high demand.

Emily squealed. She couldn't wait to see her friend again. Beca and Emily hadn't seen one another for close to a year by this point. The other Bellas, who were all hanging out with Stacie and Emily in the hotel lobby, clamored excitedly. Many of them had seen Beca here and there since graduating college. Still, the entire group of Bellas had not all been united since college graduation. Tonight was a night they were all looking forward to. That is, all but one of them.
"Wait, now she is coming?" Chloe whispered as an aside to Aubrey, her tone of voice utterly distressed.

"Yeah, she moved some things around with her schedule," Aubrey whispered back. Hugging Chloe, Aubrey continued, "Chloe, it's going to be okay though, I promise."

Chloe and Aubrey privately made their way to the hotel bar, where the other Bellas wouldn't hear their continued discussion on the matter.

"It's just, I worked so hard to get to where I am today. I can't go back. I can't. She can't come back into my life and shatter my heart again. It would wreck me. I'm really scared, Bree," Chloe confessed. Scared didn't begin to describe her feelings. Chloe had been so devastated after Beca left. It took hitting rock bottom before Chloe rebuilt her life. Things were finally working out for her, she felt. She didn't want to go back to rock bottom.

"Chlo, take a deep breath for me," Aubrey commanded. Chloe did as she was instructed, inhaling and exhaling slowly. "That's not going to happen to you again, I guarantee. You're stronger than you were two years ago. You have a full, rich life. You're not going to lose that."

Chloe nodded, only partially convinced by Aubrey. Worry was still written on her face, as she responded, "I do. I have a job I love, I have my health, the best friends," she added, touching Aubrey's arm, "A wonderful family, everything. I just... haven't seen her for two years. What if I take one look at her and it starts all over again?"

"Everything you're saying makes sense," Aubrey reassured, "But what happened two years ago is a chapter of your life which has closed. It's normal to feel scared. It's healthy, in fact. It means you have something worth losing. But you can't let fear control you. You knew that one day you would have to come face to face with Beca again. She's an important part of our lives. Now, it seems, this day is upon you. You simply have to trust that you're strong enough to handle this."

Chloe smiled appreciatively at Aubrey. She was right, she was always right. "Thanks, Bree. I won't lie and say I'm not still scared, but everything you've said helps. I'm going to be fine."

"You're going to be fine," Aubrey repeated confidently, patting Chloe's hand.

Chloe wondered to herself what was going to happen when she finally saw Beca again. Would they talk? If so, would it be superficial, or could she actually talk to Beca about what happened? Chloe wouldn't tell Beca everything, of course. Of course Beca hadn't known that Chloe was in love with her, and that the very night Beca announced her move had been the very night Chloe was planning to confess her love. Chloe wouldn't discuss this, not tonight.

But Chloe did want to apologize to Beca. Chloe had overreacted to the fact that Beca had put off telling her about the move to LA. She had every right to be hurt, but she hadn't meant to close the door to their friendship completely. She wanted to make up. She missed Beca's friendship and hoped that Beca would agree to be her friend again.

Several minutes later, Stacie sauntered up to Aubrey and Chloe. "Is all okay?" Stacie asked. Aside from Aubrey, Stacie was the only other person that knew about Chloe and Beca's falling out. Luckily, Chloe and Beca had done a fine job of masking this matter from any of the other Bellas.

"It's fine," Chloe said, smiling.

"Is it?" Stacie asked, her eyes searching from Chloe to Aubrey.

"It is," Aubrey assured confidently, looking Stacie directly in the eyes. "Chloe's just a little
apprehensive about seeing Beca. But I told her it's all going to be okay."

"And it is," Chloe added. "I'm going to be okay," she said, trying to assure herself that these words were actually true.

"Good," Stacie said, hugging Chloe. As Stacie released Chloe, she grabbed Aubrey and Chloe's hands. "Because Fat Amy has requested your presence in her hotel room. All of us are heading up there and taking something she calls 'boomerang' shots."

"What?" Aubrey asked.

Stacie shrugged. "I think she said something about how if you take more than one, they'll come back up the way they went down." Aubrey rolled her eyes, but followed Chloe and Stacie as they excitedly ran upstairs.

Several hours later, Beca and Jesse's plane had landed twenty minutes late in Nashville. "Just figures," Beca grumbled as her and Jesse sprinted through the airport to catch a ride to the hotel. "Well, at least the party is at the hotel," Jesse reasoned, between gasps of air. "Olivia's been there before. Says it's really nice."

"Who?"

"Olivia… my friend… from grad school," Jesse panted as they continued sprinting through the airport.

"Well I'm glad… but no part of this vacation was supposed to include cardio. I hate cardio," Beca complained as she panted for air. Finally, Beca and Jesse arrived to the front of the airport, found a cab, threw their bags in, and set off in the direction of the hotel.

"I'm surprised," Jesse stated after a few minutes of silence in the cab ride.

"What?" Beca asked.

"That Miss Reggie Mitch would ride a cab like us regular folk. I thought she might be above that now," Jesse joked.

"Shut up, Jess," she said, punching him in the arm. "You do remember I took a taxi to college, yes?"

"Hold up!" An excited voice came from the front of the car. "Hold up, hold up! You're Reggie Mitch?" The cab driver exclaimed, nearly swerving off the road with excitement. The car next to the cab honked, and the cab driver guided her cab back into its proper lane.

Beca shot Jesse a particularly nasty glare. "Yes, ma'am, I am," Beca said flatly to the cab driver. Beca gave Jesse the middle finger. Jesse mouthed "Sorry" back to Beca.

"Well this is about the best thing that's ever happened to me! Wait until I show all my friends, hold on," the cab driver said, digging around in her purse to find her cell phone. She nearly ran the cab off the road a second time while searching for the phone.

"Ah here it is!" She said, holding up her cell phone, as she corrected the steering wheel to the cab. The cab was no longer straddling two lanes of traffic.

"Jesus Christ," Beca muttered inaudibly, slouching into her seat. Jesse looked like he was going to
"Now hold on, I gotta get a picture with you, hold on," the driver said, opening the Snapchat app on her phone.

She turned the camera to selfie mode. With her phone in her right hand, she held up her right arm to capture a photo at an angle that included the cab driver, Jesse, and Reggie Mitch.

"Smile!" The manically happy cab driver ordered.

Beca offered a tight-lipped smile. Jesse couldn't smile, as he was frightened over the very real possibility of an impending car crash. The cab driver's smile was the biggest of all.

Putting her arm down and inspecting the photo, the cab driver was pleased with the results. "Perfect!" she exclaimed to herself. A nearby car honked loudly.

"Oh, shit!" The driver said, swerving to narrowly avoid a pedestrian.

After what felt like hours, the cab driver finally pulled in front of the hotel. The cab driver wanted to take more pictures with Reggie Mitch, who had to refuse at least a dozen times before the cab driver stopped asking. Meanwhile, a green-in-the-face Jesse stumbled outside of the car. Beca tipped the cab driver handsomely and collected the bags.

Once the cab driver sped off, Beca turned on Jesse, "I swear if you ever pull a stunt like that again, I'm gonna-"

Beca's threat was interrupted by Jesse's puking on the sidewalk in front of the hotel lobby. "Oh, no," Beca muttered, patting Jesse's back. "You just pulled an Aubrey Posen. We need to get you upstairs and into a bathroom."

Beca quickly led Jesse into the lobby of the hotel, which was ornately and tastefully decorated. "Wait here," she instructed as she got the key to his hotel room. As soon as Beca handed off the hotel key to Jesse, she was swarmed by a very excited bunch of Bellas.

"I need to get upstairs," Jesse groaned, trudging toward the elevator. Holding up his hand to stop Beca from following him, he added, "I need to fight this battle alone. I'll call you later."

"Feel better," she called after Jesse, before turning her attention to the Bellas.

Emily promptly pulled Beca into a giant bear hug. While Beca was still hugging Emily, the other girls piled around them, creating a giant group hug. Finally, as the hug dissipated, Aubrey asked, "What happened to Jesse?"

"Oh, he'll be fine," Beca assured. "There was just a thing with our cab driver. She walked straight out of Grand Theft Auto and into our cab. If-" Beca trailed off, as she locked eyes with Chloe.

Beca stood in stunned silence at sight of the other girl. Chloe looked... she looked... great. Well, great didn't really begin to describe it. Better than great. Incredible. Her lovely red hair hung in perfect curls around her face. She was wearing a tight-fitting, navy sequined blue dress that perfectly accentuated her still-perfect body. Beca's heart felt like it was stopping. A nervous bundle of energy ran through Beca's veins. How was it that she was simultaneously excited to see Chloe and scared over seeing Chloe? What was Chloe about to do, Beca wondered, as her bright blue eyes bored straight into Beca's dark blue ones? Was Chloe going to say something?

Beca's floored reaction wasn't lost on anyone. "Hey, keep it in your pants, Shawshank," Amy joked,
punching Beca in the arm.

"Ow!" Beca recoiled, rubbing her arm as her face turned red-hot.

Beca was just as easily embarrassed as always, Chloe mused. Beca wasn't the only one who had panicked over this reunion. As soon as Chloe saw Beca bustle like a whirlwind through the hotel's front door, her breath stopped. She couldn't believe that she was seeing Beca for the first time in two years. Well, of course she had seen pictures of Beca in magazines and online, but here she was, in the flesh. She was wearing these black high-heeled boots and black leather pants, paired with a red flannel button down shirt. Once upon a time, Chloe would have swooned at the sight. Well, okay, Chloe still did swoon a little. Only a little. What far outweighed her arousal was fear. What was Beca going to do?

Swallowing her fear, confusion, and embarrassment, Beca managed to say, "Well, you guys all look great. Meanwhile, I'm nowhere near ready for an engagement party. So I'm gonna head upstairs and change, but I'll meet everyone there, yeah? Can't wait!" She added as she began hurrying off to the elevators.

"We've missed you, Beca!" Stacie shouted out as Beca was stepping onto an elevator.

"I've missed you losers, too!" Beca shouted back.

As the elevator door closed, Beca exhaled a deep breath. She had survived her first encounter with Chloe. It wasn't great. Admittedly, it was kind of horrible. Right off the bat, she had gotten caught checking Chloe out like a giant creep. But at least it was over. They had seen one another, which meant that Beca could now find a time to pull Chloe aside and apologize to her. Jesse was right. Although Beca was still a little scared, most of her fear was gone. That damn fear of the unknown.

Beca got ready for the engagement party before walking over to Jesse's room to check on his status. He was still a little green in the face, but had changed into a suit and looked ready to go downstairs to the party. "Are you sure you're up for it, Jess?" Beca asked. "We could just stay here," she offered.

"Not a chance in hell," Jesse said. "You are marching down to that party and talking to Chloe. My sickness will not be an excuse. Besides, I'm starting to feel better."

Beca and Jesse made their way down to the ballroom in the hotel. Lavish did not begin to describe the room Beca and Jesse entered. It looked like Amy and Bumper had spent a fortune on this New Year's Eve engagement bash. There were white tablecloths on each table, large centerpiece decorations of white roses, and draperies hanging from the ceiling. A grand chandelier hung in the middle of the dance floor, reflecting the colored lights being displayed from around the room. It looked like a fairy tale.

Unsurprisingly, Amy and Bumper had invited a large number of guests to this bash. Most of the party's guests had already arrived by the time Jesse and Beca made their entrance. The bar was in full service and the DJ had begun playing music. Some of the guests were already on the dance floor. Although Beca and Jesse arrived at the party together, they soon peeled off from one another. Jesse found Benji, Unicycle, Donald, and Bumper, while Beca went to the bar to get herself a drink.

About an hour into the party, Beca found herself engaged in conversation with Flo and Lilly. After graduation, Lilly had moved to Washington D.C., where she held a mysterious job position about which no one knew much. Beca wasn't positive she wanted to know much. Meanwhile, Flo was beginning her PhD in biochemistry, and was back in Atlanta. Beca listened to Flo talk about her
Beca also filled Lilly and Flo in on her own developments. Beca told them about how producing was going and how much she enjoyed it. As Beca was finishing telling Flo and Lilly about how Jesse was living with her now, Britney Spears's "Baby One More Time" began playing over the speakers.

"I think I got this CD for my eighth birthday," Beca observed dryly, taking a drink from her cocktail.


Beca couldn't hide a look of shock from spreading across her face. "Huh?"

"Yes, where I come from, all girls get knives on their eighth birthdays. Kind of like here how kids get cars on their sixteenth birthday?"

"Oh my God, I don't know what to even say."

In an almost inaudible voice, Lilly muttered, "I once swallowed a sword."

"Wait, what?" Beca sputtered. This conversation kept getting weirder and weirder. Luckily, around this time, Cynthia Rose joined the conversation.

"Hey, boo, what's up?" CR asked, hugging Beca.

"I couldn't tell you if I wanted," Beca answered honestly.

"I was telling them about my knife collection," Flo answered to CR.

"Wait, there's a collection?" Beca asked.

Rolling her eyes and smiling, Flo said, "A girl gets a knife for every achievement she makes in her lifetime. I've graduated college, patented three inventions, and am now in grad school for biochemistry. I have a lot of knives," she said shrugging.

Lilly was the only person who seemed impressed by this tidbit of information. Beca and CR exchanged looks of confused concern.

"Alright," CR cut in, "How about we all take some shots?"

"Oh, count me in!" Stacie said, joining the quartet.

"Where did you come from?" Beca asked to Stacie, who seemed to just materialize out of nowhere.

"Oh, I was FaceTiming Marcus. He couldn't get off work to come to Nashville tonight. So I went upstairs to talk to him for awhile, to, uh, get him off another way," Stacie said, winking.

"Gross!" Beca sputtered. "I don't want to know that!"

"I kind of dig it," CR said, winking at Stacie. "My wife owns a bar and can't close down shop on New Year's. She she and I did the same thing earlier today."

"Alright," Beca said, holding up her hand. "I can't keep hearing about this. Shots. Now."

Laughing, Stacie grabbed Beca's shoulders and shook her playfully. "I had no idea my little Beca
still got uncomfortable with the sex talk," she teased.

"I'm not uncomfortable, I'm just... Just... Fine, I'm uncomfortable, okay?" Beca asked.

Stacie and CR dissolved into further laughter. "Teasing never gets old," CR said between laughs.

"You guys are the worst," Beca said, although everyone knew those words were empty.

"And you're the best," Stacie answered back.

"Alright, let's go and get us some shots. Tonight's about to get lit!" CR yelled. The five girls made their way over to the bar and each got a shot of tequila.

"To Fat Amy and Bumper!" Flo yelled before each of the girls swallowed the clear liquor. For good measure, each of the girls downed a second shot of tequila before heading out onto the dance floor.

The rest of the Bellas were already dancing. Ashley was with her fiancé, Jessica with her boyfriend, Emily with Chloe, and Amy was with Bumper. Aubrey, Beca noticed, was conspicuously absent from the dance floor. Scanning around the room, she noticed Aubrey sitting down at a table and talking to Jesse.

That's weird, Beca thought to herself. This thought was quickly shaken from her mind as Stacie pulled Beca's hand and started dancing on Beca. The Bellas made a huge presence on the dance floor, as more and more of the party's guests began dancing themselves.

At one point, Amy and Bumper were in the center of the dance floor, a bottle of champagne in one of Amy's hands, a knife in the other. "Is that your knife?" Beca yelled across to Flo sarcastically. Flo laughed, shaking her head.

"Watch this!" Amy yelled to the entire captive audience of dancers, bellowing above the roar of the crowd and music,

Beca braced herself for the worst. This 'party trick' could quickly turn into a visit to the ER. In one fluid motion, Amy sliced the knife in an upward motion, up to the neck of the champagne bottle. The knife caught the cork, dislodging it. Champagne began wildly flowing out of the bottle while Bumper crouched underneath Amy, lapping up the bubbly alcohol that was pouring out. Amy shook the bottle for good measure, further drenching Bumper's face with champagne. Additionally, anyone standing within a three-foot vicinity of Amy had just received an unwarranted champagne shower.

"HELL YEAH!" Amy screamed. "WE'RE GONNA LIVE FOREVER!" Amy was blitzed. She brought the bottle up to her own mouth, the foaming fizz drenching her own face. The crowd screamed and cheered excitedly as champagne splashed their faces and the music continued pounding.

The next song that came on was a familiar one. As the opening beats of "Titanium" began playing, Beca's stomach did somersaults. Chloe. That day in the shower. Beca pushed the inappropriate thoughts that were forming from her head. The feelings that were left were now ones of sadness and grief. Beca cautiously looked over to where Chloe was dancing. Chloe was doing the very same thing that Beca was doing. She, too, was cautiously looking over at Beca. Beca's heart skipped a beat and dread washed over her. This was the moment, Beca knew it. From the universe, it was like a sign. Ugh, "The Sign." Beca truly hated that song with every ounce of her being.

Steely resolve set in. As the lyrics from "Titanium" began sounding from around the ballroom,
Beca cautiously stepped over to where Chloe was standing. This was it. She had to say something.

"Chloe," Beca said. Why did her mouth feel so dry? Why did Chloe's name sound so foreign rolling off her tongue?

Chloe's eyes met Beca's. Chloe opened her mouth to say something, but no words came out. It was a classic example of having so incredibly much to say that the brain doesn't know where to begin. All of the thoughts were swirling around, battling to be let out. None of them made it out of Chloe's mouth.

"Chloe," Beca began again, "Can we go somewhere private for a few moments? I just, I have a lot I want to apologize for and I'd rather do it… not here," Beca finished awkwardly.

Chloe, still unable to speak, nodded. Beca led the way and as the two began walking, Aubrey shot Chloe a look. Chloe nodded back at Aubrey, non-verbally telling her friend that she was okay. Beca led her and Chloe though a side door, taking care to close the door behind Chloe.

The two were now alone in a small terrace, ornately decorated with shrubberies and small trees. A small fountain stood in the middle of the terrace, lighting the small garden like a beacon. For a moment, the only sound that could be heard in the chilly night air was the water from the fountain. Several beats passed. Neither girl could bear to look at the other.

Beca took a deep breath of the cold air and shivered. This reconciliation was long overdue and Beca knew she needed to dig to the bottom of her soul and apologize. "Chloe," Beca began, still not looking at the other girl, "I don't think 'sorry' begins to convey how terrible I've felt about how we left things. I know it was a long time ago, but it still stays with me all the time. Knowing that I did something to hurt you, I can't bear it. I'm sorry, Chloe, I wish I had done it differently." Having said her piece, Beca stole a sideways glance at Chloe, who was still staring steadfastly ahead. Chloe's expression had softened a bit, Beca noticed.

Chloe processed Beca's apology. Suddenly, like a key turning open a lock, Chloe's thoughts collated coherently and she was able to speak. "Beca," Chloe started, feeling the awkwardness of saying Beca's name again, "I don't think 'sorry' begins to convey how terrible I've felt about how we left things. I know it was a long time ago, but it still stays with me all the time. Knowing that I did something to hurt you, I can't bear it. I'm sorry, Chloe, I wish I had done it differently." Having said her piece, Beca stole a sideways glance at Chloe, who was still staring steadfastly ahead. Chloe's expression had softened a bit, Beca noticed.

"All things considered, I still think I was the bigger asshole," Beca said, smiling lightly. "C'mon Beca, let's not make this a contest."

Chloe dared to look over at Beca for the first time since being on the terrace. Beca was looking back at her. Their eyes sparkled at recognition of the other's forgiveness.

"Fine, but the next time I fuck up, you have to let me admit that I'm the asshole. Deal?"

Chloe laughed. "Deal."

"Hey, Chloe?" Beca asked.
"Yeah?" She answered.

"I had this apology all planned out in my head, but I guess I never figured what would come next. I think each time I played the scenario out, it just ended with the apology... What I'm being so eloquent in asking, is what comes next? Can we still be friends?"

Chloe, biting her lip, smiled at Beca. In many ways, Beca had not changed, even a little bit. "I would love that," Chloe answered sincerely. Without necessarily meaning to, she pulled Beca into a hug.

Beca hugged her back. The two girls remained locked in an embrace for the longest time. "I really missed you, Chloe," Beca said into Chloe's hair. Chloe fully exhaled for what felt like the first time in two years.

"I've missed you too, Beca. A lot," Chloe answered.

"So much has happened and you were always the person I wanted to share it with," Beca confessed. Chloe hugged Beca a little tighter before letting go.

"So lay it on me," Chloe responded, letting go of Beca. "Tell me, what has the famous Beca Mitchell, ahem, Reggie Mitch, been up to?" She asked, winking.

Beca and Chloe spent the better part of an hour filling one another in on their lives. It was amazing how easy it was for them to talk as friends again. Aubrey poked her head outside at one point to check on Chloe. Smiling, Chloe waved her off and Aubrey went back inside. Later, Stacie came outside. She was thrilled to see the two girls friendly with one another again. She knew how much this broken friendship had affected each of the girls.

"Sorry to have to whisk you away, but Amy needs you, Beca," Stacie said apologetically.

"Right, I forgot I told her I'd-" Beca stopped herself from finishing that thought. Her guest DJ appearance was supposed to be some sort of surprise. Chloe and Stacie each looked at Beca with raised eyebrows.

"Fuck it. Amy asked me to DJ a couple songs as a surprise and I said I would. So act surprised okay?" Beca asked, pointing at each of the other girls.

"You got it," Stacie responded. "If my role-playing abilities are any indication, I'm sure I'll be an expert at this too," Stacie said winking.

"That's great," Beca grumbled sarcastically. Chloe giggled. The three girls went inside and Beca peeled off to go find Amy. She didn't have to look very hard because several seconds later, Amy approached Beca.

"BECA!" Amy shouted, grabbing Beca by the shoulders from behind.

"Motherf-

"I FOUND YOU!" Amy continued shouting. It was more than a remote possibility that Amy was wasted.

"Yes, and about scared me half to death!" Beca exclaimed, clutching her chest.

"Well, ear spike, it's your time to shine. We need to get you up there on stage," Amy said, wheeling Beca around and leading her to the front of the ballroom, where the stage was located.
Beca allowed herself to be led to the stage, where she spent the next few minutes talking to the party's DJ. He explained the equipment to Beca, who gave it a quick look-over. When Beca finally felt she was ready to temporarily take over the DJ-ing responsibilities, Beca took the microphone and walked to the front of the stage.

"Hey everyone," Beca began, the crowd silencing as Beca began speaking into the microphone. "I don't normally do stuff like this. Uh, honestly, I normally spend New Year's Eve in sweatpants and I'm asleep by twelve o' five."

The crowd lightly laughed. "But, I can sincerely say it's an honor to be standing in front of you all today. You see, Amy," Beca said, motioning with her hand over to where Amy was standing, "Has agreed to marry the love of her life, Bumper," Beca continued as she motioned to Bumper, who was standing next to Amy.

"The two couldn't be a better match. It's been a thrill to watch them fall in love. And as a present to them, I've stupidly agreed to DJ a few songs here tonight." Another small chuckle of laughter filled the room.

"You see, when Amy first met me, I wasn't Reggie Mitch. I was Beca Mitchell. Amy saw something special in me and she's one of the reasons that I can stand here in front of you all today. So I'm really appreciative that I can take this opportunity to give back and show my love for Amy and Bumper. I think these songs probably put their love into better words than I, myself, could provide."

After pausing a half beat, Beca added as a final thought, "Enjoy." The room broke into applause as Beca walked behind the DJ booth, familiarizing herself with the foreign equipment. Beca had prepared a mix of six songs, the duration of which would last about twenty minutes. Putting on her headphones, she got started.

Beca started her mix with Beyoncé's "Crazy In Love." As the beat caught, the entire dance floor began dancing in tune with the music. Beca looked like a natural up there, Chloe thought. It was amazing to see Beca in her element, with her eyes locked on the keyboard in front of her, mixing songs. If Chloe was being honest, Beca's intense focus was more than a bit of a turn on. It made Chloe's stomach flip with excitement.

Chloe tried to ignore her lust for Beca and focused on having fun with her friends. She grabbed Stacie and began dancing. Stacie started twerking on Chloe. Not one to back down to a challenge, Chloe swung her arm around Stacie's neck and, facing Stacie, began slowly grinding on Stacie. It wasn't long before the other Bellas surrounded Chloe and Stacie, watching the dance off that was now occurring between the two girls. Chloe glanced back to the stage where Beca was DJ-ing. Beca was looking down at Chloe adoringly, with a small smirk and a gleam in her eyes. Chloe winked back at Beca.

Beca didn't know why, but her heart leapt over Chloe's wink. She tried to push down the inappropriate thoughts, which were beginning to surface. Beca turned her focus on the other Bellas. The girls were all really enjoying themselves down there, Beca mused as she kept one eye on her music and the other eye on the show-down that was occurring between Chloe and Stacie.

After several minutes, Beca faded into the second song from her mix, "Can't Get You Out Of My Head", by Kylie Minogue. Stacie and Chloe's dance off ended in a truce, as Chloe began dancing with Aubrey. Meanwhile, Amy and Bumper were simultaneously slow-dancing and making out on the dance floor. Lily was robot dancing next to Donald, who seemed positively entranced by Lily's quirkiness. Jessica and Ashley had momentarily ditched their dates and were holding hands, laughing and spinning around in circles.
Beca's fifteen minutes of fame passed rather quickly as she enjoyed watching her friends dancing with one another. Beca really did miss seeing the Bellas together again. She was happy that tonight had brought them all together. As the last song faded to a close, a roar of applause filled the room.

The loudest voice of all could be heard from Amy, who hollered "YAY, BECA!" Beca smiled. As much as she hated to be made a spectacle, it was well worth it to see the smile on Amy's face.

Grabbing the microphone again, Beca spoke up, "Happy Engagement Amy and Bumper." She held up an empty hand, mocking a champagne toast. From the front of the crowd, Aubrey passed Beca her half-consumed glass of champagne. "Thanks, Aubrey," Beca mouthed to Aubrey before continuing into the microphone.

Holding up Aubrey's glass of champagne, Beca continued, "To Amy and Bumper, whose love is as passionate as it is flagrant."

"Here, here." The crowd toasted.

Beca stepped off the stage, bee-lining through the large crowd toward Chloe. "That. Was. Aca-mazing!" Chloe exclaimed, engulfing Beca into a hug with one hand, as her other hand clutched her champagne.

"Glad you liked it!" Beca answered, as she hugged Chloe back. "And I see we're still using the 'aca' prefix?"

"Yes, Becs, 'aca' will always be aca-awesome!"

Beca smiled. It wasn't because of Chloe's lame joke. Chloe had called her 'Becs' again. That meant things were back to normal.

"Come on, weirdo," Beca said, "Let's go to the bar and get me a drink. My job requirements are officially over as of this moment," Chloe linked her arm in Beca's as the two headed over to the bar.

Meanwhile, the party DJ had just introduced The Crying Dingoes to the stage for a duet. Beca and Chloe watched from the back of the dance floor as Amy and Bumper took the stage. They sang "Picture" by Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow.

"Not your typical love song, is it?" Beca asked rhetorically.

"Nope, it isn't," Chloe agreed. "But that's one of the things that makes them so great together. Their love doesn't follow the rules of typical."

Beca looked over at Chloe and met her eyes. Her eyes sparkled at recognition over Beca's gaze. A few seconds passed. For some reason or another, Beca suddenly felt a nervous jitter in the pit of her stomach. She cut her eyes back to the stage, where Amy and Bumper were finishing their duet. What started out as a collected, restrained duet had now turned into a melodic screaming match. Each Amy and Bumper held a microphone, as they faced one another and shouted their lyrics to the other.

"I swear I'll change my ways
I just called to say I want you
To come back home
I just called to say I love you
Come back home."

Once Amy and Bumper finished their song, the DJ announced the countdown to midnight was
about to occur. The party's guests freshened up their glasses of champagne. Amy grabbed the microphone from the DJ to provide commentary for the final countdown into 2018.

"TEN! NINE! EIGHT! SEVEN! SIX! FIVE! FOUR! THREE! TWO! ONE! HAPPY NEW YEAR!" She bellowed into the microphone. Dropping the microphone on the stage floor, it landed with an amplified thud, as Amy jumped off the stage and into Bumper's arms.

Confetti filled the air, sparkling as it reflected off the light. Everyone raised their champagne glasses and toasted to the new year. "Auld Lang Signe" played in the background as couples kissed one another in celebration. Things were finally going to be okay, Beca thought. She looked over to Chloe, who was standing right next to her. As their eyes met, Chloe's smile grew even wider, her nose crinkling at the bridge.

"Happy New Year, Chlo," Beca said.

"Happy New Year, Becs," Chloe answered back. Chloe linked arms with Beca and leaned her head on Beca's shoulder. In comfortable silence, they watched the confetti fall and the celebrations of their closest friends.
Thanks everyone for the continued support! I'm loving every moment of this!

CHAPTER 7 (January 1, 2018)

After midnight, the party was in full swing again. Beca and Chloe were seated at a table, taking a momentary break from dancing. "So are you headed back home tomorrow?" Beca asked Chloe.

"No, Bree and I are going to stay another day. Neither one of us takes nearly as much vacation time as we'd like. So we're just going to explore the always beautiful and sunny Nashville together! If you're staying you should totally come with us!"

"Ah, thanks for the invite, but no can do. I'm leaving right after brunch. I've got to get back tomorrow night for this event with… Well, doesn't matter. I've just got work," Beca trailed off.

"An event with who?" Chloe goaded, lightly bumping shoulders with Beca.

"Nickelback," Beca whispered inaudibly.

"What?" Chloe teased.

"Nickelback," Beca said, slightly louder.

"Wait? Nickelback? That's beyond exciting, Becs!" Chloe proclaimed.

"Wait a second, so you like Nickelback?" Beca asked incredulously.

"Of course I do," Chloe stated, "They're great!"

"Good Lord, not you too," Beca said, rolling her eyes.

"Come off it, Becs. A lot of people love to hate on Nickelback. But they're actually really talented."

"I agree they have talent, no arguments from me there. It's just their music sounds so… grating. Like fingernails running down a chalkboard. Honestly, I can't believe I didn't know you liked them. I'm not sure why, but I feel like that's something I would've known about you."

Chloe smiled. Beca had always done an exceptionally good job of remembering odd facts about Chloe. Beca would sometimes recall things Chloe had said or done that even she had forgotten about.

"So what's this mystery event?" Chloe asked curiously, leaning her elbows on the table.

"It's a charity gala to raise money for children with leukemia. I told Chris Kroeger I'd DJ. But, hey, don't interpret this generosity as anything but my dedication to the charity. It has absolutely nothing to do with liking Nickelback… or DJ-ing events," Beca insisted.
"That makes it all the more amazing, Becs. That you would DJ an event you have absolutely no self-interest in being a part of. I'm proud of you," Chloe said. Beca blushed as she smiled and looked down at the white tablecloth.

"I suppose it's a more than acceptable reason to blow off exploring Nashville with Bree and I," Chloe added, playfully shaking Beca's shoulder.

"Funnily enough, the event was supposed to be tonight. When Amy heard that I wasn't going to be able to come to her party, she had Chad Kroeger move the event back a night," Beca said chuckling.

"What? How on earth did Amy pull those strings?"

Beca raised her eyebrows and met Chloe's eyes. "I believe it involved pulling Chad's strings some number of years ago." Beca paused a second to let the shock set in. Chloe's eyes widened with surprise and she brought a hand up to cover her gaping mouth.

"Yeah," Beca continued, responding to Chloe's shock. "So she offered Nickelback tickets to see The Crying Dingoes here in town and they leaped at the opportunity."

"Speaking of The Crying Dingoes," Chloe began pointing up towards the stage. "I think they're about to begin round two." Sure enough, Amy and Bumper were adjusting the microphones on stage.

"Let's go watch!" Chloe urged excitedly.

"No," Beca whined, "I can watch from this chair." Chloe grabbed Beca's hand, attempting to pull the smaller girl up from her chair.

"Come on, Becs, it'll be fun!" Chloe insisted. Her cerulean blue eyes were brimming with joy. Beca rolled her eyes, pretending that she was reluctantly throwing Chloe a bone. In truth, Beca didn't, for a second, plan on denying Chloe.

"Fine," Beca huffed, allowing Chloe to grab her hand, pull her off her chair, and drag her onto the dance floor. Amy and Bumper began singing "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran.

Chloe grabbed both of Beca's hands and, facing Beca, began dancing. It took exactly half a second of pretending to be grumpy before Beca dropped the pretense and joined in the fun.

"Girl, you know I want your love
Your love was handmade for somebody like me
Come on now, follow my lead
I may be crazy, don't mind me
Say, boy, let's not talk too much
Grab on my waist and put that body on me
Come on now, follow my lead
Come, come on now, follow my lead-"

Beca raised her arm and spun Chloe around in a circle, before pulling Chloe in close and placing a
hand on her waist. Chloe and Beca swayed to the beat of the music while continuing to talk. Beca wanted to hear more about Chloe's job, which Chloe was more than happy to talk about. While Chloe spoke, Beca listened intently, her eyes unwaveringly focused on Chloe.

"So when exactly did you become an event planner?" Beca asked.

"Well, I started my own business about a year ago now. And honestly, I love it. It gives me purpose. I'm sure you feel that way about your job?" Chloe asked.

"Well, yeah," Beca answered. "I still get chills whenever I'm able to do something really cool with a song. And I get an excited feeling in the pit of my stomach when I feel like I'm creating something special. It's great," Beca confessed. "So that's the way your career makes you feel?" Beca asked.

"Totes," Chloe responded. "I'm helping people celebrate and commemorate the most important moments of their lives. Sometimes I get so excited about it, I can't sleep. I can't describe it… I just know undoubtedly that it's what I'm supposed to be doing. It makes all the long hours and frustration worth it."

The two girls spent the rest of the evening either at the bar or on the dance floor. The engagement party endured for another several hours. At around three o'clock that morning, the lights came on in the ballroom and the DJ began packing up to leave. The Bellas had not squandered this rare opportunity together, as all of them were still present at the party until its last moments. The only exception to this rule was Amy, who had conspicuously disappeared with Bumper around one-thirty.

All of the still-present Bellas evidenced their enjoyment of the evening through their happily inebriated states of being. Aubrey was slow-dancing with Jesse in the middle of the dance floor. It wasn't dancing, so much, as it was Aubrey smiling and leaning heavily against Jesse like dead weight. Her head rested heavily on Jesse's shoulders. Chloe couldn't recall a time where Aubrey had seemed drunker. Chloe scanned the rest of the ballroom.

CR was dancing on a tabletop with Stacie. Chloe laughed. Although CR and Stacie were both totally in love with their respective partners, they couldn't resist harmlessly flirting with one another. Emily was sitting at a different table, resting her chin on the tabletop as she slurped the last of her cocktail through a straw. Benji was sitting next to Emily, rubbing her back. Lily was sneaking out of the ballroom with a large object conspicuously smuggled in her dress. Chloe didn't want to know what was going on there. Flo, Jessica, and Ashley were leaning across the bar, pouring themselves a final drink before the bartender shooed them away.

That left Beca. Chloe turned to the smaller brunette, who was directly to Chloe's left, leaning against the wall for support. Beca, who was holding a cocktail, used her tongue to try to catch the straw. Her tongue chased the straw for several moments before Beca gave up, downing the rest of the drink in one long sip. Chloe laughed, zigzagging her way over to Beca.

"Wow, Chlo, I hope no one makes you take a… what's it called…" Beca trailed off. Her eyebrows furrowed. "Field Sobriety test!" Beca exclaimed excitedly, recalling her thought.

"That's some talk," Chloe answered with a wink, "Coming from the girl who can't stand up without help from a wall."

"I can stand," Beca protested. "Watch me stand. It's gonna be great," Beca said, straightening up and removing her weight from against the wall. Not a second passed before Beca stumbled forward, crashing towards the ground. Beca would have hit the floor had it not been for the fact
that Chloe was standing in front of her. Instead of falling to the ground, Beca fell into Chloe's arms as she stabilized Beca.

Chloe kept an arm wrapped around Beca's waist, as Beca got her footing. Chloe's eyes cut in and out of focus as she gazed down at her smaller friend. Chloe smirked.

"Not a word," Beca admonished with a slur, pointing a finger at Chloe.

Chloe giggled. "Maybe we should get you to your room."

"Yes, let's go to my room," Beca agreed, wrapping both of her arms around Chloe's waist and leaning into her friend.

Slowly, the two girls made their way to the elevator, and then up to the ninth floor, where Beca was staying. Beca sloppily inserted her key card into her room's lock. It took several tries before Beca successfully opened the door to her room. Beca walked into her hotel room and immediately plopped down on her bed. Chloe stood at the doorway, leaning against it for support.

"You good, Becs?" Chloe asked, preparing to leave.

Beca's eyebrows furrowed as she rolled over in bed to face her friend. "Don't you want to stay?"

Beca garbled.

Chloe laughed, shaking her head. Even though Chloe had little inhibition left, she did know better than to stay in a hotel room with Beca. She didn't trust herself.

"No Becs, no can do," Chloe slurred. "Bree and I are staying together and she'll be worried if I don't turn up."

Beca's face looked afflicted. "Yeah, that's… okay," Beca finished. "But I'll see you tomorrow?"

"Of course. I won't let you down," Chloe promised with a smile and a wink. Beca mirrored Chloe's smile.

How was it, Beca thought hazily, that Chloe looked perfect even in this moment? Her hair had become messier from a crazy night of drinking and dancing. Her black eyeliner had smudged somewhat. But that didn't matter. Chloe looked more beautiful than Beca had remembered, as she stood there, leaning against Beca's door, smiling over at Beca.

Beca couldn't stop the next words from tumbling out of her mouth, "I think you're really beautiful, Chlo."

Chloe blushed. She didn't know what to say. She hadn't been expecting those words from Beca.

"Now, keep this up and I'll think you're coming onto me," Chloe deflected.

"Would that convince you to stay here with me tonight?" Beca asked sleepily.

Laughing, Chloe said, "Goodnight, Becs. I'll see you first thing tomorrow. Promise." Beca didn't respond, but smiled as she lay on her bed with her eyes closed. Seconds later, Beca appeared to be fast asleep.

As Chloe gently closed the door to Beca's room, she sighed. Something had to change this time around with Beca, Chloe thought. Chloe wouldn't survive if she had to ride this roller coaster of emotions a second time.
When Chloe got back to her own hotel room, she exchanged places with Jesse in the doorway. He was leaving Chloe's hotel room just as she was entering.

"I helped Aubrey get back," Jesse offered as an explanation before Chloe had a chance to ask.

"Oh. Thanks," Chloe said sincerely.

"And don't worry, no funny business. I just wanted her to get back safely, that's all," Jesse added.

Chloe, never being the person to care about personal boundaries, grabbed both of Jesse's hands. "I know, Jesse. You're a good person."

Jesse smiled. "Thanks, Chloe. Right back at you. I saw you taking Beca to her room. That was, uh, nice of you."

"Just looking out for a friend," Chloe answered. Neither Chloe nor Jesse said anything for a moment.

"So, you're friends again?" Jesse finally asked.

"Yeah," Chloe began. "I guess Beca told you about our falling out?"

"Might've mentioned it," Jesse answered. "But I'm truly glad you've appeared to patch things up. Beca might not be the person to come out and say it, but you mean a lot to her, Chloe. I know she really missed you."

Chloe felt her heart hurt. She still felt more than a bit guilty over having shut Beca out for two years. "I really missed her too," Chloe confessed.

Jesse nodded as a lull in conversation emphasized the silence between Jesse and Chloe. Chloe chewed her bottom lip, raising her eyes to meet Jesse's.

"Hey, Jesse?" Chloe asked.

"Yeah?" Jesse asked with a confused expression on his face.

"You and Beca showed up together tonight. Are you… Is she… Are you guys together again or something?"

Jesse laughed out loud. "Oh, no, not at all. She's letting me live with her because I just got a job in LA and haven't landed on my feet just yet. No, we're not remotely interested in dating one another again," Jesse assured. Continuing, he said, "In fact, it's really cool because Beca just bought a house and I'm living in her spare room. It's awesome. She won't even let me pay rent. She says I can pay her back by unpacking her stuff and moving her in. Isn't she awesome?" Jesse asked excitedly.

"She's the best," Chloe answered honestly.

Chloe didn't know why she needed to clarify with Jesse that he wasn't dating Beca. Chloe was over Beca. Nonetheless, this didn't stop Chloe from feeling slightly satisfied to hear that the Beca/Jesse relationship was purely platonic.

"Goodnight, Chloe," Jesse said with a genuine smile.

"Night, Jesse," Chloe said, smiling warmly back.
Chloe went to bed that night feeling happier than she had felt in some time. Even in times of despair, Chloe had always been an exceedingly positive person. She loved people and she loved life. She lived her life with a smile, even if that meant smiling through pain. Chloe didn't realize this, but her outward happiness kept many people, even close friends and family, from knowing when Chloe was truly in misery. On the surface, Chloe was fine. She had wonderful friends and family, she volunteered teaching an after-school children's choir, and had a busy and fulfilling job. Beneath the surface, a part of Chloe had been toiling since her last encounter with Beca. Chloe wouldn't feel completely resolved until things had resolved with Beca. Chloe smiled because tonight, a strong first step had been made towards that resolve. Things were going to be better.

Chloe and Aubrey woke up the next morning, one feeling more hung-over than the other. "What on earth happened?" Aubrey asked, groaning and rubbing her temples. "Why do I feel like I'm dying? I don't do this. I never get drunk."

"That's why," Chloe answered hoarsely, her head still buried under her pillow. "Your tolerance is next to nothing."

"Remind me to never do this again. Seriously, I don't even know how I got back last night."

"Don't worry, Bree. Jesse walked you back to your room."

Aubrey paused for a second. "Oh," she said lightly. "That was nice of him."

Chloe said nothing as she, with her head still buried in a pillow, blindly pawed around the night side table for the Advil. Chloe took four Advil.

"I'm going to shower, is that okay, Chlo?" Aubrey asked.

"Yep, fine," Chloe croaked back in response, rolling over to get ten more minutes of sleep.

Aubrey got ready before Chloe and went downstairs to meet the other Bellas for brunch. Chloe, who by the time she was ready, was running ten minutes late for brunch, came rushing down the stairs into the hotel lobby and saw a distressed Beca. Beca was pacing the floor, while talking on the phone with one hand, and wildly gesturing with the other. Chloe marveled at Beca's recovery from the night before. She looked positively adorable, Chloe thought, yet totally edgy. Beca was dressed in a plaid skirt and a black shoulder cutout sweater. If you looked, you could barely see the tattoo on Beca's right shoulder beneath the cutout of the sweater. Beca ran a hand through her soft brown curls, her steely dark blue eyes squinting as she talked into the phone.

"Marge, I honestly don't know. How would I know why some bozo is selling my toothbrush on Ebay?" Beca questioned aggressively. Beca listened as the other voice on the line talked.

Beca looked kind of hot when she was fired up, Chloe mused. As quickly as that thought brewed, Chloe pushed it out of her head. She had just started being friends with Beca again. She didn't want to start lusting over the girl again.

"Well, just buy it, okay? I don't want some fucking Zodiac Killer who, by the way, is probably going to clone me and wear my skin to a birthday party, to end up with my toothbrush, alright?" An agitated Beca shot back.

Beca listened to the other voice on the phone for several seconds before answering again. "Yeah, I get it. We know the drill. Buy all the Reggie Mitch crap from Ebay and I'll pay you back. Okay? Okay. Talk later, Marge. Bye," Beca finished, hanging up her phone.

Beca cut her eyes up from her phone and noticed Chloe standing in front of her, with a bemused
expression on her face. "You don't want to know," Beca said, closing the door to the conversation before it even opened.

"I won't ask then," Chloe answered huskily. "Are you ready to head over to brunch?" Chloe asked, coughing to clear her throat.

Amy, knowing that many of the Bellas would likely be hung over today, had planned a brunch in the hotel's restaurant. She didn't want them to have to travel more than a few flights of steps. It was now several minutes after the designated time of that brunch.

"Sure," Beca responded. "But are you okay though?" Beca asked, referring to Chloe's lack of voice.

"Yeah," Chloe nodded, "It's just where I had the surgery on my nodes. Sometimes when I drink I'm a little hoarse the next day," she croaked casually.

Beca raised her eyebrows. "But what will people say when I show up to brunch with Barry White?" Beca asked innocently.

"Stop!" Chloe protested hoarsely, as her face cracked into a grin.

"Oh, what about this one?" Beca asked jokingly. Channeling her inner Macy Gray, Beca rasped, "I try to say goodbye and I choke, try to walk away and I stumble."

"Beca!" Chloe croaked. Beca pursed her lips together and raised her eyebrows at Chloe. Chloe's smile burst into a laugh. Subsequently, the laugh turned into a fit of coughing.

"Okay, okay, okay, I'm sorry, Chlo. I'll really stop this time," Beca said, rubbing Chloe's back. Once Chloe's coughing subsided, Beca suggested the two walk over to brunch.

A round table had been reserved for the eleven Bellas in the hotel restaurant. Chloe and Beca, who were the last of the crowd to arrive, took the remaining two seats. A smug look, accompanied by a wink, was passed between Flo and CR as Chloe and Beca entered the room. This exchange was lost on Chloe, who had immediately started happily chatting with Ashley. Beca, however, noticed the look pass between Flo and CR. Cutting her eyes between the two of them, Beca asked, "What?"

CR smirked. "Nothing, Beca. We just noticed that you and Red were late to brunch and were wondering what y'all were getting up to."

A look of shock settled over Beca as she took an empty seat between Stacie and Emily. "Oh my God, nothing, okay? I was on the phone putting out fires with my manager," Beca grumbled. Flo and CR chuckled, as Stacie reassuringly patted Beca's shoulder.

Across the table, Chloe took the other open seat, which was lodged between Aubrey and Ashley. She was still too wrapped up in conversation with Ashley to be affected by any of Flo and CR's accusations.

Once everyone was seated and had ordered their food and beverages, Amy spoke up. "Pitches!" Amy bellowed, rapping a spoon on the edge of her cup to silence the group of Bellas. Everyone quieted down.
"Listen up!" Amy yelled. "So I know what you all are thinking right now. 'Amy just threw the most amazing New Year's Eve party and how is she ever going to top it?' Well, I have considered what you are thinking," Amy said, looking around at the faces of the other Bellas.

Most of them looked confusedly back at her. Amy continued, "And I now have the clarity to realize that the only thing better than a New Year's Engagement is an Independence Day Wedding." After waiting a beat, Amy said, "That's right, skinny pitches, this Tasmanian is getting hitched on July Fourth!

The table of Bellas erupted into hoots and hollers. "And you don't need me to tell you this, but you are all in the wedding!" The table continued cheering.

Once the excitement died down, Amy continued, "Beca, I have something special to ask you. Shawshank," Amy started as Beca pursed her lips together to suppress a smile, "You've been my ride or die since the beginning of college. We have a special bit going, where I steal your belongings and sell them on Ebay as 'Reggie Mitch's' and you don't say anything."

Beca opened her mouth to say something, but promptly snapped it shut again. She reminded herself that she needed to circle back to this later with Amy. It had been driving Beca's manager positively crazy for the past year and a half that some unknown person was selling Reggie Mitch's toothbrushes, socks, tissues, and used gum on Ebay.

"You're also the only person who knows about that time I got hot sauce in my who-hah." Beca buried her face in her hand and groaned. She would give anything to block that memory out of her mind for all eternity. Aubrey, in particular couldn't hide the shock from her expression.

Amy continued on, undeterred, despite the looks of horror coming from the other Bellas. "We've been through it all together, through the fat and the thin."

Did she mean to say 'thick and the thin,' Beca wondered?

"So, short stack, what I'm asking is, will you be my maid of honor?" Amy finished.

Beca smiled and acquiesced. "Of course I will, Amy." The Bellas erupted into further cheers. Amy once again waited for the cheers to subside.

"Well, that brings me to the other thing. Chloe," Amy began, looking over to where Chloe sat. "Yes, Amy?" A nearly hoarse Chloe responded pleasantly.

"We're having the wedding in Atlanta, where it all began for Bumper and I. And Bumper and I talked about it, and we've decided that you're going to be our wedding planner," Amy said, elated over delivering this news.

Chloe looked shocked. Sure, she positively loved Amy and wanted her to have the loveliest of weddings. She was confident in her own ability to provide that perfect wedding. But mixing business with pleasure could often lead to problems. Amy was her friend and she wasn't sure if she wanted to add the title of 'client' to the mix. It would feel weird for Amy to pay Chloe to be her wedding planner. Chloe stammered around for words.

"Don't worry, Red, Bumper and I know exactly what we want. You're just going to be the manpower to make that happen." Chloe smiled sincerely, still searching for the right words to let Amy down easily. Chloe felt dirty taking money from her friend.

As if Amy could read Chloe's thoughts, she added, "And you can thank Reggie Mitch's
toothbrushes for this windfall." It appeared that Amy's somewhat-illegal remuneration from Reggie Mitch's belongings was footing the bill to this wedding.

Beca shot a look over to Chloe. Chloe responded with a sympathetic smile back, as she put the pieces of the puzzle together. De-facto, Beca was paying for Amy's wedding. Amy finished, "So, Red, what do you say? You and short stack will be working closely together and planning the most important day of your lives."

"Sure, Amy, it would be an honor!" Chloe agreed hoarsely, with a cough. Wait a second, Chloe hadn't meant to say that. What just happened? Why did she just agree to plan Amy's wedding? Amy walked over to where Chloe was sitting and suffocated her in a hug.

"Other than Ginger Spice, you're my favorite ginger," Amy informed Chloe.

"Thanks, Amy," Chloe said smiling.

The Bellas continued enjoyed the rest of their brunch together, chatting while they ate. Beca asked Emily how her last year of college was going with the Bellas.

"Oh, it's great, Beca!" Emily gushed. Beca listened pleasantly while Emily told her about how the Bellas were on track to win the ICCA's this year.

"You know, we could use a little help with the set list," Emily added. "I tried asking my mom for input, but she basically only knows songs from the 1980's. Practically nothing from this century," Emily finished flatly.

"I know about that," Beca responded, stealing a glance across the table to Aubrey, who engrossed in conversation with Amy. "Well, if you want help with the set list, I'd be glad to lend a hand," Beca offered.

If Beca was being honest, she was really too busy to help out with a college a-capella set list, but Emily was like a little sister. Beca was always going to make time for Emily.

"Thanks!" Emily said appreciatively, hugging Beca. "I'll let you know when I get back to school and we'll talk," she assured.

The rest of brunch passed rather uneventfully. From the looks of it, most everyone felt less hung-over by the time brunch had ended. The only person looking worse from the wear was perhaps Aubrey, Beca thought. Beca considered that Aubrey's condition was not so much tied to a hangover as it was tied to sitting next to Amy at brunch. Aubrey, in particular, was always easily appalled by Amy's wild stories. Beca smiled to herself.

Collecting her belongings, Beca stood up from the table. She hated to leave brunch early, but Nickelback obligations required her departure. Beca needed to get to the airport.

"Alright, nerds, I've got a plane to catch," Beca informed the table.

"No, no, no. You don't get to dash out of here without hugs," Stacie said. Beca rolled her eyes.

Beca spent the next several minutes saying individual goodbyes to the other Bellas. Unintentionally, Chloe was the last of the Bellas to see Beca off.

Beca wrapped her arms around Chloe tightly. Chloe returned the gesture as she leaned heavily into Beca and rested her head on Beca's shoulder. Beca took a deep breath, savoring the moment. Beca had been missing out on this for two years now, and finally, the world was in harmony. It felt like
that moment you open the front door to your childhood home after a long time away. The passage of time doesn't hit you until you're suddenly back again. And you take extreme contentment in realizing that home still feels the same. Every single thing in this world might feel different, but this one thing does not. At this moment, that was the precise way Beca felt. At home.

"I'll miss you, Becs," Chloe murmured softly into Beca's hair.

"You, too, Chlo," Beca responded sincerely. It seemed unfair that Beca had to leave so soon after finally patching things up with Chloe.

"Alright you lovebirds, don't get your panties in a wad," Amy stated, noting that Chloe and Beca had been locked in an embrace for the better part of a minute. "You two are going to get sick of each other by the time July rolls around," Amy said, referring to the close communication the maid of honor was to have with the wedding planner in the coming months.

"And besides," Amy finished, "We have got the bachelorette party to look forward to this May!"
CHAPTER 8 (April 28, 2018)

Once the spring semester started back at Barden, Emily reached out to Beca for help in securing a stellar set list for Nationals. Beca spent every waking moment juggling her job, planning for Amy's wedding/bachelorette party, and helping Emily and the new Bellas with songs for the ICCA. Halfway through January, Beca sent over a finished product to Emily. Predictably, Emily loved what Beca had done and called her friend to offer thanks. Beca was in the studio that afternoon as she picked up the phone to answer Emily's call.

"Hey, Junk." Beca answered, cringing. Even though 'Junk' was, in fact, Emily's last name, it didn't stop Beca from feeling as though she was insulting her friend each time she said the word.

"Hey, Beca," Emily began cheerily. "I just got your mix and had a chance to listen to it, and oh my God, it's absolutely perfect I can't even begin to tell you about all of these ideas I have it's insane -"

"Woah, slow down," Beca laughed as she interrupted Emily. "I can't keep up."

Emily took a sharp, deep breath. Beginning again just as quickly and excitedly, she said, "Beca, I love what you did with layering all those songs together, I just think it really rounds out the performance, you know? We have a lot of altos this year, which is great because a lot of the songs have deeper and richer notes and I know that's something the judges look for." After stopping to inhale, Emily finished, "Really, thanks so much, Beca. In case you couldn't tell, I'm really excited about all this!"

"That, I gathered," Beca said sweetly. "I'm glad to help, honestly."

"And that song, 'Starving' you included in our playlist? Wow, I had actually never heard it before, but I'm really into it," Emily complimented Beca.

"That's great," Beca said, "Because when I heard it, I actually had the thought that your voice would sound really good soloing that song."

"You think?"

"For sure. It sounds almost as though it was written for you."

"Thanks," Emily said. Pausing a beat, she began confiding a concern to Beca. "Beca, you know the Bellas have been competitive in the ICCA's but we haven't actually won since you were in college."

"I know that, Em," Beca began, "But don't let that feed any doubts you might be having over your talent. You've got a ton going for you. And besides, how many a-capella nerds can say they've recorded a pop hit?" Beca was referring to Emily's original song "Flashlight," which had briefly hit the Top 40 in the summer of 2015.

"Thanks, Beca," Emily said. "I promise I wasn't fishing for compliments, but it's really nice to get some reassurance sometimes."
"Anytime."

"But that doesn't change the fact that I really want to win this year. I mean, I'm graduating in May and really want to leave on a high note."

"Well you're in luck. I can introduce you to some High Notes," Beca offered sarcastically.

"Ha-ha. You know what I mean."

"Okay, okay, I get it," Beca said. "Listen, you're managing an entire group of Bellas single-handedly. That's a tough feat, by anyone's standards. I mean, I don't think I could've managed the Bellas without Chloe there. But let's be real, Chloe definitely could've managed the Bellas without me… Anyhow, that's neither here nor there," Beca said, ending her digression from the point she wanted to make.

"Chloe and I worked off of one another. I did the music, while she did the choreography and mom stuff, like making sure everyone's hair got done and planning all of the events and shows. You're doing all these jobs alone, and that's really hard. What's amazing is that you're doing such a great job at it. But still, it sounds like you could use a little help. It might keep you from having to spread yourself so thin. So here's what I'd suggest. Talk to Chloe. I know that she'd love to find time to help out with choreography. She's the best, Em. With her dance moves and your awesome leadership, you'll clench a win this year, I promise."

"Do you really think she'd help me?" Emily asked cautiously.

"I know she'd help you," Beca assured.

"But she scares me. And besides, I kind of don't think she likes me very much," Emily confessed. Emily remembered that one time during a riff off against DSM when Emily had messed up and caused the Bellas defeat. Chloe had nearly bitten her head off.

"Emily, Chloe loves you. She tells me all the time. What is it she says again... Oh, yeah. She says, 'Emily is the cutest little cinnamon roll in the world.' Her words, not mine. Really, I promise I would never use such sickeningly cute words in everyday conversation."

Emily beamed. "So I should talk to her?"

"Absolutely," Beca answered.

Emily did, in fact, reach out to Chloe, who, as predicted, jumped at the opportunity to lend a hand. Beca was right. Between Emily's leadership and Chloe's dance moves, the Bellas won Nationals, yet again. Although Beca couldn't be there to witness the win, Chloe had attended. Between Emily and Chloe's recounts, as well as a YouTube video of the performance, Beca all but felt she had personally attended Nationals.

Throughout the winter and early spring, Beca and Chloe spoke or texted nearly every day. At first it was mostly about Emily and the Bellas. Once the ICCA's were behind them, the topic of discussion frequently involved planning for Amy's upcoming nuptials.

Text Message:

Chloe: Becs, Amy and Bumper decided the entrées for the wedding dinner. They say the choices are either tilapia with capers, cod in lemon butter, or flounder with mango salsa.

Beca: Why are all three options fish? That's weird. Right?
Chloe: I'm not sure, but they were very insistent. Anyhow, want me to secretly pull some strings and order you chicken?

Beca: Yes. You are the best. Seriously. The best.

Chloe: Anytime, Becs. I know how you feel about fish.

Beca: Copenhagen was a rough week for me.

Chloe: Which meant it was a rough week for me. In case you've forgotten, you complained about it constantly.

Beca: Okay, now that's a little dramatic. It wasn't constant.

Chloe: Sure, I guess you did sleep about eight hours per day.

Beca: Wow, the claws are out Chlo. Anyhow, FaceTime me later today, cool? I need your eyes on something

Chloe: Interesting proposition, Becs. I'd love to lend my eyes... on whatever 'something' you want to show me

Beca: No! That's not what I meant. It's an outfit for a studio opening tomorrow. God, I'm not asking you have phone sex with me!

Chloe: Neither was I. Why would your mind even go to sex, Beca? ;)

Beca: Dude. Your mind constantly lives in the gutter, so don't lecture me about why I assumed your text was some kind of weird innuendo.

Chloe: Hey, you're the one that brought up phone sex. Although I will advise, if you're gonna do it, don't do it at work. Trust me.

Beca: Gross. No. Just call me later, okay? Sometime after 3, preferably. Things are stressful around here

Chloe: You know what's good stress relief?

Beca: Don't.

Chloe: You make it too easy.

Beca: Talk later okay?

Chloe: Awes.

Beca: Yeah, awes.

Later that evening, Chloe FaceTimed Beca and she explained to Chloe about the studio opening. "Yeah, I'm opening a sub-label here in LA called 'Yellow Cup Records,'" Beca said. "It's still under the larger umbrella of Residual Heat, but the sub is mostly going to be focusing on dance-pop crossover hits. I could try to explain more, but then I'd be getting into a lot of corporate jargon that I, myself, don't totally understand. Trust me," Beca finished, "I've entirely relied on the help of lawyers to pull this stunt off."

Chloe was stunned. She knew Beca was really successful, but now, here her Becs was, opening a
"It's nothing," Beca responded with a small smile, as her cheeks grew pink. Beca still didn't know how to take a compliment.

"So why is it called 'Yellow Cup Records?''" Chloe asked.

"Well, uh, I couldn't think of a name to call it. So being the creative genius I am, I looked at what was sitting on my desk. And there's a framed picture on my desk of you and me at a college party. And you're holding... you guessed it... the yellow cup. Alas, 'Yellow Cup Records.' It was either gonna be that or 'Chewed Cinnamon Gum Records.' So, yeah, I think I made the right choice."

Chloe smiled, attempting to mask the dueling feelings she was experiencing. On one hand, she was both touched that Beca had named a record label after their yellow cup and that Beca had a framed photo of the two of them on her desk. On the other hand, Chloe felt a little regretful. Beca and Chloe had been so close during college and after their fight, had lost two precious years together. Those two years could never be reclaimed and Chloe still felt mostly responsible for this. Chloe didn't want to delve into these conflicting feelings at the current moment. "I think you made the right choice, too," Chloe agreed with a chuckle.

Beca continued from her digression, "Anyhw, I called you because I wanted to get your opinion on my outfit for the grand opening. There's no opinion I trust more," Beca said truthfully.

"Lay it on me, Becs," Chloe said excitedly.

Beca panned the phone's camera to show off her suit. Beca was wearing a tailored black suit. The jacket showed a plunging view of Beca's cleavage. It was tasteful, yet indescribably sexy. Chloe's breath hitched. Damn, Beca looked... well, she looked downright hot.

"What do you think? Is the pantsuit too slutty?" Beca asked self-consciously.

"Wow, Becs," Chloe began, trying to regain her cool, "You look stunning. Really, every single person there is going to want a piece of you. I know I do," Chloe added with a wink.

"Great," Beca quipped back sarcastically, as she turned the color of a beet. "That's... awesome," Beca floundered for words.

Chloe giggled. She still enjoyed a flummoxed Beca. Chloe brought the conversation back to Beca's grand opening and the two spoke for several more minutes on the topic. After that, Beca asked about what was going on in Chloe's life.

"Oh, you know, just busy as ever over here!" Chloe chirped. "Which is totes okay by me! I've got weddings this Saturday and next, a retirement party next Tuesday, a wedding vow renewal on Thursday, and a sweet sixteen on Friday."

"Damn, Chlo, have you got time to breathe?"

Chloe rolled her eyes playfully. "Of course I do, Becs. A job isn't working if you love what you do! Although I will say, I'm struggling to fit Amy's wedding into all this. Amy wants me to check out five wedding bands in Atlanta tomorrow. I managed to clear my schedule tomorrow afternoon to accommodate, but I'm still kind of nervous that she's asking me to visit these bands and trusting me to make a sole opinion on them."

Beca nodded. "What if I went with you? I could fly in tomorrow morning, do the 'greatest hits' tour
of wedding bands, and be back here tomorrow evening for my opening."

"No, Beca. You're not flying into Atlanta for five hours and then turning right back around to LA."

"Watch me," Beca shot back.

That was that. Chloe knew how stubborn Beca was when she set her mind on something. There was just no talking her out of it. Not that Chloe minded. Secretly, she was counting down the minutes until Beca would be with her again.

Beca packed a bag and told Jesse that she'd be flying out the next morning for Atlanta. Yes, she confirmed to Jesse, she was still going to be back by eight o'clock Pacific Time for the grand opening. She just had some wedding details she wanted to take care of with Chloe. Several hours after Beca broke the news to Jesse, he knocked lightly on her bedroom door. Beca was sitting on her bed, reading a work-related email.

"Um, hey, Beca," Jesse approached awkwardly.

"Wazzup?" Beca answered, tearing her eyes away from her phone to meet his eyes. Jesse folded his hands together and took a deep breath.

"You look like you're about to tell me my dog died," Beca observed.

"You have a dog?" Jesse was momentarily distracted.

"No, it was a colloquialism you ignorant fuck," Beca joked flatly.


"So I know you didn't come in here to talk to me about word jokes. What's up, Jess?"

Starting again, he said, "Okay, Beca. It's totally fine if you say 'no,' but I figured you might not care since you're going to be out of town for most of the evening anyhow. Let's say, hypothetically, there was this girl I was interested in. And hypothetically, she was flying into town tomorrow night for business. And hypothetically, I really wanted her to stay with me because-"

"Hypothetically, you're trying to bang her?" Beca interrupted.

"Hypothetically, it's a bit more than sex," Jesse answered honestly.

"Alright," Beca said nodding, holding out her hand as a nonverbal command to stop using the word 'hypothetical'. "I'm curious though, has anything happened with this girl yet?"

"No, I don't think she knows I'm into her," Jesse confessed. "Hypothetically," he added as an afterthought.

Beca rolled her eyes. "Well, hypothetically," Beca answered, "I'd tell you that I'm not going to stand in the way of love. So, sure, hypothetically invite her over."

"Thanks, Be-caw, you're really the best!" Jesse said excitedly. "I'm going to go call her right now and invite her over!" He exclaimed.

"So none of this is hypothetical?" Beca asked sarcastically.

"No," Jesse laughed.
"Well, who is she?" Beca questioned. Jesse's face contorted into an uncomfortable expression.

"Jess," Beca began again cautiously, "Who is she?"

"Well," Jesse said, "You know her."

"That clears it all up," Beca shot back. Beca thought for a moment about to whom Jesse could possibly be referring. It suddenly dawned on Beca. Olivia, that girl from Jesse's grad program. Beca knew he was friendly with her. They texted all the time. Beca also knew that Olivia would be the perfect girl for anyone. She had beautiful red hair, a killer smile, and was outgoing and bubbly. Sure, her bubbliness was slightly less endearing than, say, Chloe, but whatever. Beca was convinced. It had to be Olivia.

"Wait a second," Beca mused, "I think I've figured this out," she said with a sly smile. Pointing her finger at Jesse, she said, "I remember seeing you and your girl together at that party. Yeah, I didn't think about it then, but you were so into her!" Beca was referring to the time she had met Olivia at Jesse's house party from two and a half years ago. Jesse's face burned red-hot. Beca had figured him out, he thought. Unbeknownst to Beca and Jesse, they had each interpreted Beca's words differently. Jesse was referring to a different girl from a different party.

"So you're not… weirded out or anything?" A perplexed Jesse asked.

"No, dude, not at all! I'm, like… really happy for you," Beca said sincerely.

Jesse breathed a sigh of relief. "Well, thanks, Beca," Jesse said. "I was a little nervous to tell you, honestly because I didn't know how you'd take it. I guess now the only hurdle I've got left is telling her how I feel."

"And how are you feeling about that?" Beca asked. "Jesus, I sound like a fucking therapist," Beca added with a frown.

Jesse was too wrapped up in his thoughts to acknowledge Beca's joke. Answering her question, he confessed, "I'm scared to death. What if I lay it on the line for her and she doesn't like me back? I know it's weird to say, Beca, but I feel like she could be the one. I just… don't want to blow this," Jesse finished worriedly.

Beca mulled over Jesse's concern for a moment. She was trying to recall some advice she had once been given on a similar matter. Finding the words she needed, Beca began "Jesse, if you're meant to be together, at some point, you will be. Even if it takes some time to work out the kinks, the world isn't that cruel."

"Where'd you pull that advice from?"

Beca smiled. "Someone much smarter and wiser than myself. But it's true, Jess. If you're supposed to be with her, you will be. You just need to lay it on the line with her and let the chips fall as they may. And, uh, hey, if all else fails, you can try Rocky and juice pouches to woo her."

Despite his nerves, Jesse laughed. "I don't know if that would work on her."

"Well, hey, it worked on me," Beca joked.

"Did it?"

"Actually, no, it was super lame," Beca answered.
"You’re an asshole," Jesse said.

"But I like lame," Beca backtracked. "I mean, I’m a crazy cat lady waiting to happen. Seriously, all I need is the cats."

"I’m so glad I’m coming to you for relationship advice," Jesse retorted.

"Yeah, not your finest judgment call. But you know what? I bet everything is going to work out for you, Jess. Really. I’ve got a feeling that she’s going to feel the same way about you."

Jesse nodded. "I hope so. Because Beca, I really like her. She’s like…like…” Jesse trailed off, trying to find the right words.

"Personally, I would say she’s like the Lucy to my Ricky," Beca supplied thoughtfully. "The bright, fun-loving redhead… the comparison makes sense," Beca mused. Again, Beca and Jesse interpreted this statement differently. Beca was referring to Jesse’s interest in Olivia. Jesse thought Beca was confessing to having an interest in Chloe.

"That’s an interesting comparison, Be-caw," Jesse said with a knowing smile on his face. "Anything you need to share with the class?" Jesse asked, amazed that Beca had just indirectly confessed feelings for Chloe.

Beca shot a confused look over to Jesse. What was he talking about? He was making no sense. "No, I don’t think so?" Beca answered honestly.

Jesse shrugged. He supposed he could be patient until Beca got home from Atlanta before questioning her about Chloe again.

The next morning, Beca flew into Atlanta and landed just after lunchtime. Beca knew Chloe was busy and didn’t want to inconvenience her friend by forcing her to take time out of day to collect Beca from the airport. She caught a Lyft to the building where Chloe worked. Beca remembered that Chloe was on the thirty-second floor and walked into the elevator. As the elevator door opened, Beca cautiously entered into the lobby. Wow, this place was really nice, Beca mused. The lobby was surrounded by glass windows on two sides, allowing the early afternoon sun to pour into the room beautifully. The furniture was mostly white, accented with vibrant reds and oranges. The hardwood floor echoed each time Beca took a further step into the room.

"Oh my, God!" Beca heard a voice exclaim. Snapping her head around, Beca made eye contact with the receptionist. The receptionist couldn’t have been older than Beca. She was tall and slim and had, Beca noticed, long ombre hair, which hung in loose curls down her back. She was pretty, Beca conceded.

"Oh, my God!" The receptionist squealed again, covering her mouth with her hands. "You’re Reggie Mitch!"

Beca looked blankly at the receptionist. Beca figured she should be used to the fame by now but no, Beca hadn’t gotten over the awkwardness of fawning fans yet.

"You are Reggie Mitch, right?" The receptionist asked.

"Uh, yeah, I am," Beca responded with a tight-lipped smile.

"Okay, good, because I was gonna be so embarrassed if it turned out you weren’t! Anyhow, I love your stuff," the girl continued, walking over towards where Beca was standing. The receptionist held out her hand. "I’m Jenna," she said by way of introduction.
"Beca," Beca responded as she shook Jenna's hand. "Or Reggie Mitch, whatever. I'll respond to anything. Even 'hey you'..." Beca trailed off awkwardly.

Jenna, who was still holding Beca's hand, laughed giddily.

"Um," Beca began, politely trying to reclaim her hand.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Jenna said, blushing as she let go of Beca.

"Hey," Jenna began again as Beca's eyes scanned the lobby to look for the way towards Chloe, "I can't believe I'm saying this, but I think you're really hot, and if you're ever in town for a night and have some time on your hands, you should give me a call."

Well, Jenna was being very forward, Beca thought. "Uh, thanks," Beca responded once she realized that there was dead silence between the two girls. "I'm really flattered that a... slice like you is interested in me." Slice? God dammit. Beca cursed her own awkwardness.

Jenna giggled again as she sauntered over to the receptionist desk to grab a pen and paper. As Jenna was jotting down her phone number, the lobby door opened and Chloe appeared.

Beca couldn't explain the rush of emotions that overcame her in that moment. It was warm familiarity, it was giddy excitement, it was quiet happiness. Beca slowly blinked as she took Chloe in. A smile spread across Beca's face. Chloe looked ravishing. She was wearing a form-fitting black dress, which perfectly combined professionalism and elegance. Her black heels gave the illusion that her legs would go on for days. Chloe's eyes cut up from the notepad she held in her hands and her eyes met Beca's.

Beca's heart skipped a beat as Chloe's nose-crinkling smile graced her face. "Becs!" She exclaimed. Beca's heart skipped another beat over the sound of her own name. Beca rushed forward to embrace Chloe in a hug.

"Chlo, it's been too long," Beca answered. Chloe was moved. Beca was not usually one to show affection or emotion, but here Beca was, initiating a hug and telling Chloe how much she missed her. Chloe hugged Beca back tightly.

After several seconds, the embrace ended and Chloe filled the silence by saying, "I've missed you, too. Are you ready to go see some wedding bands?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," Beca responded. As the two girls turned around to leave the lobby, Jenna interrupted.

"Hey you," she flirted to Beca, "I think you're forgetting something."

Beca widened her eyes with confusion. "This," Jenna responded with a sultry smile, as she handed Beca a piece of paper with a phone number written on it.

"Oh, right. Thanks," Beca stammered, her cheeks growing pink.


Beca took the slip of paper reluctantly. Beca felt too bad to shoot this chick down to her face. Beca didn't want to make Jenna feel bad about herself. Because, Beca felt, it wasn't Jenna's fault, it was Beca's fault. Jenna just wasn't what Beca was looking for... whatever that was. Beca couldn't help but cut a sideways glance over to Chloe, who was biting her lip to keep from smiling. Silently, the two girls made their way onto the elevator.
Chloe waited until the elevator door had closed before speaking up. "It seems you've made quite the impression on Jenna there, Becs," Chloe said with a wink.

"I knew there was zero chance of you not grilling me over this," Beca answered with a moan.

"Hey, I'm not grilling! Jenna's awesome. And super hot. And she really seems to like you!" Chloe nudged Beca with her shoulder.

"She came onto me, not the other way around. And besides, I'm not into her that way," Beca confessed.

"Hmmmm, whatever you say," Chloe joked.

"I'm not!" Beca protested. "Look, Chlo," Beca said, her eyes taking in Chloe's bemused expression, "I'm flattered, sure. But I'm honestly not interested in seeing her. I mean, I just didn't feel any particular connection."

Chloe grew serious. "That's okay, Becs," Chloe said. "No one is making you call her."

"Okay," Beca said, backing off from her earlier aggressive tone. "I just wanted you to know that."

"Why?" Chloe asked genuinely.

Beca stopped to consider this question. Beca wasn't sure why she had created this argument with Chloe. What did Chloe care whether or not Beca wanted to bone this girl? "Um," Beca stammered, "I guess I respect you too much to try to bang all of your employees?" Chloe smiled and linked her arm in Beca's.

Once they were in the parking garage, Chloe clicked the keys to unlock her car. "Wow, Chlo, a Range Rover?" Beca asked, impressed over the sleek black car.

"Yeah, it really helps to have an SUV in my line of work," Chloe answered.

Beca climbed in the passenger side of the car, as Chloe entered the driver's side. Beca immediately noticed a certain yellow cup in the cupholder of the car.

"There it is," Beca pointed out with a smile. "The reason for my new sub label." Beca was secretly thrilled that Chloe had kept their yellow cup after all these years… after everything that had occurred between them.

Chloe beamed at their shared connection. Who knew that a simple yellow cup could elicit so many strong feelings? "I still drink out of this cup every day," Chloe confessed.

Beca smiled. "You know, it was my cup first."

"It so was not."

"It so was."

This banter continued as Chloe drove the car out of the garage, excitedly anticipating the day before them. Chloe and Beca would spend the next several hours scoping out wedding bands. Bumper and Amy had graciously narrowed the list down to five. It was the job of Beca and Chloe to meet with these five bands and report their impressions back to Amy and Bumper. Time was of the essence, as the wedding was drawing near and the bands' schedules were starting to become booked.
"So what's first?" Beca asked Chloe as they began cruising down the road.

"First up, is a band called, 'The Wind Beneath My Fried Chicken Wings,'" Chloe said cheerfully and without any iota of sarcasm.

"The Wind Beneath My Fried Chicken Wings?" Beca asked dryly.

"I've worked with them before," Chloe responded, ignoring Beca's skepticism. "They were the band for this bat mitzvah I planned last fall. They're pretty good actually!"

"I'll believe that when I see it. Any band whose name is a pun deserves to be whapped with a piñata stick."

"Well it's a good thing this isn't your wedding," Chloe said, casting a quick sideways glance at Beca.

"If this were my wedding, we wouldn't be running around like chickens with our heads cut off trying to pick among mediocre bands with even worse names to play at our wedding."

Beca deadpanned, "Pun very much intended."

Chloe giggled, blushing. Beca had unintentionally said, 'our wedding.' Chloe shook the thought from her mind as she tried to ignore the somersaults her stomach was currently doing. Teasing Beca with sexual innuendos was one thing. Teasing Beca over the prospect of a committed marriage was another thing completely. For that reason, Chloe halfway successfully (and a little reluctantly) forced the thought of marrying Beca from her mind. Smiling, she turned on Beca, "Alright, this is going to go a whole lot better today if you're a good sport. That means no complaining, and especially, no being mean to the wedding bands, yeah?"

"Fine, I won't be mean… intentionally," Beca added as she flipped nonchalantly through her phone. "But you owe me one."

"Anything," Chloe promised.

"Taco Bell?" Beca asked, lighting up.

Chloe grinned. Beca was positively adorable when she got excited over something. "Yes, after this we'll go to Taco Bell and you can eat to your heart's content."

Beca had to hand it to Chloe. 'The Wind Beneath My Fried Chicken Wings' was actually quite talented. The band consisted of three guys and a girl. Although they clearly knew their stuff, they spent a good deal of the meeting hitting on Chloe. Beca couldn't tell which of the four had tried the hardest to get into Chloe's pants.

Once they were back in the car, Beca observed, "So, Chlo, you must really be putting out those loving vibes today."

"What's that, Becs?"

"The band. I swear one person came onto you harder than the next."

"Oh, that," Chloe waved it off casually. "Yeah, they were like that at the bat mitzvah as well. I'm sure they respect professional boundaries enough to dare act."

"Uh-huh, so there's not one of those Chicken Wings you'd bone?" Beca asked in a bemused tone.
"That's a sentence that's probably not been said before," Chloe joked back, laughing. "But really, probably not. The boys all looked too greasy. It's a bit of a turn off. The girl's hot though," Chloe mused as she trailed off into thought.

"You think?" Beca asked, a little too defensively. Beca was surprised at her own tone of voice. She wasn't sure what she was feeling in this moment. She took a deep breath. It didn't matter who Chloe liked. Chloe was her friend. Beca wanted Chloe to do whatever made her happy.

"Yeah, in a Kristen Stewart kind of way. Although she's kind of greasy, too, come to think of it," Chloe added.

Beca laughed. After 'The Wind Beneath My Fried Chicken Wings', Beca and Chloe methodically ticked the other bands off their list. On the way over to the second wedding band, Chloe asked Beca a question that had been weighing on her for quite some time.

"Beca, are you happy?"

"What?" Beca stopped to consider the question, caught completely off guard. Not once in the past few years had anyone asked her this question. "I mean," Beca began, furrowing her eyebrows, "I guess I am. I mean, I should be, right?"

Chloe's eyes lost a bit of their gleam. "I think it's easy to get lost in the 'shoulds' of life. Trust me, I've been there. I think it's sometimes okay to not be okay," Chloe finished, her eyes focused steadfastly ahead on the road.

"Right," Beca paused to consider for a moment. Picking at the skin on her thumb, Beca confessed, "Well I guess I am mostly happy. I love what I do. I like that I'm finally getting the opportunity to have the career I've always wanted. But it comes at a cost. I, uh, well... it's hard to explain," Beca looked over at Chloe, who cut her eyes over to Beca, nodding and encouraging the smaller girl to continue.

Beca sighed. Beca had never been the kind of person who enjoyed opening up to other people. Due to years of careful, calculated, emotional repression, she found it extremely difficult to share her vulnerability with other people. Chloe, it seemed, even after all these years, was the exception to this rule. It took about one second of gazing into those light blue eyes before Beca's resolve broke. Beca's heart swelled with contentment. Beca had Chloe.

Starting again, Beca said, "There are days I wake up and I feel like I'm living somebody else's life. The clothes I wear were picked out by someone else, the car I drive is this stupid red convertible that I hate, and the events I go to were hand-picked by my manager to promote my image. It's kind of sad... to think that I'm not acceptable. That I have to be curated or something before anyone could love me," Beca said, looking down at her hands.

Chloe swallowed the lump in her throat. The one thing Chloe hated the most in this world was seeing Beca upset. It completely unraveled her. Chloe quickly swiped away the tear streaming down her left cheek. "Beca, you're perfect the way you are and I wouldn't change a single hair on your head for the entire world. There's nothing wrong with you, even though you might feel like there is. You are exactly the person you're supposed to be, and I'm so thankful. I don't know what I'd do without you, you're one of my best friends," Chloe said, reaching across the car to grab Beca's hand in her own and give it a squeeze.

Beca smiled softly. Beca didn't know how much Chloe meant behind these words, but to Beca, they were everything. Somebody was on her side. Somebody understood.
"And Becs," Chloe continued gently, "I get how it must feel to wake up and feel like a stranger in your own life. It breaks my heart to know you're going through that," Chloe said, another tear streaming down her face. She didn't bother to wipe this tear away. "But if you ever decide that you want to stop living that way, I'll support you one hundred percent, no questions asked. I'm in your corner."

Beca didn't respond, but squeezed Chloe's hand. Chloe's heart warmed a bit. This response said more to Chloe than words could have.

The girls continued their 'greatest hits' tour of wedding bands and the mood of the afternoon lightened. The second band was pretty good, although they were newer and didn't sound as cohesive as the first. On the way over to the third band, Beca turned on a 90's playlist. "Spiderwebs" by No Doubt filled Chloe's car. Chloe smiled over at a Ray Ban-clad Beca, as Chloe began singing along with Gwen Stefani. Beca missed hanging out with Chloe like this. She especially missed karaoke car sessions with Chloe. Beca smiled back at Chloe, lingering with her eyes as she took the sight in.

"What's up?" Chloe asked, casting a sideways glance at Beca.

"What's up?" Beca shot back automatically.

"You were staring."

Beca hoped Chloe didn't catch the blush appearing on her cheeks. "I'm just impressed that you're giving Gwen Stefani a run for her money over there," Beca answered casually.

Chloe smiled and the two continued singing. Chloe couldn't remember the last time she had enjoyed an afternoon this much. The two girls spent the next fifteen minutes of that afternoon jamming along to hits from the 1990's while stuck in Atlanta traffic. They screamed and air guitared to "Blister in the Sun" by Violent Femmes. They dramatically belted out "Creep" by Radiohead. Next, Third Eye Blind's "Semi-Charmed" life came on.

Chloe frowned. Her frown was quickly replaced by a forced smile. "Want to cut to the next song there, Beca?"

Beca was confused. "Okay?" She asked, switching to the next song on her playlist. "Do you hate that song?"

"It's about being on drugs," Chloe answered.

"Right?" Beca asked, prompting Chloe to elaborate.

"It's just... I don't know. It makes me feel sad, I guess," Chloe answered in a small voice.

Beca patted Chloe's hand, not knowing what to say. Beca didn't know that Chloe was so affected by this issue. I mean, she knew that Chloe was very anti-drug and never used drugs. But she didn't know that Chloe cared that passionately about it.

The rest of the afternoon passed as the girls visited the three remaining bands. The third band was really good, Beca thought. The fourth band was passable, although it was nothing inspiring. The fifth and final band, who called themselves "The Bitchin' Turtlenecks" was laughably awful. Beca had to harness every amount of willpower to avoid laughing until the two were back in the car.

As soon as Beca closed the passenger side door, she unraveled, dissolving into a peal of laughter. "They were... so bad..." Beca cried between howls.
Chloe tried not to laugh, but especially after seeing Beca curled up in a ball of laughter in the passenger's seat, Chloe's resolve broke. She began laughing too as she wiped her eyes from the tears that were forming around them.

"I can't... believe they sang..." Beca laughed, "Roxanne." Beca burst into further laughter.

"When the drummer's drumsticks flew out of his hand and hit the guitarist?" Chloe asked amidst her own laughter. Beca doubled over, hardly able to breathe she was laughing so hard.

At long last, the laughter subsided and Beca's hunger set in. "Soooooo, we're still going to Taco Bell, right?"

"A deal's a deal," Chloe agreed, as she set off in the direction of the nearest Taco Bell.

Beca ordered a Crunchwrap, two Doritos Locos tacos, and a Chicken Quesadilla. Chloe marveled at how Beca managed to put this all away. Beca was a small girl, yet had the appetite of a pro wrestler. As the two sat inside the Taco Bell and ate, Chloe went over the wedding bands with Beca.

"So what is your take?" She asked Beca, who was between bites of her taco.

"Either the first or the third one," Beca answered simply.

"Totes agree," Chloe answered with a nod as she crossed bands two, four, and five off on her list. "So we have either 'The Wind Beneath My Fried Chicken Wings' or 'Purple Oblivion Fusion.' Thoughts?" Chloe raised her cerulean blue eyes to meet Beca's eyes from across the table.

"Well, the Chicken Wings had a better set list. I think there's more songs that Amy and Bumper would like. If I'm being honest, I think the Purple band wowed me more with their talent. Besides, their sound equipment was way better. And if we've got a big wedding, we'll need good equipment that can carry sound. So that's my take. What do you think?"

"You're right, the 'Chicken Wings,'" Chloe said with a smirk, "Did have an awesome set list. But I still think that Purple Oblivion Fusion had a fine set list as well. And I agree that they seemed slightly more established and cohesive."

"So the Purple band?" Beca asked.

"That would be my opinion," Chloe answered honestly.

"Super. I'll call Amy and send news of our proclamation," Beca said, nodding her head.

At that exact moment, Chloe's phone, which was lying on the table between them, began ringing. It was Aubrey. Chloe looked at Beca apologetically. "Answer it," Beca consented. Beca contentedly finished her meal while Chloe spoke happily with Aubrey.

"Bree?" Beca couldn't hear what was being said, but could surmise the tone of Aubrey's voice. She was excitedly explaining something to Chloe.

"Yeah?" Chloe responded after a while.

"Well, that's great, I'm sure it's nice not having to stay in a hotel," Chloe answered a minute later. Another minute passed. "What?"

Beca glanced up to see Chloe's already-perky face turn into one filled with pure joy. "What? Bree?
Oh my God, that's wonderful! I'm so, so happy for you!"

Several more seconds passed. "Yeah, Bree, Beca's right here." Beca raised her eyebrows. "Well of course I'll tell her!" Chloe said into the phone.

Chloe and Aubrey talked for about another thirty seconds, while Beca eyed Chloe curiously. As Chloe was hanging up the phone with Aubrey, she said, "Okay, Bree, love you too. Have fun with Jesse. And trust me. The, ahem, acoustics in the shower are worth it," she added with a wink towards Beca. Chloe hung up the phone and grinning, looked up from her phone at Beca.

Chloe registered Beca's shell-shocked expression and her own smile faltered. "Becs, what's up?"

"Jesse's supposed to be interested in…" Beca trailed off as the realization set in. "Aubrey is the girl. Aubrey is the girl? The girl is Aubrey? Aubrey, the girl?"

"Okay, Becs," Chloe began, holding both of Beca's hands in her own hands, "I think you've exhausted every combination of those words."

"Sorry," Beca said grimacing. Meeting Chloe's eyes, she said, "I just didn't see this coming at all."

Chloe laughed softly, squeezing Beca's hands. "It surprised me a little as well. But I'm really happy for them. I love Aubrey and I love Jesse." Chloe's face lit up excitedly.

Beca softened. "You're right," Beca said, shaking her head. "I mean, of course I'm happy for them too. Even though Aubrey scares me sometimes." Lightly rolling her eyes, Chloe smiled.

"Also, I'm gonna give Aubrey so much shit for treble-boning Jesse. She just broke the number one rule of being a Bella. I mean, how is anyone going to respect her if a Treblemaker penetrates her?" Beca asked innocently.

Chloe smiled. "Are those rules serious?"

Deadpanning, Beca nodded and shot back, "Oh, Dixie Chicks serious."

Chloe giggled. "Well, I guess that oath is meaningless now, hm? It's a shame to have wasted all of that Boone's Farm."

After dinner, a reluctant Beca and Chloe headed back to the airport. Neither of them wanted Beca to go. One long, drawn-out goodbye later, Chloe climbed back into her car, alone. It immediately dawned on her that her yellow cup was missing. Damn it. Beca. Chloe couldn't help but smile.

Beca got back into Los Angeles just in time for the grand opening. A makeup artist and hairstylist did Beca's makeup and hair in the car on the way over to the gala. Although it was a tight connection, the evening went off without a hitch. The grand opening was a giant success and gave Beca hope that her career would continue to blossom. It's wasn't until the next morning that Beca returned home, utterly exhausted.

Beca walked through the front door of her home about an hour after Aubrey had left. Jesse was sitting on the couch in the living room, watching The Godfather for the billionth time. Beca momentarily forgot she was insanely sleep-deprived as she called out Jesse's name.

"Jess!" Beca greeted, pulling her friend into a hug. This was weird, Jesse thought, Beca never initiated physical contact with anyone. "I'm so happy for you, you weirdo!" She added. That sounded like the Beca Jesse knew, he thought as he laughed to himself.
"Thanks, Beca. I'm just… I don't know. Really happy," he said with a goofy grin.

"Of course you are," Beca said. "But Jess, you never told me the girl was Aubrey!"

"Yes, I did," Jesse argued.

"No. You didn't," Beca fought back. "You told me it was Olivia."

"No I didn't. Wait, why did you think it was Olivia?"

"I saw you two at that party a couple years ago. You talk about her a lot. I don't know, Jess. I just saw the flowing red hair, the toothy grin, the infectious laugh. I think I just figured that's what you were into," Beca finished, scratching her head. Now why, again, did Beca jump right to this conclusion, she wondered?

Jesse paused for a beat, suppressing an accusing grin. "Nope. That's not what I'm into. It was never about Olivia. Olivia has been married since the first day I met her. Never thought about her twice. But it is funny your mind went there."

"Is it?" Beca asked defensively. "I think it was a more logical person to assume than Aubrey."

Jesse shrugged. "Well, in any event, it clears up my confusion over thing you said the other day about Lucy and Ricky." Jesse now realized that Beca's reference had been to Jesse and Olivia and was not about Beca and Chloe.

"What?" Beca asked, confused beyond belief.

"Nothing," Jesse answered, playfully patting Beca's head.

Meanwhile, back in Atlanta, Chloe was meeting Stacie for a quick lunch at their favorite local Mexican restaurant. Stacie and Chloe had a standing appointment at this restaurant each week. It was a way to make sure Chloe still got to see one of her nearest and dearest friends, at least on a semi-frequent basis. As the food was brought to their table, Chloe had just finished telling Stacie about Beca's impromptu visit.

"Wow, the fact she'd jet across the country for five hours speaks volumes. I think she really wanted to spend time with you," Stacie said sweetly.

"Well, I think it was for Amy's wedding," Chloe answered.

Stacie rolled her eyes. "If it was for Amy's wedding, she would've just asked you to send over videos of the wedding bands."

Chloe chewed her bottom lip nervously. After several moments, she looked up and asked Stacie, "What if I fall for her again?"

Stacie answered, "If you fall for her again, you'll tell her this time. And then you'd know that she's fallen for you, too."

"What if she hadn't?"

"Then you might bend, but you wouldn't break. You'll never break again."

"Promise?"

"I promise," Stacie answered.
Hey, everyone. So this chapter wasn't originally planned for or even intended, but I decided to add it in. I wanted to take some time to just focus on Chloe and Beca's friendship and lay the groundwork for what is to come. As it happens, I think it's turned out to be one of the sweetest, most moving chapters of the story so far. Comments are always welcome.

The next chapter is going to be Amy's bachelorette party and things are going to be quickly ramping up between our favorite couple. Really, the holdout before we finally get to see Beca and Chloe together is coming to an end. I'm hoping to have the next chapter out in another week. I want to sincerely thank each of you for the ongoing support- if even one of you has gotten anything out of this story so far, I'd call it a success. You all mean the world to me and thank you.
Beca hung up the phone and walked from her back porch into her living room. She was stressed out and a little angry. Her eyes met Jesse's as he paused The Godfather, which he was watching for the billionth-and-first time. Staying seated on the couch in the living room, his eyes implored Beca to elaborate on her anger.

"It's just general stress. Amy is being really inflexible with everything for the bachelorette party, which is making mine and Chloe's lives difficult."

Of course Amy hadn't let Beca or Chloe step within a mile of the plans for the bachelorette party. Amy insisted that the only person who could throw her a proper bachelorette party was herself. Beca and Chloe tended to agree, although it certainly didn't make either of their lives easier. Chloe and Beca were in charge of booking the hotel and restaurants, and sending the other Bellas the weekend's itinerary. This was pretty difficult to accomplish when a certain Tasmanian was changing the plan every five minutes.

"Ah, man, that sucks," Jesse responded. He wasn't really interested in Beca's party planning, but feigned the right level of sympathy, which invited Beca to continue talking.

"Yeah, I mean it's not the biggest deal ever, but she keeps planning these 'surprises' for the weekend and won't tell us anything about them. So keeping an itinerary of things is next to impossible. But whatever, I'm not going to complain about it," Beca finished with a wave of her hand.

"Well if that's all that's bothering you these days, I'd say you've got a good life," Jesse reasoned.

"Hah. That's hardly the worst of my problems," Beca said flatly.

"What else is happening?"

"Okay, so get this. My manager called me today, and she doesn't think I'm dating enough. Can you believe that?"

Jesse said nothing. On the one hand, he agreed that it wasn't any of the manager's business whether or not Beca was dating anyone. On the other hand, Jesse couldn't recall the last time Beca had dated anyone. He decided to play devil's advocate. "When was the last time you dated someone?"

He asked innocently.

"What? That's… that's… not anyone's business. What does my personal life have to do with my career?"

"I hate to break it to you, Be-caw, but you chose a career that is smack-dab in the middle of the public eye. I wish I could tell you that it doesn't matter, but it does. How do you think the Kardashians became so famous? They let the public into their private lives. These days, it almost always takes comprising some privacy to succeed in the entertainment world."

Beca's eyes shot daggers at Jesse. "Jesus, you sound just like my manager," Beca spat. "Who, by
"Hey," Jesse responded, holding up his hands in self-defense, "I'm just saying this because I'm your friend and want you find the level of successful you deserve. And you deserve success because you've got a lot of talent. It sucks, but I think you've got to drink the Kool-Aid here, so to speak."

Beca sighed. She hated admitting that Jesse was right. Huffing, she asked, "So what does dating even mean? Like going on a date? Banging? Getting married? Since you apparently know so much today, enlighten me, Jess," Beca said, folding her hands together and cocking her head to the side.

A sly smile spread across Jesse's face. This was as close as Beca would ever get to saying 'you were right, I was wrong.' "Well," he began, "I think it means going on several dates. Getting dinner together somewhere. Going out for coffee. Holding hands when you're walking down the street. No serious commitment, just spending some time together."

"Well that's great," Beca said. "I hardly have time to see the people I don't hate seeing. Now I have to go on dates with this assorted collection of guys and girls my manager has got lined up?"

"Guys and girls?" Jesse asked, now more interested than ever in the conversation.

"Yes, Jesse. Guys and girls. Over the next month, my manager is going to set me up with several girls and several guys and I'm going to have to go out on dates with them. And the paparazzi will conveniently be present to document all of it. She says it'll give me an edge as 'the girl everyone wants but no one can have.' It's supposed to promote my image or something. Tell me that's not utter bullshit."

Jesse shrugged. "Kinda," he agreed. "But it's not all bad. I'm sure you'll at least get to pick the lucky guys and gals?"

"Ugh, no, why would I want to do that? I just told my manager to pick a few girls and guys that seem… not terrible. I mean, I'm not going to honestly date these people. It's just a few dates to make the paparazzi happy, and then I'm never gonna see them again… with any luck," Beca added as an afterthought.

"Wait, so you don't care who these people are?"

"No," Beca shot back without pausing to think.

"Huh," Jesse mused to himself. "So. Reggie Mitch is bi-sexual."

"Stellar observation."

"Yeah, so Reggie Mitch is into the ladies and dudes, but what about Beca Mitchell?" Jesse asked Beca the question that was really on his mind.

"I don't think Beca Mitchell could begin to know where to start figuring out how to answer that question," she responded honestly, as she stood up from the couch and left the room.

That was about the most confusing sentence ever uttered, Jesse thought. Still, he was shocked and pleasantly surprised that Beca had given him an honest response instead of a cutting remark. Sure, her answer was entirely laced with ambiguity and confusion, but it was honest.

The next week passed and Reggie Mitch went out on a date with a perfectly nice guy called Jay Dean. As planned, the paparazzi was present and evidence of the date quickly took to social media. The photos were accompanied by headlines like, "Reggie Mitch's New Man," "Love Is In The Air

The Bellas' group text also blew up, as most of the Bellas poked fun at the public airing of Beca's love life. Beca confided to them that the date was mostly for publicity, and it didn't mean much. One Bella, in particular, felt surprising relief in that confession.

Several days later, Reggie Mitch was caught on a date at Starbucks with the new indie artist, Kailey Watson. Again, social media exploded with pictures and headlines saying things like, "Reggie Mitch Plays The Field," "Breaking Hearts and Taking Names," and "Girls, Don't Worry-You've Still Got A Shot, Too." Beca hated every minute of this. She wasn't interested in dating these people and she was less interested in lying about her life to gain public attention.

Throughout this spectacle, the one thing that kept Beca sane was Chloe. Beca remembered Chloe's words of comfort more often than Chloe probably realized. It was nice to know that someone would be in her corner if she decided to stop living a Kardashian lifestyle. Beca picked up the phone and called Chloe.

"Hey!" A cheerful voice answered from the other end of the phone.

"Hey, yourself," Beca answered. "How are things over there?"

"Oh, you know… the usual. Busy but good. I'm so excited for the bachelorette party tomorrow!" Chloe exclaimed.

"Yeah, me too." Beca took a deep breath. "Chloe?"

"What's going on?" Chloe asked. She could read straight through Beca's tone of voice. Although Beca hadn't said anything, Chloe knew something was bothering Beca.

"You know those fake dates I'm going on?"

Chloe took a deep breath. Did she ever. Chloe hated to admit it, but she got more than a little relief from knowing those dates were staged. She had spent too much time over the past week trying to convince herself that she didn't care who Beca was dating. Even knowing the dates were fake, Chloe was, nonetheless, caught in a cycle of lying to herself over how much these fake dates bothered her. "Sure, Becs," Chloe answered as breezily as possible.

"Well, I hate them."

"I'm really sorry," Chloe answered sincerely. "I know how much you hate being made into a spectacle."

"That's it exactly," Beca agreed. "Everyone thinks it makes sense that I'm going on fake dates for publicity. Jesse, my manager, even the people I'm fake dating… they're behind it, too. No one else gets how much it eats at me. Except you, I guess."

Chloe smiled over the thought that she was the only person who got Beca. She suddenly wished with her entire heart that she could be there with Beca. Just to see her. To be with her. "Wait," Chloe thought to herself, "No." She needed to stop having these thoughts about her friend Beca.

To Beca, Chloe said, "I understand how it feels to do something disingenuous to yourself, trust me. It's not a good feeling, is it?"

"Chlo, you've said something like that to me before. What is it about you that I don't know?"
"I… I can't right now, Becs. Look, you'll hear about it, I promise, okay? It's just, it's a long story."
Chloe knew at some point or another that she'd have to tell Beca exactly what she was holding back. But this wasn't the moment. And further, Chloe wasn't ready to have this conversation just yet. It was going to take a lot of mental preparation before Chloe would be ready to have this talk with Beca.

Meanwhile, Beca was perplexed. Chloe never withheld. Although Chloe was more or less the same ray of sunshine she had always been in college, Beca couldn't help but notice a little bit of hesitation. Something over the past two years had changed Chloe. Beca knew it. She could feel it in her gut. The only problem was Beca didn't know precisely what had happened.

The change was subtle. So subtle, in fact, that it almost flew under Beca's radar completely. It wasn't until this very moment until Beca had seen the sign and realized the subtle shift in Chloe's behavior. Back in college, Chloe had been exuberant, happy-go-lucky, and overly touchy-feely. Chloe was still each of those things, but only... less so. She was still exuberant, but slightly more subdued. Her squeals of excitement were slightly softer and less frequent. Chloe was not quite as happy-go-lucky. Beca couldn't place a finger on a specific example, but she could just tell that Chloe viewed life through a more cautious lens these days. It was almost as if she was a little bit afraid to let herself go.

Most noticeably, Chloe was far less touchy-feely than she had been in college. Hell, back in college, Chloe had shared a bed with Beca several nights a week. When they sat down next to one another, Chloe's hand always held Beca's, or their arms and/or legs were intertwined. Chloe played with Beca's hair, kissed her cheek, and playfully slapped her ass. Since their reconciliation, most of this behavior had fallen by the wayside. Sure, Chloe and Beca were still close, but not like that. Again, Chloe was holding back a bit. Beca frowned to herself. She wasn't sure why this bothered her to the extent it did. Beca hated touchy-feelyness... so she thought.

"Okay," Beca answered uneasily. "We don't have to talk about it. But just, I have to know, are you okay?"

"I'm more than okay," Chloe answered with a smile.

"Promise?" Beca asked Chloe. As curious as Beca was to know what Chloe was hiding, she respected that all stories unravel at their own pace. Chloe would do this in her own time.

"I promise, Becs."

Aside from Chloe, the only other thing keeping Beca going throughout the spectacle of the fake dates was Amy's upcoming bachelorette party in Las Vegas. Beca was looking forward to a weekend with her friends and out of the public eye. As it turned out, Bumper had also planned his bachelor party in Las Vegas, on the same weekend, and at the same hotel as Amy's party.

Beca and Jesse caught a flight to Las Vegas very early the next morning. As they sat at their gate in the airport terminal at four AM that morning, Beca asked, "Hey, Jesse, do you have any Advil? I swear these early mornings give me raging headaches." Beca complained as she rubbed her temples.

"Maybe it's the fact that you normally hold the sleep patterns of a sloth. Or maybe it's that when you are awake, your bloodstream is more coffee than blood."

Beca punched Jesse in the arm. "Ow!" He recoiled. "Now that's no way to treat your drug dealer, is it?" He asked loudly.
Beca's eyes shot daggers at Jesse, as she looked around and noticed that more than a handful of people had just heard Jesse call himself Beca's drug dealer.

"Just… do you have Advil or no?" Beca asked irritably.

"Yeah, hold on," Jesse said, searching through his backpack. Jesse found three white pills and put them in Beca's palm. Beca automatically took the pills dry and slouched down in her chair. Jesse sat next to Beca in the terminal, watching The Godfather 2 on his Ipad.

After about twenty minutes of silence passed between them, Beca asked him, "So, do you think it's kind of odd that Amy and Bumper are throwing their bachelor weekends in the same place and at the same time?"

Jesse paused his movie and thought for a second. "No, I guess not. I think it's kind of sweet."

"Oh, that's right. I forgot you were a lovesick sap now."

Jesse pushed Beca.

"By the way, how are things going with the aca-Nazi?"

Jesse pushed Beca again, this time, harder. Beca shot him a glaring look, as she rubbed her shoulder.

"To answer your question," Jesse answered, "Aubrey is doing great, she-"

"Woah, Jess, I don't care how she's doing, I just wanted to say aca-Nazi."

Jesse pushed Beca a third time, slightly harder. "Ow!" Beca exclaimed.

One uneventful flight later, Beca and Jesse landed in Las Vegas. It was early afternoon before the pair made it over to the hotel. Once there, Jesse peeled off to meet Bumper and the guys for a round of golf. Beca checked her phone. The Bellas group text message indicated that half of them were at the pool and the other half were shopping and exploring the strip. Beca changed into her bathing suit and joined the group of Bellas at the pool.

"There she is!" Stacie shouted as Beca walked outside into the pool area. Stacie ran over to hug Beca. Meanwhile, every male in the pool's vicinity practically drowned in a pool of their own drool as they watched Stacie running over to Beca.

"It seems like you've been busy lately," Stacie continued as she hugged Beca hello.

Beca hugged Stacie back. "Yeah, who knew how exhausting fake relationships could be? At least I've got one weekend away from the press… So that's a blessing, I guess."

"Agreed." Stacie linked her arm in Beca's as the two made their way over to the part of the pool deck where the other Bellas sat. Aside from Stacie and Beca, the other Bellas present were CR, Ashley, Jessica, and Emily. The other five Bellas were out shopping, it seemed. Beca was a tiny bit disappointed that Chloe was nowhere to be seen.

Beca greeted everyone and spread out on a chair next to Emily. The girls spent the next few hours catching up poolside. It was good to see the Bellas again. Beca really missed seeing them the same way she did in college. After some time had passed, Beca began to notice the late afternoon sun in the sky. Surely the other Bellas would be returning back soon. "So when are the other girls coming back to the hotel?" Beca asked. It was not lost on anyone that Beca was indirectly asking when
Chloe was coming back to the hotel.

"Should be anytime now," Stacie answered casually as she broke her attention away from filing her nails.

"I figured about as much," Beca said. "Amy has a surprise planned for us at seven… Which is," Beca said, looking down at her phone, "An hour and a half from now."

Emily's eyes widened. "Surprise? What is it?"

"Sorry, Little Bit, Amy won't tell me either," Beca answered, shrugging her shoulders.

"This bodes well," Ashley observed with a concerned tone of voice. Amy's surprises were notoriously bad. Once in college, Amy had planned a surprise birthday party for Ashley. As it happened, it was actually Jessica's birthday, not Ashley's. This oversight was largely forgiven. What took longer to forgive, however, were the clown strippers that came over to the Bella house. Ashley legitimately had coulrophobia and the whole ordeal had caused her to suffer a horrible panic. Upon seeing the strippers dressed as clowns, Ashley had tried to run out of the house in fear. While running, she tripped on a step and fell, busting open her chin. Seven stitches later, she was having about the worst non-birthday a person could have.

With the evening's festivities before them, the group of Bellas at the pool disbanded and decided to go back to their respective rooms and get ready. Beca was sharing a hotel room with Emily and Stacie that weekend. Meanwhile, Chloe and Aubrey had decided to bunk up together this Bachelorette weekend. Beca quickly got ready and left her own hotel room in search of Chloe's. Beca knocked on Chloe and Aubrey's door. Seconds later, it opened.

Chloe was wearing a very, very short pair of boxer shorts, coupled with a very low-cut tank top. Her hair was up in a messy bun, as she stood grinning at the door, toothbrush in hand. Although Chloe was nowhere near being ready for a night on the town, to Beca, she looked smoking hot. Beca forced herself not to cop a look at Chloe's cleavage.

Beca plopped down on Chloe's bed as Chloe continued getting ready in the bathroom. "I'm so glad I stopped by," she muttered sarcastically.

"Meanwhile, I've experienced the other half of that equation first-hand," Chloe called from the other room.
"What?" Beca's eyes practically boggled out of her head.

"I'm teasing, Becs," Chloe called back, laughing. "I mean, I'm hot stuff, but definitely not the brand Aubrey is looking for, if you know what I mean."

"Hear you loud and clear."

"She's exclusively into men," Chloe continued.

"Yeah, I got your expression the first time, Chlo," Beca called back.

Chloe walked from the bathroom into the hotel room. Her pants and top were gone and she was now only wearing a matching set of red, lacy lingerie. Casually, she perused through her suitcase for the perfect outfit to wear that evening. Beca, still lying on Chloe's bedroom cast her eyes upward towards the ceiling, not wanting to defile her friend with her stare.

"Hey, Becs?" Chloe asked.

"Yeah?" Beca asked, still looking at the ceiling.

"I need your eyes for a sec."

Beca sighed, looking down. "What?"

"Green dress or black dress?"

Beca used every ounce of focus to look only at the dresses Chloe was holding out, and not the mostly-naked girl standing behind them. "Green," Beca answered simply before reluctantly averting her eyes from Chloe, once again.

As Chloe finished getting ready in the bathroom, the girls continued chatting. Chloe told Beca about how beautiful the hotels on the strip were. Beca had been to Vegas a handful of times for work-related events, but had never had the time to actually walk around or see the hotels. Chloe promised to circle back with Beca the next day. As Chloe put the finishing touches on her makeup, she stepped back into the hotel room to put on her shoes.

Wow, Beca thought, she looked flawless. She always looked flawless. But tonight, especially, she looked particularly stunning. Beca cast her eyes to the floor, swallowing hard. Chloe smirked to herself, noticing the slight blush on the brunette's face. Chloe secretly loved when she captured Beca's attention this way.

The two girls made their way downstairs to the hotel lobby. Once the other Bellas were present, Amy corralled the eleven girls into several Lyfts and away to Freemont Street. Once on Freemont Street, Amy led the way down the block, before turning left down a sketchy alleyway. All of the Bellas were on the verge of stopping Amy and begging to turn around when, suddenly, Amy stopped before a trap door on the ground. Amy bent down and knocked on the red trap door three consecutive times.

"Password?" A slightly familiar, yet strange voice asked from behind the trap door.

"Muffgate 2015!" Amy leaned down into the door and boomed excitedly.

Beca bit her tongue to keep from laughing. She cast a glance sideways towards Aubrey, who was biting her tongue to keep from saying something judgmental.
"You may enter," the voice said, opening the trap door from the floor. As the door opened, a tunnel leading underground became apparent.

"This looks like we're crawling into a sewer. Are we really doing this, Fat Amy?" Aubrey asked.

"Hell, yeah!" Amy responded. "We're finally going to win us a riff-off. As long as Legacy doesn't screw the pooch this time, eh?"

Emily shot a guilty look around to the other Bellas.

"Well, come on down, girls!" The voice of Sir Willups Brightslymoore invited.

"Sweet Jesus," Beca muttered under her breath. This was the same guy from that riff-off the Bellas had participated in during Beca's senior year of college. What was he doing in Las Vegas in an underground sewer? More importantly, how did Amy know where to find him?

"It's not so bad," Flo reassured Beca as they began climbing down the ladder and into the sewer. "Back in my country, all of the richest families lived beneath trapdoors."

"That's reassuring," Beca said sarcastically.

One by one, the eleven Bellas stepped into the trap door and crawled down the ladder which was provided to them. Landing on the floor, Beca figured this secret venue was about fifteen feet underneath street level. Sir Willups led the girls through a slim, dimly lit hallway.

Chloe grabbed Beca's arm. "I hope you're not counting on me for protection here Chlo, because I swear to God, if this gets any sketchier, I'm out of here."

"You and me both," she whispered back to Beca.

After about thirty seconds of walking through the hallway, the girls entered a grand ballroom. It looked like the inside of a VIP club. There were plush purple couches around the perimeter of the room, a fully stocked and open bar in the corner, and a giant disco ball in the middle of the room. It looked like close to a hundred other guests were already present.

"What is this place?" Beca asked, mostly to herself.

"This, my dear, is Las Vegas's best kept secret," Sir Willups suddenly appeared beside Beca, touching her arm lightly.

Beca, who was both startled and uncomfortable by Sir Willups's presence, about jumped out of her skin. "Ah!" She screamed. "How did... how did you suddenly appear right beside me?"

"I have cat-like agility, sweetie pie," he answered. Beca shuddered and took several steps back from Sir Willups.

Sir Willups, who was unfazed by Beca's recoil, suddenly pulled a microphone out of his sleeve and announced to the room, "My A-capella people! Welcome to Swan Song, the latest and greatest sub-terrestrial nightclub in the Freemont Street region of Las Vegas! Whoever said that you couldn't turn a sinkhole into a nightclub?"

Beca shot a horrified look over to Chloe and harshly mouthed, "Sinkhole?"

Chloe, whose arm was still linked in Beca's, patted her arm reassuringly while simultaneously attempting to swallow her own concern.
"Well I know you're all excited about tonight's riff-off, and my friends, so am I! So without further ado, let's meet our competition!"

Sir Willups first introduced the Treblemakers. Beca was shocked. In the midst of all the excitement, she had totally failed to notice that Jesse, Bumper, Benji and the other Treblemakers were all present. Beca figured this meant that the guys had finally let Bumper back into the group.

Next, was a group called the Vega-pellas. Beca had to assume they were a local group.

"Third," Sir Willups piped up, "Troop Number 4131 coming to us from Des Moines, Iowa, we have ten very eager Girl Scouts looking to clench their 'Golden Microphone' badges." Beca shook her head in disbelief. Girl Scouts? Just when this experience couldn't get any weirder.

"And last, though hopefully not least," Sir Willups finished, "We have a graduated group of Barden Bellas, who will hopefully prove to us tonight that talent doesn't go stale when you get old."

CR took a deep breath, resisting the urge to deck the middle-aged nightclub owner in the face.

"So let's go over the rules," Sir Willups said. "The rules tonight are simple. We're doing a standard riff-off, which means that you cut off one team by using their last sung word as your first sung word of a new song. If you can't keep up, you get the gong!"

Sir Willups paused a moment, waiting for anyone to laugh over his 'clever' rhyme. Noticing that his joke was received with silence, he continued on, "And the prize here tonight is special. The winner of tonight's riff-off gets... drumroll please... a ten thousand dollar Napster gift card!"

The only one of the Bellas who looked even moderately interested in the prize was Amy. The rest of the Bellas were left scratching their heads and wondering whether or not Napster had disbanded.

"Alright, you wonderful a-capella talent, let's get started! The first category is... Boy Bands! Vega-Pellas, you're up!"

Immediately, the Vega-pellas began an a-capella rendition of "Bye Bye Bye" by N'Sync.

"I'm doing this tonight
You're probably gonna start a fight
I know this can't be right
Hey baby come on
I loved you endlessly
When you weren't there for me
So now it's time to leave and make it alone
I know that I can't take no more
It ain't no lie
I want to see you out that door
Baby-"

The Girl Scouts cut them off and began singing One Direction's "What Makes you Beautiful."

Beca had to hand it to them, the Girl Scouts were actually pretty talented, despite their youthfulness.

"Baby you light up my world like nobody else,
The way that you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed,
But when you smile at the ground it ain't hard to tell,
You don't know, oh oh,
You don't know you're beautiful,
If only you saw what I can see,
You'll understand why I want you so desperately,
Right now I'm looking at you and I can't believe,
You don't know, that's what makes you-

The Treblemakers cut off the Girl Scouts with New Kids on the Block's "You Got It (The Right Stuff)."

"You got the right stuff, baby
I love the way you turn me on
You got the right stuff, baby
You're the reason why I sing this song
All that I needed was you
Oh, girl you're so right
And all that I-

Beca shot Chloe a look that said, 'trust me on this.' Chloe nodded and got the attention of the other Bellas. Beca walked up in front of Jesse, who was doing the lead vocals on the NKOTB song. With her hands, she cut him off and began singing,

"I should've said no
Someone's waiting for me
But I got my coat, called and said-"

By this point, the other Bellas had figured out that Beca was singing Backstreet Boy's "The Call." Lily had already began beat-boxing, while Jessica and Ashley were providing background sounds. As the chorus hit, the other girls joined in, Chloe taking a supporting lead role and harmonizing to Beca.

"Listen baby, I'm sorry
Just want to tell you don't worry
I will be late
Don't stay up and wait for me
I said again, your dropping out
My battery is low
Just so you know
We're going to a place nearby
Gotta go-"

The Girl Scouts tried to cut off the Bellas with Walk The Moon's 'Shut Up and Dance With Me.' Realizing they hadn't properly timed the jump, the song quickly dissolved. Sir Willups laboriously lifted his large mallet and banged the gong.

"You're out of here, Troop 4131!" He shouted. The Girl Scouts, crestfallen, left the venue. This was probably for the best, Beca figured. Those girls were most definitely underage and did not belong anywhere near a nightclub. Especially a nightclub that used to be a sinkhole.

"Alright, we've got three teams left, and our next category is... Songs by Britney Spears!" Sir Willups exclaimed excitedly. Chloe and Aubrey grinned at one another. They had this round in the bag.

"Bellas, you're up first!" Sir Willups boomed into the microphone.

Aubrey began singing the lead vocals and Stacie took the supporting vocals for Britney's "Baby One More Time." The rest of the Bellas filled in the song seamlessly within seconds.
"My loneliness
Is killing me (and I)
I must confess, I still believe (Still believe)
When I'm not with you I lose my mind
Give me a sign
Hit me baby one more time
Oh baby, baby
The reason I breathe is you-

The Treblemakers cut off the Bellas as Bumper began belting "Womanizer." Bumper made a big production out of dancing every word to the song.

"You, you, you are
You, you, you are
Womanizer, womanizer, womanizer, womanizer,
Boy don't try to front, I, I
Know just, just, what you are, are, are
Boy don't try to front I, I
Know just, just what you are, are, are
You, you say I'm crazy
You, I got you crazy-

The Vega-Pellas cut in with "Crazy." Beca rolled her eyes. The Treblemakers had just handed the Vega-Pellas that opportunity on a silver platter.

"Crazy, I just can't sleep
I'm so excited, I'm in too deep
Crazy, but it feels alright
Baby thinkin' of you keeps me up all night
Tell me, you're so into me
That I'm the only one you -"

Amy cut the Vega-Pellas off as she began belting "Stronger." CR quickly stepped in with the supporting lyrics. The two were dancing with one another as they belted out the song obnoxiously in front of Bumper and the Treblemakers.

"You might think that I won't make it
On my own
But now I'm stronger than yesterday
Now it's nothing but my way
My loneliness ain't killing me no more
I, I'm stronger
Then I ever thought that I could be, baby-

The Treblemakers entered with "Toxic." Benji sang the lead while the rest of the group harmonized around him. Beca wouldn't have been surprised to learn that this was a song in the Treblemaker's normal repertoire. They seemed to have mastered the song.

"Baby, can't you see
I'm calling
A guy like you
Should wear a warning
It's dangerous
I'm fallin'
There's no escape
I can't wait
I-

The Vega-pellas cut off the Treblemakers with Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle."

"I feel like I've been locked up tight
For a century of lonely nights
Waiting for someone to release me-

"Woah, woah, woah, stop that racket," Sir Willups interjected. The Vega-pellas came to a grinding halt. "If you're waiting for someone to release you, I'm going to do that right here and now. You know why? Because you're singing Christina, not Britney. Now don't you, ever, ever, come into my sinkhole… I mean, club, and confuse those two names!" He banged the gong, and just like that, the Vega-Pellas were cut off.

"Alright, final round!" Sir Willups started back up. "Our category is Songs With Sexual Innuendos. Treblemakers, you're up!"

Jesse cocked a sly grin over at Beca, who raised her eyebrows in response. Jesse began singing, Fifth Harmony's "Work from Home." As Jesse was singing with a goofy grin on his face, Beca mouthed, "I hate you."

"I know you're always on the night shift
But I can't stand these nights alone
And I don't need no explanation
'Cause baby, you're the boss at home"

Flo nudged Beca happily, who shot Flo a dead eyed expression. Beca hated every moment of this.

"You don't gotta go to work, work, work, work, work
But you gotta put in work, work, work, work, work
You don't gotta go to work, work, work, work, work
Let my body do the work, work, work, work, work, work, work
We can work from home, oh, oh, oh oh
We can work-

Luckily for the other Bellas, CR cut in with Rihanna's "Work." None of the other Bellas had been prepared in the slightest with another song idea.

"Work, work, work, work, work
You see me I be work, work, work, work, work
You see me do me dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt
There's something 'bout that work, work, work, work, work, work
When you a gon' learn, learn, learn, learn, learn
Me na care if me tired, tired, tired, tired, tired, tired
Join me I deserved it
No-

Donald cut CR off and began singing "Ignition" by R. Kelly. The whole time he was singing, his eyes were locked on Lily.

"No I'm not tryin' to be rude,
But hey pretty girl I'm feelin' you
The way you do the things you do
Remind me of my Lexus coup
That's why I'm all up in your grill
Tryna get you to a hotel
You must be a football coach
The way you got-

Chloe cut Donald off with Demi Lovato's "Cool for the Summer." Throwing a wink at Beca, she grabbed Beca's hand and pulled her up to the front of the crowd of Bellas. Beca's stomach flipped. As Chloe pulled her so close that their noses nearly touched, Beca tried to ignore the strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. Beca began singing backup for Chloe as the two belted,

"Got my mind on your body and your body on my mind
Got a taste for the cherry
I just need to take a bite
Don't tell your mother
Kiss one another
Die for each other
We're cool for the summer
Take me down into your paradise-

The Bella rendition of this song was a little more risqué than Beca would've thought. As Chloe sang, she grinded her backside into Beca, swiveling her hips up and down the length of Beca's legs. It was all Beca could do to keep singing and not rip apart at the seams.

"Don't be scared because I'm your body type
Just something that we wanna try
Cause you-

Beca took a deep breath, slightly relieved and slightly disappointed (wait, what?) that Bumper had cut the girls off. Beca was currently experiencing a strange tingling sensation. It felt like every cell in her body was dancing and she was losing her senses. Bumper gently took Amy's hand and crooning to her, he began singing "Come On Eileen" by Dexys Midnight Runners.

"You in that dress, my thoughts I confess
Verge on dirty
Ah, come on Eileen
Come on Eileen
Poor old Johnny Ray
Sounded sad upon the radio
But-

Amy held a finger up to Bumper's lips, silencing him. His smug look dissipated as she began singing Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline." The rest of the Bellas knew this song well. Over the years, it was a song the Bellas had grown accustomed to performing.

"But then I know it's growing strong
Was in the spring
Then spring became the summer
Who'd have believed you'd come along
Hands, touching hands
Reaching out, touching me, touching you
Sweet Caroline
Good times never seemed so good
I'd be inclined
To believe they never would
Oh no, no."

The Treblemakers conceded defeat as the girls circled back to hit the chorus a final time. Beca grabbed Chloe in a playful hug as she swayed to the beat of the music and continued singing,

"Sweet Caroline
Good times never seemed so good
I'd be inclined
To believe they never would
Oh no, no."

The song wrapped up and the Bellas cheered, all high-fiving and hugging one another. Beca, displaying an uncharacteristic giddiness, gave Chloe a large bear hug and planted a dramatic kiss on her forehead. Chloe's skin burned at the feel of Beca's soft lips on her forehead. Why did a platonic gesture of giddy excitement have such an effect on her? Chloe couldn't help herself from grinning as she hugged Beca back and smacked her cheek with several playful kisses.

"Well, well, well," Sir Willups said as the song came to a close. That's a wrap! It looks like the Barden Bellas are our winners tonight!"

"WOOOOOO!" Amy cheered above the noise of anyone else, snatching the gift card from the older man's hands. Waving the gift card in the air, Amy continued yelling in celebration. "WHO RUN THE WORLD?!" She bellowed.

"Girls!" The Bellas all shouted back in unison.

The Bellas's celebration eventually subsided and The Swan Song converted from a riff-off stage into the general nightclub for which it was designed. The three remaining a-capella groups began drinking from the open bar and dancing to the music booming from inside the nightclub. Beca still felt wary about being in what was once a sinkhole, but there seemed to be a negative correlation between her worry and the amount of alcohol she consumed. The more Beca drank, the less she worried.

A few drinks in, Beca found herself engrossed in conversation with one of the female Vega-pellas. This particular Vega-pella was a tall, slender, attractive Colombian with chocolate brown hair and a full-lipped smile.

"You did really well up there," the girl complimented Beca, touching her arm.

"Uh, thanks," Beca said awkwardly. "Um, what did you say your name was again?"

"I didn't," the girl laughed. "But it's Lena."

"Lena," Beca said back. "I'm Beca."

"Well, it's nice to meet you Beca. Any chance you'll come dance with me?"

Beca swallowed hard. "Dance? Yeah. I do. I mean, I will... Sorry," Beca said, cringing. She hoped dearly that one day she would outgrow her awkward nervousness around attractive strangers.

Lena giggled, taking Beca's hand and whisking her onto the dance floor. Things heated up as the
two began dancing with one another. Facing Beca, Lena ran her hand through Beca's hair and leaned down and placed a soft kiss on Beca's neck. Beca instinctively arched her head upward, giving Lena better access to continue what she was doing.

Chloe, who happened to be dancing with CR at the time, honed in on what was occurring between Beca and the beautiful Colombian. Chloe's eyes widened with shock as she saw the girl pecking at Beca's neck. And what was stranger, Chloe thought, was that Beca seemed to be enjoying herself. Chloe used every ounce of her being to attempt to swallow the jealousy threatening to rage. Beca was a friend and only a friend. Chloe didn't care about Beca that way anymore. It didn't matter who she liked. But... a girl? Chloe wondered.

Chloe's distraction over Beca and the Colombian was not lost on CR. "Girl, what up?" CR asked.

Chloe snapped her head back towards CR. "Oh, sorry. It's nothing."

"It's just... that's a girl," Chloe observed.

"Uh-huh? That's not news," CR said. "Beca's gone both ways in the past."

"Wait, so Beca's been with girls, too?" Chloe asked, her eyes widening. CR raised her eyebrows, as if Chloe's observation was nothing but obvious. "I just, um, didn't know that Beca was... an equal opportunist," Chloe finished clumsily.

"Duh! You've seen her around that scary blonde German lady from DSM!" CR shot back. "There's no world where that girl ain't nothing but a double-barrel shotgun."

Chloe didn't know how to take this news. In spite of herself, Chloe felt more than a bit interested over this revelation. Chloe had more or less figured Beca wasn't exclusively into guys. But hearing this suspicion confirmed filled her stomach with nervous energy.

Chloe turned her head back around to get a look at Beca. Beca's hands were around the other girl's hips, as the two danced sensually with one another. The other girl continued to pepper Beca's neck with kisses and Beca seemed really into it. Chloe took a deep breath, using every ounce of her being to ignore her blinding jealous rage. She had to cut this feeling off. She wasn't going to let herself feel jealous. Jealousy indicated the presence of someone she cared enough for to feel jealous. And Chloe absolutely didn't care for Beca in that capacity anymore. She couldn't. Steely resolve set in as Chloe tore her eyes away from Beca.

"CR?" Chloe asked above the boom of the music.

"Yeah?" CR asked in a concerned tone. CR knew the look of jealousy and knew that was the precise look Chloe was wearing across her face. CR also knew that Chloe and Beca had a bit of a thing for the other in college. Until now, CR figured this interest had dissipated after college though. Seeing Chloe suffer made her feel sympathy for her friend.

"Want to get the other Bellas together to dance?"

"Um, yeah. Let's see if we can tear Fat Amy away from Bumper's face first," CR said with a wink. Chloe laughed. The two girls went to collect Amy and made their way over to the bar.

As Chloe was surrounded by the other Bellas, she found herself being able to halfway successfully ignore Beca, who, by the way, was still dancing with the random Vega-pella. Chloe loved the other Bellas whole-heartedly. Being around them made her happy. She chose to focus on this
happiness and not the jealousy, which by the way, totally didn't exist. Not at all.

As the night wore on, a laundry list of guys and girls had tried to make passes at Chloe. She happily danced with several of them, but as soon as they tried to make any real move on her, she would let them down easily. Chloe just wasn't in the mood for a hook-up. The evening ended around two in the morning. Amy and Bumper, true to form, had disappeared somewhere about an hour ago. Jesse and Aubrey were half-dancing, half-making out in a corner. Lily and Donald were smitten as they danced with one another. Chloe, CR, Stacie, Jessica, Ashley, Flo, and Emily were all fairly drunk and/or tired. The group of girls decided to head home.

As they were leaving the club and preparing to climb up the ladder and back onto street-level, a hand grabbed Chloe's shoulder from behind. "Don't leave me," Beca said.

"Becs!" Chloe exclaimed happily.

"Yeah, I'm coming with you guys."

"I thought you would want to stay here," Chloe said, slightly more accusatory than intended. "I mean," Chloe backtracked, clearing her throat and trying to plaster what seemed like a genuine smile on her face, "It seemed like you were having fun."

"No," Beca shook her head, leaning on Chloe for support, "I'm not into that girl."

"You seemed into her," Chloe observed, trying her best to capture the right level of nonchalance in her tone.

"Well, yeah… I mean she was hot," Beca began, furrowing her eyebrows and intensely focusing on her words, "But I just don't want to end up going home with her, you know? There's nothing there. She's not… Never mind."

"She's not what?" Chloe asked, really curious over Beca's insight into what she was looking for in a partner. Not that Chloe cared in any way other than as a friend.

"She's not… I don't know. She's too touchy. It's off-putting."

Chloe couldn't stop herself from laughing out loud. Beca cut her eyes over at Chloe curiously. Chloe suppressed her smile, explaining, "Becs, are you sure that's something that really bothers you?"

"Why do you ask?"

"We're literally holding hands right now."

Beca looked down and confirmed this was true. "Shit, how'd that happen?" Interestingly, Beca did not let go of Chloe's hand.

"Does it bother you?" Chloe asked.

"No," Beca answered automatically. She liked holding Chloe's hand. She wasn't sure why.

"But it bothered you with that other girl?" Chloe asked, a little too happy to point this out to Beca. Chloe kicked herself mentally for getting any amount of joy from this conversation.

"Well… yeah," Beca confessed, trying to figure out why this was. "She's not you… I mean, that was weird to say. Sorry. I don't know her that well is all."
Chloe sighed, trying to push down the intense feelings she was having. Chloe forced herself to give Beca the same advice she'd give to any other platonic friend. "Becs," Chloe said, patting Beca's arm. "You deserve to be happy. And it just seems to me like you tend to shoot down anyone that shows a passing interest in you. It's hard to find someone if you give no one a chance."

Beca sighed, looking deeply into Chloe's eyes. "You have really blue eyes. Like, really, really blue. Has anyone told you that?" Beca slurred.

Chloe laughed. Beca was nowhere near sober enough to have a serious conversation. "I think it's been mentioned," Chloe answered, linking her arm in Beca's as the two stumbled home alongside the other Bellas.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, so I'm gonna need some input. We're coming pretty close to the moment we've all been waiting for. And I've got a chapter planned that would certainly bump the rating from "T" to "M." Quite honestly, you guys mean the world to me and I want to do whatever makes y'all happiest. That said, do y'all want me to include this chapter or no? It's fine if y'all don't want it, I can easily gloss over it and continue on with the story as planned. Just let me know :)
CHAPTER 10 (May 26, 2018)

It took some gentle prodding, but eventually Chloe had gotten Beca back to her own hotel room. Chloe had successfully navigated around having a conversation with a drunk Beca as to why she couldn't stay with Chloe. Secretly, Chloe didn't trust herself to spend the night with Beca. Beca was too… well, it was a complicated situation. It definitely had nothing to do with the feelings that were beginning to re-blossom for Beca. Because Chloe definitely was having none of those feelings. Finally, after leaving a disappointed Beca, Chloe returned to her room alone and settled into a restless sleep.

"Chloe! Chloe!" Aubrey called across the hotel room the next morning. "Are you okay?"

"Whaaaaa-" Chloe jolted awake with a start, her heart pounding. Sitting up in bed, Chloe came to her senses. She was here in her hotel room in Las Vegas. None of what just happened was real... unfortunately. She was alone. Well, sort of. Aubrey had just walked into the room. And so had Stacie, for that matter. "Yeah, I was asleep," Chloe answered, reality setting in.

"You were groaning. I thought you were in pain," Aubrey pointed out, by way of explanation.

A light pink blush danced across the top of Chloe's cheeks. Right, she was groaning. Chloe was trying her best to forget how turned on she was. If Bree and Stacie weren't in the room right now, well… Chloe took a deep breath, trying to ignore the itch she so desperately wanted to scratch. "No, Bree," Chloe said with a yawn, "I was the opposite of in pain."

Aubrey raised her eyebrows questioningly over Chloe's response. Putting two and two together, Aubrey soon figured out the puzzle before her. So did Stacie, it seemed.

"You were having a sexy dream?" Stacie asked excitedly.

"Yeah," Chloe began, stretching her arms out and smiling, "You could say that."

"Do tell," Stacie pleaded, jumping into Chloe's bed and plopping down beside her.

"Or don't. We're running late for yoga," Aubrey contradicted. Chloe had forgotten, but she had agreed to go to a yoga class this morning with Aubrey and Stacie. They all figured a little zen and balance in their otherwise crazy weekend might serve them well. After yoga, the Bellas would be meeting for breakfast and after that, they would have several more of Amy's planned surprises to anticipate.

"Fuck yoga, I want the dirty details," Stacie responded, a devilish gleam in her eyes.

"Fuck dirty details, I want the yoga," Aubrey insisted back, just as persistently.

Chloe and Stacie exchanged bemused glances. Aubrey rarely cursed.

"Okay, okay," Chloe said, hoping to strike a compromise, "I'll fill you in on the sordid details while I put on my workout clothes."
"Fine," Stacie and Aubrey each said in unison.

A blush crept back across Chloe's cheeks as she began delving into the details of her dream. That, combined with the not-unpleasant fluttering in her lower stomach, halfway convinced Chloe that the dream was real instead of a fiction.

"Okay, so in my dream, I was in my bathroom. Well, it wasn't my bathroom, but in the dream it was my bathroom, does that make sense? Like it was understood in the dream that it was my bathroom."

"Got it. Moving on," Stacie dismissed, eager to stop talking about bathrooms and get to the good part.

Getting out of her bed and walking over to her suitcase, Chloe bent down and picked out a workout top and pair of spandex pants. She continued her retelling by saying, "I had just finished getting ready for bed. I was looking in the mirror as I took out my earrings. And when I looked behind me..."

Chloe looked in the mirror and standing behind her was Beca. Beca walked up behind her and wrapped her arms around Chloe's waist, like it was the most natural thing in the world. Chloe's breath hitched as Beca's hands made contact with her body. Beca smirked that damn sexy smirk that never failed to push Chloe's heart into overtime. Leaning in, Beca softly kissed Chloe's cheek. It was both totally sexy and sweet at the same time.

"After all these years, I've still got you wrapped around my finger," Beca teased with a grin, looking into the mirror with her dark blue eyes to meet Chloe's gaze.

"Don't kid yourself, Becs," Chloe answered with a wink. Wow, Chloe marveled at her ability to hold herself together.

"Don't I though?" Beca asked, placing a trail of soft kisses down Chloe's neck and across her shoulder blade.

Chloe swallowed hard, watching the actions of the girl behind her in the mirror. Good Lord, that felt... so good. Each time Beca brought her mouth to Chloe's skin, she felt as if she were on fire. "Fine," Chloe said shakily, trying not to come undone at the seams. "I'm still wrapped around your finger."

"Well, not yet anyway," Beca responded suggestively, playfully gleaming into the mirror and meeting Chloe's eyes a second time.

"God, Becs, you're going to be the end of me," Chloe responded breathily behind hooded eyelids.

Wrapping her arms more tightly around Chloe's waist, Beca rested her head on Chloe's shoulder. She whispered into Chloe's ear, "Wanna go to the bedroom and find out?"

Chloe's stomach flipped several times. She couldn't believe this was happening. It was really happening. She couldn't wait. She needed Beca right away. She had this nagging feeling that if she didn't get her kicks with Beca right now, that it might never happen. "No," Chloe answered resolutely, turning around to face Beca. "I wanna find out right here. Right now."

Now it was Beca's turn to be taken aback."Wow," Beca responded, her eyes becoming hazy with lust, "You're pretty impatient, aren't you?"

Chloe didn't verbally answer Beca's question, but brought her lips to Beca's kissing her deeply and
passionate. That kiss was everything Chloe wanted and needed. Chloe wrapped her arms around Beca's waist, pulling the brunette into her. Chloe needed as much of Beca as she could possibly have. The touch of her lips, it was indescribable. It built her up, further and further, to the point she felt she might collapse.

Beca broke contact. "Sit up," Beca ordered, helping Chloe onto the countertop of the bathroom. Wow, Beca was really hot when she was in charge. Chloe jumped up and Beca guided her onto the countertop. Beca took the sight of Chloe in. The hungry gleam in her eyes softened. The lust was still there, but it was different. It was softer, like the sharp afternoon sun turning into the subdued blend of a sunset. It was as if all of the colors in the world were lighter, happier. It was the melody of a song. Every part of the world felt in perfect balance.

"I never get tired looking into your blue eyes," Beca whispered.

Chloe smiled. Everything about this felt right. "I never want this moment to stop, I feel like I've waited years," Chloe responded, staring deep into Beca's adoring gaze. Beca smiled.

"Now, where were we," Beca mused, taking a step closer and closing the final distance between their lips.

Chloe wrapped her legs around Beca, keeping the brunette secured in place. Deepening the kiss, Chloe forced her tongue inside Beca's mouth. Beca responded favorably, massaging Chloe's tongue with her own. Oh... my God, Chloe thought, moaning. Chloe couldn't keep holding on like this. She needed... she needed... more of Beca.

As if Beca could read her mind, her hands began exploring. Downward and downward they crept. With the tips of her fingers, Beca lightly raked the tops of Chloe's thighs, honing in on... Chloe moaned again.

"You like that?" Beca asked with a smirk. "You- Chloe, Chloe!"

That was where the dream ended. Chloe awoke with a start over Aubrey calling her name. If Aubrey hadn't interrupted, goodness knows where that dream could've gone.

"God," Chloe said fanning herself, "I know it wasn't real, but it just felt so real. Like, it's gonna take my brain some time to shake this dream and remember that none of that actually happened." Chloe hated to admit it, but she was more than a little disappointed to have been awoken.

"I know what you mean. When I have sex dreams, it really amps up my sex drive for the next day or two," Stacie agreed.

"And that's different from usual, how?" Aubrey asked with a frown. Stacie's sex drive seemed pretty amped up on a normal basis.

"Yeah, I know Stace," Chloe said, responding to Stacie as she finished tying her running shoes. "It's really got me going."

"Do you think Beca's really like that in the sack?" Stacie wondered aloud.

"Stacie!" Aubrey admonished harshly. Aubrey did not want to think about any of that.


"I don't know and I'll probably never find out," Chloe answered airily and with a small smile. That dream would be the closest Chloe would ever get to "getting it on" with Beca.
"Don't you kind of want to though?" Stacie asked.

"Stacie!" Aubrey exclaimed a second time.

"But do you?" Stacie whispered to Chloe.

Chloe laughed and rolled her eyes playfully. "Well I can't say the thought is far from my mind after that dream. Like yeah, I'm totes not going to look at Beca the same way this morning because, God, that dream was seriously hot," Chloe said, trying to control her hormones and stop thinking about having sex with Beca.

"But the dream was also more than the sex, yeah? I don't know... the dream was kind of sweet in a weird way. I think we were married. And there's just something so simple and touching about it all. It's difficult to put into words." It really was difficult to put into words. Chloe felt the same sad pang in her heart that resembled the feel of nostalgia. It felt like something was slipping out of her fingers. Something she didn't really have in the first place. So I guess it was silly to feel sad about it, right?

"That's what you want from a partner some day," Stacie supplied.

"Someone who loves you in the small, normal moments, not just the big moments," Aubrey added, coming around to the fact that they were still discussing Chloe's dream and not going to yoga class.

"I think that's exactly it," Chloe agreed, nodding her head. "Someday... when I'm ready," she emphasized, "I do want to find that with someone."

"When you're ready?" Stacie and Aubrey asked at the same time.

"Why do I have the weird feeling that I'm the victim of some planned out scheme of yours?" Chloe asked, deflecting. "Did you two not just wake up?"

Aubrey blushed. "I've been up for hours," she admitted.

"Do share," Stacie continued with a gleam in her eye.

"A lady never kisses and tells," Aubrey said.

Stacie shrugged. She wasn't surprised that Aubrey wouldn't be forthcoming about her sex life. "Fair enough," Stacie said. "I only wish that was the reason I was woken up at the ass crack of dawn."

"What's up, Stace?" Chloe asked.

"Beca snores," Stacie answered.

"I know, isn't it just adorable?" Chloe asked, the words shooting out of her mouth before she could stop them.

Aubrey and Stacie's eyes immediately honed in suspiciously on Chloe. First, the dream. Now this.

"Chlo?" Stacie asked.

"What?" Chloe asked, pursing her lips together and averting her eyes away from the watchful gazes of her friends.

"I was more or less joking before with the dream. But now I'm really asking. What's going on with you and Beca?" Stacie accused.
"Nothing."

Aubrey and Stacie did not look even marginally convinced as they both raised their eyebrows at her.

"Nothing!" Chloe insisted again, more forcefully. "You saw her last night with the hot Colombian! We're not interested in one another, honest," Chloe said, not realizing that her 'honest' statement was far from honest.

"Look, if anything, I'm a little concerned for her," Chloe continued, attempting to cover her tracks. "She's just so wonderful and awesome and aca-adorable and she won't give anyone the time of day. That girl last night? Beca dropped her like a hot potato. And just so you know, this is pretty par for course with Beca. People show interest in her and she's having absolutely none of it. She deserves to find someone that makes her happy. I guess I'm just a little sad that she doesn't see the same thing I see," Chloe confessed.

"Chloe," Stacie said, "This is an actual example of the pot calling the kettle black."

"I whole-heartedly agree," Aubrey interjected. "Stacie and I were literally just telling you to get back out there and start dating. To give someone a chance."

"And I told you that I'm not ready yet," Chloe shot back defensively. "These are two different situations we're talking about." Over the past two years, Chloe had enjoyed her share of casual hook ups, but she had not once been on an actual date.

"Are they?" Stacie challenged.

"Of course! Beca did not go through the same thing I went through. Thank God," Chloe added, placing a hand over her heart. Chloe hoped to God that nothing would touch Beca's heart the way Chloe's heart had been touched. Aubrey and Stacie's expressions softened, as they watched Chloe clutch her heart.

Aubrey piped up, firmly yet sympathetically, "Stacie and I both know that, Chlo. We wouldn't be telling you to get back out there if we thought you weren't ready. It's been two years since everything happened. You're smart, beautiful, and talented. We want you to be happy and find someone that appreciates you the way you deserve to be appreciated."

Stacie nodded. "At some point or another, you need to trust yourself. Have you thought about dating?"

Chloe closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She knew her friends were coming from a place of concern, but it didn't stop Chloe from feeling frustrated. "I have thought about it. But it's something I'm choosing not to pursue… I don't know. It's just… maybe I'm not supposed to end up with anybody. Maybe I shouldn't fall in love. Maybe I overthink everything."

"Chloe," Stacie answered softly, "You know that's not true. You're more than deserving of love. You just have to be open to receive it. Just… promise Aubrey and I that the next time you find a person you feel for, that you'll actually act on it and see where it goes."

Chloe nodded. "I think I can do that."

"Speaking of people you feel for… I can't believe I'm bringing this up again, but Beca's name has come up a lot in conversation this morning. Are you sure there are no feelings there, Chloe?" Aubrey asked.
"I mean she was featured pretty heavily in that dream of yours," Stacie added.

"Why? Do you think that means something?" Chloe asked. Fuck, did it? I mean, Chloe could hardly control who or what she dreamed about. Was this some kind of sign? Or was it coincidence? This was getting into an existential question Chloe didn't feel prepared to think through.

"I don't know, Chloe, you seemed pretty smitten last night at that club," Aubrey retorted.

"True, and I think dreams have a way of unleashing your darkest inner desires," Stacie agreed.

Chloe paused. She had been denying and denying for the past few months that she felt anything for Beca beyond platonic friendship. After last night, the dream, and the current discussion with Aubrey and Stacie, Chloe was beginning to reconsider. "I honestly don't know. I might be into her… but I'm not sure," Chloe answered, chewing her bottom lip and raising her eyes to meet the gazes from her friends.

"Do you want my advice?" Stacie asked. Chloe nodded hesitantly. "For once, I think you need to throw caution to the wind with Beca and just do what feels right. Go for it."

Aubrey chimed in, "She's right, Chlo. You've been living in your own shadow for too long. I know you're scared and you have every right to be, but you need to trust that you're strong enough to handle any outcome. I think you've still got some what-if's about Beca. If you could get out of your head for even one day and just go for it, I think you'd find the resolve you need."

"For one day?"

"Right," Aubrey reaffirmed. "For just one day, throw caution to the wind and see what happens with Beca."

Pausing a moment, a smile crept across Chloe's face. "I think I can do that for one day. Thanks, guys." One day. It would be trying, but Chloe felt as if she could get out of her mind and act on her instincts for just one day. Hell, it might be kind of nice to not worry for a change.

"Alright, girls," Chloe added, "I think we've got a yoga class calling our names." Chloe led the way out of the hotel room. Stacie and Aubrey trailed behind.

"So, she's definitely still into the hobbit, right?" Aubrey whispered to Stacie, once they were sure that Chloe was definitely out of earshot.

"Yeah, there's little doubt about that," Stacie answered simply, as she closed the door behind her.

After yoga class ended, Chloe, Aubrey, and Stacie each went their separate ways. Stacie went off somewhere to call her boyfriend. Aubrey went back to Jesse's room, capitalizing on the little time they had left together before the day's festivities pulled them apart. Chloe, alone, went back to her room to take a shower.

Although the dream never strayed far from her mind, as the morning wore on, the dream felt less and less like reality and more and more like what it was- a dream. By the time yoga class ended, the memories over the dream only left a vaguely pleasant ache between Chloe's legs. An ache that Chloe needed to take care before she saw Beca at breakfast later that morning.

Turning on the shower faucet, Chloe stripped down and turned Spotify on her phone. She had a very specific song in mind. Once the water was hot, she stepped into the shower. Something about showers always got Chloe going. "Flying solo" in the shower was Chloe's modus operandi.
Right on cue, "Titanium" began playing over her phone speaker. Chloe's mind flashed back to that day during Beca's freshman year and her lower stomach clenched. "God," Chloe exhaled to herself, as the sharp beads of hot water rained down on her.

With one hand, Chloe lightly ran the tips of her fingers down her neck and across her right shoulder. She was tracing the exact pattern of Beca's kisses from her dream. Chloe's breathing became a bit shallower as her mind fully focused on her recreation of the dream. She remembered exactly how it felt to have Beca's mouth on her neck. To feel Beca's smile as she continued placing a trail of kisses across Chloe's shoulder. Shit, this wasn't going to take long at all. And it didn't help that "Titanium" was crescendoing into its first chorus.

As she stood under the shower, Chloe lightly ran her hands down her own wet body, just as Beca had in the dream. She paused to fondle her own breasts, pretending they were Beca's hands and not her own. Biting down on her bottom lip, she let her hands wander south. Chloe started near her knees and with her fingertips, lightly raked upward on her thighs. She could practically her Beca's voice, in that oh-so-sexy, cocky tone, asking, "You like that?"

This had been the point in the dream where Chloe had been awoken. From here on out, Chloe was departing from the dream and propelling the fantasy forward on her own terms.

"Oh, God, yes," Chloe moaned, her right hand circling lightly around her core. She shuddered at the light impact as her fingers found her clit. She was more than ready.

"Yes, Becs, yes," Chloe whispered, slipping two fingers easily inside herself. Chloe's knees nearly buckled under her, as she felt intense pleasure pulsating throughout her body. God, she thought to herself, she had no idea just how wet she was. She needed release and she needed it quickly.

Chloe splayed out her one free hand and pressed it against the shower wall as support for her trembling body. Drenched in shower water, Chloe continued the fantasy, after the momentary setback of having entered herself. She slowly and deliberately swirled her two fingers in a circle, hitting all of the right spots. "Oh, Becs," she moaned softly, leaning more heavily on her arm.

She moved her fingers slowly out and then back inside herself, pausing to again to circle them around and hit the spots that drove her so close to the brink of orgasm. Repeating this sequence several times got Chloe so close to release. The final chorus of "Titanium" was now playing. Chloe remembered Beca's face right after their shower duet- how the edginess from Beca's face had softened. How fucking cute and hot Beca had looked all at once, with that earspike and tattoo on her shoulder blade. And that's how, standing there in the shower, leaning against the wall for support, with two fingers inside of herself and picturing Beca's face, Chloe came.

"Beca!" Chloe called out, slightly louder than intended. Panting, Chloe came down from her orgasm just as "Titanium" finished playing. Wow, Chloe mused to herself as she stood upright and came back to her senses, that might be a record. Chloe couldn't remember the last time that she had "landed the plane" after a solo flight in under four minutes.

And God, that was really hot, Chloe thought. Almost a shame she had gotten it over with so quickly. Chloe pursed her lips together. There was still an hour until breakfast. Chloe reached outside of the shower, grabbed her phone, and set "Titanium" to play on repeat.

By the time breakfast rolled around, Chloe felt like she was in a good headspace to tackle the day before her. She could handle one day of being carefree and following her instincts with Beca. With her horniness at bay (thanks to that really long shower) and with the dream becoming a more and more distant thought in her mind, this day was going to be pretty easy. I mean, right? There was no way one day could do any irreparable harm.
Chloe walked into the restaurant that morning and immediately took sight of the small brunette girl sitting at the table. In one split second, her walls shattered like glass in her mind as she realized that she had no self-control over any of this. Her stomach lurched and her breath caught as she couldn't help but remember the sexy thoughts she had been harboring over Beca just hours before. Shit. No amount of self-talk could undo the intense feelings she was having. Chloe was hook, line, and sinker caught up in Beca.

"Just one day," Chloe thought to herself. Chloe turned off the cautious angst and walked into the restaurant.

Throughout the lunch, Chloe found it surprisingly easy to forget her caution and doubt. Something about Beca made it that way, it seemed. The more she let go, the more she forgot that she was even letting go. Being with Beca was just easy... it felt right. Acting the same way with Beca as Chloe had in college was about the easiest thing in the world. In fact, Chloe mused, not acting this way with Beca took far more effort than the other way around.

Beca and Chloe's already-flirty relationship continued escalating throughout the lunch. By the end of it, Stacie was left half-wondering if Beca and Chloe were just going to say "fuck it" and start having sex right there on the table. To neither Aubrey nor Stacie's surprise, Chloe had selected a seat next to her favorite brunette at breakfast.

"Seat taken?" Chloe asked cheerily as she sat down next to Beca.

"Yeah, actually. I was saving that chair for the part of my soul that died last night," Beca said, rubbing her eyes.

"I forget how grumpy you are in the morning before you have your coffee," Chloe responded.

"I'm not grumpy," Beca fought back. "I'm... enervated."

"Wow, Becs, did you eat a dictionary before you came down here?"

Beca glared at Chloe. "I'm too tired for this Chlo."

Chloe grinned. "You're so adorable when you're grumpy."

"Ugh! I told you I wasn't grumpy!"


Covering her head with her hands, an exasperated Beca exclaimed, "Look, please, for the love of God, could you desist with the thesaurus word salad until I've had at least one cup of coffee?"

"I think you're going to need a lot more than one cup," Chloe observed, as her eyes perused the menu.

Beca laid her forearm on the table with a thud. "Go ahead and insert an IV drip of caffeine, I need it," Beca joked dryly.

Even though the Bellas were still arriving and none of them had yet placed any drink orders, Chloe waved the waitress over. "Hi, I hope it's not too much trouble, but could you get some coffee for this one over here?" Chloe asked, pointing to Beca. "Her crabbiness is pretty unbearable right now."

"Hey!" Beca protested, as the waitress sauntered off to place the coffee order, laughing.
"She thinks I'm funny," Chloe pointed out.

Beca rolled her eyes, trying her best not to smile. Several seconds later, the waitress returned with a steaming cup of black coffee. "Cream or sugar, dear?" The waitress asked. Beca declined.

"You're just like my Grandpa," Stacie pointed out.

Beca shot her a look. "What's that?"

"My grandpa drinks his coffee black, too."

"What can I say, I'm an old soul," Beca responded, taking a sip of the steaming black liquid.

"That's so true," Flo piped in, "We always joked in college..." She trailed off.

Beca raised her eyebrows at Flo expectantly. "Well, we would always say that you were like the grumpy dad of the Bellas," Flo finished.

"What? Why does everyone always say I'm grumpy?" Beca asked as Chloe started laughing.

"Because you are," Stacie answered. "It's just who you are as a person. But we love you for it, Beca," Stacie said, rubbing Beca's arm.

"So if I was the grumpy dad, does that make you two, like my children or something?" Beca asked, pointing to Flo and Stacie.

"I guess I was kind of like the rebellious teenager," Stacie shrugged.

"Yeah, that makes sense," Beca agreed.

"I was more like the wild aunt," Flo said.

"Aunt Flo?" Beca asked dryly.

"Yes," Flo said, clearly unaware that 'Aunt Flo' took on an entirely different context when talking about the menstrual cycle.

"I guess no one ever knows what they're gonna get when Aunt Flo comes to town," Chloe said jokingly. Beca smirked over at Flo while holding a hand up to high five Chloe.

"Nice one, Beale," Beca said as Chloe high fived her hand. Flo, still clueless, shrugged.

"So then what was Chloe?" Beca asked, turning to look at the redhead.

"Oh, she was definitely the Mom of the Bellas," Flo answered resolutely, pausing a second to let this all sink in with Beca. "That was the joke. You were the grumpy dad and she was the doting mom. And together, you were an old, bickering, married couple."

Chloe laughed out loud, clearly unaffected by the fact the Bellas had essentially deemed them a married couple. Beca, meanwhile, grew flustered. "Well, yeah, we bicker," Beca defended herself, "Because Chloe always picks arguments with me. I mean, did you see what she did this morning?"

Beca asked, half-joking, half-serious.

"What I saw," Flo started, "Was an amiga who ordered you coffee because you really needed it." Beca sighed. Flo was right. Beca knew there was nothing she could say to win this friendly little disagreement.
"So, what do ya say, Becs?" Chloe asked in a sing-songy voice. "When someone does something nice for you and you want to show your appreciation? You say..." Chloe trailed off, baiting Beca to give the correct response.

Beca huffed. Chloe was clearly loving every moment of this. "Thanks," Beca muttered inaudibly.

"Come again?" Chloe asked.

"Thanks," Beca said again, a bit louder.

"See, that wasn't so hard, was it?" Chloe asked as she placed a friendly kiss on Beca's cheek. Beca didn't fail to notice the smirk that passed between Flo and Stacie. This whole ordeal further reaffirmed the truth behind their joke.

By this point, all of the Bellas were present at breakfast but one. The Tasmanian bachelorette was noticeably absent until about fifteen minutes later, when she came propelling into the restaurant.

"Amy, where were you?" Emily asked as Amy took a seat at the head of the table.

"Erm... seeing a man about a horse," Amy answered uneasily.

"What about last night? You just kind of disappeared and we didn't see or hear from you until now," Emily said.

"Uh, well, I was seeing another man about a different horse," Amy answered.

"Well we tried calling," CR added. "Didn't you check your phone?"

"Dingo ate it?" Amy asked in a flimsy excuse to cover the truth.

"Level with us," CR told Amy. "What's been going on?"

"Alright, alright, alright," Amy began, "Since everybody here is so obsessed with me. Bumper has my phone."

"And why is that, Amy?" Emily asked knowingly.

"Uhhhhhhhhh.... uhhhhhhhhhhhh," Amy droned, buying herself time to think of a lie. Beca pursed her lips together and looked down at the table to keep from laughing.

"Was it because you and Bumper are getting it on during your bachelorette weekend?" CR asked. Beca figured that clearly CR and Emily had stronger suspicions about Amy's whereabouts than she had. Come to think of it, Beca had more or less forgotten about Amy last night. Beca suddenly felt a tiny bit guilty. This was Amy's weekend, after all.

"Well, erm, we aren't not getting it on," Amy admitted.

"Knew it!" Emily exclaimed excitedly, reaching across the table to high five CR. "Pay up!" Emily shouted over to Lily. Lily pulled a twenty-dollar bill out of her wallet and passed it over to Emily.

"You guys betted on me?" Amy asked the girls.

"Nuh-uh, I didn't," CR answered. "I don't gamble anymore. But I'm not going to pretend that I wasn't witness to any bets occurring between Lily and Legacy."

"Sorry, Amy, but when in Vegas," Emily reasoned.
"It's okay Legacy. You complimented my vagina after Muffgate, so that makes it much easier to forgive you."

Now that all eleven Bellas were present and accounted for, the girls placed their food orders. Chloe, true to form, ordered pancakes. As long as Beca could remember, there hadn't been a single breakfast among the girls where Chloe hadn't ordered pancakes. It was her thing. Beca smiled, glad for some reason that this had not changed since college.

"Well charge up the taser and shock me," Beca teased sarcastically once Chloe had placed her order.

"Hey, I don't always order the same thing," Chloe protested, pushing Beca lightly in the arm.

"I can't think of a time you haven't ordered pancakes at breakfast. Face it, Beale, I can read you like a book."

"Is that so?"

"It is," Beca challenged back.

"Okay then," Chloe said, clasping her hands together and placing them on the table in front of her. Flashing a wink and a bright smile at Beca, she continued, "Tell me, what am I thinking right now?"

"Um," Beca paused, considering the question. "That I'm all-knowing and always right?"

"Nope," Chloe answered, shaking her head, "I was thinking that it's really funny how you always point out to me that I always order pancakes for breakfast. And meanwhile, every single time we go out to breakfast, you order eggs, bacon, and biscuits. So tell me, Beca, what did you order today?"

Beca was silent.

"Nice to meet you, Pot, I'm Kettle," Chloe joked.

"Okay, I don't always order the same thing," Beca backtracked.

"Mitchell, I can read you like a book," Chloe responded with a grin. Beca rolled her eyes playfully over the fact that Chloe had just used her own words against her.

"I mean, I have read you from cover to cover, so to speak," Chloe continued, winking.

"Dude, is that some kind of weird innuendo?"

Chloe shrugged. "I've seen you naked, Beca." Beca turned scarlet. Chloe grinned. She had more or less forgotten how much she enjoyed this banter with Beca.

Once the food arrived, Chloe pushed Beca's buttons a bit further, just to see what would happen.

"Pardon my reach," Chloe said to Beca as she leaned across Beca's plate to grab the butter.

"No pro-" Beca trailed off. Chloe, who was very openly leaning across Beca by this point in time, was offering Beca a full shot of her cleavage. Unbeknownst to Beca, none of this was even slightly accidental. Chloe knew exactly what she was doing as she leaned across Beca and felt Beca's eyes descend upon her.
"Thanks," Chloe responded cheerily as she settled back into her chair and began spreading butter on her pancakes.

Chloe could barely catch it from the peripherals of her field of vision, but she could tell Beca's face was turning red. Chloe smirked. Turning to Beca, she innocently asked, "Feeling okay there, Becs?"

"Um, yeah," Beca answered, clearing her throat. "Great." Beca mentally kicked herself. She was pretty sure she had just been caught checking out Chloe's junk.

"You look... flushed. Sure you don't need something?"

"I'm fine," Beca responded sharply.

Chloe bit her lip to keep from smiling and shrugged, turning her attention back to her food. Beca furrowed her eyebrows. She was now pretty sure that Chloe was messing with her.

"Two can play this game, Beale," Beca thought to herself. Several minutes later, Beca lobbed the ball back over to Chloe's side of the net.

"Hey, Chlo?"

"Hm?"

"You've got a little something, right underneath your lip there," Beca said pointing.

Chloe rubbed the spot to where Beca was pointing. "Gone?" She asked.

"Nope, still there."

Chloe tried and failed a second time to get rid of whatever was stuck on her face.

"Hold on, let me get it," Beca offered leaning in closely to Chloe's face. Beca licked her thumb and gently brought it up to Chloe's face, rubbing and removing the small spot of syrup. Chloe's breath hitched as she felt Beca's hand on her face and Beca's eyes intensely focus on her lips. The two girls were practically close enough to kiss, Chloe thought as butterflies filled her stomach.

"Promise I'm not trying to get fresh with you, Chlo," Beca said in an even tone. "And... got it."

Beca finished, leaning away from Chloe and cutting her grayish blue eyes back up to find Chloe's light blue eyes.

Now it was Chloe's turn to be embarrassed as a light pink blush crept across her cheeks. Chloe's mouth was suddenly quite dry, as she found herself without words.

"Okay there, Chlo? You seem... flushed," Beca threw Chloe's words back at her.

Chloe swallowed. This wasn't fair. Beca was always the flustered one, not Chloe. Chloe vowed to exact revenge. Chloe waited patiently for a few minutes until, miraculously, the right opportunity presented itself.

The girls had all just finished eating and Chloe had just popped a piece of gum into her mouth.

"Hey, Chlo, can I get some of your gum?" Beca leaned over and asked.

"Well," Chloe paused, considering the question, "I guess so, Becs," Chloe offered, placing her hand gently behind Beca's head and leaning over towards Beca's mouth. Right when her mouth was
about to touch Beca's mouth, Beca forced herself away from Chloe's face.

"Dude... what? No!" Beca protested. "I didn't mean I wanted your gum!"

"But you said your gum," Chloe responded, feigning innocence, as her eyelashes fluttered several times.

Beca was completely floored. "Well, obviously... I didn't... I didn't mean it like that..." Beca trailed off in an embarrassed fit.

"I didn't mean to fluster you, Becs," Chloe said innocently.

Beca shot Chloe a dry look. Of course she had meant to fluster Beca. The gauntlets had been thrown and Chloe had bested Beca. The way things were escalating, there wasn't much more Beca could do to retaliate that didn't involve crossing into some seriously uncharted territory.

This battle would have to end, however, because the checks had just arrived to the table.

"This isn't over, Beale. You may have won the battle, but I'll be damned if you win the war."

"Is that a threat?" Chloe asked steadily.

"It's a promise."

Chloe's stomach did somersaults as she tried to ignore the fact that in this moment, she was very turned on. If this kept up, she would need another shower.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, so there it is. I'll admit, writing this chapter was a new challenge for me. Honestly, it was about as hard as the piece of candy corn I found in my couch cushion last week. I didn't eat it... Okay, I did. Yeah, it's probably been there for a good six months but... YOLO as they would say in 2012. And whatever, I kind of count candy corn like a vegetable anyhow, so it's good. Okay, I gotta stop talking about candy corn, this is bananas.

OKAY. So Beca and Chloe. We're really getting somewhere with them now! I know the slow burn is really killing us. I was originally planning to gloss right over the shower scene and just allude to it later. After your comments, I reconsidered and wrote it in there for those of us (like me) who wanted to see some action. I promise we're gonna see some real, actual Beca/Chloe romance very soon. So, I'm really excited about it and I hope you are too.

As always, I love you guys.
CHAPTER 11 (May 26, 2018)

As the girls were leaving brunch, Amy reminded them that they all needed to be back in the hotel lobby at three o'clock that afternoon. Apart from that, the Bellas had the next several hours free to do whatever they wanted. Most of the girls headed off in the direction of a casino. Several girls, including CR, Jessica, and Aubrey, decided to go to a matinee performance of Cirque du Soleil. That left Beca and Chloe.

"Ready to hit the strip, Beale?" Beca asked. Yesterday, Chloe promised Beca she'd walk along the Las Vegas strip with her and sightsee. Beca was looking forward to this in more ways than one. Beca wasn't really in the mood to gamble or sit still for a two-hour show. Additionally, Beca had been to Las Vegas at least a dozen times for work, yet had never stopped to smell the roses. She hadn't once been able to enjoy herself and take any of the scenery in.

Chloe smiled. She didn't, for one second, plan on letting Beca down. But that didn't mean that she didn't want to see Beca squirm a tiny bit first. "Hmm," Chloe hummed, "That's not exactly the 'stripping' I had in mind."

Beca groaned. She had just survived the breakfast from hell and now this. It seemed as though Chloe was not willing to cut Beca any breaks today. And it was taking every ounce of wit for Beca to keep up with Chloe. "Did your mind just buy a condominium in the gutter? Because I swear to God, Beale, it lives there now."

Chloe smiled. "Can't keep up, Becs?" Chloe asked with a wink.

Beca's eyes darkened with a devilish gleam. This wasn't a look Chloe had ever seen on Beca before. And if she was being honest, it was almost too much to take. Chloe felt very short of breath all of a sudden as a warm sensation spread through her core.

"Oh, I can more than keep up. You wanna strip? Let's go strip, Chlo. Lead the way to your room," Beca motioned with her hand toward the elevator. "I'll follow."

Chloe swallowed hard. Surely Beca wasn't being serious, right? Chloe searched Beca's eyes for any hesitation. Beca's steely gaze didn't back down. Chloe discreetly wiped her sweaty palms as she crossed her arms in front of her chest. This was all too much. She felt like she was cracking. Unable to take the sexual tension, Chloe momentarily broke her gaze from Beca's face.

"Nothing, Beale? Now that's a first," Beca said with a dry laugh.

Chloe bit her bottom lip and shook her head. "Hey, don't get used to it," she warned. "You may have won this battle, but I'll be damned if you win the war. So are we hitting the strip or what?"

Chloe asked with a sigh.

"Hm, I'm not sure that I'm in the mood anymore," Beca shrugged nonchalantly.

"What?" Chloe asked, failing to keep the shock out of her voice.

"I can probably be convinced though," Beca continued, as she gleamed at Chloe.
"Name your game, Mitchell," Chloe demanded. Chloe wasn't sure what had just gotten into Beca just now, but she knew that she more than liked it.

"I want you to ask me to spend the afternoon with you."

"What? That's it?" Chloe asked, surprised. "Okay then, Becs, will you spend the afternoon with me?"

"I don't feel like that was sincere enough. Maybe… try it again, but put a little more feeling into it. Oh, and why don't you go down on your knees. A little groveling never hurt anyone, right?" Beca asked with a playful wink.

"You can't be serious."

"Dixie Chicks serious," Beca deadpanned.

"Well this is a first," Chloe muttered, as she lowered herself onto the ground. "I've never gotten on my knees for a girl to ask her to 'hang out,'" Chloe emphasized sarcastically.

Beca swallowed hard, trying her best to look unaffected by that last statement. Even though Beca herself couldn't explain the sudden rush she was feeling, she couldn't lose the ground she had just gained. For once, the tables were turned and Beca had bested Chloe. She wasn't going to give up this victory. Not that easily.

"Well there's a first time for everything," Beca answered evenly. "So let's hear it."

"Beca," Chloe began as she stood on her knees and took Beca's hands in her own, "Would you please do me the wonderful honor of being my partner in crime this afternoon? Nothing would make me happier."


"What? You're embarrassed?" Chloe asked.

"I guess you have less shame than me," Beca answered back simply.

Chloe pushed Beca. Beca leaned over to push Chloe back, but before Beca could push Chloe, she enveloped Beca into a large side hug and dramatically kissed Beca's cheek with a loud smack. Beca rolled her eyes and pretended to be offended over Chloe's PDA.

As Beca and Chloe set out that afternoon, they saw the Luxor, MGM Grand, Monte Carlo, the Cosmopolitan, the Bellagio, Caesar's Palace, the Linq, the Mirage, and Wynn. On the way back to their hotel, they stopped along the side of the road to see the water fountains at the Bellagio. The fountains danced in sync with "Titanium."

"How ironic," Chloe mused sweetly, as the two girls, shoulders touching, stood side-by-side, watching the fountains jump.

"Real irony or Alanis Morrissette irony?" Beca asked.

"What?" Chloe asked.

"It's just... never mind. I didn't land the joke."

"No, please. Explain," Chloe requested.
Sighing Beca said, "The joke was that most of the lyrics in Alanis Morissette's song 'Ironic' aren't actual examples of irony. They're just unfortunate situations. Like 'a black fly in your chardonnay.' That's just bad luck. See? 'Ironic' is actually an often-misused word. That's the joke."

Chloe thought for a moment, biting back a smile. "So the fact that Alanis Morissette wrote a song misusing the word 'irony,' an often-misused word, is that ironic?"

"Don't you think?" Beca deadpanned.

"A little too ironic," Chloe answered in a flat tone.

"Yeah I really do think," Beca responded grinning.

"Becs, you're one of a kind," Chloe said, shaking her head as she giggled.

"Says the girl whose lady jam in college was 'Titanium,'" Beca shot back jokingly, circling them back to the present moment.

Chloe arched her eyebrows in response and bit her lower lip.

"God. It's still your lady jam, isn't it?"

Chloe answered breezily, "Once a lady jam, always a lady jam. In fact, I jammed out to Titanium just this morning."

"I really didn't need to know that."

"What? It's a great song."

Beca chuckled softly. "I've heard it really builds."

"Good memory, Becs," Chloe said with a friendly wink, "I knew we were going to be really fast friends," Chloe said, snaking her arms around the smaller girl's waist.

"There's nothing faster than seeing your new friend naked the second time you meet her," Beca joked back nervously, acutely aware that Chloe's hands were wrapped around Beca.

"Oh, that's nothing. I still think there's a lot of… experimenting involved before you really know someone," Chloe said, dropping her voice half an octave as her pointer finger lightly brushed the length of Beca's narrow nose.

Beca swallowed hard, trying futilely to control her hormones. Her heart felt like she had just run a marathon. And was she sweating. "Is that so?" Beca tried her best to ask evenly.

"Oh, absolutely," Chloe continued in a husky voice, "I think really knowing someone is discovering everything about them. Knowing every little thing that drives them," Chloe said, her finger now lightly running along Beca's jawbone, "Positively wild," she finished, winking.

Beca's eyelids fluttered several times, as she tried to control any part of her response. She was surprised she was even standing, much less, breathing. Chloe leaned in, her face now only centimeters away from Beca's face. Beca wasn't backing down, Chloe noticed. Chloe crept a little closer. Before she could do the one thing she wanted the most, which was to close the gap and feel Beca's mouth on her own, her phone started ringing. This broke the moment, which might have otherwise played out exactly how Chloe had wanted.

"Better get that," Beca answered, clearing her throat as she metaphorically gasped for air.
"Right," Chloe responded, shaking her head to clear any inappropriate thoughts she may have been having.

Aubrey was on the phone. Beca and Chloe were late and needed to get back to the hotel. Hurrying, the two girls made it back to the hotel shortly, where the rest of the Bellas waited. Amy then began explaining her "surprise" activity.

"There you two are," Amy said, once Chloe and Beca made it through the hotel doors. "What were you two up to?" Amy asked.

"Nothing," Chloe and Beca each responded automatically in unison.

Beca internally groaned over their perfectly orchestrated answer. Well, shit, that sounded a little more than suspicious. But in all honesty, Beca wondered, what had happened back there at the fountains? Were Chloe and Beca having a moment? I mean, yeah, Chloe was flirty and forward with every single person on the planet, but was that more? Surely not, right?

"Well I'm sorry I was crock-blocking you," Amy began.

"You mean you're sorry you were cock-blocking," Beca corrected. The other Bellas all stared at Beca in silence.

CR finally spoke up. "Heyyyyy," She trailed off with a knowing grin.

"Pay up Flo!" Emily said excitedly, holding out her hand. Flo pursed her lips together, opening her wallet.

"Woah, woah woah," Beca began again. "What in the living fuck is going on?" She asked, pointing between Flo and Emily.

"I'm sorry for betting on you guys," Emily said sincerely, "But Vegas is really getting to me. Ah, who knew that betting could make you feel so alive!"

"Watch yourself, there, Legacy," CR admonished with a smile.

"Back up," Chloe asked. "What, precisely, are we betting on?"

CR stammered for words. "Well… Amy said the thing about crock-blocking and Beca didn't deny it, so we just assumed that she was admitting-"

Beca cut her off, "Oh, my God, no… you perverted weirdos. No crock-blocking… shit, cock-blocking was happening… It's called cock-blocking, by the way," Beca finished in a frustrated tone of voice.

"No, it's crock-blocking," Amy continued, unfazed by Beca's flustered fit. "Because, we're crocodile wrestling this afternoon, Pitches!"

"We're doing what?" Aubrey asked, practically jumping out of her skin.

"Wrestling crocodiles," Amy answered with a clueless smile, moving her arms up and down to imitate the open and close of a crocodile's mouth.

"Wait, Amy, that's insane. You know that, right?" Beca asked. For once, it appeared that Aubrey and Beca were on the same page about something.

Coming to Beca's defense, Aubrey added, "Beca's right. Someone could get seriously injured. We
are not doing this."

"Ah, don't worry, you two. Although a crocodile could snap you twig bitches in half easily, these crocodiles are totally sedated. It's like they're fast asleep."

"I don't care," Beca pushed back, "I'm not going anywhere near any crocodiles. Sedate or otherwise." Aubrey nodded in solidarity. Chloe wrapped an arm around Beca's shoulder and rubbed her arm to calm her down.

"Erm, Stacie?" Amy asked. "Have you ever seen anybody come into you ER with crocodile-related injuries?"

"No?" Stacie answered.

"I rest my case," Amy said.

"Wait a minute," Stacie answered, holding up her hand. "Crocodiles aren't even native to North America. I cannot let you use my lack of personal experience as an argument to your favor."

Amy dramatically huffed. "Fine," she conceded, "You pitches would never last a minute in Tasmania."

Beca silently begged to differ. She had never been to Tasmania, but she couldn't imagine that even in Tasmania, crocodile wrestling was a normal activity.

"So we can go right to my plan B instead," Amy continued. Beca and Aubrey locked eyes and smiled over their small victory. It was not often that Amy, the world's most stubborn human being, agreed to make compromises.

"Plan B?" Stacie asked skeptically.

"That's right. Even though it is not the Plan B you're used to, Legs," Amy began, while Stacie shrugged casually. "We're going skydiving," Amy announced. "Yayyyyyyy," she trailed off, as she began a celebratory dance.

Beca shook her head. Amy had just played them and she had just played them good. There was no crocodile wrestling. There never was. Amy had used that as a guise to bait the girls into agreeing to the safer, (slightly) less terrifying prospect of skydiving.

"I've been pushed out of a plane seven times," Lily whispered quietly.

Beca swallowed hard. She really tried not to think about Lily's shady past. She was half-afraid that Lily was an assassin. The other half of her was afraid that Lily was the one being hunted and that she was on someone's hit list somewhere.

Since it was Amy's bachelorette party and since skydiving was, technically speaking, a safe activity, the Bellas all bucked up and prepared themselves for an afternoon skydiving. Amy had a van pick the girls up several minutes later and transport them to the skydiving location, located a bit outside of town.

On the bus on the way over, Chloe sat next to Beca. Beca was slouched in her seat, her face a mix between anger and fright. "Hey," Chloe said softly, touching the crook of Beca's arm. Beca kept her eyes locked forward. "This is going to be okay. It's totes safe. All you have to do is get strapped in and-"
"Then get pushed out of a plane?" Beca finished.

Chloe rubbed Beca's arm. "Just pretend it's like jumping onto that blob at Aubrey's lake retreat."

"I was scared of that, too," Beca admitted.

"Right. And it turned out to be aca-awesome," Chloe responded with a cheerful nod.

"Your sheer positivity is truly astounding," Beca muttered.

"Becs, this is just supposed to be fun. If you wouldn't have fun, don't do it. I just want to make sure you're deciding not to do it for the right reasons," Chloe added sweetly.

Beca cut her eyes over to Chloe. Her eyes glittered with happy anticipation. Huffing, Beca changed her tone somewhat. "If I do this, which I'm not saying I will, but if I do, you've got to be right there beside me."

"Of course," Chloe responded as her smile grew.

"You're not gonna leave me alone, right?" Beca asked with a surprising amount of vulnerability.

"Wouldn't dream of it," Chloe responded.

"Fine. I guess I'm jumping out of a plane today."

Chloe launched herself at Beca and hugged the smaller girl. "You won't regret it!"

"Assuming I live long enough to regret anything."

Chloe patted Beca's hand. Beca grabbed on to Chloe's hand, interlacing their fingers together. Chloe smiled. Even though Beca's hand was sweaty, Chloe didn't care.

A few more minutes of the car ride passed, as Amy sat in the front seat, talking on the phone to Bumper. Their conversation was PG-13 rated, at best.

"I'll tell you where you can put your zucchini," Amy whispered seductively over the phone.

Beca's eyes widened. She had been more or less trying to ignore Amy's phone call. Unfortunately, she could not ignore that statement. She whispered over to Chloe, "Isn't the whole point of a bachelorette party to enjoy your last moments of single-dom with your friends?"

"Well, I'd argue that Amy and Bumper are friends. Best friends," Chloe added with a nod, as she bumped shoulders with Beca.

"True. But still, it defeats the whole purpose of the weekend if they're shacking up the entire time, right?" Beca responded by bumping Chloe back.

Chloe sighed, squeezing Beca's hand in her own. "I think it's the sweetest thing I've ever heard."

"No one says that about Amy and Bumper's sex life. You know this, right?"

"I just find it incredibly romantic that they're so in love they can't keep their hands off of each other."

"Well, I guess I didn't think about it that way," Beca admitted, not registering the fact that she was still holding Chloe's hand.
As the girls arrived to the drop site, Beca was less than shocked to learn that a reservation had been made weeks ago. The next several hours were spent meeting the tandem skydiving instructors, getting fitted with the skydiving gear, watching informational videos, and finally, signing a waiver form.

Amy scarcely read the form before hurriedly signing her name to the bottom and turning it in to an employee. Beca scanned the form warily. "What the...?" She asked, pointing her finger over the part of the form, which read, "I hereby accept and assume all risk of personal injury or death."

Aubrey, who was sitting next to Beca, leaned over Beca's shoulder to read the part of the contract to which Beca was referring. "Oh, that," Aubrey said nonchalantly. "That's just a hold harmless clause. Don't let that freak you out. Your chances of death are higher driving a car than they are skydiving."

"No shit," Beca mused, impressed that Aubrey clearly knew her facts.

"Yeah, I've got all sorts of these types of contracts at my retreat. I know my way around the law."

"Maybe you should go to law school then," Beca answered.

"Maybe I still will. As my father always said, 'It's never too late to start beating a dead horse.'"

Beca raised her eyebrows at Aubrey said, "Your dad doesn't make a whole lot of sense, does he?"

Aubrey paused, frowning. "You sound like Alice. She was the Bellas captain during my junior year of college."

"Great," Beca said, not quite sure what to make of this statement.

"The only difference between you and her was Alice hated Chloe in college," Aubrey pondered aloud.

"Wait, what?" Beca asked, surprised. "I can't imagine that was true. I mean, I don't know who Alice is, but still... No one hates Chloe."

"Oh, it's true," Aubrey answered. "You see, Chloe used to date this guy, Tom."

"I'm familiar," Beca affirmed.

"And Alice really liked him, Beca. So you could imagine that when he and Chloe got together, Alice was not happy. She was openly hostile toward Chloe. She would make Chloe run extra laps at practice and throw insulting comments at her whenever she could. It was rough."

"Wow," Beca mused. Chloe had never mentioned Alice before. "That makes our past tension sound like a birthday party," Beca said, cutting her gaze over to Aubrey.

"Yeah," Aubrey laughed lightly, "It does."

"But things got better," Aubrey added, after a beat of silence. "After Alice graduated, it was like a light switched in her head and her whole demeanor changed. She apologized to Chloe and Chloe, being the saint she is, actually forgave Alice. I wouldn't call them friends, but they're actually pretty cordial now."

"Huh. Do you think that apology had anything to do with Chloe and Tom's breakup?"

"I don't know," Aubrey answered honestly. "Could be... They did break up around the time Alice
apologized to Chloe."

"That was around the start of your senior year, right?" Beca asked.

"And the start of your freshman year," Aubrey thought to herself. The timing of Chloe's breakup in relation to Beca's aca-initiation was not even slightly coincidental.

"That's right," Aubrey answered. "Good memory."

"Hardly. I don't even remember why they broke up." Beca was now lying through her teeth. No one had ever told Beca about the breakup and Beca was chomping at the bit to know... for some reason.

"I don't think Chloe ever made a big deal about it," Aubrey said simply, "Because their breakup never hit Chloe very hard. You see, they never had the whole package. Sure, there was attraction... all sorts of attraction," Aubrey trailed off while Beca frowned, "But there was no friendship. No love. And it began to bother Chloe that she couldn't have those feelings for Tom. Because-" Aubrey stopped herself.

Aubrey had nearly said, "Because she easily found those feelings for you."

"Because?" Beca asked.

Aubrey sighed. It wasn't her place to tell Beca how Chloe felt. "Because she knew that she was capable of finding those feelings for someone else."

"Yeah, I actually really get where she's coming from. I'm sure Jesse's told you about where we went wrong? I mean, we were friends, but were missing the love, as well," Beca said.

Aubrey nodded. Jesse had, in fact, told Aubrey just that. "Well then I guess that makes you and Chloe two peas in a pod."

"Guess so," Beca trailed off. Aubrey and Beca each sat awkwardly in silence for several seconds as the air hung heavy with unspoken thoughts. There was probably a whole lot more to say on the subject, but neither was inclined to keep speaking.

"Well, I'm gonna go turn my death contract in," Beca joked, after the uncomfortable silence became too unbearable.

"You're not going to die, Beca," Aubrey said with a light smile, as she rolled her eyes.

"That remains to be seen, Posen," Beca shot back with a sarcastic smile.

Not too much longer after that, the eleven girls and their tandem jump instructors packed like sardines into a small plane. Beca's stomach felt like it was churning. Why, again, did she decide this was a good idea? This was anything but a good idea. Beca looked at the faces of her friends. The only person who looked happy was Amy. The other girls wore faces with varying levels of anxiety.

Chloe rubbed Beca's shoulder. "It'll be fun," she mouthed to Beca, though the expression on her face indicated that she, herself, wasn't convinced.

The next ten minutes passed both quickly and slowly until the inevitable arrived. It was time to be voluntarily pushed out of the plane. Amy was first. The tandem instructor, who was strapped in behind Amy, guided Amy to the door of the plane. He garbled a question to which Beca couldn't
gather, before Amy nodded. Before Beca could register anything else, Amy and her instructor were gone. Beca swallowed bile that had been rising in her throat.

Not much more time passed before Flo jumped. Next came Emily, then CR, Jessica, Aubrey, Stacie, Ashley, and Lily. Chloe and Beca were the only two left. Chloe's jump instructor began positioning Chloe and him to take the next jump. Chloe dug her feet into the ground and stopped him. "No," she mouthed, pointing over to Beca. Beca had to go first. Chloe, though herself was scared to death, was not going to leave her friend alone in the plane. Chloe had to see Beca out before she would jump.

Beca shot a horrified look towards Chloe, which non-verbally said, "I can't do this."

Chloe nodded reassuringly. Beca could, and she would. Beca swallowed and nodded back. Although Beca's insides felt twisted up like a pretzel, she let her instructor guide her to the edge of the plane.

"Are you ready to jump?" He asked Beca.

"WHAT I CAN'T HEAR ABOVE THE-"

The instructor pushed forward and the two went toppling out of the plane before Beca had a chance to finish her response. The first few seconds of free fall were utterly terrifying. Once Beca's stomach stopped spinning she opened her eyes. She saw the vast expanse of desert around them. This was what it felt like to be a bird, Beca thought. She could see the afternoon sun hitting the city off into the distance. A few seconds, or maybe minutes, Beca wasn't sure, passed.

Her tandem instructor garbled something indiscernible. Beca didn't respond. The instructor started guiding them into somersaults. One after the other, after the other. Beca felt like she was going to be motion sick.

"Stop, stop!" She cried. The instructor either didn't hear or chose to ignore Beca's pleas.

Finally, the two were close enough to the earth that he pulled the parachute. Beca spent the rest of the ride down trying not to vomit. The two finally hit the ground. "Thank God," Beca thought. "So how was it?" The instructor asked.

"It was fucking amazing. I feel... like I could do anything right now. Like I can literally do anything!" Beca exclaimed excitedly. She was experiencing an adrenaline rush. She took a deep breath, which did nothing to stop her from shaking with excitement. Sure, she still felt a little motion sick. But she would take a Dramamine from Stacie later.

Beca moved inside and removed her skydiving gear. The other Bellas had seemed to take to skydiving rather well and were all feeling the effects of adrenaline rushes as well. Chloe and Stacie were both really amped up as they manically recounted their experiences to one another. Emily and Flo were actually jumping up and down as they held hands.

Amy came sauntering over to Beca. "Well, short stuff, was I right or was I right?"

"You were right," Beca said with a huge grin on her face. Chloe looked over and locked eyes with Beca. Still grinning, Beca winked at Chloe before continuing her conversation with Amy.

Chloe attempted to turn her focus back onto Stacie, trying to ignore how turned on she was. Beca really had no idea how irresistibile she could be. Stacie didn't miss the wink that passed between Beca and Chloe.
"Fuck her yet?" Stacie asked.

"What? No!" Chloe exclaimed, taken aback.

"All I'm saying, is if you don't, I will. The Hunter needs a challenge."

"Stop it!" Chloe hissed, lightly hitting Stacie's arm. "Other people are standing nearby."

"I'm serious, Chlo. If you don't fuck her by the end of this weekend, so help me. I'll do it. I'm not even kidding."

"You have a boyfriend," Chloe shot back.

"Good. He can be a part of it, too," Stacie answered simply, with a shrug.

Chloe rolled her eyes. This statement was less than surprising. Stacie and Marcus had asked Chloe to have threesomes with them dozens of times. "You wouldn't."

"Wanna test me?" Stacie asked, giving Chloe a stern look. "Because I wouldn't. Especially when it comes to Beca. She's super hot. She's got that whole moody and edgy thing going on. I'd love to sink my teeth into her."

Chloe pursed her lips shut, swallowing the silly jealousy bubbling inside of her. Surely Stacie was joking, right? I mean she had to be.

"I know that look," Stacie continued. As if she were reading Chloe's thoughts, Stacie said, "And no, Chloe, I'm one hundred percent not joking. You take that sexy music producer to your room, rip her clothes off, and fuck the living daylights out of her or I will. Your choice."

Chloe narrowed her eyes at Stacie. Of course Chloe wanted Beca in bed with her, but it was hardly Stacie's place to push her beyond her comfort zone.

"Beca!" Stacie called across the room to Beca, once it had become clear that Chloe wasn't going to respond to Stacie's threat.

Beca raised her eyebrows at Stacie, who beckoned her over. "What?" Beca asked, as she joined the conversation of Stacie and Chloe.

"Come here," Stacie commanded.

"I am here," a confused Beca answered.

"No," Stacie began again, "Come here." Stacie took Beca's hand and pulled her close. With Beca wrapped around her arms, Stacie let her gaze slowly drop down to Beca's lips, while Beca shifted uncomfortably on her feet. Beca had no idea what was going on.

"Stace," Chloe interjected sternly, "I think we should leave Beca alone, don't you?" Chloe was more than a little worried that Stacie was actually going to kiss Beca. What worried her more, still, was the thought that Beca might like it if Stacie kissed her.

Stacie broke her gaze from Beca's lips and met Chloe's eyes. With a playful gleam and a wink, Stacie answered, "Oh, I don't know about that, Chlo. With all this adrenaline I've got pumping after skydiving, the Hunter-"

Chloe interrupted Stacie by grabbing her face and yanking her in for a kiss. Chloe felt Stacie respond as her soft lips kissed Chloe back. Although kissing Stacie was nice, really nice, Chloe
released her hold of Stacie and took a step back.

"That should shut her up," Chloe thought.

Both Beca and Stacie stared at Chloe like she had lobsters crawling out of her ears. This behavior was unexpected, to say the least. "Tell the Hunter to keep it in his pants until he gets home to his boyfriend, yeah?" Chloe requested.

Stacie smirked. Chloe had taken the bait.

"What have I just walked into?" Beca asked in an annoyed tone of voice. Why had she left a perfectly fine conversation with Amy to watch Chloe kiss on Stacie? That was the last thing she wanted to watch happen.

Chloe and Stacie each shrugged and answered in unison, "Nothing."

Beca tried her best to ignore the strange emotion she was feeling in the pit of her stomach. It felt strangely akin to jealousy. But, it couldn't be… right? I mean, Stacie and Chloe had always been touchy and forward, particularly with one another. And it had never bothered Beca before. I mean, Beca had witnessed Stacie and Chloe take body shots off one another in college.

"Fine, if you say so," Beca answered, pursing her lips into a smile, as she turned around to walk away.

Chloe shot Stacie a look of distress.

"Don't give me that look. This slow burn has been burning too long," Stacie explained, as she responded to Chloe's nonverbal look of worry. "Something needs to light the fire under your ass."

"Just…" Chloe trailed off, trying to collect her thoughts, "Tell the Hunter to back off tonight. I'll make my move, okay?"

"You'd better," Stacie muttered. "Now, go get your girl. I'm pretty sure she's sulking."

"Sulking?"

"Yeah, Chlo. Maybe you don't see it and hell, maybe she doesn't see it either, but that girl has got it bad for you."

"Do you really think?" Chloe asked, gushing in spite of herself. She realized that this conversation effectively declined her chill level to zero.

"Beca looked like she wanted to murder me and parade my severed head around on a stick. And I know I don't usually have that effect on others unless there's jealousy involved. So yeah, she's a sure thing. You've just gotta pull the trigger, Chloe."

"Oh, I'll pull the trigger alright," Chloe answered with a smirk. By the end of this evening, Beca was going to be a goner.

Chloe ran off to go find Beca.

Chapter End Notes
Wow, so we're a little over halfway done at this point! And thanks for hanging in there, we're actually going to see Chloe and Beca get together in the next chapter! So count your blessings that I'm going to stop slowly burning our souls- I know I'm thankful for that.

Anyhow, I've already got the next chapter well under way. It was a little too long to tack onto this chapter, but once I've got it looking perfect, you'll have it.

Love you all!
"Alright skinny pitches, you think the afternoon was fun, but wait until you see what I have in store for you tonight!" Amy exclaimed to the group of Bellas.

After skydiving, the girls returned back to Amy's hotel room and ordered pizza while getting ready for the night's festivities. Apart from Chloe, they were all dressed for the evening and present.

"I hope it doesn't involve crocodiles," CR pleaded softly to herself.

"Any wagers?" Amy asked, mostly directing the question toward Emily.

"Nope, my betting days are behind me," Emily answered with a small frown. She remembered her earlier bet with Flo regarding whether or not Beca would admit to hooking up with Chloe. And that hadn't gone over well. She was pretty sure she had offended Beca by airing her private life with Chloe.

"Well what if I told you tonight would de-top the afternoon by far?" Amy asked enthusiastically.

"Don't you mean 'top,' Fat Amy?" Aubrey asked skeptically.

"Erm, no. I mean de-top."

"Wait," CR answered, raising her hand to silence Amy while she stared off into space and mentally put together Amy's joke. After a few moments of silence, CR exclaimed, "Strip club!"

"That's right, my very-American pitches. I'm making this bachelorette party an all-American experience. Which means we're going to a strip club."

"No," Beca answered simply.

"What's that, Shawshank?" Amy pushed back, a little surprised that Beca was challenging her authority.

"No," Beca refused again. "Just no."

"Are you offended by the female form, short stuff? Because I figured you, of all people would-"

"Not offended, just no. I don't want to."

"I'm with Beca," Aubrey came to Beca's defense a second time that day. "Fat Amy?"

"Yes sir?" Amy asked back.

"We went to your sketchy sinkhole turned nightclub last night. And we went skydiving today. I think we all need a break from your daring lifestyle. Can't we just go to a normal nightclub? Like normal bachelorette parties do?"

"That sounds duller than vegemite on toast."
"What if we could get a VIP lounge section in said club?" Beca asked, hoping to sweeten the deal.

"VIP, what?" Amy asked.

"That's right," Aubrey answered, linking her arm in Beca's. "Beca, here, will get us VIP access to Las Vegas's hottest nightclub," Aubrey promised, looking over to meet Beca's gaze. She had no way of knowing if Beca could pull this off, but felt oddly inclined to promise it nonetheless.

"Right. Yeah," Beca affirmed, slightly weirded out that Aubrey had linked her arm in Beca's. Aubrey was almost acting like they were friends now. "Let me make a call. Consider it done."

VIP access to the hottest club in Vegas appeared to be enough to convince Amy not to go to a strip club. It seemed that Beca's fame had benefited Amy, yet again. Beca stepped outside to make the appropriate phone calls. As she opened the door to Amy's hotel room, she physically bumped into Chloe, who was entering.

Unbeknownst to Beca, Chloe had deliberately put a little extra effort into her appearance that night, mostly (entirely) for Beca's benefit. Chloe was wearing stiletto heels, black leather pants, and a silky, white spaghetti strap tank top. She really wanted to get Beca's attention if she was going to finally lock her down. Besides, it thrilled her to see Beca check her out.

It appeared that Chloe's outfit more than had the right effect on Beca. Chloe bit down a smile and tried her best to look unaffected while Beca ostentatiously ogled Chloe. Beca's eyes slowly raked the length of Chloe's body, finally meeting her eyes.

"Woah… You look… Um, nice… Nice outfit," Beca finished clumsily. Beca cut her eyes up to the ceiling, sighing as she wished she had sounded smoother and not like she was trying to get into Chloe's pants. Seriously, she could've said anything else and it would've sounded better.

"Thanks, Becs!" Chloe responded casually, giving Beca a quick peck on the cheek.

Beca blushed lightly as her stomach turned in knots. Her skin tingled where Chloe's lips had touched her cheek. Why was Beca suddenly nervous? It was the leather, Beca decided, as she intentionally averted her eyes from Chloe's legs. Something about it was doing a number to Beca and Beca couldn't really figure out why that was.

Chloe cleared her throat. Shit. It had been a solid five seconds and Beca hadn't said anything.

"Huh?" Beca asked automatically, snapping back to the present moment. She needed to stop thinking about Chloe in leather.

"You're standing in the doorway," Chloe observed.

"Oh. Right… Sorry," Beca said, groaning internally. This had been one of the more disastrous conversations she had been a part of as of late.

"Okay, we're gonna swap places," Chloe suggested, when it became clear that Beca wasn't moving. Chloe placed a hand on each of Beca's shoulders and spun her around so that she was now facing Amy's hotel door.

"Better!" Chloe pointed out with a beam as Chloe now stood in the threshold of the hotel door.

"You smell like vanilla," Beca blurted out, before she could stop herself. She was now realizing that this total lack of game was embarrassing. Even when considered next to her lack of game with Kommissar. This was worse. Seriously, Beca thought, she couldn't think of a time where she had
been this horrible at interacting with another human.

Chloe chuckled, leaning in and softly kissing Beca's cheek a second time. "You know, if you keep talking like that," she said, her voice half an octave lower than normal, "We're not going to even make it out the door tonight."

Beca hoped the heat she felt radiating across her body wasn't as evident as it felt. "Keep it in your leather pants… I mean, pants, damnit. I, uh, gotta go," Beca answered hurriedly, pointing to her phone. Beca had to call about getting the Bellas into a club that night. Getting away from Chloe in that moment was merely an ancillary benefit.

What had gotten into Chloe? Beca wondered as she walked alone down the hotel hallway, dialing a club manager's phone number. She was always flirtatious, sure. That was just normal Chloe behavior. It meant nothing. But it really felt like she was amping it up. And Beca was having a hard time making heads and tails of it.

Several hours later, the Bellas arrived at the club. Once they had arrived and settled at the location for the night, the Bellas immediately got to partying. The girls were settled in a roped-off VIP lounge, which had its own private bottle service and overlooked the dance floor.

"How did you do this?" Aubrey asked incredulously to Beca, referring to the glamorous VIP area in which they now found themselves situated.

"I DJ-ed here a few times," Beca answered simply, not caring to elaborate.

"You're too modest, Beca," Amy pointed out. "Aca-believe how awesome you are," she added sweetly, before taking a swig of champagne straight from the bottle.

As the night continued, the girls were all having the time of their lives. The DJ was playing a stellar selection of pop hits. The girls were singing, dancing, and drinking happily as they moved between their VIP lounge and the dance floor.

Beca, who had just finished talking to the club manager and thanking him for getting Beca and the girls into the club without any prior notice, locked eyes with Chloe. Chloe looked… well, she always looked good. But her tight leather pants and her top with its plunging neckline hit Beca hard. The outfit, combined with her four-inch stiletto heels, perfectly showed off the redhead's toned legs. Beca swallowed. She could deny until the sun rose that she wasn't checking her best friend out, but it simply wasn't true. Beca was beginning to realize that ogling Chloe was a thing she did. Chloe, it seemed, noticed too.

Once Beca was done speaking with the club manager, Chloe sauntered over to where Beca was standing.

"Like what you see, Becs?" Chloe dropped her voice half an octave as she asked with a wink.

"Wha- uh," Beca trailed off, stammering as she turned red with embarrassment.

"It's nothing to be ashamed of," Chloe goaded innocently, "If you find me attractive."

Beca swallowed hard. She was suddenly finding it rather difficult to breathe. "I... what?"

Chloe grabbed each of Beca's hands, placing them around Chloe's waist. Instinctively, Beca ran her hands down the sides of Chloe's thighs, feeling her toned legs beneath the smooth leather. "God," Beca thought to herself, "Dealing with Chloe tonight is going to be the end of me."
Chloe purposely closed the gap between her and Beca, wrapping her hands around Beca's waist. If Beca was having trouble breathing before, she was now facing a full-on heart attack, as Beca's hands were essentially grabbing Chloe's ass. "Mmm, that feels really good," Chloe whispered in a husky voice.

Beca's mind was spinning into a panic. She was grabbing Chloe's ass. And Chloe said she liked it? What was happening? And why, Beca wondered, was she suddenly interested in kissing Chloe? Beca forced herself not to look at Chloe's lips. Whatever kicks and giggles Chloe was getting from this interaction was just that. Meaningless fun. It had always been silly fun and games with Chloe in the past.

Chloe leaned into Beca's ear and whispered, "Wanna get out of here?"

Chloe began tracing the outline of Beca's ear with her nose, pausing over her ear-spike monstrosity, before slowly finishing the outline of Beca's ear with the tip of her nose. She felt Beca's breath hitch. Chloe pulled her nose back from Beca and shot another wink toward the smaller girl.

Beca's mouth hung open like a flytrap as she stared at Chloe, standing in front of Beca with a seductive smirk on her face. Beca's stomach was turning and a warm, jelly-like sensation spread across her entire body, from the tips of her fingers to the tips of her toes. Her ear burned pleasantly from where Chloe's nose had just grazed her skin.

Jessica interrupted the moment by coming up to the girls and asking Chloe, "Is Beca okay?"

"I need..." Beca started, her throat as dry as the desert, "A drink."

Beca promptly turned around and bee-lined for the bar. Jessica and Chloe each shrugged and sought off in direction of the dance floor. Chloe figured it would take several tries to finally wear Beca down. Beca, on the other hand, was trying to make any amount of sense over what had just occurred. Why was it, all of a sudden, that the only thing Beca could think about was running her hands across every square inch of Chloe's body? Something was different about tonight. And in a dumb attempt to avoid addressing her feelings, Beca planned to keep drinking.

"How's it going?" Stacie asked Chloe as the two girls found themselves on the dance floor.

"Well, I came on to her and she went to get a drink, so... That's where we are so far," Chloe nodded lightly.

"Hm," Stacie began, "If Beca keeps up this charade of getting a drink each time you get inside her head, she's going to be on the floor in ten minutes flat," Stacie observed.

"You might be right," Chloe said with a small smile. "Hopefully she'll come around."

"Oh she will," Stacie answered in a matter-of-fact tone. "She's been undressing you with her eyes all night. Not that I can blame her. Those leather pants, Chlo? Hotter than hell. Trust me, she's so close to giving it up."

A while later, Beca, Chloe, and a handful of other Bellas all found themselves on the dance floor together. Amy was teaching Beca a new dance move called the crocodile, and it was positively cracking Beca up. Nothing warmed Chloe's heart than the sight of Beca laughing.

"Yeah, this is different than mermaid dancing. Not as much floor work. See what you do, is stagger forward like this," Amy instructed, stomping forward with her left foot, then her right.

"Then, you snap the mouth a few times," Amy continued, using her hands and arms to imitate a
crocodile mouth. "Then you stagger again with your right foot, left foot, then right again."

Amy did the whole dance routine while Beca imitated, laughing hysterically. Pretty soon, the other Bellas had joined in as well, all dancing and laughing like weirdoes. As the song ended, a happy, yet exhausted Chloe excused herself from the dance floor to grab a breather. She needed a tiny bit of headspace to figure out what her next move was going to be with Beca.

Before she could reach the counter, she was stopped by a tall, slim girl with a black pixie cut. She was kind of hot, Chloe mused, in the same 'alt' way that had initially drawn Chloe to Beca. They both had that stoic, 'I don't care that I'm a loner and no one understands me' sort of vibe working.

"Hey, could I buy you a drink?" The girl asked.

"I don't usually take drinks from strangers," Chloe answered.

"Well how bout this? My name's Charlie. And you are?"

"Chloe," Chloe responded, shaking the girl's hand. "I guess we aren't strangers anymore."

"What are you having?" Charlie asked.

"Gin and tonic," Chloe answered, offering Charlie an appreciative, tight-lipped smile.

Charlie ordered the drink and began chatting up Chloe. In another world, Chloe imagined she could actually hit it off quite nicely with this girl. But as of late, Chloe really only had eyes for one other someone. And that one other someone was more than bothered by this whole interaction.

It didn't take Beca very long at all to notice Chloe with the female pixie cut. Had Beca been sober, she may have left Chloe to it. At the very least, she would have responded more calmly and rationally. Several alcoholic beverages changed Beca's planned response considerably. Within a few seconds, Beca acquiesced to jealousy and saddled up beside Chloe. Beca wrapped an arm protectively around Chloe's waist.

"Hey," Charlie said, recognizing Beca, "You're Reggie Mitch."

Beca raised her eyebrows in response, as if nonverbally saying 'fuck off.'

"Your music is way awesome. People call you the Nickelback of dance music," Charlie continued.

This comment really struck a chord with Beca. Was this chick trying to be a douchebag? Beca figured this girl was being sarcastic with her compliment, but wasn't one hundred percent certain. Instead of taking the high road, Beca impulsively hit back with an even larger insult.

"Do people call you the Nickelback of emo-punk haircuts?" Beca asked innocently, widening her eyes.

Chloe's mouth dropped open.

"At least I have a sense of style," Charlie shot back. All pretenses of innocence were gone. This exchange was beyond passive aggressive.

"Cool boots. Did you steal those from Alice Cooper?" Beca asked dryly.

Chloe's mouth still hung open, as she brought a hand up to cover her mouth. What was happening? Beca was never this mean.
"Are you fucking kidding me? That jacket looks faker than your talent."

"At least I didn't buy my outfit at Hot Topic in 2004," Beca fired back, bearing her teeth down into a grimacing smile.

Chloe couldn't tell if Beca was hating this exchange or loving it. Sure, Beca was metaphorically tearing into this other girl, but something about Beca's evil grin indicated she was enjoying it. Every moment of it. And what was weirder, was Chloe kind of liked that Beca was getting such a kick out of verbally outwitting this girl.

"Look, you've got a lot of nerve coming up to me and swooping in on my girl," Charlie began.

"Yeah, dude, she's not your girl."

"Oh, so she's yours? Because it sure doesn't look that way to me," Charlie pointed out.

"Alright, let's pretend we live in this century for one moment and consider that maybe Chloe is her own person and not anyone's property? Seriously, did you materialize from 'Little House on the Prairie'? What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"Okay, if you've got a problem with me, why don't you just grow a pair and say so?"

"Okay then, I have a problem with you," Beca said matter-of-factly.

The other girl glared daggers back at Beca, whose steely gaze didn't waiver for a second. This verbal altercation was getting more than a little attention at this point, as several bystanders began pulling out their phone to take pictures of Reggie Mitch's spat.

Before the disagreement could escalate any further, Flo stepped in to break things up. "Alright, alright, alright, chicas. Let's all take a deep breath and a step back."

Charlie didn't move, her eyes staying spitefully locked on Beca's. Beca didn't back down either. Luckily, Flo didn't need to get more involved because a bouncer suddenly appeared by Beca's side.

"Reggie, is this girl bothering you?" The bouncer asked.

"Yes," Beca answered simply, keeping her gaze directed on Charlie. Without another word, the bouncer whisked a protesting Charlie out of the club. Beca swallowed, now fully realizing that she had just pulled a total diva move by having this chick booted from the club. Beca never used her celebrity status for her own gain. That wasn't who she was. Further, she wasn't the type of person to ever pick a fight. Ever. What was this?

Once the two girls were long separated, Flo turned on Beca, while Chloe silently watched with a bemused expression on her face.

"Beca, what the hell was that?" Flo began. "You don't pick fights. I don't know what has gotten into you. And this is coming from a girl who has been in an actual fight club."

Beca sighed. She, herself, couldn't explain what had just come over her. Although Beca was the queen of sarcastic wit, she was not a confrontational person. This behavior was certainly a first. "Sorry," Beca apologized sincerely. "I don't know what got into me either."

Flo softened. "Are you okay?" She asked.

"I'm fine. I'll behave, I promise."
Okay,” Flo said lightly, patting Beca’s arm before disappearing back into the crowd.

Once Flo had disappeared, Chloe mused aloud to Beca. "Green is a good color on you."

"Oh my God, don't start," Beca begged.

"What? You're too proud to admit you got a little jealous back there?" Chloe asked playfully.

Beca glared at Chloe, which further egged her on. "Give it up, Becs. You were definitely feeling a little possessive."

"You're a free woman, like I said," Beca insisted. "I wasn't possessive."

"Hm," Chloe hummed. "It sure seemed that way to me."


"You and I both know that's not true. You pretend to hate people, but you don't. And you certainly never act like that."

"Can you please, for the love of God, let this go?"

"Only when you admit it."

"I'm not doing anything of the sort," Beca shot back resolutely. "There's nothing to admit."

"Well then," Chloe hummed airily and with a shrug of her shoulders, "I'll take that to mean you want to keep talking about it."

"I really don't. C'mon, Chlo-"

"You know," Chloe interrupted Beca with a wink, "That girl who was hitting on me earlier meant nothing, right?"

Beca exhaled through her teeth as she took a gulp of her drink. "You're impossible."

"You're stubborn," Chloe responded automatically.

"I'm fine with that."

"Fine?" Chloe asked.

"Fine." Beca affirmed.

"Fine," Chloe answered, shrugging her shoulders.

"Fine," Beca spat back, half playfully, half defensively.

"Fine," Chloe responded aloofly as her eyes fluttered around the club.

"Why is it really so important that you have the last word?"

"Maybe it's just that I want to have the last everything with you, Becs," Chloe said, walking her fingers along Beca's bicep.

"What… does that even mean?" Beca asked, her eyes searching Chloe's eyes for any indication as
"Whatever you want it to mean," Chloe responded as she cut her eyes up to meet Beca's nervous gaze. It didn't escape Chloe's attention that Beca swallowed nervously as she momentarily let her gaze fall to Chloe's lips.

"Uh huh," Beca answered distractedly as she forced herself to tear her eyes away from Chloe's soft, pink lips.

Chloe leaned heavily into Beca's ear, so close that her chest touched Beca. Beca instinctively reached out and steadied her hands on Chloe's hips. Chloe whispered, "And just so you know, I think it's a total turn-on when you get jealous."

"Jesus," Beca muttered, her eyes fluttering shut. Pulling back from Beca, Chloe winked. Suddenly, Beca felt funny. She noticed a fluttering in her lower stomach as her cheeks grew pink. For some reason, Beca was having a really tough time with Chloe's harmless flirtation today. It was driving her... crazy.

"I'm gonna get a drink," Beca answered, effectively ending the conversation. Beca ordered another whiskey coke, suddenly realizing how inebriated she was becoming. She decided she needed to sit down for a bit, so made her way to the VIP lounge and took a seat next to Lily and Ashley.

"You doing okay there?" Ashley asked.

"Just need a breather," Beca answered as she sunk into her chair. Ashley and Beca chatted, with occasional strange interjection from Lily, for the next twenty minutes.

Meanwhile, the other girls were still living it up on the dance floor.

"Hey!" Emily yelled to the other Bellas above the roar of the crowd. "I requested a song!"

Sure enough, the next song the DJ played was "Jump" by Kris Kross.

"Remember this song from that Riff Off we all did a few years ago?" Emily asked excitedly.

"Legacy, this was a DSM song!" Amy shouted back. "For someone so adorable, you are also quite dim sometimes!"

"Right, but the song was really good!" Emily responded. "Beca even used it in a mix she gave me for graduation!"

"Well of course Beca would do that," Amy retorted. "She was practically begging that German lady to be the bratwurst to her hoagie!"

Chloe frowned. She wasn't proud to admit this, but the woman from DSM made Chloe feel jealous. Meanwhile, both Flo and Emily's faces contorted into looks of disgust.

"She's a chick, so... she's not bringing sausage to anyone's party," CR responded drunkenly.

"All this sausage talk is making me hungry," Amy responded. "If you'll excuse me, my sexy ass is gonna go shake up some of those banana trees," she said, referencing a group of hunky young men who were dancing nearby.

Chloe took this opportunity to make her way up to the VIP lounge. In particular, she was interested in finding Beca.
Beca's eyes scanned Chloe, who was cutting in and out of focus by this point. "Chlo, I'm sorry," Beca admitted nonsensically to Chloe, running her hand from her forehead into her hair.

Chloe took both of Beca's hands. "What are you talking about? Why are you sorry?"

"I was such a… what is it… I don't know, I just shouldn't have pulled a move like that earlier with that girl… with the haircut like Billie Joe Armstrong. You know… dude from Green Day," Beca slurred.

"Hey, it's okay," Chloe said, hugging Beca around the neck and putting a sloppy kiss on Beca's forehead. "Whoops, I think I got some lipstick on your forehead," Chloe pointed out.

"Sss-okay," Beca said, waving it off. "Come… sit," Beca invited, not quite feeling like getting up to go dance again just yet.

"Alright, Becs, if you insist," Chloe said, sitting down in Beca's lap. Although Beca hadn't intended for Chloe to sit in her lap, Beca couldn't pretend as though she minded. Beca wrapped her arms around Chloe's waist and leaned her head heavily onto Chloe's shoulder. Chloe began lightly swaying her hips in rhythm to the music pounding through the club.

Beca's heart rate picked up as Chloe began grinding herself into Beca. Beca bit her lip. This wasn't supposed to feel this good, was it? Chloe was her friend. But why was it, Beca wondered, that every cell of her body felt like it was on fire? Beca braced herself against the chair to keep her hands from wandering and exploring Chloe's body.

"How's that, Becs?" Chloe whispered, leaning back as she swiveled her hips slowly into Beca again. God, it felt… amazing. Chloe was applying the exact amount of pressure that both satisfied Beca and left her wanting for more. Beca was feeling a little short of breath.

Chloe smiled and grinded herself into Beca's lap a third time. A soft moan escaped Beca's lips before she could stop herself. Embarrassed, Beca sputtered out before Chloe could get a word in edgewise, "I'm gonna get a drink." A flustered Beca stood up, forcing Chloe off her lap.

As Beca was at the bar, ordering her seventh drink of the evening, Emily came up beside her. "Wanna drink?" Beca asked. Emily nodded. Beca flagged the bartender down and doubled her order.

"Hey, Beca?" Emily asked.

"Whassup?" Beca asked, her eyes cutting slightly out of focus.

"I wanted to apologize," Emily said. When she was met by Beca's blank stare, Emily continued, "About earlier today. When I bet Flo that you wouldn't admit to having hooked up with Chloe. That was kind of a dick move on my part and I'm sorry. I just got so caught up in gambling and… well, now I'm rambling. I am sorry though."

"Dude," Beca responded, "Two things," Beca continued, holding out two fingers on her hand. "First. Don't get a gambling problem. Take it from CR, that's not a thing you want. Capisce?"

Emily nodded as she took a sip from her drink.

"Second," Beca continued, "You don't have to apologize to me. You're like a sister to me, so I promise I'll love you no matter what. And third-"
"I thought you said there were two things," Emily corrected.

"Well look who's the mathematician tonight."

"If by mathematician, you mean that I can count to three... the same way any toddler can do. Sure," Emily continued, "Let's say that."

Beca laughed. "You're right... I'm too joke to tell a good drunk... Or something. But where was I?"

"You said 'third'?"

"Oh, right. Third," Beca finished, "Chloe and I aren't hooking up."

Emily rolled her eyes. Maybe it was the fact that she was several drinks in herself, but she found the courage to challenge Beca's most previous statement. "Beca, I get that you didn't want to tell everyone else," she said with a wave of her hand, "But I'm like your sister, remember? You can't lie to me."

"I'm not lying," Beca insisted.

"Uh-huh. So why was Chloe screaming your name this morning in the shower?"

Beca's mouth dropped open and her face turned red. Emily figured she had busted Beca.

"That's right, Beca, you are so busted. Aubrey gave me her room key and I ran into their hotel room to borrow Aubrey's hair straightener. And when I walked in... well... you and Chloe must have been, you know..." Emily wagged her eyebrows suggestively, "Getting it onnnn," Emily finished in a sing-songy voice.

Beca continued standing and listening in stunned silence as her mind slowly put the pieces of the puzzle together. "Nice, song choice, by the way," Emily continued, when it was clear that Beca wasn't going to speak up. "I love 'Titanium.'"

Beca set her drink down on top of the bar with a thud. Most of the drink's contents spilled out, but Beca found herself not caring. She suddenly felt more sober than she had in hours. She couldn't explain what she was feeling right now. Her entire insides were buzzing with nervous energy. She felt as though she might pass out. Her heart skipped several beats as desire flooded every square inch of her body. And most incredibly of all, she liked it. Every bit of this feeling.

"Em," Beca began shakily, "Titanium is Chloe's lady jam. Do you know what that means?"

Emily shook her head. "It means," Beca continued, "That she gets off to that song... alone."

Emily raised her eyebrows at Beca. "I wasn't with her this morning. Whatever was happening in Chloe's shower was a solo act."

"Oh no," Emily said, covering her hand with her mouth. She had just inadvertently spilled Chloe's beans and she couldn't have felt guiltier if she tried. "Oh no. I- I..."

"Dude, look," Beca interjected, patting Emily's arm. "Don't feel bad. I, um... look. Don't feel bad, okay? I just, um, have somewhere I need to be."

Beca left a clueless Emily at the bar and set off in search of Chloe. Beca finally found Chloe engrossed in conversation with CR.

"Beale, I need you," Beca half-asked, half-demanded, as she took Chloe's hand, tore her away from
her conversation with CR, and led them to a secluded corner near the edge of the dance floor. Chloe smiled, allowing herself to be led by a forceful Beca across the club.

The dance floor was filled to the brim with people as Beca and Chloe walked across the club. Amy was now dancing with seven guys at once, each guy hotter than the next. Stacie and Flo were dancing happily together, laughing and creating their own dance routine to each of the songs.

"What's up, Becs?" Chloe asked, her stomach fluttering with nervous energy.

Beca's face darkened. Chloe squinted. The only word Chloe could use to describe Beca was… predatory. Painstakingly slowly, Beca's gaze raked the length of Chloe's body, stopping when she reached her eyes. Beca paused for a moment, as if she were truly considering Chloe. Considering what to say. What to do. Chloe shifted uncomfortably on her feet. Beca's intense gaze was making her feel all sorts of things.

"Becs?" Chloe repeated.

"Hmm?" Beca hummed, her lips curling into a smirk.

"That was a little forceful, no?" Chloe asked.

"Did that bother you?" Beca asked, baring her teeth.

"Well… no," Chloe answered. Chloe couldn't deny that she loved this side of Beca. She loved when Beca took charge, when she challenged Chloe, when she acted cocky and reckless.

"I didn't think it would," Beca shot back, taking a step closer to Chloe.

Chloe could hardly control the raging feelings boiling inside of her. She was truly on the verge of jumping Beca. "What's gotten into you, Becs?" Chloe asked in a raspy voice.

Beca took another step closer to Chloe so they were now standing nose to nose. "You."

Chloe's eyes widened. Had Beca just said what she thought she had said? She could hardly believe her own ears. Acting on pure instinct, Chloe wrapped her arms around Beca's waist, pulling the brunette even closer to her, if that was possible. "Bad Things" by Machine Gun Kelly began playing.

"Am I out of my head? Am I out of my mind? If you only knew the bad things I like Don't think that I can explain it What can I say, it's complicated-

Her eyes hazy with lust, Chloe let her gaze wander down to Beca's lips, which were still curled into a smirk. A smirk Chloe had the irresistible urge to kiss. "Hmm," Chloe hummed, savoring the moment.

Chloe noticed that Beca was still here and hadn't excused herself to go get another drink. Little did Chloe know, Beca's knowledge of Chloe's shower adventure had just changed the way this evening would unfold. Until Emily's slip up, Beca hadn't considered that Chloe's meaningless flirtations perhaps weren't as meaningless as they seemed.

"Are you gonna do it or not, Chlo?" Beca challenged.
Chloe's stomach swirled around excitedly. Beca was asking for this to happen. And Chloe wasn't going to deny Beca.

"And we're both wild
And the night's young
And you're my drug
Breathe you in 'til my face numb
Drop it down to that bass drum
I got what you dream 'bout
Nails scratchin' my back tatt
Eyes closed while you scream out
And you keep me in with those hips
While my teeth sink in those lips-"

Their pupils were dilated as both looked like they were overcome with need for the other. Chloe's blue eyes jumped from Beca's gaze down to her lips, before gazing up at her lust-filled grey eyes a final time. Beca wasn't wavering. Chloe dropped her eyes back to Beca's lips a second time and slowly leaned in, pressing their lips together.

Beca tightened her hold around Chloe as her own lips moved in sync with Chloe's. The feel of Beca's lips brushing against her own was indescribably perfect. God, it was even more incredible than it had been in her dream. Beca's kisses were urgent and forceful, yet just restrained enough to keep Chloe leaning in for more. She couldn't stop herself. Beca was the best kind of addiction. Chloe couldn't believe what she had been missing out on all this time.

"Don't matter what you say
Don't matter what you do
I only wanna do bad things to you
So good, that you can't explain it
What can I say, it's complicated-"

Beca momentarily pulled her lips away from Chloe's. Chloe immediately missed the contact. Every moment not attached to Beca's lips suddenly felt wasted.

"Chlo, you're so hot," Beca whispered into Chloe's ear as her hands began exploring Chloe's body. Chloe's bit down on her lip, hardly able to believe what she was hearing. Why was it that she had never done this with Beca before? It was amazing. It was perfect. It was right.

As Beca's hands ran down Chloe's back and down the sides of her legs, Beca grazed her teeth slowly along the edge of Chloe's ear. Chloe shuddered, suddenly even more overcome by desire as she felt Beca's mouth on her ear. Every single part of her body was buzzing with deep, intense need. Nothing had ever felt better in her entire life. She leaned heavily into Beca as Beca continued moving her hands along Chloe's body.

"And you said
I want you forever
Even when we're not together
Scars on my body so I can take you wherever like,
I want you forever
Even when we're not together
Scars on my body I can look at you whenever-"

Beca was now kissing Chloe's neck and Chloe had reached her tipping point. Chloe used her pointer finger to draw Beca's chin back up to Chloe's face. As much as she loved everything Beca
was doing, she needed to have Beca's mouth on her own right at that moment. Chloe and Beca stood on the dance floor, slowly and passionately exploring one another's mouths for the better part of a minute. Every kiss built them up further and further. Although they were taking their time, the urgency was there.

Chloe clawed her nails slowly down Beca's back. Beca moaned into Chloe's mouth. Chloe pressed herself into Beca further, needing to feel more of Beca against her. She wanted to feel this moment forever, but it was quickly becoming apparent that Chloe needed more. She badly needed Beca to give her something else—something that Beca couldn't give her in the middle of a nightclub.

"Am I out of my head?
Am I out of my mind?
If you only knew the bad things I like
Don't think that I can explain it
What can I say, it's complicated
Don't matter what you say
Don't matter what you do
I only wanna do bad things to you
So good, that you can't explain it
What can I say, it's complicated."

Beca pulled back and the girls broke apart, each panting as their heads swirled with an excess of hormones. The song finished. Beca pulled away and looked Chloe squarely in the eyes, whispering, "I want to take you home."

Chapter End Notes

We've finally made it! I'm having a fiesta in my mind right now. For real, I'm really amped about this and I hope y'all are too!
Chapter Summary

NOTE- if you're not into reading about sexy times, skip over this chapter. We're dealing with some graphic sex right now!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER 13 (May 26-27, 2018)

Beca and Chloe's lips hardly broke apart long enough for them to leave the club. Something about the feel of Chloe's lips on her own was irresistible. Beca couldn't quit kissing Chloe if she tried. Her soft lips, the feel of her toned body on Beca's fingertips, her vanilla-y smell, all of it. It was pushing Beca further and further into mindless insanity.

"I want you so bad," Chloe said in a husky tone, once Beca and Chloe were standing outside the club, still wrapped in one another's arms. Chloe needed to get Beca back to the hotel, and she needed it fast.

"God, Chlo," Beca practically moaned as Chloe began lightly running her nose up the length of Beca's neck until she felt Beca's breath hitch.

Chloe smiled. "Did I find your spot?"

Beca nodded as Chloe placed a small kiss on Beca's pulse point. Beca inhaled sharply. Chloe kissed again, a little harder this time. Meeting no resistance, she continued, this time biting down on Beca's neck. Chloe used her tongue to smooth over where she had bitten. Beca continued arching her neck toward Chloe as Chloe bit down again, sucking. Finishing her handiwork on Beca's neck, Chloe stole a glance up at Beca's face. Beca's eyelashes fluttered as she stood in place, seemingly unable to move.

As if she were forgetting that they were standing on a sidewalk outside of a nightclub, Beca caught Chloe's lips in her own and pushed forward, forcing Chloe to take several steps backward. The singular thought on Beca's mind was getting as much of Chloe and in as close proximity as was possible. Beca pinned Chloe against a random car and began returning the favor Chloe had so generously bestowed upon her, just moments before.

Beca, who wasn't thinking at all, but rather, acting on pure instinct, bent her head and planted a series of kisses along Chloe's neckline, waiting until she found the right spot. A small gasp finally indicated to Beca that she had found Chloe's pulse point. Chloe arched her neck, giving Beca better access as Beca bit down hard.

"Becs," Chloe moaned softly. Beca smiled as she bit down a little harder, sucking down where she had bitten. Chloe panted as her eyes rolled back in her head. Oh, my God the feel of Beca biting down on her was too much. Beca continued biting and sucking until she was satisfied that she had left a mark. Bringing her gaze back up to Chloe's, she placed a hand on Chloe's cheek and pulled her in for another kiss, this time involving tongue.
Chloe couldn't take it much longer. Beca's hands were running down the length of Chloe's torso, teasing her. There were other places Chloe needed those hands and God, it was becoming urgent.

Still pinned between Beca and the car, Chloe felt Beca's hand lift Chloe's leg up to wrap it around Beca's body. Chloe let Beca hands wander freely. The combination of alcohol and pure desire led Chloe not to care about anything that didn't involve Beca. Chloe pulled Beca by the back of her neck, forcing their lips together. Beca moaned into the kiss. This was seriously hot.

Before things could continue escalating, a sound of a car alarm jolted the girls apart.

"Jesus fuck!" Beca exclaimed, jumping back from the car and clutching her chest. She felt like she was about to have a heart attack. Although Chloe didn't use the same colorful language as Beca, she felt just as startled. The car upon which Beca and Chloe had just been making out had just started blaring.

Chloe and Beca simultaneously came to their senses as Beca led Chloe by the hand away from the car. As Chloe straightened her top, she noticed that they had attracted more than a little attention. Cameras were snapping around the area in which they stood. Unpredictably, Beca was less than happy about any of this.

"Okay, we gotta get out of here," Beca said, scanning the road for a cab, Uber, or Lyft as people continued snapping photos, yelling out for Reggie Mitch's attention.

"There," Chloe spotted about fifteen yards away. A Lyft was parked along the side of the road.

Beca turned to see the car to which Chloe was pointing and without a word, quickly led them away from the blaring car horn.

Beca opened the door to the Lyft. "Hey," she began hurriedly to the driver, "I need you to take us to-"

"Are you Brian?" The man in the front seat of the car asked.

"No, I'm... doesn't matter. I need you to take us back to our hotel."

"I'm sorry, but if you're not Brian, I can't take you anywhere. Company rules."

Beca rolled her eyes as she gleamed with fury. She pulled a wad of cash out of her back pocket and thrust it at the driver. "Fine. How about this? Here's seven hundred dollars. Can you just pretend I'm Brian?"

The driver smiled. "Welcome aboard, Brian."

Beca helped Chloe into the car. Once they were seated and the car was headed back to their hotel, Chloe turned and met Beca's eyes. Her hard gaze softened. Chloe smiled at the effect she had on the brunette.

"Now where were we?" Chloe mused, slowly leaning in to meet Beca's lips.

The door to Chloe's hotel room had barely closed before Beca had Chloe slammed against it. One of Beca's hands was splayed against the door while the other grabbed Chloe's right hip and held her pinned against the wall. Beca cut her eyes up to Chloe's face, waiting an instant to make eye contact, before fervently capturing Chloe's mouth on her own. Chloe kissed Beca back intensely, running her tongue across Beca's bottom lip, seeking entrance. Beca responded, deepening the kiss by opening her mouth and caressing Chloe's tongue with her own.
Chloe swallowed a moan, which was threatening to erupt. She snaked one of her hands into Beca's hair, while the other hand found one of Beca's belt loops. Hooking a finger around the belt loop she yanked Beca even closer.

Beca moaned at the additional contact, as Beca was now fully pressed against Chloe. As they continued kissing, Beca did not relent and give Chloe any more space. They continued exploring one another's mouths hungrily as Beca started lightly running her fingers up the side of Chloe's body. Chloe's breath hitched at how insanely good Beca's fingers felt on her skin. Beca's hand continued traveling upward, pausing for a beat before firmly grabbing Chloe's boob. Chloe gasped, involuntarily jutting her chest outward towards Beca's hand. Chloe's motion caused the kiss to break and for a moment, each girl was left panting as they stared at the other. The pupils of Beca's steely eyes were dilated from pure desire. That look alone, Chloe thought, could cause her to become undone.

Not more than a second passed before Chloe's craving for Beca became too intense and she pressed her lips into Beca's once again. Chloe pushed herself away from the door, backing Beca into the hotel room, their lips still locked on one another's. She guided Beca backwards onto the bed. With a push, Beca fell back onto the bed with a light thud. Beca didn't have time to process what was occurring before Chloe was climbing on top of her, straddling her.

"Fuck, Chlo," Beca panted as she pushed her exploring hands up Chloe's thighs and around to Chloe's ass. Beca felt like she could hardly breathe from the pure rush of adrenaline coursing through her veins. "I'm gonna lose it," Beca breathed.

Chloe smirked, very slowly lowering herself down on top of Beca. Beca groaned, suddenly needing, more, all of Chloe right then and there. "Oh, Becs. I've just begun what I have in mind for you."

Beca bit her bottom lip hard, pulling Chloe down forcefully on top of her. Chloe smiled at Beca's impatience, more than satisfied over the effect she was having on the smaller girl. Chloe ghosted her lips over Beca's neck. Beca craned her neck upwards, wordlessly begging for contact. Relenting, Chloe ran her tongue over Beca's pulse point. Once her actions were met with an approving moan, Chloe bit down, eliciting an even more guttural moan. Chloe continued the action, biting down and then licking, swirling her tongue over Beca's pulse point to soothe the pain from the bites.

Beca's hands deftly began pulling off Chloe's top. Chloe, whose body had been flush atop Beca's, forced herself up and off the bed. She finished the job Beca had started as she pulled her shirt over her head. Slowly, she pulled off her leather pants until all that remained was Chloe's black lingerie set.

Beca, still lying on her back, propped herself up on her elbows, ogling over the sight of the other girl. She looked drop-dead sexy. Beca's mouth hung open as her eyes slowly scanned from Chloe's feet all the way up to her breasts, which were covered in lacy black material. Finally, Beca's gaze settled on Chloe's eyes. She couldn't believe this was happening. That Chloe was here. With her. Wearing that.

"You look... Come here," Beca commanded. Chloe felt on the bridge of collapse herself as she obeyed Beca's words and crawled back onto the bed and on top of Beca. As Chloe's torso laid flush atop Beca's, the two continued kissing one another, each of their hands exploring the other's body. Several minutes passed before Beca began pushing Beca's shirt up.

"I need you... to be wearing less," Chloe said, between fervent kisses. Beca's lower abdomen swirled excitedly at Chloe's request.
Beca broke her lips away from the redhead to force her shirt over her head. While Beca was working on her shirt, Chloe was working on Beca's pants, forcefully unzipping them and removing them. Soon, each Beca and Chloe were only clad in underwear. Chloe took things a step further by removing Beca's bra.

"You're so beautiful," Chloe mused softly as her hands found the other girl's breasts.

As her hands worked massaging Beca's boobs, Chloe placed one leg between Beca's and lowered her lips to ghost over Beca's. Unable to resist the craving urge, Chloe leaned down and made contact with Beca's lips. Beca's mouth on her own was doing nothing towards helping Chloe avoid coming undone right then and there. Chloe pulled her lips away from Beca's, just hovering out of reach.

"Tell me what you want, Becs." Chloe's voice had dropped an octave and her husky command was having a wild effect on the other girl.

Beca squirmed, itching to make contact with the leg Chloe had positioned underneath Beca's core. "I want…" Beca panted, "You… Your mouth… I want it everywhere."

Chloe winked. Beca's insides turned further into jelly. "That," Chloe began in a whisper as she placed a chaste kiss on Beca's lips, "I can do."

Chloe leaned back down on top of Beca and continued kissing her, their tongues swirling around each other's as Chloe's body worked against Beca's. Chloe pushed her right knee further into Beca's core, giving the other girl the friction her body so needed. Chloe's actions were met with a satisfied moan. Chloe repeated the action again, and again, and again as she felt Beca arching her body into the Chloe's thigh. As Beca was riding Chloe's leg, she felt so close. Beca's breathing became short and labored. Suddenly, right before Beca could get release, Chloe stopped.

"What the fuck-" Beca began in a frustrated tone, but was silenced when Chloe placed a finger over Beca's lips.

"You said you wanted my mouth everywhere, didn't you?"

Beca nodded, surprised she was able to make any kind of response to Chloe at this point. Beca had never felt a stronger desire for anyone in her entire life. Her desire was so strong that her body physically hurt. Beca craved Chloe's touch more than air itself. Nothing else mattered.

Placing one last deliciously passionate kiss on Beca's mouth, Chloe began placing a trail of kisses down the length of Beca's body. She kissed Beca's neck, even over the areas where Chloe had given Beca hickeys. She kissed Beca's collarbone and down to her breasts. Taking a nipple in her mouth, Chloe ran her tongue around it, softly biting down and sucking. Beca arched her body and moaned.

"Chloe…" Beca trailed off, her eyes rolling into the back of her head. "I'm so close," Beca exhaled.

Chloe smiled as she repeated the action with the other breast. Beca moaned loudly. Continuing on, Chloe placed kisses down Beca's stomach and on her hipbone. As long last, Beca thought, Chloe was about to do the one thing Beca wanted the most. Sitting up, Chloe placed her thumbs in the waistband of Beca's underpants. She slowly pulled down, deliberately savoring each moment.

With Beca's underwear removed, Chloe took a moment to marvel at the sight before her. Chloe had, of course, seen Beca naked before, but not like this. Here Beca was, naked on Chloe's bed, panting as her eyes filled with desire. For Chloe. Chloe swallowed hard. Beca had never looked
more attractive to Chloe than in this moment. She began working her way back up Beca's body, placing a trail of kisses up Beca's right leg, while her hand slowly trailed up Beca's left leg.

Eventually, Chloe was forced to stop as her lips reached the top of Beca's right thigh. Chloe didn't raise her head but raised her eyes to capture one last look at Beca's face. Beca's head was tipped back in desire, her mouth hanging slightly open, her eyes glazed over. Chloe grinned as she softly swiped her tongue up the length of Beca's folds.

Beca moaned loudly, "Jesus, Chlo!"

Chloe never would've figured that Beca would be so... well, so vocal in the bedroom. It drove Chloe positively wild. Chloe placed a hand on each of Beca's thighs, holding the girl in place. She repeated the action with her tongue, tasting the sweet desire coming from inside Beca. Again and again, Chloe licked, moving her tongue up and down, swirling her tongue around and sucking the bundle of nerves at Beca's clit. Beca began bucking her hips up towards Chloe's mouth, wordlessly begging her to continue. Chloe acquiesced, continuing to lick and suck around Beca's core.


"Oh my God. Fuck. Don't stop," Beca begged, using a hand to hold Chloe's head in place. Again, Beca's breathing became shallow and ragged as she fervently bucked her hips up towards Chloe's mouth.

"Come for me, Becs," Chloe commanded in a raspy voice, before her mouth went back to work on Beca.

That command appeared to be all that was needed before Beca loudly orgasmed, screaming profanities loudly as she came undone around Chloe. Chloe herself, nearly lost control in her own rage of hormones after seeing Beca buckle under Chloe like that. Chloe continued her oral handiwork as Beca came down, not stopping until she felt Beca fully relax beneath her.

Smiling, Chloe crawled back up to meet Beca's face, her eyes searching Beca's eyes for non-verbal acceptance. Beca's eyes gleamed with quiet joy as she kissed Chloe, tasting herself on the other girl's lips.

"That was some colorful language, Becs," Chloe observed. "I'm sure the entire hall got a nice vocab lesson," she added with a wink.

"Let's see if we can give them another one, huh?" Beca asked, flipping Chloe on her back and climbing on top of her in one fluid motion.

Beca's mouth found Chloe's easily as the two girls continued kissing one another passionately. Beca bit down on Chloe's bottom lip hard. Chloe's breath hitched. "That didn't hurt, did it?" Beca asked.

Chloe shook her head no. "Good," Beca breathed, repeating the action.

Beca's hands slid down Chloe's body, feeling her hips, boobs, everywhere. Beca began kissing Chloe's cheek, then neck, forcing her head upward. Beca lightly grazed her teeth along Chloe's collarbone. Chloe shuddered. Beca surprised even herself with how aggressive she was being with Chloe. Chloe didn't seem to mind, however, as her body writhed impatiently underneath the smaller girl's.
Beca sat up. Chloe's mouth was hanging open as she gasped, missing the contact with Beca. "Becs, please don't stop." Chloe begged.

"I won't. Just, sit up for a sec," Beca ordered. Chloe did as she was told. Beca leaned in slowly, her eyes looking from Chloe's eyes, down to her lips, and then back to her eyes. Beca softly kissed Chloe's lips. Chloe leaned in, needing more action, attempting to deepen the kiss. Beca relented, opening her mouth to massage Chloe's tongue with her own as her fingers deftly removed the clasp on Chloe's bra.

Once Chloe's bra was removed, Beca pushed Chloe gently back down on her back. Straddling the redhead, Beca kissed her lips while one hand moved through Chloe's hair and the other began fondling one of Chloe's breasts. Chloe moaned softly. Beca really knew how to use her hands, Chloe mused to herself.

"There's just… one more thing I need to do," Beca said, sitting up. Chloe panted, lust practically emanating from her body.

Beca kissed down the length of Chloe's body, stopping when she reached the line of her sexy black lingerie. Keeping her head down, Beca raised her eyes to meet Chloe's. Beca winked before taking Chloe's lingerie between her teeth and pulling down.

Chloe honestly felt like she was on the bridge of collapse and Beca was definitely not helping matters at all. She bit down on her already-sore bottom lip to keep from crying out. Beca slithered down the length of Chloe's legs until finally, Chloe's underwear was between her ankles. Beca used a hand to finish the job of removing Chloe's underwear.

"Now then. I'm still deciding just what I want to do with you, Chlo," Beca mused aloud, knowing fully well that her idling was driving Chloe crazy.

"Just, for the love of God, Beca…" Chloe trailed off, the glazed lust behind her blue eyes slowly turning into angry lust.

Beca smirked. Chloe always looked beautiful, but in this moment, she looked irresistible to Beca. Using her hands, Beca spread Chloe's legs apart and moved her mouth above Chloe's wet core. Without any warning, Beca went in, using her tongue to lap the desire spilling out of the other girl. Chloe tipped her head back and began panting, as her hips involuntarily bucked upwards, again and again.

"Fuck, Chlo," Beca said in a husky tone, removing her mouth from Chloe's center momentarily, "I had no idea you were so wet."

"That's what you do to me, Becs," Chloe whispered.

Beca's expression softened somewhat. She really hadn't known before today that Chloe thought about her in any sort of romantic way. The thought made her heart swell with feelings. Beca shimmied back up to Chloe's face and placed a brief, yet deep kiss on Chloe's mouth.

"I want to watch you come for me," Beca admitted, whispering into her ear.

Beca bit down softly on Chloe's earlobe before bringing her face up to watch Chloe's. "Oh, Becs," Chloe moaned. "I'm so close, you're barely gonna have to touch me at all."

Beca placed a languid kiss on Chloe's lips and pulled back, taking in the sight of Chloe beneath her hooded eyelids. Beca looked at Chloe like there was no one else in the world. In fact, to Beca, there wasn't. Chloe gazed back into Beca's eyes, both fueled with desire… but also something else. Chloe
would tell herself it was liquor, but realistically, that something else was another word beginning with "l."

"Well, let's see about that," Beca responded in a throaty tone of voice. Beca inserted a finger inside Chloe. And then a second finger. Beca watched the expression on Chloe's face go slack as she felt Beca give her exactly what she needed. Beca used the pad of her thumb to rub Chloe's clit while her fingers pumped inside her, moving around in circles, before pumping again.

Beca continued the action as she watched Chloe writhe beneath her fingers, slowly creeping to the brink of orgasm around her. Chloe's core tightened around Beca's fingers. Watching Chloe like this almost made Beca forget she had just been taken care of, not ten minutes prior.

"Becs. Yes. Keep going… I'm gonna… I'm gonna," Chloe whispered huskily. Before she could finish the thought, Chloe came undone around Beca's fingers, bucking her hips wildly to maximize contact with Beca's hand. When she finished, her entire body relaxed as Chloe's hips leveled on the bed.

Beca kept her fingers inside Chloe, still slowly working them in and out. Chloe let out a guttural groan.

"Am I hurting you?" Beca asked, genuine concern shooting across her face.

"No. Just…" Chloe panted, squirming as her core involuntarily clenched around Beca's fingers again.

"Oh my God," Beca responded, half-sarcastically. Was Chloe really already about to finish a second time?

Beca kept her slow rhythm as she continued firmly working her fingers in and out of Chloe. Chloe, meanwhile, bit her lip to keep from immediately coming undone a second time within five minutes. Oh my God, Beca was really good with her hands, Chloe thought to herself.

"Becs… I don't know if I can…" Chloe trailed off. As good as it felt to still have Beca inside her, letting Beca finish her off a second time in a row would make the score uneven.

"I think you'll find that you can," Beca responded simply. Chloe shot her blue eyes open and looked at Beca with shock. Beca still had Chloe lying on her back. Was she really not going to relinquish her control over Chloe?

"Again?" Chloe asked, unbelievably thrilled.

"Yes, again. Just relax," Beca commanded, with a seductive chuckle as she shimmied down the length of Chloe's body. Beca wasn't going to tell Chloe this, but after Chloe's solo "jam session" in the shower that morning, Beca felt compelled to make sure Chloe was completely taken care of.

Beca continued to feel Chloe clench around her more, to the point that Beca was more or less stuck, knuckles deep inside Chloe's core. Beca bent down, needing the feel of Chloe's mouth on her own, the feel of Chloe's tongue on her own. Chloe's hormones built her up and up again, until she was so close to sweet release. Everything Beca was doing to her felt perfect.

Chloe pulled their mouths apart. "Becs?" Chloe managed to speak, even though she was feeling so much pleasure that it bordered on pain.

"Yes, Chloe?" Beca responded, her lust-filled eyes, making contact with Chloe's eyes.
"I wanna know if your mouth is as skilled as your fingers."

"God, Chlo," Beca groaned, feeling more and more turned on by the moment.

Beca did as she was told, driving Chloe over the edge a second and a third time with her mouth, as Chloe clamped her legs around Beca's head, arched her back, and screamed Beca's name.

After Beca was satisfied that Chloe had been fucked good and hard, she relinquished control over Chloe. Removing her mouth from in between Chloe's legs, Beca wiped her mouth with the back of her hand.

It was unclear how much time had passed. Both girls were left utterly exhausted. Chloe placed a kiss on Beca's forehead.

"Babe, that was… amazing," Chloe said with a tired smile.

"Better than amazing," Beca agreed, internally thrilled over Chloe's new pet name for Beca.

Chloe smiled, her eyes drooping shut with pure exhaustion. "I've wanted this for so long," she whispered.

"Come here," Beca requested, pulling Chloe close to her.

Beca kissed Chloe on the tip of the nose. Chloe pulled the smaller girl in closely, wrapping her arms around her. Facing one another, Beca burrowed her head into Chloe, while Chloe rested her head atop of Beca's. Smiling, each girl fell into an immediate sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Friends! This chapter took a lot. I mean that in the best possible way because, yay, our favorite Bhloe is finally a reality!

And I hope you're all getting what you're looking for so far. Because I'll even though I started writing this story for me, I'll be honest, this story stopped being about me a long time ago. Now, this story is about each of you. Love y'all and see you next week (hopefully!)
Beca stirred the next morning as a phone buzzed on the nightstand. Groaning, Beca covered her head with a pillow. The phone was too loud and her head was pounding. The phone kept buzzing, relentlessly. Beca gave up trying to block out the sound after several minutes. Keeping her face covered by her pillow, Beca began blindly pawing around on the nightstand until her hand grasped her phone.

She brought the phone to her face. Thirty-seven missed calls from Marge, her manager. Shit. Accompanying the missed calls were frantic text messages, saying things like: Urgent. Call me ASAP.

Beca groaned, rolling over in bed. She figured she was going to have to go ahead and call this lady back. As Beca rolled over, she became distinctly aware of two things. One, Beca was not wearing a lick of clothing. Two, Beca was most definitely not alone.

Like a bolt of lightening striking, Beca suddenly recalled everything. Beca brought a hand to her mouth as she looked over and saw an adorable mop of red hair peeking out from underneath the covers. Beca's stomach tightened. Last night. Beca was hung over to the point she felt she might be sick, but this feeling was very temporarily replaced with a rush of hormones spreading across her body over thoughts of the previous night.

Beca reached out to touch Chloe. Before she could, her phone started buzzing again. The damn phone. A wave of nausea overtook Beca. Chloe began stirring at the sound of the phone. Shit. Beca declined the phone call coming from her manager. Chloe settled back to sleep.

Beca figured she should find out what had gotten Marge's panties in a wad before returning back to Chloe's room. Beca quickly got dressed and walked downstairs, outside, and into a garden terrace of the hotel.

It was not lost on Beca that she was awake at an ungodly hour and she was none too pleased about it. Beca's phone began ringing again. Beca bent over into a bush and hurled. Somehow, the puking made her feel marginally better. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and answered the phone.

"Reggie!" The frantic voice of a middle-aged lady shouted from the other end of the phone. Beca held the phone away from her face. Beca was very hung over and her manager, Marge, was yelling quite loudly. "Do you have any idea how the media is taking your evening's escapades?" Her manager asked.

"Well... I just woke up like five minutes ago. So... that's a no," Beca said, rubbing her eyes.

"Reggie, pardon my French, but shit has hit the fan!"

"Marge? Any chance that when it's just us, you could call me 'Beca'?" Beca requested tiredly. "And please don't talk about shit, or I'm gonna..." Beca trailed off as she leaned over into the bush and hurled a second time. Marge waited patiently until Beca got back on the phone.
"Beca, this isn't good," Marge continued.

"What isn't good?" Beca asked in a strained tone. Marge had a definite tendency to overreact to every piece of Reggie Mitch news. Beca supposed that's what made her such an effective manager. Even though Marge cared way too much about Reggie's image, Beca cared very little. She mostly lived her life the way she wanted and relied on Marge to curate Reggie's image appropriately.

"Look, Beca, I wanted you to hear it from me first, but there are a flurry of stories and photos coming in of you from last night."

"Okay?" Beca asked, still failing to see the problem.

"There are photos of you having a verbal altercation with someone. Photos of you getting a lap dance from some redhead. Another photo of you and the redhead where she's giving you a hickey. And one of you pressing her up against a car while her legs are wrapped around you and-"

"Wait, she's not some redhead, she's..." Beca trailed off, trying to figure out the right word to describe Chloe. I mean, they definitely hooked up, but what did that mean?

"She's Chloe," Beca finished unceremoniously.

"Pardon my asking, but is Chloe an 'escort'?" Marge asked for clarification.

"No. She's an event planner, and a successful one at that. Look Marge, you gotta yank these photos ASAP. This could really hurt Chloe's career," Beca barked into the phone.

Marge's tone of voice softened. She could tell Beca was very concerned over her... Chloe. "I'm already on it," Marge assured. "I'm hoping to nip this story in the bud immediately. Although Beca, I'm your manager, not your friend's manager. And while I've got you on the phone, we need to discuss your narrative in all this. Tell me, what happened last night?"

"Must we?" Beca whined.

"Yes, I'm your manager. I have to know."

Beca scowled. She really hated this lady sometimes. "Fine. Well you know I'm here for my friend's bachelorette party, right?"

Marge affirmed. What kind of manager would she be if she didn't know where her star client was at all times?

"Well, we were out and a verbal spat happened because this girl was hitting on Chloe and I don't know..."

"You got jealous?" Marge provided.

"No," Beca shot back defensively. After several beats of silence Beca conceded, "Okay. Maybe a little."

"And then?"

"And then I drank a little too much and things got out of hand. I just... I don't know. I guess I didn't think that people would recognize me or take pictures."

"Beca, we're going to change the direction this story is taking, I promise," Marge reassured.
"What are they saying?" Beca asked, cringing.

"Well, they're painting you as an out-of-control party girl with a temper."

Beca sighed. She wasn't thrilled to hear that, but she could live with it. "And Chloe?"

"Your friend, meanwhile, is being portrayed as a slutty bimbo who is trying to get her fifteen minutes of fame by getting into your pants," Marge said regretfully.

Beca bit her tongue to keep from lashing out at Marge. It wasn't Marge's fault, Beca remembered. Marge wasn't curating these stories. She was giving Beca the honest truth about stories that other people had curated.

"Well can't you, I don't know, tell the media that Chloe is not a slutty bimbo, but rather, is my friend? And that maybe we both got a little carried away last night, but that shouldn't reflect poorly on either of us?"

"Well, I could," Marge said honestly, "But it wouldn't do a whole lot of good. For one, it puts you on the defensive, which implies you and your friend have something to hide. It would also further circulate talk over your friend, which you've indicated to me you'd like to avoid, is that right?"

"Absolutely," Beca said, without pausing a beat. "Anything that minimalizes damage to her."

"So here's what I'd suggest. I'm buying all the photos I can get my hands on from last night. It won't stop the talk that's already occurred, but it should more or less cease future coverage on the matter. I'm putting you on a plane immediately back to Los Angeles, and once you arrive, we're going on the offensive."

"Offensive?" Beca asked.

"Right. Reggie Mitch's image is one of an edgy cynic with a heart of gold. Not a sleazy party animal with a Chris Brown attitude. We're going to drown out this unfortunate coverage of you with a whole lot of better coverage."

"Uh huh? And that means...?" Beca asked.

"It means that as soon as your feet touch the California soil, you're going on a lunch date with Kailey Watson. And the next day, you're going to a retirement home and surprising them with flowers. And the day after that, we're getting a magazine in to shoot photos of you in action at work. Hell, let's top it off with a charity gala next Friday. You can attend with some other up-and-coming young star. Beca, I promise, by the end of this week, the world will have long forgotten any negative implications your friend might be facing."

"Well, that is the goal," Beca said, impliedly consenting to the week's laundry list of atrocities. Beca's only care at the moment was protecting Chloe. She would go to a million charity galas if it meant saving Chloe's reputation.

"Okay," Marge said gently. "A car is coming by to pick you up in half an hour to get you to the airport. We'll talk later, okay?"

"Okay."

"And Reggie... I mean, Beca?"

"Yeah?"
"Put on a goddamn turtleneck. The last thing we need is further photographic evidence of exactly what you got up to last night."

"Okay, bye," Beca said, rolling her eyes and hanging up the phone. Thirty minutes left Beca almost no time to run back to her room, shower, brush her teeth, and throw her belongings in her bag. Beca hadn't anticipated needing to leave for another few hours.

As Beca was leaving her hotel room, she found herself stressing over how to handle everything with Chloe. Beca had exactly ten minutes before she was expected in the hotel lobby. Should Beca wake Chloe up and tell her she was leaving? If so, what should she say? Where would that leave them? What did Chloe want out of all this in the first place? Beca would be having these anxieties, regardless of the current rush in which she found herself.

Even though Beca had almost no time to talk, she wasn't going to leave without giving Chloe an explanation, however brief. She owed that to Chloe. Beca learned her lesson the hard way that hiding things from Chloe was never a good idea.

Beca walked to Chloe's room and quietly let herself in. The lights were still off. The only light came from the small streak of light between the two curtains. Beca's heart skipped a beat and lifted out of her chest as she noticed that Chloe was still in bed, asleep. That feeling was normal, right?

"Chlo?" Beca asked gently, as she walked over to the bed and gently shook Chloe's shoulder.

"Hmmmm?" Chloe hummed, her eyes still closed, as she rolled over.

"Can you wake up for a sec?"

"Whaaa… where…" Chloe muttered sleepily as she opened her eyes, "Where were you? Come back to bed," Chloe whispered with a tired grin.

"I… I can't," Beca said with a sigh.

Chloe reached out and took Beca's hand in her own.

"C'mon, Becs," Chloe persisted, tugging Beca's hand toward her.

"But I have to go," Beca responded.

Chloe blinked several times allowing her baby blue eyes to meet Beca's. There is was. The puppy dog stare.

"God. Fine." Beca acquiesced almost immediately. She was a goner and she hardly knew it. Once Beca had climbed into bed, Chloe wrapped her arms around Beca, spooning the smaller girl.

"This is nice," Chloe hummed with a content smile.

Beca sighed loudly. She wasn't going to give Chloe the satisfaction of knowing she was a total softie, but secretly, Beca relished every bit of this. Chloe's arms wrapped around her. Chloe's naked body pressed against Beca's back. Beca tried her best not to think about the fact that Chloe was very naked right now.

Chloe, meanwhile, began drawing circles with her fingertips on Beca's hip bone. Beca sharply inhaled as a warm prickly sensation spread across her body. Beca didn't know how Chloe was still having this effect on Beca.
"This tattoo is new," Chloe observed casually, referencing, yet another, new tattoo that had found its way onto Beca's body. Chloe loved Beca's tattoos. Something about this new one was so incredibly sexy that Chloe couldn't stop herself from bringing her lips Beca's shoulder blade and kissing it.

Beca shuddered as Chloe's soft lips made contact with her skin. Suddenly, the only thing Beca was interested in was having more of that feeling.

"What does the tattoo mean?" Chloe asked, pretending to be oblivious to the fact that she was watching Beca get turned on right before her very eyes.

Beca cleared her throat. "It's a plane."

"Why?"

"Why is it a plane? Aren't we getting existential this morning?"

"So you aren't going to answer my question?" Chloe asked, gently ribbing Beca.

"Why are we still talking about this," Beca asked, flipping over on her side so that she was now facing Chloe, "When we both know the real reason you dragged me back into bed with you this morning?"

Chloe's blue eyes shot fully open as she took in the sight of Beca before her. There Beca was, nose to nose with Chloe, with that damn cocky smirk plastered on her face like a challenge to act on her urge. Chloe smiled. Before Beca could comprehend what was happening, Chloe was straddling her and Beca would be damned to say she wasn't more than turned on. Beca was completely defenseless to Chloe's sudden advance and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Chlo…" Beca trailed off, unable to find any other words. Gravity was heavier. Beca felt like she was sinking hard into the mattress, unable to move. Unable to do anything apart from let the warm feeling of unbridled desire take hold as she watched Chloe devour her.

"God, I love hearing you say my name," Chloe responded in a husky voice. Chloe leaned down and found Beca's mouth easily, nipping at her lip as she moaned into Beca's mouth.

"Fuck, Chlo," Beca exhaled as Chloe began quickly removing Beca's clothing. Beca had to hand it to her, the girl was on a mission. "How can you possibly still be horny after last night?"

"I guess I haven't had my fill of you yet," Chloe answered with a flirty wink as she finished removing Beca's pants.

"I 'filled' you three times last night," Beca said with a throaty chuckle as she watched with intense interest as Chloe remove the last of Beca's clothing. Chloe's desperate desire for Beca was driving Beca crazy.

"Which means I have some catching up to do."

"Tell me what you're going to do," Beca demanded with a gleam in her eyes.

"What?" Chloe asked back, a little caught off guard as she sat, straddling Beca's lap.

"I said," Beca said, sitting up in bed and coming nose to nose with Chloe, who was still sitting on Beca's lap, "What are you going to do to me, Chlo?" Beca asked, emphasizing Chloe's name.
Chloe swallowed hard, suddenly unable to focus on anything other than her intense desire.

"I can clearly tell what I'm doing to you," Beca continued with a smirk, referencing the wetness emanating from Chloe's core onto Beca's thigh.

"Damn that smirk," Chloe thought to herself as she bit her lower lip. God, it was so sexy.

With a tilt of her head, Chloe pushed Beca down on her back and responded with a whisper, "Well, Becs-"

Chloe was interrupted by the buzzing of Beca's phone. Her eyes shot over to the nightstand where Beca's phone was sitting.

"Just. Ignore it," Beca pleaded, eager to get back to the more pressing matter at hand.

"No. Answer it, it looks super important," Chloe observed with a wink. She could tell the phone call was coming from Beca's manager.

Beca shook her head.

"Answer it," Chloe demanded.

"Fine," Beca said, leaning over, picking up her cell phone, and answering the call.

"Hello?" Beca asked into the phone, more than annoyed to be receiving a phone call.

"What are you talking about…" Beca trailed off in a hiss as her eyes rolled back into her head and she clamped her knees tightly around Chloe's head.

While Beca was talking on the phone with Marge, Chloe had suddenly decided to go down on Beca. Beca could barely breathe. She forced her gaze down at Chloe, whose mouth was attached to Beca's core. With her tongue still licking inside Beca's wet folds, Chloe raised her eyes to meet Beca's gaze and winked.

Beca bit down on her lip hard to keep from embarrassingly moaning out loud. Chloe was most definitely going to be the end of her. Good God.

"I'm fine," Beca exhaled through gritted teeth as she used every ounce of her being to maintain composure.

Chloe, meanwhile, was still fucking Beca while Beca carried on this phone conversation. And it was getting harder and harder for Beca to keep up the charade of sounding normal on the phone.

While Chloe sucked Beca's clit and drew slow circles with her tongue around Beca's entrance, Beca involuntarily writhed in bed.

"Are you okay?" Marge asked Beca.

"No… Just… I feel," Beca forced in a gruff voice, "Off. Right now," Beca finished as she gasped for air.

God, everything Chloe was doing felt so right. Chloe smiled as she continued licking and sucking around Beca's clit. Beca's hips involuntarily jutted upwards. Beca was so wet, Chloe could tell this wouldn't take long. Chloe stuck a finger slowly, yet forcefully inside Beca as she continued her oral handiwork.

"Ahhhh… Fuck!" Beca called out, using her free hand to tangle itself in Chloe's hair. "I mean,"
Beca hissed, "Sorry, I'm sick."

With a devilish grin, Chloe added a second finger and began pushing Beca a little farther, slowly pumping her fingers in and out as her mouth sucked gently around Beca's clit. She could feel Beca clench around her fingers.

"What? No," Beca trailed off, her face going slack as she began bucking her hips into Chloe's face, needing more, all of Chloe.

"I'm goingggggg..." Beca's hold on Chloe's orange locks tightened as she forced Chloe to the exact spot she needed. The exact spot where she could finally get-

"JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!" Beca called out loudly as her body metaphorically exploded into a million pieces. Beca rode Chloe's fingers hard as she experienced one of the strongest orgasms she could remember having.

It seemed the gig was up. There were no more pretenses that Beca was doing anything other than having sex as she talked on the phone with Marge. As Beca's breathing returned to normal, her cheeks grew red with embarrassment.

"Fuck, I'm sorry Marge. My stomach is really off this morning," Beca offered. She knew that this flimsy excuse wasn't fooling anyone, but she couldn't bring herself to admit the truth.

Beca looked down at Chloe and arched her eyebrows sternly, as if to say, "Are you happy with yourself?"

Chloe grinned as she slowly crawled up the length of Beca's body and placed a soft kiss on Beca's cheek.

"Yeah, I'll be down in a minute. Bye." Beca said, clicking off the phone.

"God. Give a girl some warning next time, no?" Beca asked, sitting up in bed.

"Wow, Becs," Chloe answered, kissing Beca's neck before meeting Beca's gaze with a look of innocence, "I had no idea you were that horny."

"Hey, don't even pretend like..." Beca trailed off, losing her steely resolve as she stared into Chloe's light blue eyes, which were dancing with happiness. Something about Chloe made Beca forget anything else even existed, it seemed.

"What? Cat got your tongue?" Chloe asked with a wink.

"You're so weird," Beca shot back with a small grin, as she searched the floor for her shirt. She needed to get downstairs so she could catch her flight back home.

"So you're leaving right now?" Chloe asked, dropping the flirtation and changing subjects.

Beca swallowed the lump that was forming in her throat as purposefully avoided Chloe's stare. She didn't want to see Chloe disappointed. "I don't want to, but I have to go home."

"Why?"

Beca was silent.

"Becs, please look at me," Chloe asked gently.
Beca looked up at Chloe as she finished putting on her pants. Chloe searched Beca's eyes, which were stoic and un-telling. Chloe couldn't be sure, but she felt as though she could sense a little sadness.

"Tell me what's wrong," Chloe whispered soothingly.

"It's Marge. My manager. She said... she called earlier and she said that some photos leaked. Of us from last night. I've seen them and they aren't good. They've got you in some pretty compromising positions. And now people think you're..." Beca broke off as she swallowed the lump in her throat for a second time. She wouldn't cry, Beca didn't do that.

"They think you're using me for fame and the photos are raunchy and could ruin your career. So I have to go and do a bunch of PR shit to make people forget about this."

Chloe processed for a moment, biting her bottom lip as she took it all in. Beca sighed. Even in Beca's hungover stupor, she found Chloe incredibly attractive. Even when she was sitting in bed, her hair a mess and her eye makeup smeared from the night before.

"I'm not using you for fame," Chloe finally responded, her eyebrows furrowing in confusion.

"I know that. But people are idiots and they clearly don't know that we... Well, they don't know that we, you know..." Beca finished clumsily.

Chloe's lips flourished into a smile. "Have history?" She asked jokingly.

"Sure, we'll say that. The point is, we've been friends for a long time," Beca added.

"We have," Chloe affirmed as her thumb drew circles around Beca's wrist. "And now we're even better friends," Chloe added with a wink.

Beca blushed lightly. "Is that what we are?"

"Oh absolutely," Chloe began innocently, "We're gal pals!"

"That's great," Beca exhaled as she muttered sarcastically. She made a mental note that she needed to look up the definition of 'gal pal.'

"It is," Chloe nodded as she smiled to herself.

After getting dressed and saying a quick goodbye, Beca ran to the hotel lobby, caught her ride, and left Las Vegas. It wasn't until Beca was sitting on the airplane that she had a chance to begin collecting her thoughts.

Her mind wandered back across the events of the previous night. Her and Chloe had been dancing and then one thing led to another, until... Beca shuddered as she began to feel a pool of desire in her lower stomach. Last night was great. Really great. And so was this morning. Beca was trying to find a word better than great. Perfect. Beca had never felt such overwhelmingly intense chemistry with another person before. In hindsight, Beca could admit that she had actually desired Chloe long before last night. Last night was just the night when Beca had finally decided to act on her desire.

So, the sex was great, but what about its implications? Beca was still unclear on what the whole thing meant moving forward. Especially given the media's reaction to their escapades last night, Beca couldn't foresee a scenario where Chloe would want to have any sort of relationship with Beca. Beca sighed heavily.
Reggie Mitch continued forward with Marge's plan of going on the offensive and went on a date with Kailey Watson. The nice thing about Kailey, Beca thought, was that there were absolutely no pretenses. In some ways, she was the perfect 'girlfriend' to Beca because she knew exactly where she stood. Kailey understood that this wasn't love, but rather, a mutually beneficial business arrangement. Kailey got fame and recognition, while Beca painted herself a favorable image.

That afternoon, Beca and Kailey were sitting in the open-air restaurant of a trendy Mexican restaurant in town. Marge had made sure paparazzi were present to capture images of the 'date.'

"Nice turtleneck," Kailey pointed out, as she took a sip from her margarita.

"Thanks," Beca responded. "It's a little warm outside but... you know."

Kailey laughed. "Yeah, landed yourself in a spot of trouble last night, didn't you?"

"What, the emergency lunch date that you just found out about an hour ago didn't seem normal to you?" Beca asked in a jokingly innocent tone.

Laughing Kailey responded, "My manager told me what was up."

"Well, thanks for doing this," Beca said sincerely.

"Sure, it's not like I had anything else to do," Kailey answered simply, as her eyes perused the menu.

"And who said romance was dead?" Beca asked.

The girls shared a laugh. The paparazzi snapped a few photos of the girls.

"Sure you don't want a margarita?" Kailey asked Beca.

"Nope. I'm off the sauce for a while," Beca answered.

"Right. Your poor decisions."

"Yep," Beca said. "What brings us to this hipster hell today," Beca added, referencing the douchey restaurant they in which they currently found themselves situated.

"It's not so bad," Kailey said.

"It's no Taco Bell," Beca corrected.

"I forgot you had the palette of a college aged boy. You know, I'm seeing this chick right now, and I swear you and her would hit it off. She loves Taco Bell, too."

"You're trying to pimp me out to your sidepiece while we're on a date?" Beca asked. "Dude, that's so twisted."

"Not like that!" Kailey insisted. "I just thought you'd get along... as friends."

"Right," Beca said. The two girls enjoyed the rest of their date as they continued their friendly chatter.

A day passed. Despite Beca's busy itinerary, she hadn't heard a peep from Chloe. It was driving her insane. She had tried calling a few times, each time reaching Chloe's voicemail. Meanwhile, Chloe had returned back to Atlanta. She would talk to Beca tomorrow, she promised herself. She just
needed one day to collect her thoughts.

Chloe had been through a lot. Before the past weekend, Chloe hadn't planned on hooking up with Beca. That being said, she certainly didn't regret anything. A blush crept across Chloe's cheeks as she recalled that past night's activities. Those moments had been the single hottest moments from Chloe's life. Sighing, Chloe forced herself to stop thinking about sex with Beca, even though that was a thought she could happily harbor all day. Beca made her feel so... alive. She reminded her what it was like to desire another person again. The last time Chloe had felt this way, well, was also with Beca. Two and a half years ago.

Chloe frowned as she looked down at her phone. News was coming out about Beca going on another date with indie artist Kailey Watson. Chloe knew these dates were all for show, but it didn't stop her feelings from being hurt. Did Chloe really mean that little to Beca? And if this hookup did, in fact, mean nothing to Beca, couldn't Beca at least have made that clear? Chloe felt played. Not only had there been a small leak of embarrassing photos of Chloe and Beca from the night before, but Beca's actions were only adding insult to injury. Chloe relayed each of these concerns to Stacie.

"Chlo, you've got to call Beca back and tell her this," Stacie advised.

"I know. It's just... I feel really sad that this didn't mean more to her."

"I understand you're hurt," Stacie said, hugging Chloe. "But it isn't really fair to put words into Beca's mouth yet. Talk to her. Tell her how you feel."

"I don't think I know how I feel," Chloe admitted. What did Chloe want from any of this? She would be lying if she said she didn't have feelings for Beca. But she really doubted whether she was ready to jump into any sort of committed relationship with the girl. She had good reason to be cautious about everything. Beca had broken her once before.

Chloe slept on it all and called Beca back bright and early the next morning. Beca picked up after the second ring. Her answer was noticeably more strained than her normal greetings.

"Hey," Beca said awkwardly, her heart skipping a beat.

"Hey," Chloe said back. "I'm just... returning your calls," Chloe trailed off, not really knowing where to begin.

"Chlo," Beca said. Beca sighed. "I'm sorry about this weekend."

"What part of it?" Chloe asked in a hurt voice. She hadn't been expecting Beca to apologize.

"The bad press part of it," Beca answered.

Chloe was half-satisfied. She would have been devastated if Beca had apologized for their hookup. She hoped against all odds that would be something Beca never felt sorry for. That being said, Chloe still felt a little angry that Beca had abruptly left the next morning. And angrier still over the fact that Beca had been dating other people.

Beca started back, "You have to understand that you're my best friend and I never want to hurt you. And this tabloid bullshit, well, I didn't want you to get dragged into it all. I've been doing everything I can to take the heat off of the situation. I want to protect you, Chlo. And somehow or another, I feel I always end up letting you down."

"Beca, the thing that lets me down the most is when you treat me like I'm fragile. I can handle
more than you think. I want us to be equal."

"And we are equal," Beca assured. "It's just, you've worked so hard for your career, and here these pictures come along, threatening your reputation. And I can't forgive myself that I'm the reason why. I don't want to hurt you."

"Beca, you aren't the only reason those photos exist. And the only way you've ever hurt me is by shutting me out of your life."

Beca chuckled dryly. "That's what I do best, it seems."

Chloe blinked several times as tears slowly spilled down her cheeks. She didn't try to stop them. She didn't see the point. Chloe was always the kind of person to wear her heart on her sleeve. She sniffled loudly into the phone as she continued crying.

"God," Beca said, running a hand through her hair. "Oh my God, Chloe, no. Please don't cry. See? This is exactly what I don't want."

"Chloe," Beca started again, "Please don't cry. It breaks my heart. Look, you don't understand. You don't understand the magnitude of this. Your career could have been over. I'm sorry I shut you out, but I was only doing it for your own good."

"Don't tell me what I understand," Chloe shot back angrily. Great, here it is, Beca thought. Mad Chloe. "Stop yelling at me," Beca fired back.

"Then stop treating me like an unbalanced basket case and actually tell me what's going on," Chloe spat.

"I did tell you what was going on. Jesus, what more do you want from me?" Beca asked angrily. "I told you about the photos and I told you that I was going to fix things. And guess what? I fixed things. So, you're welcome, by the way."

"No you didn't, Beca. You didn't tell me you were going on other dates with people. And maybe you've been telling me that you're going to fix this, but guess what? Maybe I don't want you to fix it. Did you ever think to ask me whether or not I cared about the bad press?"

"Well don't you care that there are pictures out there of you doing everything short of banging me in a nightclub? This is some NC-17 stuff. I think it was more than reasonable of me to think you cared."

"You still should have told me you were going out with other people."

"Oh, you mean my contractually obligated dates? The ones where everything down to my sneezes are orchestrated? Those dates?"

"Yes, those dates," Chloe exclaimed. "It's like we're a broken record running in circles, Beca. You lied to me about your internship for an entire year in college. And then you didn't tell me you were moving across the country until the day before you left. And now this."

"Oh my God," Beca cut in, "Dude! Sorry, I didn't tell you, but you're blowing this way out of proportion."

"Don't you turn this on me."
"You're the one getting mad because I was trying to protect you. Maybe if you weren't being ridiculous right now -"

"Ridiculous?" Chloe asked with fire-hot anger. "You're calling me ridiculous?"

"No, I wasn't calling you ridiculous. I was just saying that you were acting ridiculous -"

"You know what, Beca? I'm now realizing this is my fault. I keep thinking that something is going to change with us."

"God, this is impossible," Beca muttered in an exasperated tone. "I can't win with you, can I?"

"Beca, I'm so mad, I can't talk to you right now."

"Well that makes two of us," Beca fired back, bracing herself as she waited for Chloe to continue lighting into her.

Beca could hear Chloe sigh on the other end of the phone. "I'm hanging up. This was a bad idea."

"What was a bad idea? Chloe? Chlo! Come on, Chlo." The line went silent. For the first time ever, Chloe had just hung up on Beca.

Beca stared down at her lap, surprised to see droplets of water forming on her jeans. She was crying, for the first time in two and a half years. Beca grabbed a pen and scrap piece of paper. She wasn't really sure why, but she brought her pen down to paper and started scribbling her stream of consciousness.

"Just stop your crying
It's a sign of the times
Welcome to the final show
Hope you're wearing your best clothes

You can't bribe the door on your way to the sky
You look pretty good down here
But you ain't really good

We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?

Just stop your crying
It's a sign of the times
We gotta get away from here
We gotta get away from here
Just stop your crying
It'll be alright
They told me that the end is near
We gotta get away from here

Just stop your crying
Have the time of your life
Breaking through the atmosphere
And things are pretty good from here
Remember, everything will be alright
We can meet again somewhere
Somewhere far away from here

We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?

Just stop your crying
It's a sign of the times
We gotta get away from here
We gotta get away from here
Stop your crying
Baby, it'll be alright
They told me that the end is near
We gotta get away from here

We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?

We don't talk enough
We should open up
Before it's all too much
Will we ever learn?
We've been here before
It's just what we know

Stop your crying, baby
It's a sign of the times
We gotta get away
We got to get away
We got to get away
We got to get away
We got to get away—away
We got to—away
We got to—we got to—away
We got to—we got to—away"

Beca didn't realize until she put her pen down that she had just written her very first song.
Friends! Several things- thanks for bearing with me while I've been MIA the past several weeks. Believe it or not, I've been losing sleep worrying over this story. There's some parts I've had to write, scrap, and re-write to get to where I wanted us to be. And as always, I'm really trying my best to keep you all in mind.

Second, I promise I'll bring Chloe and Beca together for good. We're clearly at a hurdle here, but once we move past it, there are only sunny skies ahead!

Much love!

**It goes without saying, but obviously I don't own any rights in the Harry Styles song "Sign of the Times."
CHAPTER 15 (May 30- July 1, 2018)

Over the next two weeks, Jesse did not see Beca once. Which was strange, considering they were sharing a house together. He assumed Beca was around because coffee mugs piled themselves in the kitchen sink and takeout boxes found their way into garbage cans. Finally, Jesse had enough of Beca's absenteeism. He needed to make sure Beca was, in fact, still alive. He walked up to the bedroom that had been converted into Beca's office.

Jesse knocked softly on the door and pressed his ear against the wood frame. There had been some shuffling movement in the studio, which abruptly stopped after Jesse knocked. Jesse knocked again before turning the door handle and stepping into Beca's studio. Beca was seated in a chair, at a desk full of expensive sound equipment, with her back facing Jesse.

"Dude. Get out," Beca scolded without any of the enthusiasm or fervor her normal tone held. It sounded like she was tired or bored.

"How did you know it was me?" Jesse asked, noticing that Beca had not even turned around to acknowledge the identity of her visitor.

"I didn't know. But seriously, please leave."

"'Please?' Beca Mitchell never says that word. Now I know something is going on. What is it?" Jesse asked, taking a step closer into the room and closing the door behind him.

Beca put her headphones down on the table, begrudgingly accepting that Jesse was not going to leave her alone. She slowly swiveled around in her chair to face him. Jesse's face contorted as he politely tried to hide a look of shock over Beca's appearance. Beca looked rough. She looked like she hadn't showered anytime recently, her makeup was smeared, she had bags under her eyes, and her skin was translucent and pale. And despite all the empty takeout containers he had seen over the past weeks, Beca looked like she had lost some weight.

"Jess. I'm really working hard on a song right now, so could you, I don't know, just leave me alone?" Beca asked flatly. Again, her biting sarcasm was notably absent. And for some reason, Jesse missed it.

"Beca, are you sure you don't need to talk? No offense, but you look like you haven't slept in weeks."

"Probably because I haven't. I need to get this song done quickly."

"Why?"

"Because… I have to finish it."

"What artist are you working with on this one?" Jesse asked, hoping to bring Beca out of her shell.

"Myself," Beca answered.
"What?" Jesse asked excitedly. "You're doing your own stuff? That's awesome! I wanna hear it!"
Jesse exclaimed.

"I need to go to the Atlanta office to finish it up," Beca continued tiredly, unaffected by Jesse's
excitement. Unfortunately, Beca's song needed a final tweak. A tweak, which could only come
from a certain former boss of Beca's in the Atlanta studio of Residual Heat.

"I'm going there tomorrow morning and I'll be back in the evening. It should be done by then,"
Beca added.

"Then can I hear it?"

"We'll see," Beca muttered, as she continued fidgeting with the soundboard. They both knew that
'we'll see' meant 'no way in hell.'

Jesse shifted his weight between his feet, awkwardly standing and looking at Beca.

"Can you shut the door behind you on the way out?" Beca asked.

Jesse took the hint and left Beca alone. The next morning, Beca actually showered, dressed, and
tried to look like a functioning member of society before flying over to Atlanta. Working alongside
her old boss in the Residual Heat studio, Beca finally finished her song and aptly named it 'Sign of
the Times.'

"This is good work Reggie. Revolutionary, really. You are a legend of pop music," her old boss
praised her. "What was your inspiration?" He asked, drumming his fingers on the desk as he peered
intensely into Beca's eyes.

Beca averted her eyes uncomfortably. "I just sat down and wrote it, dude. It's a just another song."

"It doesn't sound like just another song. There's so much… raw feeling. You've really grabbed onto
something here, Reggie. There's got to be inspiration behind this."

"Well, there isn't," Beca lied.

Her boss shrugged. "Well, if this is the kind of work product you give me, I would be honored if
you wanted to collaborate with me more often."

"Yeah. Um, I'll think about it," Beca answered, mostly just to shut this guy up. She didn't think she
wanted to work alongside her former boss again.

"You know… We can fast-track this and get it on the radio pretty quickly," he added thoughtfully
as he tapped his sunglasses against the table.

"No. It's not going out," Beca countered stubbornly.

Beca didn't quite know why she had spent two weeks tirelessly and meticulously working on this
song that no one else would ever hear. She knew, clear as day that she was not going to allow this
song to be released. This song was for her ears only. It was her cathartic release. It was her moving
on. Past everything with Chloe… whatever that was.

"Reggie. Listen. Are you listening?" He asked. "This song is too good to not go out. This song is it.
It's going to boost you to superstardom."

"Yeah, I don't care about that," Beca answered thinly.
"How is that?"

"Look, it's just... this song is way too personal. I don't need the world knowing about my business," Beca fumbled awkwardly.

"Uh huh. And I thought you said this was 'just another song.' Do you remember saying that to me, Reggie? You literally just said those words to me."

"Okay, Nancy Drew," Beca quipped back, holding out her hand to stop her former boss's tirade. "Can you listen to me for one second? It's a personal song and it's not going out."


"Look, man, I told you I'm not interested. So let's chalk this up to a loss and move on, okay?" Beca asked shortly.

"You shut everyone out," her former boss responded evenly and with a shrug of the shoulders. He wasn't trying to pick a nerve with Beca, but he unknowingly said the one thing that drove Beca ballistic. The one thing that brought Beca's conflict with Chloe back to the forefront of her mind.

"Fuck you," Beca spat out as she stood up, her chair making a loud scratching noise on the tile. Beca's old boss recoiled in his seat a little, but otherwise, his expression remained unaffected.

"You are a pretentious, arrogant shit," Beca continued. "You know what? You don't know everything either. You don't know me. So back the hell off," Beca barked.

When she was finally done speaking, she stood there, her chest heaving as rage emanated from her small body. Her former boss sat there, looking up at Beca, with a stunned expression on his face.

Missing the point completely that Beca was furious with him, he said, "Now that's the kind of raw energy I like to see, Beca. I mean, Reggie. Now why did I just call you Beca? But seriously, when you decide to stop closing yourself off from the rest of the world, let me know," He mused as he pulled out his phone and began preparing for his next client appointment.

"I don't shut everyone out!" Beca spat back at him as he shrugged nonchalantly. "Listen," Beca lit into him as she bared her teeth. "Never, and I do mean never, talk to me again about Chloe. Got it?"

"Who is that?" Her former boss asked as he raised his eyebrows. "I don't know a Cornelius. I'm pretty sure I never mentioned that name," he pondered as Beca stormed out of the office.

After causing a huge scene and leaving the Atlanta office, Beca was left shaking with residual anger. How dare he say that? Beca didn't shut everyone out. Or she didn't mean to, at least. It wasn't lost on Beca that the reason she lashed out so harshly on her former boss had everything to do with Chloe. Chloe had made the same accusation toward Beca multiple times in the past. And each accusation had been followed by a prolonged period of silence between the two girls. Beca couldn't take it anymore. She had meant to go straight to the airport, she really had. But inexplicably, she found herself directing her chauffer to Chloe's office building in downtown Atlanta.

As Beca stepped on the elevator inside Chloe's building, her anger began to subside. It suddenly occurred to her how nervous she felt. Her stomach was in knots to the point she wondered if she might be sick. Beca hadn't seen Chloe in two weeks. And the last time they had spoken, well,
Chloe hung up on her. Beca tried to shake that unpleasant thought from her mind. This wasn't the time for second-guessing, it was too late. The elevator door opened and Beca stepped out into the lobby.

Jenna, the receptionist recognized Beca immediately. "Reggie!" She exclaimed. "Long time, no see!"

"Um, hey," Beca answered nervously, not scarcely matching Jenna's level of enthusiasm.

Jenna batted her eyes several times as she warmly smiled at Beca. "How's it going, Reggie?"

"It's Beca, actually," Beca corrected.

People that preferred to call her 'Reggie' were generally expecting her to be this amazing, perfect, pop persona. Beca preferred to be called 'Beca,' an actual human person. People that called her 'Beca' generally cared more about the person behind the fictional celebrity.

"You're so funny!" Jenna said with a wave of her hand.

Beca, oblivious to Jenna's smitten behavior, asked, "Is Chloe around?"

Jenna frowned a tiny bit as she nodded. "Yeah, she's back in her office. I'll call and tell her you're here."

"Wait, no," Beca insisted, stopping Jenna before she could pick up the phone and call back to Chloe's office. "Can you just let me through? She told me just to come on back," Beca lied through her teeth. Beca was pretty sure that Chloe wasn't going to be eager to see Beca after everything that happened.

"Oh, she's expecting you? She didn't tell me that this morning," Jenna pondered in a perplexed tone.

"Yeah, it's a last minute thing," Beca lied again. "And uh, thanks, by the way. It's good to see you again." Beca could hardly believe she had just said this, knowing that this chick had a crush on Beca. Beca was shamelessly playing this girl and if the circumstances had been different, Beca would have felt much guiltier about it.

"Oh my God, it's good to see you, too! I hope you know my former offer stands" Jenna prattled on, touching Beca's arm.

Beca bit her tongue. Oh yeah. She had forgotten that Jenna had given Beca her phone number. "Oh, um, yeah. That's great. Thanks," Beca forced out.

Neither girl said anything for a moment.

"Well, uh, I really do need to get back there," Beca prodded.

Taking the hint, Jenna finally buzzed Beca back past the lobby of the building. Beca quickly wound her way through the offices and to Chloe's office at the end of the hallway. Beca straightened her shirt and took a deep breath. She realized that although she was riddled with anxiety, she wanted- no, scratch that- she needed to see Chloe. The past two weeks had been agonizing. Beca knocked lightly on the wooden door to Chloe's office.

"Come in," she heard the unmistakable cheery voice of Chloe Beale answer. Beca's chest lurched over the voice recognition. Even hearing Chloe's voice could light a fire under her skin.
Beca gingerly opened the door and walked into Chloe's office. Chloe was seated behind her desk, eyes focused on her computer screen. Beca's stomach turned as jolts of excitement danced across every inch of Beca's skin. How could one glance at Chloe completely floor her, Beca wondered? She didn't understand how Chloe did this to her, even after everything.

Beca's eyes perused Chloe more closely. She was wearing plastic-rimmed glasses, Beca immediately noticed. Since when had Chloe needed glasses? And since when had glasses made anyone in the world look sexier than Chloe right now? Chloe was more than pulling off this look, Beca mused.

Beca's borderline-inappropriate thoughts were momentarily shut down as Chloe looked up from her computer screen and registered shock at the sight before her. Her jaw dropped open slightly. Beca. Beca was here. In her office. Looking at her in that intense way that made Chloe want to rip Beca's clothes off, despite all of her anger at Beca. Chloe tried to forget just how attractive Beca was to her right now, and puzzled together a comment.

"Beca, why are you here right now?" Chloe asked politely, if not a little coldly, as she peered at Beca overtop the frames of her glasses. She hadn't intended to sound cold. But she was surprised… and yes, still a little angry.

Beca's stomach flipped. She was simultaneously angry, confused, and Lord, so turned on as Chloe peered at her sternly behind those glasses.

"I had to see you," Beca answered honestly, as she walked across the office to where Chloe was sitting.

Chloe stood up in her chair, revealing a tight pencil skirt that hugged her hips in all the right places. Her gaze lightening somewhat, she asked softly, "Why?"

"God, I don't know. Maybe because this is killing me," Beca said, wrapping her arms around Chloe's waist and bringing her lips to meet Chloe's.

Beca could feel Chloe's body fully relax as Chloe kissed Beca back with intense fervor. Chloe hated herself for letting this happen. But she couldn't stop it. In spite of the anger she still felt strongly, Beca did things to her that she couldn't understand. Beca was her kryptonite. Which is why she found herself consenting as Beca slid up Chloe's skirt and lifted Chloe onto the desk.

Chloe began removing her glasses before Beca brought up a hand and stopped her. "No, leave those on," Beca commanded in a throaty voice between kisses. "I like them."

Without bothering to take Chloe's black thong off, Beca slid the lacy material to the side and fingered Chloe. Chloe's face went slack as Beca's fingers immediately filled her with the exact amount of pressure she needed. The angry tension between the two girls made for incredible sex.

"This feels so good," Chloe answered back through gritted teeth. Beca's palm was rubbing Chloe's core as she methodically, yet forcefully, rammed her fingers inside Chloe. It felt so right… yet so, so wrong. Chloe was still mad at Beca. Or at least, that's what she told herself as she continued driving her hips forward to make more and more contact with Beca's hand.

"God, I've been craving you for the longest time," Beca whispered into Chloe's ear, as she kept pumping her fingers firmly inside Chloe.

Chloe tipped her head back and moaned in pleasure. She couldn't hold herself upright. She felt like she was collapsing. Everything Beca was saying and doing was so good. But Chloe was mad at
Beca. Chloe surely couldn't give the satisfaction of knowing Beca could play her like a piano. Chloe bit down on her lip hard, trying her best to stave off the inevitable orgasm that was creeping closer and closer. God… Beca's fingers were deft. Too deft.

"Oh my God, no," Chloe said hoarsely. She was trying her hardest to not feel turned on right now. She was mad. But something about that made her feel even closer to the brink.

Beca stopped the movement of her fingers, keeping them inside Chloe's wet folds.

"No?" Beca asked with a smirk. Beca knew Chloe was pretty close. And her wetness was practically seeping. Beca slowly began retracting her fingers.

"Fuck… yes," Chloe changed her mind as she spoke through clenched teeth, hating herself for succumbing to Beca. The only thing worse than coming for Beca was not coming for Beca. Chloe was too close. She needed it. Worse than she had ever needed anything. She hated it, but she had to give into Beca.

"Keep going," Chloe commanded, her body writing, desperately needing Beca's touch again.

"You're going to have to ask a little more nicely than that," Beca countered, with a gleam in her eyes, as her fingers ghosted over Chloe's clit.

"What? Do you want me to beg?" Chloe practically spat. Now she was both mad at Beca and so close to coming that she couldn't see straight. Politeness was low on her current list of priorities.


Damn it, Chloe thought to herself as she winced. She felt charged by electricity. She would do anything in the world to finally tip over the edge. But she couldn't beg. Wouldn't beg.

Leaning forward, Beca wrapped a hand around Chloe's waist and brought her lips to Chloe's. Chloe practically moaned into Beca's mouth as Beca's tongue massaged Chloe's tongue. Using her other hand, Beca began lightly drawing patterns with her fingertips along the top of Chloe's thigh. It was amazing how crazy this drove Chloe as she found herself needing Beca's touch more and more intensely.

"Tell me you want it, Chlo," Beca whispered into Chloe's ear before softly biting down on Chloe's earlobe.

Chloe jutted her head back and moaned in pleasure. She really couldn't take this much longer. "Beca…" Chloe trailed off.

"Huh?" Beca asked.

"Finish me off," Chloe seethed as her eyes bore daggers into Beca's eyes.

"Say please. Use those manners," Beca commanded as she winked at Chloe.

Chloe hated herself for this. She hated that she needed Beca. That she was here in this compromising position. But she needed release. More than she needed her next breath of air.

"I need you to get me off… please," Chloe jeered, the anger still evident in her tone.

"Gladly," Beca said, jumping at the opportunity to finish what she had started. She thrust her fingers back inside Chloe, who bucked her hips in pleasure as Beca's fingers quickly worked in and
out of Chloe's core, Beca's palm making contact with Chloe's clit at each pump.

"Oh my God, yes," Chloe said, her eyes rolling into the back of her head. "Keep fucking me."

Chloe's head jutted back, exposing her neck. Beca began placing kisses along her jawline and down her neck, softly biting Chloe's skin. Each time Beca bit down would elicit another moan from Chloe. So Beca kept doing it. She kept doing it and doing it until she felt Chloe violently orgasm around her fingers.

It wasn't until Chloe came down from her orgasm that either girl acknowledged any awkwardness.

"God dammit," Beca said in a husky tone as she removed her fingers from Chloe's core. She hadn't realized until now how much she needed physical contact with Chloe. Whether it was touching, kissing, or fucking, Beca needed to touch Chloe. To feel her respond to Beca.

As Chloe's glazed, slack-jawed look returned to normal, she said, "Beca, I've got to go. I've got an engagement party tonight."

"You're still mad at me," Beca observed. She knew because Chloe was calling her 'Beca.'

"That's a unique way to apologize," Chloe responded.

"Jesus, I'm sorry, okay?" Beca said, running a hand through her hair. "I didn't do a good job about handling the bad press about us. But you hung up on me and have been avoiding me for two weeks. So you can't take the high road here. I think you owe me an apology, too."

Chloe bit her lip. "I'll apologize when I'm satisfied over your apology."

"What more do you want me to say?" Beca asked, throwing her hands in the air. Although Chloe could be infuriating at times, Beca would gladly say anything to get back in her good graces.

"Maybe you could start by apologizing for calling me ridiculous."

"I'm truly sorry for calling you ridiculous. What was I thinking?" Beca asked.

"And not sarcastically," Chloe added as she straightened her skirt and began collecting her belongings and preparing to leave.


"Don't act like you're the victim here, Beca," Chloe shot back, her eyes narrowing.

"Am I not? You've been giving me the cold shoulder for two weeks," Beca spat back, closing the gap between her and Chloe.

"You left me without a full explanation on what was going on."

"Jesus Christ. Next time I'll have my assistant print you off a detailed itinerary. Would that satisfy you, Chloe? Or would anything?"

Taking a step closer to Beca, Chloe jeered, "God, of course you're trivializing this!"

Beca gulped, now realizing that her and Chloe were practically standing nose to nose. Beca tried not to look at Chloe's lips. Keeping her eyes trained on Chloe's very blue (and very angry) eyes, Beca hissed, "You're impossible."
Chloe quietly boiled with anger and something else… what could that be? With affliction, Chloe realized that something else was attraction. Without necessarily meaning to, Chloe let her gaze wander down to Beca's lips. God, she still needed Beca so badly.

With her eyes still on Beca's lips, she whispered harshly, "You're even more impossible."

Beca wasn't really sure who kissed the other first, but somehow or another, the two girls found themselves in the midst of an intense make out session in Chloe's office. Beca desperately found Chloe's mouth, partly to shut her up, and partly to give into her ever-present need for Chloe's touch. Chloe responded favorably, ripping off Beca's shirt and pinning her against the wall.

Twenty minutes later, Chloe and Beca walked out of Chloe's office in tandem. As they walked onto the elevator together, Chloe noticed a dejected, scornful look coming from Jenna. Beca, it appeared, was completely oblivious to Jenna's look of resentment. Chloe figured Jenna knew something was going on between her and Beca and was probably not happy about it.

"I'm coming back to Atlanta tomorrow for work," Beca piped up, livening the silence shared between the girls in the cold, steely elevator.

"Are you?" Chloe asked airily.

"In case you want to continue fighting with me, you should come by around three," Beca said with a hint of sarcasm.

"Don't hold your breath," Chloe muttered, her eyes trained forward at the slit of light coming through the elevator.

The elevator door opened at Beca's floor and she walked off, not bothering to cast a glance behind her. "See you at three, Beale."

The next day, as Beca sat in her office and watched the clock tick closer and closer to three, she sort of wondered if she had been too brazen about things. Beca was more than relieved to see her favorite redhead bouncing through the door around three. Beca's predatory gaze slowly undressed Chloe while she shut the door to Beca's office. Turning around and meeting Beca's eyes, Chloe swallowed hard. Fuck, she was already a goner, she realized as her heart practically lurched out of its chest.

Neither girl said a single word. Beca slowly and deliberately got out of her chair, taking her time to walk the distance across the room to where Chloe was standing, her hand still on the doorknob. When she reached Chloe, Beca traced the outline of Chloe's jaw with her forefinger, while her gaze bore daggers into Chloe's eyes. Chloe couldn't take it. She pressed her lips to Beca's lips, needing to feel that rush of euphoria. And did she ever. Beca kissed Chloe back with intense fervor as she led Chloe to the producer's chair, sat her down, and found even newer and more creative ways to completely ravage her.

After that, for the next week and a half, Beca found excuses to be in Atlanta three other times and each time, Chloe moved around her schedule to accommodate Beca. Each time they saw one another, they didn't talk very much. In fact, their rendezvous were all quick and dirty. Beca would meet Chloe in her office or apartment. They would have hot, lusty, explosively passionate sex and Beca would leave.

Before she knew it, it was three days before Amy's wedding. It was one of the rare days Beca wasn't in Atlanta under the pretense of "working," even though she knew fully that her trips to Atlanta had everything to do with Chloe. Even though Beca was back in LA, she had the company
of Chloe's best friend. The Bella (with serious control issues and dictator-like tendencies) that Beca had come to begrudgingly like, in spite of everything. When Beca walked into her kitchen that afternoon, she was less than surprised to see Aubrey braising a chicken.

"You've been pretty absent recently, Beca," Aubrey observed.

"Funny. You've been pretty… present recently," Beca responded with a sneer. It practically felt like Aubrey was the third roommate she neither wanted, nor needed.

"Well, Beca, the California branch of the Fallen Pines needs attention, too," Aubrey answered sternly. "It's as my father always said," Aubrey continued. "Actions speak louder than the man crying in the cell next to you."

Beca looked at Aubrey with dead eyes. "That makes absolutely no fucking sense."

"Sure it does, Beca," Aubrey explained. "It means that you demonstrate your commitment through accountability, not through whining and complaining."

"Okay that makes sense," Beca conceded. "You should've just said that."

Aubrey shrugged. "Accountability is important, Beca. Whether it's business, friendships, or even love. You know, being accountable to those you love is especially important."

"Alright, alright," Beca said, holding her hand out to stop Aubrey from continuing, "You sound like you're regurgitating a self-help book."

"It sounds like you've got something to hide," Aubrey observed knowingly.

Beca's face momentarily flashed panic before she could consciously mold her face back into an expression of sarcastic apathy. Aubrey smirked. Beca's flash of panic hadn't been lost on her.

"You're being weird," Beca accused.

"And you're being defensive," Aubrey lectured.

"I'm not doing this," Beca said, turning on her heels and preparing to walk away.

"BECA!" Aubrey barked out, causing Beca to stop dead in her tracks. Beca hated to admit this, but she was still scared of Aubrey. Aubrey's fury still had the ability to bend Beca's will into involuntary submission. Of course, Beca would die before she ever admitted this to anyone.

"Jesse and I have both been worried about you for the past three and a half weeks. And each time Jesse tries to talk to you, you shut down. Now I'm not fooling myself into thinking you actually consider me your friend, but you're going to sit down and have a real conversation with me."

Beca raised her eyebrows, challenging Aubrey's authority. "Let's remember, you're in my home," Beca seethed, barely above a whisper.

"I don't care if we're in your home, my home, or on Mars. You can deny as much as you want, but we both know that you're going through some hard times. I care about you, Beca… believe it or not," Aubrey answered, pointing her brazing brush toward Beca.

"I… care… about you… too," Beca forced out, wincing as the words poured unpleasantly out of her mouth. Who was she? Why was she admitting this to Aubrey?

Aubrey smiled. "There is a soul beneath all those layers of sarcasm, eye-rolls, and insults, after
"Ha-ha." Beca responded sarcastically. "We both know I'm dead on the inside."

"Oh, hardly," Aubrey said. "You just hide your compassion well."

Beca and Aubrey sat in awkward silence for a few moments. Aubrey was waiting for Beca to find the words to articulate what she needed to say. Beca finally asked, "Was there a time when you realized you needed Jesse more than you realized?"

"There was," Aubrey answered. "A couple months ago, I was afraid my California branch of Fallen Pines was going to fail," Aubrey started. "It had only been open for three weeks and we were struggling financially. I got so worried. I was waiting on a phone call from my bank to find out if I would get approval on an additional loan. As I was waiting for that phone call, I felt so paralyzed with nerves that I threw up."

"God, that's rough," Beca said, wincing. She was no stranger to Aubrey's projective vomiting.

"Anyhow, Jesse was there. He held my hand and sat with me for hours while I waited for that call. He didn't try to 'fix' me, like other boyfriends have done in the past. Or ignore me, like even worse boyfriends have done in the past. He just told me he was there for me and that he would continue being there for me."

Beca nodded. Jesse was nothing but loyal.

"Somehow, it was exactly what I needed to hear," Aubrey pondered aloud. "You know I have anxiety, don't you?"

"Uh, no I didn't know that," Beca confessed.

"Well I do, Beca. I didn't fully know I had it until partway through college. And even then, I didn't fully understand it for another few years. I guess I always thought that at some point or another, I would find the key and suddenly, I would be cured. It never occurred to me that living with anxiety would be chronic. Until suddenly, one day I looked back and realized I had been living with some combination of anxiety and depression for half my life. It wasn't going away. It never would. It's a part of me now. The same way that I have blonde hair. It won't change. I just have to try my best to live around it. And that's where Jesse comes in."

"He didn't try to fix you," Beca parroted back what Aubrey had said earlier.

"Exactly. It's like he understood that it wasn't his job to try. That simply being there for me is what I needed most. And when I realized that, Beca... well, I opened up my eyes and saw the sign."

"I'm warning you, Posen, if you start singing that song right now..."

"Ah, tempting Beca, but I'll spare you from The Ace of Base right now," Aubrey teased.

"Ace of Base?" Jesse piped in as he lolloped down the stairs and into the kitchen. He began singing in the most annoying way, "I saw the sign, and it opened up my eyes I saw the sign. No one's gonna drag you up-"

"For fuck's sake, Jesse!" Beca groaned, interrupting Jesse's impromptu karaoke session.

"What?" Jesse asked. We were talking about 'The Sign,' weren't we?" He asked cluelessly.
"No. We weren't. And never sing that song again," Beca pleaded. She hated that song.

"Alright. Well what were you talking about?" Jesse asked. "Your new song, perhaps?" He asked, nudge[ing Beca's shoulder.

"You have a new song?" Aubrey exclaimed. "Well, we have to hear it!"

"No, really, it's kind of a private sort of thing, really," Beca answered awkwardly as she shot Jesse a look of contempt.

"Come on, I'm your best friend," Jesse whined.

"Debatable."

"Hardly. Name one friend better than me," Jesse challenged. "Who fixed your sink last week?"

"Who clogged my sink the week before?" Beca countered.

"Touche," Jesse conceded. He had, in fact, clogged Beca's sink. "So should we 'facet' over to what you were talking about? Or should I say 'faucet'?"

"You shouldn't say anything," Beca responded with a groan.

"So why did you ask me about my and Jesse's relationship?" Aubrey asked, simultaneously steering the conversation back to its planned course and including Jesse in their topic of conversation.

Beca sighed, buying herself a moment to figure out just how she was going to drop this bombshell. In the end, she decided to simply rip off the Band-Aid, so to speak. "Chloe and I are having sex."

Jesse couldn't believe his own ears. He practically bit his fist to keep from yelling with excitement. Finally. It was about damn time. "What?" Jesse asked in pure shock.

"Don't make me say it again," Beca pleaded.

"Finally," Aubrey responded.

"Did you know?" Beca asked incredulously. "How?"

"You know Chloe is my best friend, don't you?" Aubrey asked, as if the answer were already obvious. "Come on, hobbit. Get your head out your ass. It's not a hat."

Beca scowled partly because of the sarcasm, partly because of the insult, but mostly because Aubrey had just called Beca a hobbit.

"You didn't tell me?" Jesse asked Aubrey, hurt that Aubrey had been keeping a huge secret from him.

"Jesse, I love you. But this isn't my news to tell. I'm nothing but a loyal friend," Aubrey responded seriously.

"And I love you for that," Jesse said, placing a loving kiss on Aubrey's cheek while she beamed in pure delight.

"This is gross," Beca muttered under her breath.
"But now that the cat's out of the bag, I gotta know. When did you all have sex?" He asked.

"The first time, or…?" Beca trailed off.

"There's more than one time?" Jesse asked.

"That's the thing. I can't seem to stop having sex with Chloe."

"What? This is huge! Okay, start from the beginning," Jesse pleaded with a grin. "When was the first time?"

"The last night of Amy's bachelorette party. We got really stupidly drunk, and I don't know… You know how she doesn't know about personal boundaries?"

"Maybe with you," Jesse answered while Aubrey nodded in unison.

"She's like that with everyone," Beca shot back. Aubrey raised her eyebrows as if to challenge Beca's statement, but thought the better of it and chose to stay silent.

Beca continued, "Well, she was being her normal self and I guess I started pushing the boundaries further and further with her. And she kept responding to it. And eventually, we crossed a line. And Jess, I don't know what came over me. I couldn't stop myself. We went back to the hotel and…" Beca trailed off.

"Wow," Jesse said, still in total disbelief.

"So there were other times, too?" Aubrey asked, leaning her arms down on the countertop of the kitchen. Aubrey was only aware of Chloe and Beca's first hook-up.

"Yeah. I've been to Atlanta four times over the past ten days. And each time, well, we've been, you know… banging."

"Beca, this is great!" Jesse exclaimed.

"Is it? Because after our first hook up there were pictures taken of Chloe and I at a club and they could've gotten her into a good deal of trouble. Anyhow, I left the next morning to mitigate the damage. And I didn't consider it at the time, but I hurt her when I decided to protect her without first really discussing any of it."

Jesse nodded along in silence. "So anyhow," Beca continued, "We're still fighting. But we're also sleeping together. And there's this giant elephant in the room and neither of us are talking about the giant fucking elephant in the room. It's really confusing."

"I'm sure this would be easier if you actually talked to her instead of just having sex with her when you see her," Aubrey said, pointing out the obvious.

"Thanks," Beca said sarcastically. "I'll log that advice away."

"You know I'm right. At some point, you've got to talk about what your relationship means," Aubrey said, crossing her arms over her chest.

Beca wanted to point out that Aubrey looked like a constipated kindergarten teacher, but thought better of it. For once, she wasn't going to get defensive, she decided.

With a sigh, Beca admitted dejectedly, "I know. I keep meaning to talk to her. But then when I see her, well…” Beca trailed off as she pursed her lips together tightly and raised her eyebrows.
"If Chloe were here right now, what would you say?" Jesse asked. "Pretend I'm her." In an exaggerated falsetto, Jesse said, "Hi, I'm Chloe. I'm totes aca-dorable and I have a massive toner for Beca."

Beca coughed to suppress a laugh as she punched Jesse lightly in the arm. "Stop! That's so... weird, dude!" Beca said, trying her best not to smile.

Jesse rubbed his arm. "I swear you didn't learn how to punch until you went to prison."

Beca shot Jesse a look. "Okay, okay," Jesse said, raising his hands in self-defense. "But honestly, in all seriousness, what do you want to tell Chloe right now that you can't?"

"I really don't know," Beca said. "Chloe's holding back something, I just know it. There's something she's not saying and I can't get a read of the situation. If I could really talk to her, I guess I'd ask her to tell me what she's thinking?"

Aubrey kept her gaze trained at the braised chicken on the kitchen table. Beca was more astute than Aubrey realized. Beca was circling the plane close to something huge, but hadn't quite landed it yet. As much as Aubrey wanted to tell Beca, she knew that Chloe needed to be the one to breach this topic.

"Okay," Jesse said, nodding along. "And is there anything, perhaps, that you might want to tell her about your thoughts?"

"I wish I could decipher those myself," Beca answered honestly. Beca hadn't been able to stop thinking about Chloe. She played like a loop in Beca's mind. But Beca was still trying to figure out what any of it meant, if any of it meant.

Jesse sighed. It was easy for him, as an outsider to the situation, to tell Beca that she was clearly crazily in love with Chloe. It was completely, one hundred percent obvious to him. But he knew that life wasn't this black and white. When you, yourself, are personally in the middle of a complicated relationship, no amount of reasoning will keep you from seeing any color other than grey.

"When you see Chloe at the wedding in a few days, Beca, promise me one thing," Aubrey requested gently.

"What's that?" Beca asked.

"Just promise me that you'll sit down and talk about this with her. It's clearly weighing on you and I'll bet anything it's weighing on her, too."

"Fine," Beca said. "I'll find a time to say something," Beca promised as her phone started buzzing.

Beca looked down at her phone and was very frustrated to see that Marge, her ever-pestering manager, was calling. Marge had become the bane of Beca's existence, she decided.

"What?" Beca asked flatly as she picked up the phone.

Jesse and Aubrey exchanged looks of confusion, each wondering where Beca had left her manners and why she was answering the phone so rudely.

On the other end of the phone, Marge told Beca, "I heard the great news, Reggie!"

"What great news?" Beca asked, irritated and unwilling to play into Marge's coy allusions.
"About your new song! At first I was surprised you didn't tell me so I could plan a huge release around the song. But now, it makes sense! It's so… Beyoncé, dropping the secret music. It's genius, actually-"

"Wait, Marge. What the holy living world of fuck are you talking about?" Beca barked into the phone while Aubrey and Jesse exchanged concerned glances for a second time.

"Your new song, 'Sign of the Times.' It's blowing up airwaves, Reggie. Everyone loves it!"

"NO!" Beca shouted, loudly enough for the sound to reverberate across her entire house. "Damn it, no! Are you fucking insane? This is totally unacceptable! And you know what, Marge? I'm at my fucking wit's end. This song gets yanked. NOW!" Beca bellowed, her face turning beet red with anger.

"Woah, Reggie," Marge recoiled, taken aback at her client's unhappy reaction. She had expected this conversation end in happiness, not anger. This was truly surprising to Marge. "I can't yank it, okay?" She asked softly.

Taking a deep breath, Marge continued, "It's in your contract. Your intellectual property created on the job belongs to Residual Heat. They have rights in what you create, unfortunately. So if you created a song, then they were permitted to release it. But hey, fame is fame, right?" She asked.

Beca's fire-hot anger simmered into a deep resentment. "Marge. This is truly detrimental. I did not ask or want that song to be released. In fact, I specifically said that I did not want the song to be released. And it was anyway. Do you understand how that makes me feel? Don't you think it makes me feel sad? Small, maybe? Like even after I've fucking sold my soul to the company, that they maybe… I don't know… couldn't offer me enough respect to even let me know before they released my song?" Beca asked exasperated, as she sat down gingerly on her couch.

"Reggie, I know this is unexpected for you. But Residual Heat gave you your name."

"My name's not even Reggie," Beca answered dejectedly.

"Well, of course it is, it has to be. Right?" Marge asked.

"We've been through this hundreds of times. It's Beca."

"That's right. Beca. Well, Beca, this is good for you. This is going to give you even more fame," Marge said, trying to perk up Beca.

Beca huffed. "But I don't want that song to have been released. It was deeply personal."

"But that's what makes it so good. And why you're going to be even more famous now!"

"This is like explaining colors to a rat," Beca mumbled to herself.

"You know, we're going to have to get you on some talk-shows now," Marge prattled on happily. "People are already speculating as to who your song is about!"

"Good God, no," Beca groaned, panic setting in as she hung up the phone.

She hoped more strongly than anything that Chloe wouldn't be dragged into her drama for a second time. She already felt guilty enough that she had tarnished Chloe once. Beca let her phone drop out of her hands and hit the wood floor with a thud as she stared at the wall with a distant, far-away look in her eyes.
"I'm sorry, Beca," Jesse spoke nimbly as he walked over and sat down next to Beca. Aubrey sat down on the other side of Beca.

Beca's eyes welled with tears. Suddenly, Beca was crying. For a second time that month. She didn't know why she was suddenly a person who cried, but she found herself unable to stop the tears from flowing. As she sobbed loudly, Jesse and Aubrey each leaned in, enveloping Beca in a hug from either side.

"I just," Beca hiccupped. Continuing on between heaves, Beca sputtered, "I gave. I gave them everything I had. For three years. For three years… they were my life. I was so alone," Beca said sniffling, trying futilely to maintain any amount of composure.

Aubrey rubbed Beca's back as her sobs subsided. Aubrey blinked back tears of her own. For one, she had never seen Beca cry. For another, she had never seen Beca sound so… small.

"I didn't realize how alone I felt until…" Beca trailed off.

Clearly, Aubrey thought, Beca had intended to finish that sentence with the word 'Chloe.'

"And I didn't know they'd…" Beca trailed off, angrily wiping her tears away with the back of her hand.

"I know you're pissed off, Beca," Aubrey cooed into her ear as she rubbed her back. "And we're going to get through it, I promise."

Meanwhile, back in Atlanta, Stacie and Chloe were having their weekly friendly gathering at their favorite local Mexican restaurant. For once in her life, Chloe was running late. Sure, her career always kept her busier, but Chloe found herself a little busier than normal these days. Her rendezvouses with Beca had ensured that. Chloe came bustling into the restaurant fifteen minutes late.

"God, Chlo, you're a marg and a half late!" Stacie chirped.

"Sorry!" Chloe apologized, taking a seat across from her friend. "Work calls!"

"What kind of work are you doing these days?" Stacie asked with a wink.

"Why do I get the sense this isn't a straightforward question?"

"You're definitely getting some. Now spill it," Stacie asked with a grin, leaning in toward Chloe.

"Wait a second, how on earth do you know that?" Chloe exclaimed, her mouth dropping open in shock.

"Well two things. One, you just admitted it to me right now."

Chloe snapped her mouth shut. Dang it, she had just impliedly confessed to Stacie.

"And, two," Stacie continued evenly, "You're walking like a duck."

"Am not!" Chloe recoiled, placing a hand over her heart. Sure, she was a little sore, and sure, Beca may or may not have drilled her particularly hard the day before... but walking like a duck? No way.

"I call it like I see it," Stacie said, with a shrug. "So who is it?" Stacie asked, clearly interested in
cutting to the chase.

"Well..." Chloe trailed off.

"It's Beca, isn't it?" Stacie asked. Stacie could hardly credit herself for coming up with this correct response. She knew that Chloe had hooked up with her during the bachelorette party. And she also knew that Chloe had eyes for exactly one other person on this planet... especially after that night.

Chloe nodded.

"Knew it!" Stacie exclaimed excitedly. "Tell me everything!"

"It's totally weird, Stace. We've been fighting for about a month now. And each time she comes into town, we keep fighting... but mostly, we're having sex."

"That's really hot," Stacie said, fanning herself internally. "There's nothing like angry sex."

"I thought so, too, at first, but-" Chloe trailed off, as she picked up on a new song blaring overhead on the radio. Beca's voice. Chloe knew Beca's voice like the back of her own hand.

With a distant look in her eyes, Chloe whispered, "This is Beca singing."

Stacie quieted down, paying close attention to the song playing overhead. Sure enough, Stacie agreed, it did sound an awful lot like Beca.

"Are you sure?" Stacie asked uneasily. Beca had made it known in the past that she was exclusively a producer, not a singer.

"Am I sure? I'd bet my life," Chloe answered softly, her tone taking a sharp edge.

Stacie pulled out her phone and Googled the new song. Sure enough, Google confirmed Chloe's statement. This song had, in fact, been released by 'Reggie Mitch' earlier that day. And was already blowing up the Internet, it seemed.

"But why didn't she tell us-" Stacie began asking before Chloe interrupted her with a shush.

The song sounded forlorn, Stacie thought. Not the usual pop-dance hits in Beca's wheelhouse. Stacie honed in on the lyrics, watching the look on Chloe's face contort further and further into misery.

"We never learn, we been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets? The bullets?
We never learn, we been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets? The bullets?

We don't talk enough, we should open up
Before it's all too much
Will we ever learn? We've been here before
It's just what we know

Stop your crying, baby, it's a sign of the times
We gotta get away, we got to get away
We got to get away, we got to get away
We got to get away
We got to, we got to run
We got to, we got to run
We got to, we got to run."

The song ended and each girl sat in stunned silence at the table. Stacie would have marveled longer over the fact that Chloe so clearly knew Beca's voice, had Stacie not been worried that Chloe looked on the verge of emotional collapse.

Chloe squeezed Stacie's hand and with her free hand, used her thumb to wipe away the tears flowing down her cheeks. After a minute of two of silence, Chloe said between loud heaves, "I don't know what to do."

Stacie didn't say anything at first. What could she possibly say? With their hands still intertwined, Stacie caressed the top of Chloe's hand with her thumb while Chloe sobbed helplessly in the middle of the Mexican restaurant.

"Tell me what you're feeling." Stacie urged gently grabbing Chloe's hand.

After a loud sniffle, Chloe choked out, "I'm madly in love with the girl who just wrote a breakup song about me."

"Chloe…" Stacie cooed. She more or less figured, but this was the first time in over two years that Chloe had admitted to being in love with Beca.

"I'm afraid," Chloe whispered in a small shaky voice. "I don't want to fall apart again. I don't want to die."

Despite her best efforts, Stacie began tearing up. The last time Chloe had been in a one-sided love with Beca was about two and a half years ago. When their friendship crashed and burned, Chloe nearly crashed and burned with it. It took about six months for her to finally hit rock bottom and crawl out of the deep depression in which she found herself. Ever since then, Chloe was too scared to give love a real chance. She was scared that someone could hurt her that way again.

"Chloe, you're one of the strongest, bravest people I know," Stacie answered honestly, meeting the tear-stricken gaze of her friend. "Love doesn't always work seamlessly. Sometimes it's agonizing. But you're going to get through it. You're going to live. We'll get through it together."

Chapter End Notes

Hello, friends. I guess I don't really know what to say. It's hard to write sad storylines. It's also hard trying to strike the right tone... I've been meticulously pouring over this chapter time and time again, trying to make sure I'm getting this right. I don't want to let any of you down.

Anyhow, I promise we're not wandering into some abyss of depression. In the next chapter, we'll see the Bellas back together for Amy's wedding, so that'll be fun! And more importantly, I plan to have Chloe and Beca actually begin talking through what's going on with them in the next chapter. And I promise, I'm not going to drag out the drama too much longer. Beca is going to wake up, see what's been in front of her this whole time, and get her girl!
CHAPTER 16 (July 3, 2018)

Beaming, Chloe broke her lips away from Beca's, still keeping their hands intertwined and her close enough in proximity so that the tips of their noses touched. "You don't know how long I've waited for this," Chloe whispered in a low tone of voice as she found herself deeply lost in the depth of Beca's dark blue eyes.

Beca gazed back lovingly at Chloe, savoring every part of this moment. Slowly bringing a hand up to Chloe's cheek and brushing her fingers along Chloe's jawline, Beca responded softly, "On some level, I think I've known it all along. It's you. It's always been you. It's always going to be you."

Their noses still touching, Chloe leaned in, gently capturing Beca's mouth with her own. Beca's heart swelled as she responded, smiling into the kiss and pulling Chloe closer. Beca brushed her thumb along Chloe's jawbone and Chloe wrapped her arms around Beca even more tightly.

"I love you, Becs," Chloe breathed between impassioned kisses, relishing the way the golden evening sun shined through the window and danced atop Beca's skin. It looked like she was glowing.

"I've been in love with you for the past six years," Chloe continued, breaking away from Beca's lips and nuzzling into the crook of her neck.

"What?" Beca asked, slightly taken aback. With a hand still wrapped around Chloe's waist, Beca pulled away far enough to look Chloe in the eyes.

Chloe took a deep breath and blinked slowly. She was finally telling Beca the one thing she had been hiding for such a long time.

Meeting Beca's intensely puzzled gaze, Chloe confessed, "Beca, I've loved you for the past six years… and, at one point, I was even going to tell you. And that happened to be the very same night that we got in a giant fight and you moved across the country. And then two years passed and since that point, well…" Chloe trailed off.

"Chlo, why didn't you say something?" Beca asked, her voice cracking, indicating that she was on the verge of tears.

Beca couldn't believe her own ears. Six years? Had Beca really been so dense as to ignore something that had been going on for that long? Six years ago, well, Beca was a freshman in college. She couldn't bear the thought that she had been breaking Chloe's heart for even one day, much less six whole years.

Chloe shrugged, trying to downplay the magnitude of her words as she answered, "After that night, I spent the next several years strongly in denial. It wasn't until recently that I realized I never actually stopped loving you. And at that point, I… I didn't think you felt the same way about me. So I was waiting until tonight to tell you." Chloe elaborated by adding, "I didn't want my heart to get stomped on while I still had this wedding to plan."

"God," Beca muttered, deeply troubled, blinking to keep the impending tears from spilling. "I'm so
"sorry. I… I wish I could change things. I wish I had just…"

"Becs, it's okay," Chloe advised gently, nodding her head.

"Is it?"

"We can't beat ourselves up over what we can't change," Chloe answered, taking Beca's hands in her own and giving them a small squeeze. "We're together now, right? Isn't that what matters?"

Chloe asked, a genuine smile gracing her face.

Beca looked deeply into Chloe's cerulean blue eyes. After a moment of silence, Beca acquiesced, "No, you're right. We're together now. And I guess I'm glad that I finally opened up my eyes and…"

"Saw the sign?" Chloe supplied with a playful wink.

"I know where you sleep, Beale," Beca warned lightly, a smirk gracing her face.

"With you? In your room?" Chloe asked with pure joy as she bumped noses with Beca.

Beca couldn't stop herself from grinning as she wrapped her arms around Chloe pulled her close, only now realizing that she intensely craved the feeling of Chloe's lips against her own.

"I love you," Beca whispered against Chloe's lips as she closed the gap and felt Chloe's soft lips on her own.

Each girl sighed into the kiss, both totally exhilarated and completely relieved. They had been through so many ups and downs together over the years. Finally, at long last, it was over. They had figured it out. Wrapped in the other's embrace was the one other person that each girl wanted and needed more than words could explain.

**********************************************************************************************************************************************************************************

Earlier that day:

"So when is Aubrey and Bec-" Emily cut herself off before she could finish the thought. It was a classic foot in mouth situation. She hadn't meant to bring Beca up in front of Chloe. As far as Emily knew, none of the Bellas knew too much about what was currently going on with them. Most, if not all, of the Bellas knew that Chloe and Beca had hooked up at Amy's bachelorette party. And now, all of the Bellas knew about Beca's song. It didn't take a genius to put two and two together and figure out that things between Beca and Chloe weren't going well.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to… sorry," Emily stammered, her face turning a shade of pink as she stared down at her sandals.

The other Bellas stared off in various directions and remained silent, none of them quite knowing how to address this awkward situation. Chloe was their friend. But so was Beca. They weren't going to take sides and didn't want to get in the middle of whatever was happening with Beca and Chloe.

Chloe, choosing not to dwell in the obvious discomfort that had fallen upon things, smiled, trying to make light of the situation, even though she felt like she was dying on the inside. "It's okay, Em," Chloe told Emily, bumping shoulders with the younger girl. "She's not Voldemort. We can say her name."

"And to answer your question," Chloe continued as she glanced down at her phone, "Beca and Aubrey should already be here… And so should Amy and Bumper, for that matter," Chloe added
with a small frown. Where on earth were Bumper and Amy?

"God knows where those two are," CR said, shaking her head. "Amy and Bumper, that is," she clarified, glancing nervously around at the group of Bellas.

Today was the day before Amy and Bumper's wedding. Currently, the wedding party was supposed to be convening in the hotel ballroom to practice the wedding precession. As a wedding planner, Chloe always found that running a wedding rehearsal the day before made things operate more smoothly during the wedding itself. That is, things would run more smoothly… if Aubrey, Amy, Bumper, and Beca were present. God. Beca. Chloe trailed off into thought and sighed heavily.

As Chloe exhaled, she suddenly realized how completely exhausted she felt. Chloe had scarcely slept a wink in the past two days. She told herself it was because of all the busyness involved in planning Amy's wedding. That was what she told herself, anyway. And in large part, this was the truth. Chloe couldn't imagine that any other wedding in this world involved live dingoes, wallabies, and koalas. This was a first and last, Chloe hoped sincerely. Her preferred activities did not involve wrangling wild animals.

Despite her constant busyness, Beca was slipping through the cracks and occupying every free thought not regarding Amy's wedding. Chloe couldn't escape it. No amount of live Australian wildlife could distract her from Beca. No amount of edible floral arrangements. No amount of every other tireless and ridiculous request from Amy and Bumper could stop Chloe's mind, in the middle of the night, from thinking about kissing her, holding her, simply being with her. Nothing could distract her from how fucking mad she was at Beca. From how confused she felt. She couldn't avoid hearing Beca's song on the radio. It was all too much.

Meanwhile, Beca wasn't boding much better. She had spent the past two days dodging questions from what felt like every person on the planet regarding the subject of her song. Despite her refusal to answer anyone's prying questions, the press, somehow or another, had figured out that Beca's song was about none other than Chloe. It was maddening to the point Beca couldn't sleep, much less think about anything else. Articles were appearing all over the Internet, resurfacing Beca and Chloe's rendezvous in Las Vegas and linking it to Beca's recent chart-topping hit.

Currently, Beca, Jesse, and Aubrey were all flying over from Los Angeles to Atlanta for Amy's wedding. Not unusually, they were late. Beca sat anxiously on the plane, looking out the window as her hands fiddled idly in her lap and her leg restlessly bounced up and down. Aubrey, who was sitting next to Beca on the airplane, noticed that Beca seemed particularly nervous.

"Beca, you're fidgeting," Aubrey observed, not bothering to glance up from the book she was reading.

"Am I?" Beca asked nonchalantly, her eyelid involuntarily twitching from the lack of sleep she had experienced over the past two days.

"Yes. And you're twitching," Jesse added, leaning across Aubrey to meet Beca's gaze. Jesse was sitting in the aisle seat, next to Aubrey.

"Gee, thanks for bringing that up," Beca answered Jesse flatly.

"You seem on edge," Jesse responded.

"Probably because the amount of caffeine I've consumed over the past forty-eight hours is lethal," Beca fired back, her eyelid involuntarily twitching again. Not sleeping for two days necessitated
large quantities of caffeine, Beca was learning.

Aubrey piped up, "Well maybe you should try listening to your body and actually getting some sleep." Aubrey was entering lecture mode. "You know," Aubrey continued, "When I used to have problems with my gag reflex, it took a level of mindfulness to realize that I could control what triggered-
"

"Jesus, here we go," Beca thought to herself, tuning out Aubrey's irritating lecture.

What felt like three hours later, Aubrey concluded, "-And I haven't thrown up in three years." Beca raised her eyebrows in mock interest.

"Knock on wood," Beca answered, her eyelid twitching a third time.

"God, Be-caw," Jesse interjected. "That twitch makes you look like a sociopath… Or, a uni-bomber or something."

Woah, dude, don't use the 'B' word on an airplane," Beca whispered, trying to hush Jesse down.

"Be-caw? We've discussed this and I thought you were fine with it now," Jesse answered, his eyebrows furrowing in confusion.

"The other 'B' word," Beca answered. Jesse looked blankly at Beca.

"Bomb," Beca emphasized in a harsh whisper, when it became clear that Jesse wasn't understanding her.

"Dude, come on, just because I say the word 'bomb' doesn't mean that the TSA is going to unleash upon me like drones," Jesse responded, emphasizing the word "bomb" with air quotes.

"Don't test fate," Aubrey interjected, taking Beca's side as she warned Jesse.

"It's not like I'm going around yelling 'I have bombs in my bag!'" Jesse said, waving his hands comically above his head.

The next thing Beca saw was a man out of the corner of her eye, approaching Jesse. Shit. This wasn't good. This wasn't good at all.

The man introduced himself, saying, "I'm Air Marshall Kevin and sir, I'm going to have to ask you to come with me." It didn't take more than a moment before Air Marshall Kevin was forcing Jesse up from his airplane seat.

"Wait!" Jesse protested, fighting back, "I said I DIDN'T have bombs. This is being taken completely out of context!" He persisted animatedly as the other airline passengers began talking nervously and animatedly amongst themselves.

"Dude, calm down!" Beca yelled to Jesse, as Jesse continued to unsuccessfully free himself from Air Marshall Kevin's strong grasp. "That's not making this even slightly better!" Beca added.

"But I don't have bombs!" Jesse repeated in exasperation, as the Air Marshall began handcuffing Jesse and dragging him ceremoniously through the aisle and to the front of the plane. The other passengers were in a tizzy by this point, all screaming, crying, or pulling out their cell phones and beginning to dial their loved ones.

"FOR FUCK'S SAKE JESSE, JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!" Aubrey screamed at the top of her
lungs, effectively silencing the every single person on the entire airplane.

What had been chaos moments before, now turned into utter silence, as every person turned his or her focus to Aubrey. A moment passed before Aubrey hiccupped. Oh no, this wasn't good. Beca prepared for the inevitable as she scrambled to get a barf bag ready. Beca knew exactly where this was going. Aubrey hiccupped a second time, and then a third, before projectile vomiting all over the airplane.

Beca quickly opened one of the barf bags, which had been situated on the back of Aubrey's seat. As it happened, Beca wasn't nearly quick enough to avoid the return of Aubrey's breakfast. Some (most) of Aubrey's breakfast embedded itself on the back of the airplane seat in front of her.

People on the airplane began screaming as Aubrey continued spewing voluminous amounts of vomit on the airplane seats, the aisle, and even the passengers. Beca wasn't sure if the crowd reaction was due to a mistaken belief that a terrorist was among them, or if was due to Aubrey's spot-on impression of Niagara Falls. It was probably both. Beca was stunned. As if it weren't already stunning enough that Jesse was getting 'arrested' on an airplane, it had been years since Aubrey had vomited from nerves.

"So much for knocking on wood," Beca thought to herself.

Jesse, apparently, realized the magnitude of the situation, because he subsequently shut up and allowed himself to be detained. Jesse spent the rest of the flight, in cuffs, sitting dejectedly next to Air Marshall Kevin on the front row of the plane. Beca meanwhile, spent the rest of the flight soothing Aubrey with calm words and trying to keep her from giving the airplane an encore performance.

It seemed Aubrey's little regurgitation shower had caused many of the other airline passengers to become sick themselves. The duration of the flight largely consisted of one passenger after another endlessly barfing. One triggered another, which triggered another. This was, hands down, the absolute worst flight Beca had endured.

Once the flight ended, Aubrey and Beca couldn't leave the flight quickly enough. Beca tried to ignore the cacophony of angry looks coming from the other passengers. After exiting the flight, Aubrey and Beca waited for Jesse near the baggage claim. They weren't quite sure what was going to happen to him and Aubrey, in particular, was up in arms. It really put Beca's issues in perspective, she thought. Yes, Beca was freaking out about seeing Chloe, but at least she wasn't being interrogated by the TSA for potential terrorism. And at least she hadn't started a chain reaction of perpetual vomiting on an airplane.

Roughly an hour passed and at long last, Jesse was released and met back up with Beca and Aubrey. Aubrey, momentarily forgetting her anger towards Jesse, rushed up and embraced him in a hug.

"What the fuck was that, Jesse?" Beca seethed as Aubrey released Jesse from her grasp.

"I am so sorry," Jesse said genuinely, his big brown eyes filled with remorse. "Look, I didn't mean to upset either of you and I promise I won't do it again. Really."

"You'd better not," Beca muttered, stewing in her own anger.

"So what happened, Jess? Are you going to be okay?" Aubrey asked sternly, crossing her arms in front of her.
Jesse sighed heavily. "I'll probably go on a special TSA flag list from now on, but they decided not to charge me with anything. I explained how it was a mistake and after intense interrogation and more than a few pat-downs, they let me go."

Aubrey pursed her lips together sternly before finally answering, "Please never do that to me again, okay?"


"Well, I still hate you," Beca interjected. Jesse couldn't woo Beca with hugs and kisses.

Jesse was an adult, arguably a smart one, although his recent actions might indicate otherwise. He definitely should have known better than to start yelling the word 'bomb' on an airplane. That was a serious thing.

Jesse punched Beca's arm. "I'll make it up to you, I promise," he said.

"Ow!" Beca recoiled, holding her arm in pain. "Damn. Prison's changed you."

Aubrey stepped in, breaking up the spat, "Okay, you two can continue bickering like siblings once we're in the cab. We need to be at the hotel in..." Aubrey trailed off, looking down at her watch, "Negative ten minutes from now."

They were running late. Aubrey, Jesse, and Beca high-tailed it to the hotel. The other Bellas, along with the other Treblemakers, had all arrived to Atlanta by this point. A flustered, smelly, vomit-encrusted trio finally came bursting into the corridor of the hotel lobby. As they entered the lobby, every set of eyes immediately descended upon them.

Beca's stomach dropped what felt like three flights of stairs as she entered the hotel lobby and suddenly forgot the excitement of the plane ride. In this moment, the sole thought on Beca's mind was Chloe. Beca's stomach churned. She hadn't seen Chloe since that song had been released. And her twenty unanswered phone calls indicated that this wasn't going to be a happy reunion. Beca swallowed hard as she blinked, meeting the gaze of eleven Bellas, among other various wedding guests.

"Amigos!" Flo exclaimed, breaking the ice as she rushed to embrace Beca, Aubrey, and Jesse.

"Ohhhh..." She stopped herself from hugging them, as she came close enough to the three to realize they smelled like vomit. "You smell like food poisoning," she added, scrunching up her nose.

"Yeah," Jesse trailed off uncomfortably, "We've had a bit of a day."

"Looks like it," Ashley observed, meeting Jessica's gaze and raising her eyebrows.

Beca pursed her lips, denoting discomfort as she allowed her gaze to peruse the crowd and find the one person... There she was. Chloe. Looking at Beca that way she did. That way that made Beca's heart stop in time. That way that made Beca forget that time existed at all. Weirdly, Beca felt as though she could capture this moment in a Polaroid and relive it forever. Which didn't make things any easier, as the pain of the situation set in. Yes, she looked completely gorgeous and perfect in her slim black dress. Yes, Beca was undeniably attracted to her. But there was no denying that Chloe did not look happy to see Beca. And it hurt Beca more than she thought to realize that Chloe's steely gaze wasn't angry. No, Chloe's gaze wasn't angry at all. It was a look of utter sadness. Chloe broke her gaze from Beca.
"Maybe you want a moment to drop your bags off and shower?" Emily asked kindly, interrupting the long moment of silence that had befallen the crowd.

"Yes," Jesse answered, "We will most definitely need to shower off." Jesse squeezed Aubrey's hand gently.

"Sorry to hold things up," Beca added as an uncomfortable afterthought.

"Don't worry about it," CR responded with a wave of her hand. "We can't do the wedding ceremony without Amy and Bumper anyhow."

"Wait, where are they?" Beca asked.

"No one knows," Chloe answered, staring past Beca as she answered aloud.

Simultaneously, Chloe and Beca's heart each skipped a beat, though neither girl knew the other's had. Chloe intentionally kept herself from looking at Beca, fearing the impending flood of emotions, which would erupt if she let herself truly acknowledge the other girl.

"Well," Jesse butted in, "We'll be back down here as soon as we shower and change. Happy hunting for the happy couple."

And with that, the trio shuffled past the crowd, all parting ways to let the vomit-covered people past them with ease. They all got on the elevator. Aubrey and Jesse got off on the third floor. Beca got off on the fourth floor. As Beca was walking past Room 420, on the way to her hotel room, the door quickly opened and an arm grabbed Beca by the collar, yanking her inside.

Beca screamed. "HELP, I'M BEING KIDNAPPED-"

A hand forcefully covering her mouth, silenced Beca. Beca continued screaming, the resulting sound consisting of muffled nonsense.

"Much better," a familiar voice said calmly, shutting the door to Room 420 behind her.

Beca whipped around angrily, meeting the face of her surprise captor. Beca knew that voice. That distinct voice belonged to none other than-

"It's only me. Your favorite Tasmanian-American," Amy said with a wide smile, ignoring the fact that Beca was on the verge of a heart attack from being snatched and pulled into a seemingly random hotel room.

"Christ!" Beca exclaimed, "You can't just do that! I thought I was being kidnapped!"

"Kind of a funny word, isn't it?" Amy asked, effectively undermining any of the legitimate anger Beca felt in this particular moment. "Kidnapping? Because you aren't really a kid and nobody is napping."

Beca looked at Amy in stunned silence, realizing for the first time, that Amy wasn't wearing ordinary clothing. No, Amy was wearing her wedding dress.

"Amy, you look… shit," Beca said, noticing a large stain that looked like red wine running down the front of Amy's dress. "What in God's name have you done?"

"Uhhhhhh…" Amy trailed off. "That's kind of why I need you right now. Because of this stain."

"Amy," Beca began again cautiously as she asked evenly, "What sort of stain are we working
with?"

Amy paused before answering, "Well, Bumper and I were sort of, getting fresh in between the sheets," Amy began. "We were getting to know one another… intimately. Doing the dirty. I was the mayonnaise to his ham sandwich, if you catch my drift-"

"Yeah, Amy, your drift is coming through about as subtly as a tornado in a trailer park," Beca answered, interrupting Amy. "But what's that got to do with the wine stain?"

"Well, uh, it's not a wine stain."

"Jesus. Is it blood?" Beca asked dryly.

Amy said nothing.

" Fucking tell me this isn't blood," Beca demanded.

"Well… it's not not blood."


"You okay there, short stack?" Amy asked, as Beca began hyperventilating. "I thought I was the one in crisis here," Amy added.

"Just… Just. Call… Chloe," Beca panted, clutching onto the wall for support as she cast her eyes down to the floor.

"Don't lose your lunch there, Shawshank," Amy warned as she dialed Chloe's number.

It was only a matter of minutes before Chloe arrived at Amy's room. She walked in to a distressed Amy in a stained wedding dress and a pale-looking Beca, curled up in a ball on the foot of Amy's bed.

"Okay, which fire am I putting out first?" Chloe asked, looking between Beca and Amy.

"I'm fine," Beca said in a small voice. "Do Amy."

"Well, uh," Amy began as Chloe looked over to Amy's wedding dress, "Bumper and I were having some sexy times and he hit his head on the headboard over there and, uh, he's gone off to the ER to get some stitches on his bloody, busted up forehead…" Amy trailed off.

"Urgh!" Beca involuntarily groaned, trying not to picture the situation. Beca stood up, lightheaded, as she attempted to stumble her way into the restroom.

"Woah, there," Chloe grabbed Beca, who was not steady on her feet. "Sit," Chloe ordered Beca. Beca did as she was told. "Now, count out loud for me, backwards from one hundred," Chloe instructed.

"One hundred, ninety-nine-" Amy began.

"No, no, not you, Amy. Beca," Chloe clarified.

"Right. I was going to say, I don't know how that's going to help with this massive blood stain-"
"Ame?" Chloe asked, noticed that Beca's pale face had just grown a shade paler at the mention of the word "blood". "Let's stop saying the 'B' word around Beca."

To Beca, Chloe said, "Beca? Start counting for me."

Beca looked at the wall and did as she was told while Chloe turned her attention back to Amy.

"Alright, Amy, the dress needs to come off," Chloe commanded.

Amy and Chloe got the wedding dress off Amy while Beca looked at the wall and continued counting. Finally, once the dress was off, Chloe put it back in the zipper dress-bag in which it came.

Chloe told Amy, "I'm going to go wash this off, okay? It'll need to dry overnight, but will be totes ready to wear tomorrow, I promise. The day-of coordinator will make sure it's back in your hands tomorrow morning."

"Thanks, Ginger."

"You're welcome," Chloe answered genuinely. "And Beca?"

"Hm?" Beca asked. Chloe noticed that her distraction had seemed to work and that most of the color was back on Beca's face.

"Are you feeling better?"

"Much," Beca answered. "Thanks."

Chloe nodded and promptly left to go tend to Amy's bloody wedding dress.

Once Chloe was gone, Beca asked Amy, "So you've hired a day-of wedding coordinator? Is that not excessive?"

"Erm, yeah. We figured since Red was in the wedding, she should be with us tomorrow. So we've hired someone to come in tomorrow and make sure Red's plans all go off without a hitch. More quality time with the Ginger isn't a bad thing, eh?" Amy asked, winking and nudging Beca with her elbow.

Beca shrugged. Amy waggled her eyebrows suggestively.

"Dude, stop being weird," Beca deflected.

"Ah, come off it, I know that you and Red are 'bhloe-ing' together."

"What does that even… that's not a thing."

"You can't pull the wool over Fat Amy's eyes, short stack," Amy began with a smile as she waved off Beca's words. "I saw you shacking up with Red at my bachelorette party. And I've also heard your very sad, emo-like song on the radio."

Beca said nothing.

"So tell me how you blew it with her," Amy insisted.

"Who says I blew it?"
"Your song says you blew it," Amy pointed out. "And also, Chloe looks like she wants to finish you like a cheesecake."

"Yeah, she does kind of look like that," Beca agreed dejectedly. Although Chloe had been more than helpful with Beca just now, her demeanor had been a bit sharp.

"Well, short stuff, all that means is that you've got to apologize. You know… Fix the hole in the 'bhloe.'"

"Easier said than done. I think I fucked things up beyond repair this time," Beca confessed, fidgeting with her hands as she stared down at her lap and furrowed her eyebrows, trying her best not to start crying.

"Aw, come off your little pity party," Amy reassured. "Underneath it all, you've got a big, fat heart. Maybe even fatter than my own… well, maybe not. But you're a close second."

Beca raised her eyebrows at Amy.

"And I think you can fix this, little bit," Amy considered carefully, showcasing a rare, contemplative side of Amy, "All you need is some of my butt confidence."

"No. None of that. Please," Beca said, laughing lightly.

Amy rubbed her hand across the butt of her jeans and brought her hand around to pat Beca. "Come here, short stuff."

"No!" Beca protested, backing away from Amy.

"Take it," Amy insisted, holding her hand out toward Beca. "It's my wedding tomorrow. So you have to do what I say."

Beca relented, allowing Amy to rub her 'butt confidence' all over Beca's body.

"I don't have to do this," Beca grumbled, mostly to herself. "Considering that Reggie Mitch's shit is all fucking over eBay."

"Yeah, aca-believe that people keep buying it all," Amy said, once she finished her job on Beca. Beca didn't feel like telling Amy that Beca was the person purchasing all of Reggie Mitch's stuff. She didn't have the heart to rain on Amy's parade like that.

"Yeah, me either," Beca answered flatly, standing up and preparing to leave Amy's hotel room.

"You going to get your girl?" Amy asked, propping herself up from the bed on one elbow.

"Maybe once I'm not covered in Aubrey's vomit…" Beca answered, looking down at herself. Meanwhile, Aubrey noticed a more frazzled than usual Chloe bustling through the hallway. She was holding a zipped up dress bag in one hand. As she was passing Aubrey in the hallway, Chloe made eye contact with the blonde, motioning for Aubrey to follow her.

"Bree? Have you got a moment?" Chloe asked, not slowing down her stride.

"Sure, what do you need?" Aubrey asked, following alongside her best friend, practically running to keep up the pace.
"Amy's dress is blood stained."

"What?" Aubrey asked in abject horror.

"You don't want to know," Chloe added.

"Why was she wearing her dress before the wedding day?" Aubrey asked.

"I didn't ask," Chloe responded.

"That's probably for the best," Aubrey agreed.

"So in between this, a nearly-fainted maid of honor, and everything else, I'm spread a little thin," Chloe confessed.

"Beca fainted?"

"Nearly. She gets squeamish."

"Uh huh. So you and her..." Aubrey said, setting Chloe up to elaborate.

"Bree, I- I can't. I know I need to talk to Beca, but I'm going to start crying if I talk about it right now. And right now, I owe it to Amy to be..." Chloe's eyes began welling with tears as her breathing turned into loud heaves.

"Chloe," Aubrey soothed, wrapping Chloe in a tight hug. "Breathe, okay? I'm sorry I brought it up. Take care of the wedding tasks and once today is over, then you can worry about this. One thing at a time."

Chloe nodded. "One thing at a time. I can talk to Beca tomorrow... and then let her finish stomping my heart."

"Chloe," Aubrey responded. "You and I both know that's not going to happen."

"I'm done playing games, Bree," Chloe said resolutely. "I'm done waiting for her to want to be with me."

Chloe sighed, unsure what else there even was to say. Luckily, she was saved from the bell because at that moment, Chloe's phone started buzzing. Another fire to put out.

To Aubrey, Chloe apologized, "Hey Bree, I gotta run down to the ballroom real quick and put out another fire. I hate to ask this, but could you..." Chloe's trailed off, holding out the blood-stained dress toward Aubrey.

Aubrey answered knowingly, "Heard you loud and clear, Chloe. Let me take care of the dress, I'm sure club soda will do wonders."

"Thanks, Bree, you're such a life saver," Chloe said handing the dress off to Aubrey. "I need to run, but I'll see you at the rehearsal dinner, yeah?" Chloe asked as she rushed out of the hotel room and on to her next task.

Another hour passed until finally, Bumper was back from the hospital with seven stitches on his forehead. Chloe knew there wasn't enough time to do a full run though of the wedding, so quickly walked Amy and Bumper through the process before sending them upstairs to get ready for the rehearsal dinner. The rest of the afternoon passed just as quickly as Chloe handled one emergency after the next.
The rehearsal dinner was held in a swanky restaurant located in downtown Atlanta. There was a piano in the restaurant's lobby and a large, crystal chandelier. The rehearsal dinner guests were ushered into a large, closed off, private room for the dinner. The tables were covered with expensive tablecloths and soft jazz music played in the background. This was one of the nicer restaurants Beca had ever been to, she mused.

As Beca walked into the crowded private room with the other Bellas and Treblemakers, her eyes immediately zeroed in on Chloe. Chloe hadn't noticed Beca's arrival, as she was simultaneously on the phone and on her Ipad. Chloe seemed so perfectly in her element. Not to mention that watching the redhead as the in-charge boss was a massive turn-on.

When Chloe got off the phone, she looked up from her Ipad. It was nearly time to get on with the rehearsal dinner. The first person she noticed was Beca, looking drop-dead sexy in her rose gold dress. Chloe inhaled sharply, averting her eyes. She couldn't help herself from feeling overcome with desire for the other girl, despite her resolution to end this weird, angry fling she had going on with Beca. Of course Beca had to look irresistible tonight.

Before either girl could begin thinking about approaching the other, the bride and groom-to-be, as well as the in-laws, turned up for the rehearsal.

"I'm here and ready to rehearse, pitches!" Amy bellowed, effectively drawing the entire room's attention toward her.

"And I'm here, too, and ready to pitch slap this rehearsal into the ground!" Bumper yelled, just as enthusiastically as he high-fived Amy.

Beca smiled. Although she had her reservations about Bumper, she marveled at how perfectly they complemented one another. No other person on this planet could even come close to keeping up with Amy.

Beca soon realized that she had been placed at a table with Stacie, Marcus, Aubrey, Jesse, Flo, Flo's date, and Chloe. It didn't escape Beca's notice that she had essentially been coupled off with Chloe.

"Wow, Beca, you're looking drop dead sexy. Where'd you get the dress?" Stacie asked, ogling Beca up and down as they made their way to the dinner table.

Beca's snug, light pink dress was both sexy and conservative at the same time. Her hair fell in soft waves around her face and an elegant smoky eye further accentuated her grey eyes.

"I'm not sure," Beca answered Stacie honestly. "One of my assistants bought it for me... how awful is that, right? Like, I hate myself having just said that."

"It's not your fault you're busy changing the world one song at a time," Marcus, Stacie's boyfriend, pointed out.

"Coming from the ER doctor," Beca joked as she sat down at the dinner table. "Seriously, you do way more than I ever could."

"Ah, nonsense," Marcus said, with a wave of his hand as he found his own seat. "You've just gotta be okay with a lot of blood and broken bones."

"Urgh," Beca shuddered, groaning.

"You alright Beca?" Stacie asked.
"I just hate the 'B' word," Beca confessed.

"Bomb?" Jesse asked cluelessly, interjecting himself in the conversation.

"The other 'B' word… you bastard," Beca spat back sarcastically.

"Bastard?" Flo guessed triumphantly.

"Blood," Aubrey confirmed, as Beca groaned a second time.

"Beca had a bit of a mishap today," Chloe said across the table to Stacie as she took her seat.

It wasn't until Chloe had spoken before Beca truly got a good look at the other girl. She was wearing a stunning emerald green dress and looked positively radiant. Beca lost her train of thought, as she involuntarily ogled Chloe.

"You look beautiful, Chlo," Beca complimented genuinely, unable to take her eyes away from Chloe.

Chloe smiled, her nose crinkling. Even though her heart felt like it was broken into a million tiny pieces, she still couldn't help the fact that her heart leaped over Beca's words. That she still loved it when Beca noticed her.


Beca frowned. Chloe wouldn't be calling her 'Beca' unless she was upset.

"When are you going to tell me what's up?" Beca whispered to Chloe, as the rest of the table continued conversing amongst themselves.

"Funny. I thought you should be the one to tell me that, seeing as how your song completely blindsided me the other day."

"Maybe I could have if you hadn't been ignoring my phone calls," Beca fired back.

Chloe narrowed her eyes at Beca.

"Look," Beca continued, softening her tone, "You've got to understand that I never wanted that song to be released… it was a- a thing I did to cope with the fight you and I had several weeks ago. I'm so sorry, I never wanted you to be dragged in the middle-"

Beca's apology was interrupted by a group of waiters putting plates of salad in front of each of the dinner guests. Beca huffed as the waiter leaned his arm between Beca and Chloe and put the plate of leafy greens in front of Beca.

"Beca," Chloe whispered sternly, once the waiter was gone and the rest of the table had resumed conversations amongst themselves, "Save the apology. I'm half of the equation here and I know the consequences of my actions."

"Dude, so why are you ignoring me then?" Beca asked, her dark blue eyes searching Chloe's for the answer to her question.

Chloe sighed. It probably wasn't fair that she was totally shutting Beca out. After all, Beca hadn't done anything wrong. It wasn't her fault that she didn't return any of Chloe's feelings.
"I've got a lot on my mind," Chloe confessed. "And I think we should talk… later. Maybe after dinner tonight," Chloe said, staring down at her plate.

"Okay," Beca answered nodding. Beca nudged Chloe's shoulder lightly. "I'm holding you to that."

Chloe bit down on her bottom lip and cast her eyes towards the table. It was really hard pretending like everything was fine, when the girl you were in love with was sitting next to you, looking gorgeous. Beca didn't know that every time she even looked at Chloe, her heart broke a little more. Sighing, Chloe resolved to try her hardest to hold herself together for the next several hours.

The rehearsal dinner was peppered with stolen glances. As much as Chloe tried to distance herself from Beca, Beca was just too charming. Chloe had almost begun deluding herself into thinking that Beca and her stood a chance. Shaking her head, she cast the thought from her mind. It was only wishful thinking. Partway through the dinner, Amy motioned Beca up to the stage at the front of the room. It was time for the toast.

Beca, in her elegant dress, made her way alone to the front of the room. She had to adjust the microphone down a few notches so that it would accommodate her short stature. Beca eyed around the room, which had grown silent. Smiling, Beca opened up her heart and begun speaking the speech that her mind had prepared over the past few weeks.

"As long as I've known her, Amy has had a personality that lights up this world. You may not know this, but one of the first things she ever told me was that, in high school, she had done a very Jewish rendition of 'Fiddler on the Roof' with some Aboriginals," Beca paused a moment for the laughter to pass.

"Right, so that's when I knew that Amy wasn't like any other person I had ever met. I've found that not only is she one of the funniest and most entertaining people I know, but I've also come to experience over the years that she's one of the most caring." Amy smiled at Beca, nodding her on to continue.

"So, uh, yeah. I'm really, truly honored to call her one of my best friends. She's been a listening ear when I needed to talk, a fountain of knowledge when I needed to listen, and a never-ending supply of butt confidence... which is still a thing that kind of weirds me out," Beca admitted, while the crowd laughed a second time.

"That being said, there aren't many people I'd deem worthy of everything that Amy deserves. But Bumper, you are. When Amy met you, I could tell that she immediately took to you. You're the one person in this world that can keep up with her. You balance one another out. You belong together."

At this point, both Amy and Bumper were trying their best to hold back tears. "Your love for the other is true and in fact, got me thinking about what love is in the first place. It's unconditional acceptance. It's togetherness. It's knowing that you can get through anything together."

Although Beca was now at the end of her rehearsed speech, she was suddenly inspired to keep talking. She hadn't planned to say any of the things that she now found herself saying. Rather, these words poured straight from Beca's heart. She wasn't realizing the truth they held until they left her mouth.

"Love is like titanium. You know, if you look it up," Beca continued thoughtfully, "Titanium has a larger strength-to-density ratio than any other metallic element. Its strength far defies perception. Love is kind of like that, too," Beca mused, only now becoming aware that she was looking straight at Chloe as she spoke these words.
Chloe looked straight back at Beca, as Beca continued, "Nothing can break its endurance. 'Shoot me down, but I won't fall, I am titanium.' At least I think that's how the song goes."

At this point, Chloe's eyes were welling up with tears, as she used every might to hold herself together. Beca, upon seeing Chloe, began feeling much the same way. A single tear rolled down Beca's left cheek. She wiped the tear away and continued.

"To Amy and Bumper, whose love is strong as titanium, always and forever, no matter what," Beca finished, raising a glass, as her eyes still locked on Chloe.

Suddenly, it hit her overwhelmingly and as strong as an atomic bomb. Why hadn't Beca known it until now? It had taken her saying these words aloud to Chloe's face before she was hit by the truth of it.

"I'm in love with Chloe," Beca thought with stunned realization.

As soon as Beca's speech was over than the toast had been made, Beca looked back over to Chloe. Her heart sank as she noticed an empty chair where Chloe should have been sitting.

As Beca stepped off the stage and returned to her table, she immediately honed in on Stacie. "Where's Chloe?" Beca demanded.

"She said she needed a moment alone. She stepped out for a moment," Stacie had answered honestly. Beca ran out the ballroom door without pause.

Beca quickly found Chloe, sitting on the piano bench in nearly-empty entrance area of the restaurant.

As Chloe sat at the piano bench, she took a small moment to herself. Without intending to let her mind wander, it did. Chloe loved weddings, she really did. But something about them made her a little sad, at times. Normally, Chloe could push these sad feelings away and focus on the happiness. Today was not one of those days.

Beca had just said the exact words that twisted the knife in Chloe's heart even further. It reminded Chloe of what she was missing. She felt it so deeply and intensely down to her core. She loved Beca, more than she thought was possible. And Beca didn't love her back. Never would she stand at the altar, her own hands intertwined with Beca's delicate hands. Never would she smile with pure delight as she kissed Beca, sealing the promised vows they made to one another. Never would Beca be her wife. Never would she share a life with Beca.

These thoughts burned through Chloe's heart as she began pecking at the piano keys in a melancholy manner, sounding out the tune to "Pachelbel's Canon." Messing up, she started again. She wasn't a pianist, by any stretch of the imagination, but she knew her way around the instrument. Well enough to sound out a song every now and again.

Beca, meanwhile, had just entered the ballroom. She took a moment just to take in Chloe, watching her adorably pecking around on the piano, clumsily sounding out "Pachelbel's Canon." Chloe's eyebrows furrowed in frustration as she missed a key and started over. Beca smiled, her heart swelling as she watched in adoration. Chloe's determination was one of Beca's favorite things about the other girl. Beca watched on for several more moments before snapping out of her small trance and making her way across the room to where Chloe was seated.

"You've got some talent there," Beca observed, sitting down gingerly beside Chloe on the piano bench. "Do you play?"
Chloe dropped her hands from the keys of the piano, her big blue eyes filled with despair.

"Not really," Chloe answered hoarsely, continuing to inch away from the piano and from Beca.

"Wait," Beca commanded, causing Chloe to stop in her tracks. "Stay. I know you're still mad at me. But for just a minute, please. Please stay," Beca requested gently as she sat down at the piano bench.

Chloe acquiesced, sitting back down on the piano bench, faced away from the piano and away from Beca.

"You were playing 'Pachelbel's Canon,'" Beca observed as Beca's fingers quickly found the piano keys.

Seamlessly, Beca began playing the canon without a single error, making it look as effortless as breathing. Chloe tried not to feel affected by Beca's undeniable talent.

"It's a beautiful song, isn't it?" Beca asked somewhat rhetorically, her fingers still gracefully sliding along the ebony and ivory keys.

Without turning around, Chloe listened, marveling at how talented Beca was on the piano. And how, impressively, Beca could carry on a conversation while still perfectly executing the notes of the song.

"Amy and Bumper don't want it for their wedding march anymore," Chloe offered.

"Shame," Beca mused, playing on.

The two girls sat in silence for a moment, Beca still expertly hitting the notes. Suddenly, Beca's tempo slowed. She was still playing, but the leisure tempo caused the song to take on a more melancholy tone. Bittersweet almost, Chloe decided.

"You know," Beca continued as her fingers continued hitting notes, "This chord progression… it's the inspiration for a lot of other songs. It's that good."

"Is that right?" Chloe asked, curiosity getting the better of her as she found herself unable to keep from engaging Beca in conversation.

"Yeah. Like take for instance, 'Basket Case' by Green Day." Beca smirked as she began intensely banging the keys of the piano, mimicking the pop-punk tone of Green Day.

"I hear it now," Chloe agreed, becoming slightly amused and momentarily displacing her anger and sadness toward Beca. "Oh!" She pointed out, "What about that song 'Graduation' by Vitamin C?"

"That, too," Beca said with a small chuckle. Continuing the progression of Pachelbel's Canon, Beca sang out cheesily, "As we go on, we remember. All the times we, had together."

"As our lives change," Chloe picked up with a small grin, "Come whatever. We will still be, friends forever."

Chloe smiled, in spite of herself. Even when Beca was breaking her heart, Chloe couldn't deny that the girl made her smile. Beca continued playing the canon on the piano as each girl giggled over the cheesiness of the song.
"Lame. So lame," Beca said with a small smile.

Neither girl said anything for a few moments as Beca continued playing the piano. Chloe finally found the pluck to ask, "Why am I here, Beca?"

Beca sighed as she continued plucking the keys on the piano. "I'm not so good with words and feelings, Chlo. And when I realized I fucked up to the point where I might lose you... well, the point is, I can't. Lose you, that is. I haven't been very open with you. And it doesn't help that I wrote that break up song," Beca continued, focusing intently on hitting the keys on the piano.

"So, this is me letting you know what you mean to me. I want to play you the opposite of a breakup song," Beca finished, sliding the melody of Pachelbel's Canon seamlessly into the melody of Vampire Weekend's "Step."

Chloe swallowed the large lump forming in her throat, keeping her eyes focused on the hardwood floor. She didn't dare herself to look over at Beca.

Beca, it seemed, noticed the unspoken shift in tone between the two girls. When the piano melody came around, Beca began singing hauntingly beautiful words to the song. Everything about this moment was so perfect, Chloe thought as tears began rolling down her cheeks.

"Ancestors told me that their girl was better
She's richer than Croesus, she's tougher than leather
I just ignore all the tales of her past life
Stale conversation deserves but a bread knife

And punks who would laugh when they saw us together
Well, they didn't know how to dress for the weather
I can still see them there huddled on Astor
Snow falling slow to the sound of the master
The gloves are off, the wisdom teeth are out
What you on about?
I feel it in my bones, I feel it in my bones-"

Hearing the raw emotion from Beca's silky smooth voice reverberate across the room sent shivers down Chloe's spine. Something about it all was so incredibly moving. It was everything Chloe ever wanted to hear. And those particular words spilling from Beca's lips made Chloe's heart swell with desire. The lyrics were full of longing. And Love. Love so deep that there was no coming out of it.

Beca continued singing,

"Wisdom's a gift, but you'd trade it for youth
Age is an honor, it's still not the truth
We saw the stars when they hid from the world
You cursed the sun when it stepped to your girl
Maybe she's gone and I can't resurrect her
The truth is she doesn't need me to protect her-"

In that moment, Beca sang the truth that needed to be said. The reality of that lyric hit Beca hard. Beca wasn't supposed to protect Chloe if it meant closing herself off from the one person she loved most. No, the truth of the matter was that Beca was insanely in love with Chloe. And Beca didn't need to protect Chloe. She needed to love Chloe. As she continued playing on the piano, Beca cut her eyes over to Chloe's bright blue eyes, meeting their watery gaze. Beca began tearing up at the sight of Chloe.
Beca sniffled and continued singing, as Chloe joined in, harmonizing perfectly with Beca. The two girls locked eyes, trusting one to keep harmony as they took the plunge into the final chorus.

"The gloves are off, the wisdom teeth are out
What you on about?
I feel it in my bones, I feel it in my bones
The gloves are off, the wisdom teeth are out,
What are you on about?
I feel it in my bones, I feel it in my bones…"

Beca trailed off, her fingers pausing over the keys. Deciding she had finally reached her resolution, Beca lifted her fingers off the piano and dropped them limply by her side. Now was the moment, Beca thought as she sat at the piano bench with Chloe sitting beside her, facing the opposite direction and crying over the bittersweet perfection of this shared moment. Beca almost couldn't believe it had taken this long to get to this point.

There was no place else in the world Beca wanted to be. There was no one else Beca wanted to be with. This moment, here with Chloe, felt like Beca's past, present and future. This was it. Chloe was everything. Beca could feel it deep in her bones.

"Chloe?" Beca asked quietly, unable to break her gaze from Chloe.

Chloe, her eyes filled with tears, found herself unable to answer. She looked over at Beca in pure adoration as she reached out to take Beca's hand. Beca, took Chloe's hand in her own, interlocking their fingers before squeezing Chloe's hand gently.

"I love you, Chlo. I am so incredibly, head-over-heels, irrevocably in love with you," Beca finished, her eyes searching Chloe's eyes intently, for any indication as to how Chloe would respond.

It didn't take long for Chloe to process Beca's words. They were the words Chloe had wanted to hear for years now. Somehow, in this moment, the reality of it all hit her. Beca was actually confessing her love. This wasn't all in her head, although she had imagined similar fantasies thousands of times over the years. It was better than she had imagined. It was real.

Chloe launched herself at Beca. Placing one hand on either side of Beca's face, she pulled Beca in and kissed her passionately, smiling as she kept kissing Beca over and over again. Beca wrapped her arms tightly around Chloe's waist, pulling her in as the girls continued kissing. Beca flicked her tongue across the fold of Chloe's lips and Chloe opened her mouth as their tongues found one another. The moment was everything. It was more than everything, but Chloe didn't have the word to describe that feeling. Beca, the girl she loved and who loved her back, was kissing her and it felt familiar and exhilarating, all at once.

Chloe finally broke the kiss, her arms wrapped around Beca's neck. She brought their noses together so they touched. Grinning, Chloe whispered, "Becs, I love you, too. Always."

Chapter End Notes

YAY, we made it! Ah, I have a lot of feelings right now. I laughed, I cried, I laughed while crying. Ultimately, I just couldn't bear to let another chapter pass without bringing Beca and Chloe together. It just felt like the right time. So, I really hope this
chapter hits home with you all as much as it did with me. And as always, thanks for supporting me and being wonderful people.

Finally, I want to let y'all know that I've still got a few chapters left in me. I don't have any plans to stir the pot, so we're probably looking at some light-hearted times ahead.

P.S.- It goes without saying, but I don't own any rights in any of the songs I've used in this fic.
Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: There are some heavy themes in this chapter, including a flashback involving drug use and near death experience. Don't worry, no one dies. But I need to let everyone know upfront... if you're not okay reading this, that's 100% fine. We're going to be moving on in the next chapter, trigger-free!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

CHAPTER 17 (July 3, 2018)

Beca and Chloe's lips broke apart when Chloe's phone started buzzing. Amy.

"It's alright, Chlo," Beca assured as she reluctantly pulled away from Chloe. Lightly stroking Chloe's cheek, Beca continued, "We have all the time in the world."

Chloe bit her bottom lip and smiled. All the time in the world. Something about that thought was so exhilarating and comforting all at once. She was in no rush. Her and Beca were in this together for the long haul. Finally.

"You sure?" Chloe asked. "Because I'd rather keep going," Chloe answered with a playful wink. God, how she wanted to keep kissing Beca.

"Trust me, we will," Beca answered in a husky tone. "I can't wait," Beca whispered into Chloe's ear, "To get you alone."

Chloe swallowed hard as she felt intense pangs of longing throughout her body. God… Beca made her feel so heavy with desire. Taking Chloe's phone from her hand, Beca hit the 'answer' button.

"Yeah, Amy?" Beca asked into the phone.

"Erm, Shawshank?"

"You're talking to her," Beca answered with a smirk as she winked at Chloe. Chloe felt faint.

"Why are you on Chloe's phone?" Amy asked.

"Well… it's a long story, really," Beca admitted.

"Did you finally lock down that red pepper of yours?"

"Well, maybe it's not such a long story, after all," Beca said, chuckling. Amy had quite the way with words.

Chloe watched as Beca handled the phone call with Amy. Several minutes passed before Beca put the phone down and handed it back to Chloe.

"Bad news, Beale," Beca said to Chloe.

"What's that?" Chloe asked, her eyebrows furrowing with confusion.
"Amy wants five hundred red, white, and blue balloons in the reception hall tomorrow."

"What?" Chloe asked in disbelief. It was hardly fair that Amy kept springing surprises on her like that. Especially the day before the wedding. It wasn't going to be easy to finagle that. It was already after eight o' clock at night.

"Yeah. We're probably going to need to head down there right now and make it happen," Beca said with a shrug.

"We?" Chloe asked with a smile, forgetting her annoyance with Amy, as she snaked her arms around Beca's waist.

"We," Beca affirmed, hugging Chloe back. "I'm along for the ride. At your service."

"Baby, you really don't have to do that," Chloe answered before placing a chaste kiss on Beca's lips.

"Can't talk me out of this one," Beca said with a light chuckle, secretly relishing the pet name. "I'm all yours."

"All mine?" Chloe hummed, her mind running wild at the possibilities, as she ran the tip of her finger along the bridge of Beca's nose.

"You're not making it easy to stay on task," Beca pointed out, letting her eyes drop momentarily to Chloe's lips.

"Maybe we can multi-task?" Chloe asked seductively with a wink. Chloe didn't miss the look that passed over Beca as her eyes widened with surprise over Chloe's suggestion.

"God… Dammit. I want you so much right now," Beca answered, biting her bottom lip as she realized just how turned on she was.

"Becs…” Chloe trailed off, not able to resist leaning in and closing the gap between her and Beca. It seemed that she was incapable of not kissing Beca. Feeling the pull of Beca's lips against her own was exhilarating… compelling. Chloe swiped her tongue along Beca's bottom lip, seeking entrance. Beca responded willingly as she opened her mouth and began massaging Chloe's tongue with her own, moaning into the kiss. Beca's moan caused a chain reaction, leading Chloe to audibly moan over the contact with Beca. After several minutes of passionately exploring one another's mouths, Chloe reluctantly broke the kiss.

"Becs," Chloe repeated in a husky tone, "My car. Right now."

"Lead the way. I'm right behind you," Beca responded, casting a glance around the restaurant. It seemed Beca and Chloe's absence had gone largely unnoticed. Apart from Amy, no one else had called or wandered outside the private rehearsal dinner room of the restaurant.

Chloe and Beca quickly made their way through the parking lot and into Chloe's black Range Rover. After opening the back door, Chloe climbed inside, with Beca right at her heels.

"So… we're, uh, doing this in a parking lot," Beca stated halfway questioningly. Not that she cared. She didn't really think she would be able to wait to get anywhere more secluded if she wanted to. Chloe was right here, wearing that gorgeous dress, and looking at her with those big blue eyes. Beca wanted nothing more than to take Chloe and ravish her until Chloe could no longer walk straight.
"Yeah," Chloe affirmed, climbing onto Beca's lap and straddling her.

"Yeah?" Beca whispered back, unable to stop herself from reaching out and grabbing Chloe's ass, holding Chloe in place on top of Beca's lap.

Chloe's stomach churned with excitement. Beca was so irresistible, it was astounding. Chloe dipped her eyes down to Beca's lips, lingering over them. Slowly leaning in, Chloe touched their lips together.

"Oh, Becs," Chloe whispered between heated kisses.

The material on Chloe's dress had already ridden up well above her thighs as she sat on Beca's lap, straddling the smaller girl. Beca reluctantly pulled her lips away from Chloe, immediately missing the contact. Looking Chloe squarely in the eyes, Beca noticed that Chloe's chest was heaving up and down and her pupils were dilated with pure desire. Something about seeing Chloe in this heated state drove Beca crazy.

"I'm sorry, Chlo, but I gotta have you," Beca began in a husky tone as her fingertips lightly brushed the material of Chloe's lacy underwear, right underneath Chloe's clit. Chloe inhaled sharply, failing to keep from gasping lightly.

"Like, right now," Beca continued as she pushed the lacy underwear to the side and winked, before plunging a finger deep inside Chloe.

"Mmmmpf," Chloe involuntarily moaned, biting her lip as she drove her hips down on Beca's hand. She craved the feeling of Beca's finger slowly curling in and out, working its way around inside Chloe's body. A rosy blush graced Beca's cheeks as her own breathing became ragged. Watching Chloe like this… well. It was more than a turn on.

Chloe placed one hand on the back of the car seat and the other on Beca's shoulder while her head lolled back and she continued bringing herself down on Beca's hand. Beca quickly added a second finger inside Chloe, watching in satisfaction as Chloe continued unfolding around her each time her palm made contact with Chloe's core.

"Bec-" Chloe broke off, unable to continue talking as she groaned in pleasure. "Don't… stop," Chloe choked out brokenly between pants.

"I won't," Beca answered gruffly, adding a third finger inside Chloe, eliciting another gasp from the redhead.

"Chlo?" Beca asked, her tone softening somewhat.

Chloe brought her head down and met Beca's steely gray gaze, unable to say anything as she kept riding Beca.

"I love you," Beca whispered, continuing to work her fingers in and out of Chloe at a deliciously slow pace.

"I-I- ahhhhhhh," Chloe trailed off, clenching her teeth as her core involuntarily tightened around Beca's fingers. Chloe yelled as the earth shattered around her and a violent orgasm overtook her body.

With a smile, Beca continued pumping Chloe as she rode out the duration of her orgasm. When, at last, Chloe had settled, Beca reclaimed her hand, stating, "Watch out, Chlo, or you're going to shatter glass."
Chloe bit her lip, smiling, as she eased herself off Beca's lap. She leaned in and, placing one hand on either of Beca's cheeks, pulled Beca in for a kiss. "God… that was… perfect."

"I know. I was there," Beca responded with a smirk.

Chloe smiled, bringing her lips to Beca's another time, letting her hand slowly push up the rosy pink material on Beca's dress.

"Chlo," Beca stopped Chloe suddenly, placing her hand on top of Chloe's wandering hand.

"Yes?" Chloe asked, pulling away from Beca, her eyebrows furrowing.

"I really think we should pick this up later. Maybe after we do Amy's balloons?"

"Why's that?"

"Because, I just noticed…We've got an audience," Beca answered evenly.

Chloe whipped her head around and stared out the front window of her car. Beca was right. Walking out of the restaurant and through the parking lot was none other than Stacie, Marcus, Flo, Flo's date, Emily, and Benji. Upon seeing Chloe and Beca's deer-in-headlight looks, Flo and Stacie simultaneously began hooting and hollering.

Stacie cupped her hands around her mouth and playfully shouted, "Very hot, ladies!"

"Jesus Fucking Christ," Beca muttered, straightening her dress and Chloe's dress, taking extra caution to make sure neither girl was exposed.

"Si, hotter than the fire that consumed my family's chicken farm!" Flo agreed enthusiastically, nodding her head and lightly hitting Stacie's arm for reassurance.

Chloe, who was clearly unaffected by any of the attention coming their way, made a production of leaning in and giving the audience even more of a show. Chloe salaciously kissed Beca, grinning into the kiss. This action elicited further hoots and hollers from the passerby's. Beca didn't fight it, willingly letting herself fall prey to the attention surrounding her. Did she like all the attention? Probably not. But she was more than thrilled that Chloe was finally hers. And a part of her kind of wanted the world to know that.

Chloe finally broke the kiss, throwing a wink to the crowd, who offered another rowdy cheer of support before heading off to their respective cars.

"Really gave them a show there, didn't you, Beale?" Beca asked evenly.

"Maybe I just wanted everyone to know that I've bagged the hottest girl in the entire world," Chloe answered, bumping her nose against Beca's nose.

"I could say the same for you," Beca responded. Chloe beamed her signature mega-watt smile.

Beca continued, "Alright, Beale… whaddaya say? Let's go blow five hundred fucking balloons and then spend the rest of the night making up for lost time?"

"Sounds aca-awesome," Chloe emphasized enthusiastically.

"Great. Let's aca-do this thing." Urgh, Beca internally groaned. Did she really just use the word 'aca?'

Chloe grinned. "I'm rubbing off on you," she teased happily as she made her way to the driver's
"In more ways than one, it seems," Beca observed dryly, crawling into the passenger's seat.

"Aw, Becs, you know at some point or another you just have to own it," Chloe answered playfully, turning on the ignition to her car.

"There's nothing to own," Beca pointed out.

"Oh, sure there is," Chloe responded in a sing-songy voice.

"Nope."

"Admit it. You're an aca-nerd."

"That's not a thing, and no… I'm not an aca-nerd. Nerd. Dammit!"

"You so are," Chloe goaded playfully, as she put her car into drive and began driving from the restaurant and toward the reception hall.

"God, woman, you're insufferable!" Beca accused, mostly jokingly as she bit down on her lip to keep from smiling.

"And you're stubborn… Typical Leo, I suppose," Chloe mused, shaking her head as she beamed.

"What's that?" Beca asked.

"Leo, you know, the horoscope."

Beca looked at Chloe blankly.

"You know what a horoscope is, yes?"

"Yeah, I know about it. But isn't that something pre-teens with a propensity for buying cheap jewelry at Claire's believe in? I'm pretty sure the last time I ever discussed my horoscope was when I was buying a necklace with a lion on it from Claire's," Beca responded sarcastically.

"Okay, so you don't believe in soul mates and you don't believe in horoscopes. What do you believe in?" Chloe asked.

"The power of breakfast food and emotional repression, mostly," Beca shot back automatically without a second thought.

Chloe shot Beca a look that was a pained smile, which both mixed concern and bemusement.

"Hey, don't do that. Don't give me that look. You weren't raised in the Mitchell house."

"What was it like?" Chloe asked, genuinely curious.

Beca paused. No one really asked about her past. Not even Jesse when they were dating. "Oh you know, my parents split up when I was a teenager so… that gave me stuff to write about on my college applications," Beca deflected.

"You didn't answer my question."

Beca groaned.
"Come on, Becs, just humor me. Please?" Chloe asked, jutting out her lower lip, as she monetarily cut her gaze from the road and over to Beca.

"Damn it," Beca thought to herself. She was a goner for that puppy dog look.

"Where to begin," Beca answered honestly. "It wasn't as bad as I make it out to sound. Really, it was fine ninety percent of the time. It's just... my family doesn't do emotions. No hugs, kisses, 'I love you's,' none of that. When I was a kid, I actually was really sensitive, did you know that?"

Chloe shook her head. She did not know that.

"Well I was. And whenever things upset me, my parents would tell me to grow a backbone and toughen up. So, I guess, I did... Maybe too much. I'm honestly not blaming them because it isn't their fault, they were just trying to raise me to be able to take care of myself, but sometimes I wonder if I've done too good of a job at shutting out the world."

"I don't think that's true," Chloe said, reaching over and taking Beca's hand in her own. "You let me in."

"Well you're sitting in a pretty exclusive club, Beale. The VIP section is just you and you alone."

Chloe smiled. This statement both made her happy and sad. Happy that Beca opened up to her, but sad that opening up took so much effort on Beca's part. "I don't think that has to keep being true," Chloe assured, reaching her right hand over and capturing Beca's hand, stroking it.

"I know," Beca responded, squeezing Chloe's hand. "But it's just kind of a default now. I mean, I think it's always going to take a conscious effort on my part to let you know where my mind is. Because sharing that doesn't come easily to me."

Chloe nodded.

Continuing on, Beca said, "I mean, it's not like I'm you. You're really good at expressing yourself...Typical Pisces, I suppose, right?"

"I thought you said you didn't buy into the whole horoscope thing." Chloe asked with a knowing smile.

"Right. But I didn't say I didn't know about it," Beca pointed out with a smirk.

"I bet you're one of those people that says they hate horoscopes, but then secretly takes every Buzzfeed quiz ever about them. Like 'what kind of breakfast food are you based on your zodiac sign'"

"Eggs," Beca answered, before she realized what she was saying.

"See?" Chloe answered victoriously as she let out a heartfelt laugh. "You're so full of it, Mitchell," she said, still unable to stop laughing.

"I do hate horoscopes," Beca insisted indignantly. "But I happen to like those quizzes. They relax me. You know what kind of breakfast food you are, by the way?"

"What?" Chloe asked.

"Pancakes."

"Pancakes?! Those are my absolute favorite!" Chloe exclaimed excitedly, placing a hand over her
Beca chuckled at just how adorable Chloe was to her at this particular moment. "I know."

"Aw, Becs, do you always check my result, too when you take those quizzes?" Chloe asked adoringly.

"Yes. But not in a creepy way, I promise. It's normal."

"You're totally adorable, Becs."

"You're killing this edgy, badass vibe I've got going, you know?"

"You'll always be my little eggy badass," Chloe teased, ribbing Beca.

At this point in time, Beca and Chloe had just pulled into the parking lot of the reception hall. Chloe pulled the car into park and cut the ignition.

"Lord, I shouldn't have said anything."

"What's that? You shouldn't have egg anything?" Chloe asked innocently.

Beca shot Chloe a deadpan look. "Dude, come on, even you've gotta admit that's not one of your better jokes."

"You mean… not one of my better yolks," Chloe corrected, unable to stop herself from bursting into peals of giggles.

Beca said nothing as she got out of the car, shutting the door behind her. Chloe followed on Beca's heels, struggling to keep up with Beca's fast clip.

"You know, your surliness is only egging me on," Chloe pointed out, with a dramatic sigh.

Beca tried her best to look un-amused. Beca cut her gaze over her shoulder to Chloe and after seeing her bemused expression for less than one second, Beca faltered, breaking into a smile.

"Okay, okay," Chloe conceded, jogging to keep up with Beca's quick pace. "I'll back off. I'll take it over-easy," Chloe added, bursting into laughter a second time.

"I don't know you," Beca called back sarcastically, both her and Chloe reading straight through Beca's lie.

"Becs!" Chloe exclaimed, wrapping her arms around Beca from behind, leaning her body heavily into Beca's back.

"Dude. Your boobs are on my back," Beca pointed out as her pace broke to a halt. Not that Beca cared at all.

"You were running away from me!" Chloe said by way of explanation, clinging onto Beca like a koala would to a eucalyptus tree.

"I would never dream of it," Beca responded dryly.

Beca piggy-backed Chloe the rest of the way into the reception hall, as Chloe continued making horrible egg jokes into Beca's ear the rest of the way. When they finally arrived, Beca stopped dead in her tracks.
"Wow, Chlo, this is…" Beca said, ogling the sight of the room before her very eyes. The reception hall looked like it was more or less set up for the following day.

"Elaborate?" Chloe asked, hopping off of Beca's back.

"Sure, let's say that. Amy really went for it, didn't she?"

"She's really embracing her new American heritage," Chloe agreed, nodding her head.

The reception hall was decorated in an over-the-top fashion with everything red, white, and blue. The centerpieces were large vases of red, white, and blue M&M's, complete with red, white, and blue spears of rock candy fanning out of them. There were patriotic streamers everywhere. Hell, the backdrop on the stage was a giant American flag.

"I hope there's not fireworks," Beca said, groaning as Chloe led Beca through the large ballroom.

"There are," Chloe answered simply.

Oh, were there. Chloe couldn't talk Amy and Bumper out of putting on a giant firework show as the finale to their grand reception.

"Well, let's keep the ER on stand-by," Beca said with a chuckle. "Or at least keep Stacie and Marcus nearby for whenever Amy decides to exercise really poor judgment and nearly kill herself," Beca finished with a mutter.

Chloe bit her tongue and frowned somewhat at Beca's statement.

"What?" Beca asked, recoiling. "It was… I was joking. Sort of. I mean we know how Amy gets, right?"

"I know," Chloe agreed, unlocking a storage closet that contained a large helium tank. "It's not that," Chloe elaborated slightly, trying her best to keep her tone light.

"What's up, Beale?" Beca asked, following Chloe into the closet.

"It's a long story… maybe one best told later," Chloe said, nodding as she tried to placate a smile onto her face.

"You sure?"

"Positive," Chloe affirmed, squeezing Beca's hand gently.

Beca squinted. Something was up. Over the past several months, Beca had been putting some pieces together to a puzzle. A puzzle that she increasingly dreaded solving as she found piece after piece. Nonetheless, Beca couldn't help but keep collecting these little moments with Chloe and lodging them into some type of order.

First, there was that time in the car several months ago when Chloe had, all-of-a-sudden, gotten very sensitive to a song about drug use. Then, there was that time a month later when, on the phone, Chloe had told Beca that there had been a time when Chloe had done something very disingenuous to herself. Then, there was this. God, something was up. Beca just knew it. I mean, right?

"Okay," Beca answered aloud to Chloe, deciding not to dwell on the past moment's discomfort, "Let's make Uncle Sam proud."
Chloe smiled, pulling the helium tank out as the two girls began filling balloon after balloon, making idle chitchat. After several hundred balloons, the supply closet was filling up. The girls began to get restless.

"We done yet?" Beca asked impatiently. They had been here for nearly an hour and Beca's hands were getting tired of tying balloons.

"Hardly. We're only about halfway there."

"Good God," Beca muttered, as she grabbed another red balloon and filled it with helium. Being the mature adult she was, Beca took an inhale of helium when she finished filling the red balloon. "Hey Chlo," she said, in a high-pitched, squeaky voice.

Chloe laughed, unable to stop herself. "You sound like a chipmunk!" Chloe exclaimed between giggles.

"Listen to this," Beca continued with a smirk, taking another hit of helium. Singing in her ridiculously cartoonish voice, she sang, "I got my ticket for the long way 'round..."

Chloe couldn't resist joining in the fun. Taking a breath of helium herself, she eagerly continued the song, singing, "Two bottle 'a whiskey for the way."

Beca guffawed at Chloe, laughing in a ridiculously high pitch. Beca's laugh led Chloe to break out into laughter, creating a chain reaction of high-pitched giggles.

After the laughter died down, Beca took another hit of helium, continuing on with the song. "And I sure would like some sweet company..."

In her own helium-induced, high-pitched voice, Chloe finished, "And I'm leaving tomorrow, wha-do-ya say?"

Together, both girls took a final hit of helium and finished the verse, singing in tandem, "When I'm gone, when I'm gone, you're gonna miss me when I'm gone, you're gonna miss me by my hair, you're gonna miss me everywhere, oh, you're gonna miss me when I'm gone."

The girls finished their song by breaking into subsequent laughter, tears streaming down both of their cheeks, unable to contain themselves. Finally, after several more verses and three hundred more balloons, the girls finished Amy's impossible task and left the reception hall, arm in arm.

"Well... all things considered, I'm glad you were there with me to blow those five hundred balloons," Chloe finally said.

"Yeah, Amy wouldn't call us 'Bhloe' if we weren't damn good at blowing," Beca reasoned dryly.

With a warm laugh, Chloe added, "I won't be the one to tell her that we used a helium tank instead of actually blowing those five hundred balloons ourselves."

"Right. She might actually stop calling us 'Bhloe,'" Beca said, rolling her eyes.

"Which is quite the shame... you see, I'm really great with my mouth," Chloe responded, a half octave lower than normal, as she shot her eyes over and captured Beca's reaction.

Beca's jaw hung slightly ajar, flustered over Chloe's latest comment. Her stomach tightened and she felt herself panging with desire. Why, oh why, could Beca never get her head on straight with
this woman? It seemed that Chloe could continually flooring her with these casual flirtatious 
comments.

"I- huh?" Beca finally choked out shakily, her cheeks turning pink. Also, why was it so hot in here 
all of a sudden?

Chloe smirked and winked at Beca. Beca's eyes fluttered several times as she realized that Chloe 
was effectively turning her on... an overwhelming amount. Was Chloe suggesting...

Twenty minutes and several orgasms later, Beca and Chloe came bustling through the hotel door, 
arms linked, grinning like lunatics. As they were passing through the lobby, they couldn't avoid 
crossing paths with Aubrey and Stacie, much to Beca's dismay.

Aubrey stopped them dead in their tracks, pointing between the two of them suspiciously. "What's 
going on here?" She asked.

"Why do you sound like my dad busting me for breaking curfew?" Beca asked, recoiling over 
Aubrey's trademark intensity.

"They finally kissed and made up!" Stacie piped up excitedly, unable to contain herself.

Aubrey raised her eyebrows, perusing the new couple closely. Aubrey figured Stacie's wager was a 
safe one, considering that Chloe and Beca were currently linking arms and that some (most) of 
Chloe's lipstick was smeared on Beca's neck.

Chloe grinned over at Beca, placing a loving kiss on Beca's cheek. "Stacie's right, we totes did," 
Chloe affirmed, winking at Stacie.

"Finally!" Stacie squealed with pure delight, pulling Chloe and Beca in for a hug. Beca allowed 
herself to be suffocated by Stacie, as Stacie's strong arms practically squeezed the life out of Beca.

Aubrey relented, giving a relieved smile. "Thank God, I've been waiting for this to happen. I 
mean," Aubrey backtracked, not wanting to give off the impression that she was publicly endorsing 
Beca, she clarified, "I'm just tired of watching this will-they, won't-they game. It's exhausting." 
Aubrey sighed. She was too proud to admit to either Stacie or Chloe that her and Beca were sort-of 
friends now.

"Nice save, Posen," Beca shot back, not willing to let Aubrey off the hook. Aubrey scowled at 
Beca. "It almost sounded like you were paying me a compliment."

"Not even in your dreams," Aubrey responded, failing to maintain the deadpan delivery she 
wanted. "You hurt her and you're dead meat. You hear me, Mitchell?" Aubrey continued, pointing 
her finger at Beca. The threatening tone was noticeably absent from Aubrey's threat.

"Yeah, yeah, heard you loud and clear, Miranda Lambert," Beca said, rolling her eyes as she, 
herself, couldn't avoid pursing her lips together and smiling over the playful nature their 
conversation had taken.

"You two," Stacie said, smacking Aubrey's arm lightly. "I wanna know what happened. Tell me 
everything! Don't leave out a single detail!"

Chloe began gushing as she relayed the adorably romantic story of Beca playing Chloe that song 
on the piano and confessing her love. As the story wore on, Beca's face grew redder and redder.

"Sounds like there's a romantic under that scary ear spike, after all," Aubrey observed dryly, when
Chloe was through telling her story. Aubrey couldn't resist taking the opportunity to embarrass Beca a little further.

"Oh, we all knew Beca was always a total softie when it came to Chloe," Stacie dismissed with a wave of her hand. "Why else would Beca have gone to Starbucks with Chloe every day for three weeks in college to get pumpkin spice lattes… when we all know that Beca hates pumpkin flavored things?"

"Wait… you don't like PSL's?" Chloe asked, placing a hand over her heart as if she were offended at the very notion.

"Uh… well, no," Beca answered honestly. Upon seeing Chloe's shocked face, Beca continued, "But it's okay! You do. So now, I do, too… Anddddd there goes the rest of my game. That is, assuming I had any game to begin with," Beca said, trying to mask her embarrassment.

"Oh, you totes do," Chloe answered with a sly wink in Beca's direction. Beca's stomach tightened as a pleasant sensation shocked throughout her body.

"Thanks, babe," Beca answered with a tight-lipped smile, trying to forget that despite the fact she just had Chloe ten minutes prior, that she desperately wanted her again right now. Now it was Chloe's turn to blush as she relished the fact that Beca had just called her 'babe.'

"Babe?" Stacie asked playfully. "Pulling out the pet names? Now you really sound like a couple!"

"Well, we've hashed through enough stuff together over the past few hours so..." Beca reasoned. "I mean, no more skeletons in the closet, so to speak. We're as real as it gets."

"So you told her?" Stacie mouthed silently to Chloe. Chloe widened her eyes in surprise.

"Told me what?" Beca asked automatically, noticing the odd exchange that had just occurred between Stacie and Chloe. Beca's stomach turned uncomfortably over the shared look of anguish between Stacie and Chloe.

"Nothing," Stacie answered quickly as she averted her eyes while Chloe pursed her lips, sighing heavily.

"Fuck," Stacie thought to herself. It was more than a possibility that Stacie had just spilled the beans on an untold moment from Chloe's and her own past. A story that, no matter how hard Stacie tried to forget, was tattooed on her mind forever. Stacie's mind immediately jettisoned her back two a night about two years ago.

It was nearing the end of Stacie's first year of medical school. Despite long hours of studying and constantly teetering on the edge of pure exhaustion, she was excelling in all of her classes. Stacie had a strong ability to memorize large amounts of rogue facts. While the first year of med school was not clinically based, Stacie's success had permitted her to shadow one of Emory's interns. Once he completed his intern year in the next several months, Marcus was going to start residency with Emory in Emergency Medicine.

The night of Thursday, April 21, 2016 was a slow one at the ER so far. It was nearly 11 P.M., several hours into Marcus’s 12-hour shift. Consequently, since Stacie was shadowing Marcus, it was only several hours into Stacie's 12-hour shift. Marcus had just checked on a patient and was standing near the nurse station, yawning as he looked over some charts.

"You look tired," Stacie pointed out, matter-of-factly.
Still looking at the charts, Marcus raised his eyebrows. "Is that your diagnosis, Dr..."


"Well I think we're in luck. There happens to be a cure for fatigue."

At the same time Marcus said "Coffee," Stacie shot back with "Sex."

Marcus coughed, the cough turning into a wheeze. "You... what?" He sputtered.

Stacie shot Marcus a sultry smile. Marcus looked so adorable when he was out of his element. His big brown eyes looked at her with a combination of shock and arousal.

Recomposing himself, Marcus said, "Alright, Conrad, I gotta tell you, this is neither the time nor the place for this. Not to mention, you're working underneath me tonight." Marcus immediately realized his poor choice of wording.

"Not yet, anyway," Stacie added with a wink. Marcus blushed, suppressing a laugh and shaking his head. "But point taken," she said. "I'll tell the Hunter that he needs to back off."

"I'm sorry?" Marcus asked, thoroughly confused.

"Oh, that what I call my vagina," Stacie said casually. Marcus began another bout of involuntary coughs.

When he was finally able to speak again, Marcus said, "You, Conrad, are one of a kind. Look, I'd be lying if I told you I wasn't interested, but it would be wrong for me to take advantage of you like that. Especially during my shift. So, yeah, let the Hunter down easy for me, okay? Now," he said, shaking all sexy thoughts of Stacie from his head, "About that coffee. Care to accompany me to the cafeteria for a cup?"

Stacie agreed and the two made their way downstairs for a cup of coffee. As they sat alone at a table, sipping their coffees, the two began to get to know one another. Marcus had grown up in Atlanta, played football in college, and although he could have gone pro, he decided on med school instead. He wanted to help people. To make a difference in the world. In short, Marcus was kind and considerate, as well as funny and interesting. Stacie remembered feeling amazed that, for the first time ever, she had found a person she connected with on both a physical and intellectual level.

Marcus was indeed, tall, dark and handsome. His eyes were a stunning caramel brown, hidden behind long black lashes. He was easily six feet tall, his arms lean and muscular. When he smiled, Stacie noticed a set of perfect pearly white teeth. Stacie wanted to rip his clothes off, sink her teeth into his chocolate brown skin, and take him on the table. Sighing, she resisted and instead, got to know Marcus as a person. He was smart... really smart, Stacie noted.

As their coffee date was wrapping up, Marcus complimented, "Well, Conrad, I know I'm repeating myself here, but you really are one of a kind."

"Is that your diagnosis, Dr. Henry?"

Laughing, Marcus answered, "It is."

Before this shared joke could turn into any sort of romantic moment, Marcus's pager went off. "Shit," he said looking at the pager. "We gotta get back upstairs. We got an OD en route."

Stacie had never witnessed an overdose first-hand. Tonight would be a first on several levels, she
thought. The two left the cafeteria and walked at a fast clip back to the Emergency Room. They arrived only a minute before the blare of the ambulance. A stretcher came rolling into the ER, surrounded by a team of EMT's, who were all speaking loudly and at the same time. The attending physician, Dr. Weinberg, a no-nonsense woman in her mid-forties, took the chart as the EMT's continued clanging to her.

Stacie heard a blaring, blood-curling scream. She couldn't tell who was screaming until suddenly, she realized, it was herself. Chloe. That girl on the stretcher was Chloe. Stacie practically felt her heart stop, as she looked at the tired, sunken redhead, unconscious on the stretcher. Laid out before her, Stacie now noticed that Chloe had lost a lot of weight in the past month or so. She looked like a shell of her former self, like she was a stone's throw away from death. Stacie continued screaming. "CHLOE! CHLOE!"

Dr. Weinberg paused a beat and looked back at Stacie. "Do you know this woman?" She asked forcefully. It came out more as a statement than as a question.

Stacie kept screaming Chloe's name. "Alright!" Dr. Weinburg commanded forcefully. "Get her out of here!" This med student could not witness the procedure of a friend. Ethically, it wasn't proper. Further, the student's screams were distracting. "Get her out of here! Now!" Dr. Weinberg bellowed.

A nurse took Stacie by the arm and led her away from the ER. Looking back, the last thing Stacie saw was Dr. Weinberg charging the paddles. Marcus stood by the doctor's side, frantically looking through Chloe's chart. Once out of the ER, the nurse led Stacie into an employee break room, holding her hand while Stacie came down from hysterics.

Stacie wasn't sure if the elapsed time had been minutes or hours, but eventually, Dr. Weinberg and Marcus stepped into the break room. The nurse who had been keeping Stacie company patted Stacie's arm soothingly and got up to leave.

"Stacie," Dr. Weinberg began, adjusting the glasses on her stern face, "Your friend is in critical condition and not out of the woods yet. That said, I still expect her to make a full recovery. She was overdosing on cocaine when she was brought in tonight." Stacie's face registered shock. What? That couldn't be. Chloe didn't do drugs.

"She suffered a mild heart attack and at one point, her heart stopped. She's lucky she arrived at the exact moment she did, or I don't know what would've happened."

Stacie continued sobbing. None of this sounded right. Chloe didn't use cocaine. Stacie shook her head. This was all too surreal. It couldn't be true.

"I know this is a lot to hear right now," Dr. Weinberg said soothingly. "I just wanted to let you know that your friend is now in the ICU recovering." Dr. Weinberg stayed with Stacie several minutes longer, calmly explaining Chloe's status and doing what she could to ease Stacie's mind.

As she was preparing to leave and go back to the ER, Dr. Weinberg asked, "Dr. Henry, would you stick with Stacie until she feels better?" Despite her cold demeanor, Dr. Weinberg really did have a heart.

"Absolutely," Marcus affirmed. Marcus sat down next to Stacie as Dr. Weinberg exited the room. He wrapped his long, muscular arm around Stacie and pulled her into him. Stacie responded to Marcus's gesture by leaning into him and sobbing into his shoulder.

Neither spoke for a few minutes. Marcus didn't know what to say and figured Stacie needed to have
as much time as she wanted to collect her thoughts. Finally, Stacie spoke up, croaking in between hiccups. "Marcus, Chloe is the kindest, sweetest person I know. This isn't her, she's never done drugs before."

"I could sense that about her," Marcus answered. "Her kindness," he clarified. "She looks like she has a kind face."

But why had Chloe done this, Stacie wondered? Suddenly, it hit Stacie like a pile of bricks. Of course. Stacie told Marcus about Beca and about Chloe's response to it all. He nodded along patiently.

"I am the worst friend in the entire world," Stacie confessed. "I've been so involved with school that I've ignored the blaring signs flashing right in front of my face. Of course Chloe was hurting, I knew that. I spent the first month after Beca left eating ice cream out of the bucket and watching cheesy rom-coms with Chloe to make her feel better. After a while, I thought Chloe was better. She was leaving the apartment again and going out with friends from the temp agency, where she works. I mean of course I was still really concerned about her… Sometimes she would come stumbling in at odd hours and I'd find her asleep on the couch the next morning. I knew things weren't going great with her. But I figured it was a phase, that she just needed to sow her wild oats and then she'd outgrow it. I never figured it was this serious. And so selfishly, I kept my head in a textbook, not bothering to consider that Chloe could be facing much larger issues."

Marcus listened patiently for Stacie to finish her thought. "Stacie, you can't blame yourself for this. It wasn't your fault. In fact, I don't think placing the fault on anybody would be fair. I think it's good to acknowledge a problem, which has been done, and then work to find a solution."

Stacie nodded. Marcus continued, "Your friend was going through a lot of pain, and people show pain differently. Some people internalize things to the point that even their friends and family don't know they're hurting. It's not your fault you didn't pick up on it. Promise me you won't blame yourself, Stacie?"

"I won't," Stacie promised, "Thanks for putting it all in perspective. How is it that you know the perfect thing to say right now?"

"Personal experience," Marcus answered truthfully.

"You OD'ed on drugs?" Stacie asked.

"No, not that kind of personal experience. We can talk about it more another time, but my dad killed himself when I was fourteen. It took years before I stopped blaming myself."

Stacie looked up at Marcus, shocked. She hugged him tightly. He hugged her back. "I don't know what to say, Marcus, I am so sorry you had to go through that. And as a kid, much less."

"Thanks, Stacie."

Stacie nodded, leaning into Marcus a little more closely. "Stacie, it's going to be okay. You're here for her now," Marcus finished, "Which is a blessing to both you and her."

Before this moment, Stacie didn't believe in falling in love. Well, for herself anyhow. Looking back, Stacie would tell you that this was the moment she knew she loved Marcus. Stacie swallowed, snapping back into the present moment. This story belonged more to Chloe than it did to her. Stacie wouldn't be the one to tell Beca about any of this.

"Told me what?" Beca repeated herself, becoming increasingly panicked over the lack of response.
What was going on? Why was everyone being so damn secretive? Beca looked to Stacie, whose 
dewy gaze was downcast at the floor. From Stacie, Beca looked to Aubrey, whose arms were 
crossed as she struggled to maintain a poker face. Finally, Beca looked questioningly over to 
Chloe.

"Told me what, Chlo? What's going on?" Beca asked in a worried tone of voice. She didn't know 
what was happening, but she was worried that Chloe was hurt. And no part of Beca was okay with 
Chloe being hurt.

"Becs..." Chloe began, rubbing her eyelids with the thumb and pointer finger of her left hand, "I 
think we need to go somewhere and talk."

Chloe was truly dreading this moment. More than she even thought possible. Here she was. She 
had finally figured things out with Beca. And what she was about to tell her, well, it was 
devastating. Yes, it was something she needed to come clean about with Beca. And she had to hope 
to God that once it was all over, that Beca would still want anything to do with her.

"Talk? Have I done something wrong?" Beca asked, racking her brain to figure out what on earth 
could already be problematic in her and Chloe's new relationship.

"No, but I did," Chloe answered simply, squeezing Beca's hand as she began leading her away from 
the lobby, away from the worried Stacie and Aubrey, and toward the hotel elevators.

"You're scaring me," Beca admitted softly to Chloe, allowing herself to be led away from Aubrey 
and Stacie.

"I don't want you to feel scared," Chloe answered as her and Beca made their way onto the elevator. 
"What I'm about to tell you, well, it's not good. But it happened a long time ago," Chloe continued, 
trying to remain calm as her light blue eyes bored into Beca's steely gaze. "And even though I 
really, really want to outrun it and just pretend it never happened... I can't do that. I think it's a part 
of me now. A past part, I promise. But... I want you to know everything about me."

"Chlo... are you okay?" Beca asked, completely frightened. "Please, just tell me you're okay."

"I'm okay," Chloe answered with a small smile as the two stepped off the elevator and made their 
way to Chloe's hotel room.

"So, what happened?" Beca asked. "Did you get a Vegas marriage? Spend the night in drunk jail 
for public intoxication?" She asked, using humor as a flimsy cover for the sheer panic she was 
feeling in this moment. Whatever Chloe needed to tell her was truly serious. Beca could just tell. 
Stacie wouldn't have looked like she had just seen Bloody Mary if this weren't serious.

"None of that," Chloe said with a sad smile as she swiped the key card into Room 928. Chloe held 
the door open for Beca, who tentatively walked into the hotel room and sat down on the king sized 
bed. Closing the door behind her, Chloe walked over and sat down next to Beca, her unreadable 
gaze trained forward.

"Becs, I was- was broken," Chloe choked out, trying to keep from crying. "When you moved to 
California... I was heartbroken. And I didn't feel like anything mattered. Like I mattered." Chloe 
glanced sideways and sniffled as she noticed the stunned look of guilt coming from Beca's face.

"Chloe..." Beca began, reaching out and taking Chloe's hand in her own.

"It wasn't your fault," Chloe continued on, "I just- I felt like I was slowly dying and I couldn't let go 
of the thing that was killing me. Becs, I- I'm-" Chloe involuntarily broke down, shivering as she
began crying.

She had been trying to remain brave. To have a matter-of-fact discussion with Beca about things without crying. But what she had been through. The shame she felt... hell, the legitimate fright she felt knowing that she had once been that person and that person had nearly died. The emotions couldn't just subside. Especially as she was confessing, to the one person whose approval meant more to her than anything, something so horrible.

"Hey, hey," Beca whispered, wrapping her arms tightly around Chloe and resting her chin on top of Chloe's head. "It's okay," she continued soothing. "Just... tell me whenever you're ready. I promise I'm not going anywhere."

"I-" Chloe hiccupped, still shaking as she leaned heavily into Beca. "You... wo-won't?" Chloe sputtered.

"Chloe Beale, I love you more than anyone on this entire planet. Nothing you have to tell me is going to change that, okay? I'm not going anywhere," Beca answered, kissing the top of Chloe's head.

Somehow or another, Beca knew the exact words that Chloe needed to hear. Chloe sniffled, Beca's words settling over her like a warm blanket. A minute passed while Chloe calmed herself. Finally, when she was ready, she began telling Beca her terrible secret.

"Two years ago, I lost it. I fell hard and... Well, I need to tell you about it. I've been holding onto it for too long."

Chloe told Beca the story, which she had both wanted and been afraid to tell Beca for more than two years. It was a night in late April, 2016. The music from the bar was dulled, in part by the closed door of the restroom. Chloe brought her eyes up to face herself in the mirror. She hated what she saw, but she didn't have the willpower to change a thing. She was lost, hopeless. She silently begged herself to hold it together as she wiped the white powdery remnants from underneath her left nostril. The pain of sobriety began fading as the stimulant quickly took effect. Intense joy overcame Chloe. She happily left the bathroom to rejoin her friends.

Chloe didn't know any of these friends that well, as they were recent acquaintances from work. Hanging out with them filled a void in Chloe's life. Beca had left and Chloe was not coping with the loss. It wasn't sudden, but gradual. Chloe had begun hanging out with these friends more often. She wasn't seeing any of the Bellas on a regular basis anymore. This all started as Chloe gradually began going to bars more and more nights per week. Six months after Beca left, Chloe was now at clubs or bars five nights per week. She was barely coherent at work as she lived for the nights. Waking up with no recollection of the past night became more common. She began dabbling in drugs, first a little, and then a little more. This destructive lifestyle was an escape from reality and Chloe wasn't proud of it, but she had allowed herself to get roped into some illicit activities.

This was the fifth or sixth time she had tried cocaine. Objectively, Chloe knew better. She had never used drugs before this downward spiral and was staunchly anti-drug. Chloe had seen documentaries on drug use and knew of their dangers. Whenever, in these documentaries, one asked a drug user why they turned to drugs, the answer varied little. The answer usually involved one's feeling of extreme sadness or hopelessness. Using the drug was an escape from the reality of one's situation. It didn't make drug use okay, but gave an explanation.

Chloe's situation was much the same. Her whole life had been pinned around the Bellas, around Beca. When Beca left, her heart shattered into a million pieces. It was impossible to pick them up because she didn't have much else to live for. She didn't have any plans for her future that didn't
involve Beca. She was hurt. She slowly slipped into the descent she found herself in currently.

Rejoining her new friends on the dance floor, Chloe began dancing with one of them. The blue and purple hues of light emanating from the bar were strong and intense. Chloe was feeling elated until suddenly, she began to feel a little funny. Where was she? Was she supposed to be here? Chloe had a strange feeling that she was supposed to be somewhere, but her brain wasn't letting her know where. She put her hand on her forehead, trying to stop the world from spinning for a moment so she could figure this out.

"Hey Chloe, you okay?" The guy she was dancing with asked. Chloe nodded, as she stumbled away from the dance floor, where the bar's DJ had just begun playing "Don't Let Me Down" by the Chainsmokers.

"Crashing, hit a wall
Right now I need a miracle
Hurry up now, I need a miracle
Stranded, reaching out
I call your name but you're not around
I say your name but you're not around
I need you, I need you, I need you right now
Yeah, I need you right now
So don't let me, don't let me, don't let me down
I think I'm losing my mind now-"

Chloe reached a quieter corner of the crowded bar, where she could lean against the wall for support. She could barely stand up, she was trembling so hard. She wasn't sure if it was all in her head, but she began sweating bullets. The music was still pounding through the bar and in the midst of the hoards of people currently present, Chloe was lost in the crowd.

"R-r-running out of time
I really thought you were on my side
But now there's nobody by my side
I need you, I need you, I need you right now
Yeah, I need you right now
So don't let me, don't let me, don't let me down
I think I'm losing my mind now
It's in my head, darling I hope
That you'll be here, when I need you the most
So don't let me, don't let me, don't let me down-"

Still leaning against the wall, Chloe eased herself to the floor of the bar, where she crouched on her hands and knees. Her sweaty hands made contact with the cool, wooden bar floor as Chloe, still shaking, began heaving. She couldn't breathe. Her chest was collapsing in on itself. She needed help. Mustered all the strength she had left, she lifted her head to call for help. The music drowned out her muted cries. The bar was suddenly very blurry. All of the people were blobs of color and the lights were fading into fuzzy stars. The blur of intense colors slowly faded into whiteness as Chloe hit the floor with a thud.

"I need you, I need you, I need you right now
Yeah, I need you right now
So don't let me, don't let me, don't let me down
I think I'm losing my mind now
It's in my head, darling I hope
That you'll be here, when I need you the most
So don't let me, don't let me, don't let me down
Don't let me down
Yeah, don't let me down
Yeah, don't let me down
Don't let me down, oh no
Say don't let me down
Don't let me down,
Don't let me down
Don't let me down, down, down-

"Chloe..." Beca trailed off, choking down gasps as tears rolled freely down her cheeks. How had Beca not known this? Worse, how had Beca let herself cause this pain to Chloe? Guilt didn't begin to explain her current emotions. What Beca was feeling right now was guilt in its most raw form. It was anguishing.

Chloe leaned into Beca, nuzzling her head into Beca's shoulder. "I love you," Chloe whispered.

"I love you, too," Beca sniffled, wiping her eyes before hugging Chloe so tightly to her chest, irrationally afraid that Chloe might slip away if she let go. A minute passed while each girl sat on the bed without saying any words, only the sounds of Beca's sobs filling the room. "I'm so sorry. I can't believe I- If only I-

"Becs," Chloe answered, straightening herself up and meeting Beca's watery gaze. Cupping Beca's tear-stained face in her hands, Chloe looked Beca in the eyes and whispered, "It wasn't your fault."

"It was!" Beca insisted passionately. "I left you. I drove you to... that. You could have died, Chlo! You could have left me! I can't- without you, I-I can't-" Beca began shivering, her tears on-setting again.

The very thought of not having Chloe in this world, even for one second, was beyond what Beca could bear. Chloe was everything that was good. She brought a genuine and infectious joy to life. She cared about other people and made them feel important. Her smile could light up a room. The very thought of her not being a part of this world shattered Beca's heart.

"Babe," Chloe whispered, sniffling as another tear spilled down her cheek. "I made those choices. I made the choice to use drugs that night. I wouldn't dream of pinning it on you," Chloe continued, placing a soft kiss on Beca's salty cheek, "I love you. And I'm sorry."

Beca nodded, not saying anything for the better part of a minute. Finally, after her tears subsided somewhat, Beca collected her thoughts. "Chloe," Beca said, sighing heavily. "I'm... this is hard for me to explain, but I'm so scared."

"Why?" Chloe asked softly, bracing herself for the inevitable. This was a lot to drop on someone. She couldn't blame Beca for wanting to run for the hills.

"I never want to let you go, even for a second. But what if- what if...?" Beca trailed off, struggling to find her words.

"Things don't work?" Chloe asked, supplying the words for which Beca was searching. Beca nodded.

"If that happens, I'm not going to go back. Becs, I'm not that person anymore. If things didn't work out with us, well, I know neither one of us would want me to become that person again. I love you
an incredible amount so, I'd be hurt, sure, but I'd live," Chloe answered honestly.

"Chlo," Beca began, running a hand through her hair. "I don't know what else I can say… other than," Beca began, cutting her eyes over to Chloe and taking Chloe's hand in her own, "I love you and I'm never going to leave you."

Chloe beamed a quiet smile of joy. Beca leaned over, gently cupping Chloe's chin and kissing her softly.

Chapter End Notes

I had a whole lot of worries about whether to include this storyline. Interestingly, I actually wrote most of this chapter long before any of the other parts of this story. This idea was the jumping off point for this whole fiction... I just kind of saw Chloe as feeling lost and broken without Beca and the other Bellas around. And I kind of wanted to share that with you all. I hope it adds depth to the story and to the characters.
Early the next morning, Chloe stirred. As consciousness slowly unfolded around her, awareness set in. Chloe wasn't alone. That was evidenced by the arm draped around Chloe's waist and the face nestled into the crook of Chloe's neck. The sun, which was beaming through the hotel window, gave Beca an angelic look. Chloe blinked several times and each time she opened her eyes, Beca was still there, adorably snoozing as her body cuddled into Chloe's. Suddenly, Chloe remembered why Beca was here. She remembered the night before when Beca said she loved her, despite everything.

Chloe grinned. She couldn't help it. Everything she wanted was right here in bed next to her. Chloe placed a soft kiss on Beca's forehead. Beca stirred.

"Whuuuuuuu-" Beca groaned groggily, yawning as she opened her eyes.

It took less than two seconds for the awareness to hit Beca, as well. She was with Chloe and they were in love. The corners of her mouth turned up into a sleepy smile as her hand found Chloe's face. Placing a hand on her cheek, Beca leaned up and gave Chloe a quick peck on the lips.

"Morning, Sunshine," Chloe said, tracing the bridge of Beca's nose with her finger.

Beca squirmed, swatting Chloe's hand away. "More sleep."

Laughing, Chloe answered, "Becs, we have to get up. We need to be showered and downstairs for hair and makeup in thirty minutes."

Beca groaned, rolling over in bed.

Sighing, Chloe continued, "I'd love to go back to sleep just as much as you would, but I don't want to deal with the wrath of Amy. Especially not today."

"Fine," Beca huffed. "Because I love you and because I don't want Amy to murder us." Beca made a dramatic production of sitting up. "I'm up. Happy?"

"Very."

Beca rolled her eyes, failing to suppress a smile. "Per the crazy Tasmanian's orders, I'm going to hop in the shower."

Beca went into the bathroom, turned on the shower, and once the water was hot, climbed in. Beca really shouldn't have been shocked when several minutes later, the shower curtain was yanked open and a very naked redhead stepped into the shower with her. Beca's mouth gaped open as her heart started pounding quickly in her chest and desire overtook every square inch of her body.

Chloe, seemingly blasé about the whole arrangement, asked, "Hey, Becs, share some of the water, will you?"

Beca scooted over to give Chloe access to the water. "So I'm glad that sharing showers is still a thing we're doing," Beca said dryly, trying to mask the fact that she was extremely turned on.
"Oh, but of course," Chloe answered with a sly wink.

Beca felt faint. "Look, you said so yourself, we have to be downstairs in thirty minutes…” Beca trailed off. What kind of game was Chloe getting at, here?

“I know, isn’t this so much more efficient?” Chloe asked, her mega-watt smile gracing her face.

Beca couldn’t tell if Chloe was deliberately tempting her or if Chloe just naturally had that effect on Beca all the time. Beca decided it was probably a bit of both.

“So let me see if I’ve got this right. You’re not trying to get into my pants right now?"

"That’s funny," Chloe considered aloud. "I don't see any pants," Chloe continued innocently, as she lingeringly scanned the length of Beca's body with her eyes.

"Beale, I swear to God-

Beca's statement was again interrupted, this time by Chloe's lips on Beca's. Beca moaned loudly, serving as the only consent Chloe needed to continue down the path she was headed.

The girls eventually made it to Amy's hotel room, wearing bathrobes and their hair dripping wet. They were fifteen minutes late.

"Sorry we're late, Ame," Chloe said, flashing Amy an apologetic smile.

Amy shrugged, waving it off with her hand. "Ah, don't worry about it. I sent Stacie around to check on you two and she reported back that she heard Beca screaming from halfway down the hall. So I figured I'd leave you two lovebirds to it."

"You've really got quite the belt, Beca," Stacie said to Beca with a sultry wink.

Beca's face turned scarlet. "Oh. My God."

"Heard some of that, too," Stacie added.

"Who’d have thought that Beca was a screamer?" CR asked, laughing.

Beca’s jaw practically hit the floor. She cast a glance sideways to Chloe, hoping that Chloe might come to Beca’s defense and change the subject.

“It surprised me too, the first time,” Chloe answered CR with a wink, before placing a kiss on Beca’s cheek.

“Oh, my Lord, can we please, for the love of God, talk about literally anything else?" Beca asked.

"Well I just can't believe you two are finally together! I'm just so happy for you!" Emily squealed excitedly, putting one arm around each Chloe and Beca.

"Cheers to that!" Flo added, holding up a half-consumed mimosa.

The rest of the Bellas, who were all presently accounted for in Amy's hotel room, toasted with whatever they drinking.

"Alright, we can get into the details of your sexy times later," Amy said after she finished the contents of her champagne flute.
"No we can't." Beca retorted flatly.

Ignoring Beca, Amy continued, "Maybe after the wedding."

"Again, no." Why was everyone suddenly so interested in Beca’s sex life?

"Because I know we all want to hear about 'Bhloe,'" Amy continued on, unaffected as she continued to ignore Beca.

"Are you listening to me?" Beca asked. "Because I’m literally right here… standing two feet away from you."

Still tuning out Beca’s futile protests, Amy finished, “But right now, we've got a wedding to celebrate!"

The girls toasted a second time to Amy's important day.

“Alright, well I should just run downstairs real quick and-” Chloe began before Amy interrupted her.

“Ah, no you don’t. We didn’t hire a day-of wedding planner to have you running off on us, Red. Now make like a kangaroo and hop into that chair," Amy instructed, "We've got to get you ready."

Chloe did as she was told and let the makeup and hair artists work their magic on Chloe. Not that she needed it, Beca thought. The wedding photographer snapped picture after picture while Chloe had her hair and makeup done.

The next hour passed as each of the other Bellas had their hair and makeup done and got dressed. Amy had decided on atrocious bridesmaids dresses, each adorned with a red, white, and blue American flag pattern. The skirts were puffed out, making each of the girls look like cupcakes. Ugly, patriotic cupcakes. Amy was really making this wedding as patriotic as humanly possible, Beca decided. Beca happened to be standing next to Aubrey and Jessica as she stepped into her bridesmaid dress.

“Does anyone else feel like Betsy Ross’s sewing machine exploded and created this dress?” Beca asked flatly, as she allowed Jessica to zip up the back of her dress.

“Well, it’s her wedding, so…” Jessica trailed off with a frown. Jessica could readily admit the dresses weren’t flattering on anyone. The flag pattern and the puffy sleeves were less than forgiving. Jessica tugged on the seam of her dress, trying to keep the tulle at bay.

Aubrey piped up, supplying the end of Jessica’s sentence. “So she has every right to make us look like we’re attending a redneck prom from 1985.”

“Aubrey,” Jessica whispered harshly while Beca stifled a laugh. Jessica cut her gaze across the room to Amy. Luckily, Amy did not hear a thing.

Beca looked over to Aubrey. She was standing in front of the mirror and was trying her best to flatten out this un-flattenable dress. There was simply too much tulle. There was no way to look like anything other than an over-inflated firework. Beca caught Aubrey’s eyes as she finished checking herself out in the mirror.

Singing “You’re So Vain”, Beca began with a deadpan face, “You walked into the party, like you were walking on a yacht…”
“Shut up,” Aubrey retorted, as she continued straightening her dress so that it would lay perfectly. Beca smirked.

Flo, Amy, and Emily immediately joined in Beca’s song as they all continued singing, “Your hat strategically dipped below one eye. Your scarf, it was apricot…”

At this point, CR, Stacie, and Ashley joined the growing ensemble. “You had one eye on the mirror, and watched yourself gavotte…”

Now everyone was practically screaming the lyrics to “You’re So Vain.” Jessica, Chloe, and Lily were the last of the Bellas to join. “And all the girls dreamed that they’d be your partner, they’d be your partner, and…” They trailed off expectantly, waiting for Aubrey to join in.

Aubrey paused as she made eye contact with Beca. As much as she didn’t want to give in, the Bellas were all waiting on her for the chorus. And she wasn’t ever going to be the person to kill a lady chart topper, even one sung at her expense. “You’re so vain!” She shouted in unison with the other Bellas.

“You probably think this song is about you
You’re so vain,
I’ll bet you think this song is about you
Don’t you?
Don’t you?”

The girls continued singing one lady chart topper after another as they got ready for Amy’s wedding. Mariah Carey, Joan Jett, Amy Winehouse, and Stevie Nicks were among the litany of a-cappella renditions performed. Finally, at long last, it was time for the ceremony. In this moment, Amy now stood nervously, for what was probably the first time ever, as she waited in her hotel room for the wedding to commence.

“You okay, Amy?” Chloe asked kindly, placing a hand on Amy’s arm.

“Yeah, I’m just fine, I guess I’m a bit nervous.”

Chloe was a bit taken aback. She had never known Amy to be nervous about anything before. This was a girl who had bared her vagina to the public at large. “Wedding nerves are normal, I promise,” Chloe reassured with a nod of her head. She had seen it hundreds of times with other weddings in which she had been involved.

“I know,” Amy said. “What if Bumper changes his mind? And then I’ll be this sad, crazy hot bride, standing alone at the altar with no one beside me but eleven little patriotic puff-balls.”

“Amy,” Chloe began in a serious tone, “Bumper is positively crazy for you. In no world would he ever change his mind. You two belong together. I mean… he proposed to you in Olive Garden.”

“Right,” Amy mused, “The only garden worth visiting.”

“Sure,” Chloe answered agreeably. “The point is, he knows you. Everything you want and need. He’s not going anywhere.”

“You’re right…” Amy considered. “Thanks, Red. I guess gingers do have souls, after all.” Chloe laughed softly.

The day-of wedding coordinator entered the room. “Alright, ladies,” she began, “It’s time to walk downstairs so we can line you up and begin the precession.” The girls were each given a white
bouquet of flowers and sent downstairs.

“Wait,” Chloe instructed, as the white bouquets were passed around to the eleven bridesmaids. “One more touch.”

Chloe pulled out eleven familiar-looking yellow scarves.

“Chlo, where’d you find those?” Beca asked, half impressed, half aghast.

Those yellow scarves reminded Beca of her freshman year of college. When the Bellas had suffered endless renditions of “I Saw The Sign,” and had lived under Aubrey’s dictatorship.

“I’ve been saving them for something special,” Chloe answered, casting a wink over toward Amy.

Chloe subsequently passed out the eleven yellow scarves, instructing the girls to wrap them around their floral bouquets.

“Well,” Amy stated, once each of the girls had securely fastened the scarves around their respective bouquets, “I think it’s time. Hands in, skinny pitches.”

Each of the girls did what they were told, gathering around in a circle and placing their free hand into a pile.

“On the count of three,” Aubrey instructed, unable to keep herself from taking charge of the situation.

“On three or after three?” Stacie asked for clarification.

Aubrey huffed. “On three.”

Chloe led the girls off. “One… two…”

The girls harmonized pitches perfectly as their hands lifted into the air. Chloe smiled. Something about this moment captured the perfect amount of nostalgia.

The girls walked out of the hotel room, downstairs, and lined up in order, standing just inside from the hotel courtyard. Beca could see through the doorway into the outdoors, where the other wedding guests were present. Bumper and his groomsmen stood outside, at the altar, waiting for Amy. Inside the doors, Beca brought up the end of the line of bridesmaids. Amy and Amy’s father stood behind Beca.

A minute later, the music to which Amy would walk down the aisle began playing. No one was too surprised to hear Pat Benatar’s “We Belong.” It wasn’t convention, no, but it made perfect sense for Amy. Amy didn’t adhere to convention. One by one, the Bellas walked down the aisle.

Finally, came Amy. Bumper began tearing up at the sight of his bride to be. Amy, upon seeing Bumper’s emotions, began tearing up herself. After Amy had reached the end of the aisle, Amy’s dad hugged Amy, before handing her off to Bumper. The wedding ceremony now began.

It was beautiful and touching in all the right ways. The afternoon sun smiled down on the happy couple as they joined hands at the head of the altar. Bumper read his wedding vows first.

“Amy,” Bumper began, looking lovingly at Amy like she was the only person in the world, “You mean the world to me. I love you so much. I love the life we’ve built together, with The Crying Dingoes, and the other adventures we’ve had together. Even someday when I’m handpicked to be
the new lead singer for Coldplay, because let’s face it, Chris Martin isn’t getting any younger, I’ll
want you to be there by my side to cheer me along. And I promise that someday, when Destiny’s
Child gets back together and they ask you to be their lead singer, I’ll be there to cheer you along. I
love you, Amy, more than flying breakfast burritos.”

Despite Bumper’s sweet, yet odd wedding vow, Amy was figuratively crying buckets. Collecting
herself, Amy gave Bumper her wedding vows. “Bumper,” she started, her voice wavering with
emotion, “You were a social piranha when I met you.”

“You ate people alive and spit them back out,” she continued on with her misinformed
colloquialism. “But underneath that, I learned that you really do have a fat heart. You’re so kind
and caring and I love you Bumper. And I can’t wait to have little Bumper and Amy Jr.’s with you.”

After the wedding vows had been given, the officiator continued with an exchange of rings. Beca
leaned forward and shot her eyes down the line of bridesmaids to meet Chloe’s eyes. Chloe looked
seriously hot. And despite the ugly red, white and blue dress, her blue eyes popped even more than
usual. Chloe winked over at Beca. Beca smiled as her stomach did somersaults.

The ceremony concluded as the minister said, “And now, by the power vested in me, I hereby
pronounce you a married couple. Bumper, you may kiss the bride.”

Bumper placed a hand on the small of Amy’s back, and dipping her, placed an exaggerated
smooch on her mouth. Amy grabbed Bumper back, deepening the kiss. The wedding guests
watching in semi-stunned silence, as Amy and Bumper continued kissing one another. After about
thirty seconds, the two pulled away from one another and the crowd applauded. Amy and Bumper
were officially married.

The reception began and all of the wedding guests were taking full advantage of the open bar and
buffet. Beca, noticing that Chloe was tied up in conversation with Aubrey, took a moment to slip
away from the reception and into the hotel lobby. She had an important phone call to make.

Despite Beca’s best attempts to slide by unnoticed, several minutes had now passed and Chloe
missed Beca’s presence. Chloe walked inside to find Beca on the phone with her manager. Chloe
thought about interrupting Beca, but decided against it, instead waiting patiently for Beca to get off
the phone.

“Woah, Marge, slow down. I haven’t been hiding anything. It happened last night,” Beca said into
the phone, her back turned to Chloe, still not noticing the redhead’s presence in the room.

After a minute or so of silence, Beca answered, “Yeah, I know that. But listen, this isn’t like with
those other people. This is the real deal. Like, if I fuck this up, there’s probably not another person
in this world I’d want to date ever again. Seriously, they would just pale in comparison.”

Chloe’s heart leaped. She was so touched by Beca’s words. Smiling, she continued listening as
Beca continued fielding Marge’s flurry of questions.

“Right. Reggie Mitch is off the market because she-slash-Beca is in way-over-her-fucking-head-
in-love with her girlfriend. We good?”

Beca waited a pause for Marge to answer.

“No,” Beca started back as she barked into the phone, “No part of this is negotiable. You know
what, actually? I’m firing you.”
Beca listened patiently while Marge loudly and animatedly voiced her fervent objections on the other end of the phone line. Several minutes passed before Beca could get another word in edgewise.

“Marge, listen,” Beca said evenly, softening the harsh tone she had used with Marge minutes before. “I’m sorry, but I’m just not the kind of person you want me to be. I don’t want to be a celebrity. I just want to make good music and live my life. With my girlfriend. So from here on out, I don’t need or want a manager. So… this is it. I’m sorry.”

Beca hung up the phone with a small grin. Things continued to feel as though they were falling into place. She had finally fired Marge… the one thing she had wanted to do for so long now.

“Girlfriend?” Chloe asked flirtatiously, causing Beca to practically jump out of her skin. Beca didn’t know anyone else had been in the room with her.

“Jesus! What are you doing, you fucking psycho?” Beca exclaimed, placing a hand over her heart. Chloe grinned. “Answer my thing first. Am I your girlfriend?”

“God,” Beca said, rolling her eyes while trying not to smile, “If we’re gonna get all ‘elementary school playground’ about it, yes. I mean, that is, if you’re cool with it? As far as I’m concerned, it’s just you and me. I don’t want to date anyone else. Seriously, I don’t… I hate dating.”


“What could I do to make it more romantic?” Beca challenged, pulling Chloe in and placing a chaste kiss on her lips.

“Maybe you can tell me about how you fired Marge?” Chloe asked curiously.

“Yeah, that was long overdue,” Beca answered. “I think Marge and I never really jived together.”

Chloe began thoughtfully twirling Beca’s curls around her finger. “It sounded like she wanted so much of your life.”

“She did… So much,” Beca mused, relishing the way it felt to have Chloe playing with her hair. Smirking and staring Chloe directly in the eyes, Beca continued, “But now everyone’s going to know you and I are together. You okay with that?”

“I really don’t care about anything as long as we’re together,” Chloe answered honestly.

“I couldn’t agree more,” Beca said, placing a kiss on Chloe’s hand. “Being with you is the only thing I care about.”

“So you don’t care if I ask you to accompany me back into the ballroom? You see, The Crying Dingoes are about to perform, and I really want to watch them… with my girlfriend.”

“Ugh! Must we?” Beca made a production out of protesting, though her and Chloe both knew it was all for show. Secretly, her stomach flipped over Chloe’s words. Chloe was her girlfriend. They were together.

Beca and Chloe walked back into the reception just in time for The Crying Dingo rendition of “Photograph” by Nickelback. Chloe and Beca made their way to the front of the crowd, Chloe wrapping her arm around Beca’s shoulder as they swayed side-by-side in rhythm to the music.
“Every memory of lookin' out the back door
I have the photo album spread out on my bedroom floor
It's hard to say it
Time to say it
Good bye, good bye
Every memory of walkin' out the front door
I found the photo of the friend that I was lookin' for
It's hard to say it
Time to say it
Good bye, good bye, good bye—”

“God… this fucking song,” Beca muttered quietly and sarcastically to herself.

“Becs, you need to get over your case of Nickelback hate fever,” Chloe said.

“It just makes me so… stabby,” Beca finished, floundering for words.

“Stabby?”

“Right. It’s like angry… But with a knife.”

Flo, who had been listening to the whole exchange, piped in, “Wanna borrow one of my knives?”

“What?” Chloe asked.

“It’s a whole thing,” Beca answered Chloe. “Flo gets a knife whenever she does something special. Like how kids get trophies for doing sports and stuff?”

“How frightening,” Chloe considered.

“No, it’s not like that at all!” Flo protested. “I get a knife whenever I reach a crowning accomplishment in life.”

“I stole a crown out of a stranger’s mouth,” Lilly whispered.

“Different use of the word ‘crown,’” Flo answered with a shudder.

Luckily, the odd turn this conversation had taken effectively prevented Beca from hearing the rest of Amy and Bumper’s cover of “Photograph.” Once the song was done, it was time to cut the cake. Amy and Bumper each made a huge production of shoving as much cake into the other’s face as possible. Cake frosting was smeared down the front of Amy’s wedding dress as she happily wiped it up with her pointer finger and ate it. Bumper subsequently leaned into Amy’s cleavage and motor-boated her, getting icing all over his face.

“And that,” Chloe pointed out to Beca, “Is why I insisted Amy get a white cake.”

“Good thinking,” Beca said. On one hand, Beca was shocked that Amy and Bumper were now engaging in behavior that was totally PG-13 in front of friends and family. The more she thought about it, however, it wasn’t really that surprising at all.

“I hope you have a make-up artist on standby as well to deal with the aftermath,” Aubrey added, referencing the cake all over Amy’s face.

“I thought of that, too,” Chloe answered with a smile.
Once the bride and groom tradition of eating the cake was through, the rest of the wedding’s guests partook. Beca and Chloe sat down next to one another at the table to eat. Chloe leaned over to steal a bite of Beca’s cake with her fork.

“Dude, no!” Beca fought, pushing Chloe’s fork away with her own fork.

“But your cake tastes better,” Chloe said with puppy dog eyes.

“But… it’s the same cake,” Beca said, losing resolve. She looked at Chloe’s face again, the sad eyes working their magic. “Fine,” Beca relented, “Have your cake and eat mine too.”

Chloe beamed, as she made a production of leaning across Beca to treat herself to a second bite. Chloe noticed Beca noticing her cleavage as she leaned over. A minute later, Chloe took a third bite from Beca’s cake, even more deliberately shoving her boobs in Beca’s face.

“Stop!” Beca hissed.

“Stop what?” Chloe asked innocently.

Beca glared over at Chloe. “You know.”

“I’m not doing anything.”

“Yes you are!” Beca insisted. “Your boobs are practically in my face.”

Chloe smirked. Beca was definitely a boob man. “Sorry, I guess I just didn’t realize,” Chloe lied, leaning in and placing a soft kiss on Beca’s cheek.

Beca clenched her fist around gathered fabric on her dress. She needed to collect herself because in this moment, she was less interested in eating cake, and more interested in eating her girlfriend. Beca’s face grew pink with embarrassment over the dirty thoughts currently running through her mind.

Luckily, Beca didn’t have to stew with these thoughts for much longer because the wedding band had just set up and began playing.

“There they are. The Purple Oblivion Fusion,” Beca pointed out.

“Yep, I know!” Chloe answered excitedly. “I def think they were the right choice.”

In this moment, the wedding band was singing Bruno Mars’ “Uptown Funk.”

“Wanna dance?” Chloe asked Beca.

“Fine,” Beca acquiesced without a fight, standing up as she allowed Chloe to take her hand. The two girls joined the dozens of other couples on the dance floor.

“I’m too hot (hot damn)
Called a police and a fireman
I’m too hot (hot damn)
Make a dragon wanna retire man
I’m too hot (hot damn)
Say my name you know who I am
I’m too hot (hot damn)
Am I bad ’bout that money, break it down
Girls hit your hallelujah (whoo)
Girls hit your hallelujah (whoo)
Girls hit your hallelujah (whoo)
'Cause uptown funk gon’ give it to you
'Cause uptown funk gon’ give it to you
'Cause uptown funk gon’ give it to you
Saturday night and we in the spot
Don’t believe me just watch (come on)”

Chloe and Beca jammed out to this song with no chill whatsoever. The song ended as both girls were grinning out-of-breath smiles. Chloe had more fun being around Beca than any other person in the world. The two girls didn’t have any time to rest as the Purple Oblivion Fusion followed up their Bruno Mars song with several other strong hits. Beca and Chloe danced to Earth, Wind & Fire’s “September” and then The Isley Brothers’ “Twist and Shout.” Luckily, the next song settled into a slow tempo, finally allowing Beca and Chloe a chance to catch their breaths.

Chloe pulled Beca in close and began gently swaying to the beat of “Stand By Me” by Otis Redding.

“When the night has come
And the land is dark
And the moon is the only light we’ll see
No I won’t be afraid
Oh, I won’t be afraid
Just as long as you stand, stand by me
So darling, darling
Stand by me, oh stand by me
Oh stand, stand by me
Stand by me-”

“Hey Becs?” Chloe hummed into Beca’s ear.

“Yeah?” Beca said, snapping back into the present moment. She had been lost in the moment as she held Chloe close. In this moment, nothing was more perfect than having her arms wrapped around the girl she loved.

“I really love you.”

Beca smiled. She still wasn’t used to hearing this and her stomach flipped each time she heard these words. “I really love you, too.”

“I’ve been in love with you since that night in college when we went into that hollowed out pool and sang your “Just the Way you Are” mash-up.”

“Really? Since then?” Beca asked, with a tinge of sadness in her voice. That had been the spring of Beca’s freshman year of college.

Until this moment, Beca had been resting her head on Chloe’s shoulder. Now, with her arms still wrapped around Chloe, she took a half a step back to meet the redhead’s eyes.

Chloe smiled and nodded. “That’s when I knew. For sure.”

“That’s… a long time to wait… for me,” Beca trailed off, half-frowning.
“You say that like I was waiting for a bus or something. Beca, you matter. I knew who I was waiting for. I was waiting for my person… The person I was going to be with forever,” Chloe said with a loving smile.

Beca’s face spread into a grin. “Did you know that?”

Chloe nodded. “I knew beyond a doubt.”

Beca leaned in and kissed Chloe gently on the lips. Chloe kissed back, running her tongue along Beca’s bottom lip, seeking entrance. Chloe’s hands grabbed either side of Beca’s face. Beca pulled Chloe closer, needing more of her, all of her. After Beca had taken about all she could handle, she momentarily forced her lips apart from Chloe.

“God, Chlo, you’re driving me crazy,” Beca breathed.

“I need you,” Chloe whispered between kisses, “Right now.”

“Upstairs?” Beca whispered back as she reluctantly broke her lips away from the redhead.

“No. Right now,” Chloe panted, pulling Beca by the neck so that their mouths could meet again for one last deliciously passionate kiss. “There’s a closet over there.”

There was, indeed, a storage closet just outside the ballroom. Beca couldn’t believe she found herself agreeing as she allowed herself to be led discreetly into the closet. The closet wasn’t very large and was mostly filled with tables and chairs. Beca used the space she had to hoist Chloe up on one of the tabletops. Beca stepped to stand between Chloe’s open legs. As Beca closed the gap between their lips she realized the minute and a half their mouths had been apart from one another’s had been entirely too long.

The heat emanating from between Chloe’s legs was evident. That, coupled with the fervor in which her mouth captured Beca’s, indicated to Beca that the other girl was close. Beca didn’t want to subject Chloe to prolonged anguish, but she couldn’t help spending several minutes fondling Chloe’s boobs. This, by the way, was pushing Beca closer to the brink as well.

“Becs?” Chloe asked in a raspy voice. Beca found Chloe’s sultry bedroom voice a huge turn-on.

“What?” Beca answered, blinking several times, her hands still on each of Chloe’s boobs.

“I really need you… elsewhere,” Chloe begged.

“Right,” Beca said, lightly biting Chloe’s earlobe as her hands raked down Chloe’s tight stomach to her thighs. In a fluid motion, Beca yanked the dress up to Chloe’s thighs. Chloe moaned.

Beca dropped to her knees, suddenly eye level with Chloe’s very wet core. Beca bit her bottom lip to suppress a moan. Beca felt she might be about to come undone herself. Bringing her tongue forward, she slowly and deliberately licked the length of Chloe’s folds.

“Oh my God,” Chloe moaned huskily. Beca smiled, repeating the action. Slowly, Beca licked up and down, side to side, swirling her tongue around Chloe’s clit. Periodically, she forced her tongue inside Chloe, hungrily tasting the other girl.

“Oh my God, oh my God, Beca, yes… Don’t stop…” Chloe trailed off as her eyes rolled back into her head.

Moments later, she violently orgasmed around Beca’s tongue. Beca continued what she was doing
until she was sure that Chloe was through. Bringing her face up to meet Chloe’s, Beca pulled
Chloe’s dress back down to cover the other girl. Chloe grabbed Beca’s face with each of her hands,
bringing the girl in for a deep kiss. She loved that she could taste herself on Beca’s lips.

“Becs, that was perfect. Who knew that your oral skills went beyond carrying a tune?” Chloe
commended.

“Yeah, we’re both huge successes in our fields,” Beca joked, trying to mask the fact that she was
about as horny as she had ever been. “Want to get back out there?” Beca asked.

“Not so fast,” Chloe stopped Beca. “I think we’ve still got some work to do,” Chloe said, pulling
Beca in for a kiss, forcing her tongue inside the other girl’s mouth.

Beca moaned loudly. She acquiesced to the kiss for several seconds, languidly taking it all in. She
finally forced herself away from Chloe, astounded that Chloe was so skilled with her tongue.

“I… can’t,” Beca panted.

“Why?” Chloe asked flirtatiously, letting her fingers draw light circles along Beca’s upper back.
Chloe brought her head forward and placed a light kiss on the nape of Beca’s neck.

Beca hissed with pleasure. “Because,” Beca began, still panting from desire, “I’ll scream.”

“That,” Chloe said, “Is about the hottest thing I’ve ever heard. Come here,” Chloe said, standing
up as she grabbed Beca’s face in her own. Chloe gently backed Beca up against the door of the
closet and began returning the favor.

Several minutes later, most of the wedding guests heard loud screams of profanity coming from the
closet. Luckily, no children were present, as Beca used about every crass word in the book. As
Chloe and Beca emerged from the closet, they were only marginally heckled by their close friends.
Luckily, the moment soon passed as Amy announced the bouquet toss.

“Alright, you party piranhas!” Amy bellowed. “It’s now time for the bouquet toss! So all you
single ladies, let’s line your sexy fat asses up and see which one of your fellas is gonna be puttin’ a
ring on it next, eh?” Beca had to hand it to her, Amy really did have a way with words.

The single party guests began flooding the dance floor. Chloe and Beca stood idly by, watching.
“Not going out there, Beale?” Beca asked.

“Nah, I think it’ll happen when it’s meant to happen. Besides, the best thing that could possibly
happen to me has happened. I’ve got you. I don’t need a bouquet. I think someone else needs that
win more than I.”

“Well said,” Beca agreed.

Chloe and Beca watched, off to the side of the dance floor and with bemused expressions as Amy
threw the bouquet over her head. Beca wasn’t sure if it was purposeful or accidental, but Amy did
not throw the bouquet straight behind her into the crowd of expectant ladies. Amy lobbed the
bouquet over her head and to the side. Beca saw the bundle of flowers coming at her, but refused to
uncross her arms to catch them. The bouquet hit Beca squarely in the face, before landing on the
floor with a soft thud.

“Becs!” Chloe exclaimed. “You have to catch them if they’re coming right at you!”

Amy turned around looking for where the flowers had landed. Seeing that none of the girls on the
dance floor had caught the bouquet, she circled around in place nervously, looking to see where they might have gone. Eventually, she noticed that the flowers had veered left. Beca was picking them up.

“Shawshank!” Amy yelled. “That means you’re gettin’ hitched next!”

The crowd cheered as a reluctant Beca thrust the bouquet of flowers above her head.

The wedding reception continued on its last leg as the wedding guests danced, drank, and enjoyed the merriment. Eventually, the sendoff occurred and the wedding party made their way outside to see Amy and Bumper off in their limousine. Fireworks blared loudly in the night sky, as Amy and Bumper ran through masses of guests and into the privacy of their car. As the car drove off, Beca thought to herself, “It’s finally over.” The feeling was bittersweet. Beca loved Amy dearly and was so happy for her. On the other hand, Amy’s wedding allowed Beca the opportunity to see Chloe more often than otherwise. Tomorrow, Beca would be heading back to Los Angeles, and she didn’t know how long it would be until her and Chloe could see one another again.

The fireworks were booming loudly into the black night sky. With each boom, the lovely shades of blues, oranges, purples, reds, and greens unfolded like a blooming flower. It was mesmerizing.

And what was made better, was the company. Beca pulled Chloe into a deep hug, leaning into the crook of Chloe’s neck. She couldn’t explain it, but tears began flowing. A few at first, and then a few more. Before Beca knew it, she was sobbing. Chloe felt droplets of water on her shoulder and felt the heaves coming from her girlfriend.

“Beca, what’s wrong?” Chloe asked in a gentle voice, pulling back so she could look Beca in the eyes.

“I’m not sure why I’m crying,” Beca admitted, feeling on the verge of insanity. Chloe’s eyes began brimming with tears. “No, not you too,” Beca said, using the back of her wrist to dab away some of her own tears.

“You know I’m a sympathetic crier,” Chloe said, sniffling and trying to keep from letting tears escape her eyes as fireworks continued booming in the background.

“Please, don’t,” Beca pleaded. “I’m not crying because I’m sad. I think I’m crying because I’m happy?”

“Oh, Becs,” Chloe said, kissing Beca’s cheek and enveloping the other girl in a hug.

Beca hugged Chloe back tightly. “I love you so much.”

Despite Beca’s pleas, several tears spilled out of Chloe’s eyes as her heart swelled with pure joy. “I love you, too. So much.”

Chapter End Notes

We all love the 4th of July right? Right! Well, it's my very favorite holiday of the year and I happened to party way too hard. As I'm sure we all do time and again. Anyhow, I mean that all to say... this is really the gift that keeps on giving because now we can revisit July 4th again a week and a half later. Enjoy, y'all!
PS- Y’all... I mixed an Ed Sheeran song with a Nickelback. Now, I promise I really know better. Anyhowwwww I think we're all correct now. Thank you to those who pointed this out to me! Haha you all are wonderful
CHAPTER 19 (October 17, 2018)
“So, Gail, tell me. When was the last time a fellow a capella singer made it onto the Top 40? And a
crime woman, at that!” John Smith’s irritatingly smug voice spoke through the radio in Beca’s car.

“Oh John, you sexist pig,” Gail answered enthusiastically. “I think the answer you’re looking for is
never!”

Beca rolled her eyes as she continued listening, simultaneously dodging Atlanta rush hour traffic.
Going on “Let’s Talk-a-pella” definitely wasn’t Beca’s idea of a fun way to spend an afternoon.
No, answering the insane questions of a chauvinistic douchebag and a dingy airhead wasn’t
entertaining at all. But Beca elected to go on John and Gail’s show because she needed to clear the
air with regard to her personal life. She wanted everyone to understand Chloe wasn’t some drunken
hookup or sob story. No, Chloe was the love of her life.

“So Reggie Mitch, thanks for joining us in the studio today!” Gail exclaimed.

“Thanks for having me. Uh, and it’s Beca, by the way,” Beca heard her own voice over the radio.
Beca cringed internally. She hated hearing her own voice on air.

“Beca?” John asked. “So are you dropping the androgynous trope?”

“What? I didn’t know that was a thing,” Beca answered a little defensively. “I just… Reggie Mitch
was never my name. It started out that my old boss at Residual Heat thought my name was Reggie.
And when I started becoming famous, the name stuck. I didn’t fight it because I kind of liked
having two separate identities.”

“Kind of like Hannah Montana!” Gail interrupted excitedly.

“Yeah. Kind of…” Beca trailed off. “But now things are different. After leaving Residual Heat last
month, I decided that I was going to kill Reggie Mitch, metaphorically speaking… You know, stop
leading the double life. Be true to who I am now.”

“Like The Hannah Montana movie!” Gail exclaimed again.

“Right…” Beca trailed off awkwardly. Why did Gail keep bringing up Hannah Montana?

“So, Beca, you have a new name and are opening up your own studio. Those are some big
changes. Especially on the heels of your new hit single ‘Sign of the Times.’”

“Yeah, there are a lot of changes but, you know, they’re all pretty exciting,” Beca responded.

“Exciting… frightening. They’re one in the same,” John fired back with a dry laugh. “I mean, if
you give women too much liberation, they go crazy. Like psychotic-”

“John!” Gail exclaimed harshly. “Why don’t you crawl out of that closet you’ve been living in and
join the twenty-first century?”

“Closet, huh?” Beca asked knowingly. She more or less figured John’s horrible attitude toward
women was overcompensating for something.

“Well, you see, Beca, I have my suspicions-” Gail began.
“Why don’t you ladies quit your yakking and take your tea party elsewhere? We have a show to run,” John chimed in.

“Fine,” Gail argued back at John. “Here’s a question that’s been burning on all of our minds. Beca, what prompted your departure with Residual Heat?”

Beca bit her tongue as she listened to the answer she gave on the radio. She could have told the truth, sure. She could have told everyone that Residual Heat had released a personal song without her permission. In the end though, Beca didn’t want this radio interview to turn into a blame game. She wanted to keep positive and focus on her future with Chloe.

Which is why she had answered, “It was just the right time, I think. I doubt many people know this, but I’ve been really madly in love with this girl for the past six years. And well, I somehow got her to agree to date me… which is amazing, trust me. She’s pretty much the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“Ah, young love,” Gail answered, “It makes me want to relive the first of my five marriages!”

“Gail, you’re like the community bike. Everyone’s had a ride,” John stated.

Gail laughed and lightly responded, “And you’re like a broken bike. No one’s had a ride.”

Beca broke up the fight, refocusing matters. “Well as I was saying, it took six years before Chloe and I figured things out. And once we finally got together, well… my life came together. She inspired me to get back to my roots. Here in Atlanta. I had always dreamed of owning my own studio, and with Chloe by my side… it just felt right.”

“And there you have it folks,” John said, “A female producer with her own studio. Maybe pigs do fly.”

Beca cut off the radio, unwilling to relive any further part of that radio interview. As Beca turned onto the street of her new house, she went over her mental checklist again. Soup. Check. Tissues. Check. Tylenol. Check. Gatorade. Check. She was pretty sure she had gotten it all. Beca parked in the driveway and cut the ignition to her red convertible, not bothering to put the top back up on the car. Although it was overcast, it was still a nice day, Beca figured. What could go wrong? As Beca was leaning into the back seat to grab the bag of groceries, she noticed something odd.

“That’s not where the Range Rover was parked this morning,” she mused aloud to herself.

Chloe must’ve left to go somewhere. Beca shook her head as she hurried into the house. It had taken nearly an hour of convincing that morning, but Beca had finally gotten it through Chloe’s head that when you have a fever of one hundred and one degrees, you have to stay home. Chloe begrudgingly called into work sick and even more begrudgingly promised Beca that she would stay home and rest until Beca got home that afternoon.

“Chlo?” Beca called to Chloe as she walked through the front hallway of the house. Beca was worried. The house smelled kind of funny, though Beca was having trouble placing the precise smell.

“In here!” A hoarse voice croaked from the kitchen.

Grocery bag in hand, Beca came running through the hallway and into the kitchen. “Sweet Jesus, Chloe, what the actual fuck?” Beca exclaimed, dropping the grocery bag onto the floor.

Chloe, it appeared, had not taken Beca’s orders at all. Instead of resting, Chloe had been mostly
successful in pulling up every tile on the kitchen floor. Beca stood in surprise at the sight of her girlfriend, bent on all fours with a chisel in her hand, as she pried tiles from the floor, one by one.

Chloe glanced backward to meet a horrified stare coming from the brunette. Chloe smiled sweetly as she covered her mouth to suppress a cough.

In a raspy voice, Chloe answered in a very nonchalant tone, “I’ve mentioned that I hate this tile, haven’t I?”

Beca rolled her eyes. “Yes, you literally tell me every single day. I thought we were going to call a contractor in to remodel next week. Remember? Remember how I said that, Chlo? I think I used those exact words.”

Chloe stood up, coughed a few more times, and set the chisel on the kitchen counter. “When you know you want something, why wait?” Chloe asked with a tired gleam in her eyes.

“Good Lord,” Beca said in a worried tone, running a hand through her hair. “Let’s get you into bed,” Beca said, choosing not to engage Chloe in a further argument.

“Beca Mitchell,” Chloe croaked with a sultry wink. “You know it’s wrong to take advantage when your girlfriend is sick, don’t you?”

“I didn’t mean ‘into bed’ like that,” Beca fired back. “I meant ‘into bed’ like you’re running a fever of one hundred and one and should be in bed sleeping and literally doing anything other than remodeling our floor right now.”

Beca walked across the kitchen floor, now largely devoid of tiles. Dusty bits of tile, still present on the floor, clouded around Beca’s face and caused her to begin coughing.

“Well, I guess we just… won’t use the kitchen again for a while,” Beca reasoned, trying to act optimistic, despite the obvious inconvenience of not having a kitchen.

Chloe, who was leaning heavily on the kitchen counter for support, shifted her weight into Beca and allowed Beca to lead her out of the kitchen and up the stairs. Beca got Chloe out of her dusty work clothes, into pajamas, and then into bed. Chloe lay down and closed her eyes. Satisfied that Chloe would actually go to sleep, Beca left the bedroom, closing the door softly behind her.

Beca bit her lip, which was spreading into a grin. Did Beca want Chloe to start remodeling the kitchen while she was away at work that morning? Of course not. For one, Chloe was sick and needed rest. Additionally, the partially remodeled kitchen had created a huge mess and now made any use of the room totally impractical. Beca and Chloe were just going to have to eat out until Beca called a contractor in to finish the job. This would be the last time Beca didn’t immediately listen to the home improvement complaints coming from her girlfriend.

As Beca walked downstairs past the kitchen and through the living room, she opened the door to the back porch. Beca stepped outside into the cool, cloudy, October afternoon and pulled out her phone to call the contractor. The contractor promised she could have the job completed within a week and a half. In addition to fixing the kitchen floor, Beca went ahead and sprung to have the entire kitchen remodeled. She knew it would make Chloe happy.

Since moving in together a month ago, the couple had been busy. Beca had quit working at Residual Heat, which gave her more time to unpack the house. Beca figured by this point in her career, she had all but ‘paid her dues.’ Artists were going to come to her because she had proved her talent. She didn’t need, nor did she want, to work for a company she didn’t like. She had plans
to open her new studio after the winter holidays. Chloe, who was still busy with her event planning business, was beginning to enjoy a little more downtime as well. The wedding season was drawing to a close, which meant the coming months would be a little more relaxing for her, as well.

After Amy’s wedding in July, it had taken Chloe and Beca about a week and a half to decide that the long distance relationship just wasn’t good enough. Chloe told Beca that she would wrap things up and move to LA within the month.

“I’ll do you one better, Beale,” Beca had responded. “I’ll be in Atlanta within the week.”

The two lightly argued back and forth. Chloe insisted that Beca needed to remain in LA, where the majority of musical artists were. Beca stubbornly pushed back, insisting that Chloe had made contacts for her business in Atlanta, and that was not the sort of thing that could easily pick up and move across the country. Chloe insisted that she could gladly start over in LA.

“I know you could, Chlo, and I know you’d do a damn good job at it, but I’m saying that I don’t think you should. I should come there. That’s where we started. That’s where I want to be. Besides, could you imagine starting a family in Hollywood? Don’t you think that would be fucking terrible?”

Chloe blushed. Beca had mentioned the ‘F’ word. Not that ‘F’ word. Beca had no qualms about using the word ‘fuck.’ But Beca had just said she wanted a family.

“Yeah, I’m behind you one hundred percent on that. But, Becs? You just opened a studio with Residual Heat in April. Won’t it look kind of bad if you just pick up and leave?”

“Maybe. But honestly, Chlo, I want to leave. I kind of want to start my own record label… where I can have more artistic freedom. And employ talented producers and actually treat them the way I wish I’d been treated at Residual Heat. Does that sound crazy? That sounds crazy.”

“It’s not crazy at all,” Chloe cooed. “I think it’s aca-awesome.”

Beca smiled. “So Atlanta…”

Chloe laughed. “Are you sure this is what you want?”

“I’ve never been surer. It’ll work, trust me.”

And Chloe did trust Beca. One week later, Beca was back in Atlanta. Home. Beca loved Atlanta, but it wasn’t being back in the city of her alma mater that led Beca to feel at home. It was being back in Chloe’s arms. Beca figured, if you were lucky enough in life, you would come to realize that home wasn’t so much a place as it was a feeling. With Chloe by her side, hand in hand, Beca was at home. On the drive home from the airport that day, Chloe held one hand on the steering wheel and the other laced in Beca’s hand. The run reflected off of Chloe’s sunglasses. She cut her eyes over to Beca.

“What?” Chloe asked. Beca was staring.

“I’m glad I’m home,” Beca answered simply.

Chloe brought Beca’s hand up to her mouth and kissed the back of her hand. “I’m glad I’m home, too,” Chloe answered with a smile.

Beca and Chloe lived in Chloe’s apartment while the two girls searched for a house. Once they found the perfect home in the perfect neighborhood, Beca put an offer on the house. The Tuesday
after Labor Day, the girls moved in. And now, here they were, a month and a half later.

In some ways, it felt to Beca like she and Chloe had been living together for much longer. They had certainly settled into a domestic lifestyle together. Beca was taking care of Chloe when she was sick and Chloe was doing maddening things like ripping up the kitchen floor while Beca was away. Beca smiled. Life’s finest moments weren’t always the big ones. They were the small, everyday moments. Beca was madly in love with Chloe and Chloe could tear down the whole damn house and Beca would still feel like the luckiest girl in the world.

Beca must have been standing outside on the back porch for some time because after awhile, Chloe came treading outside. “Awake already?” Beca asked.

“I actually didn’t get to sleep. I feel much better now,” Chloe insisted, leaning in to kiss Beca on the lips.

Beca backed away from Chloe before she could kiss her. “Ah, Typhoid Mary, let’s have the thermometer be the judge of that statement.”

“Oh, Becs, we had sex last night. I’m pretty sure avoiding me now won’t change anything for you at this point,” Chloe croaked as she winked at Beca.

Dammit. Even when she was sick and hoarse, Beca still felt insanely turned on by Chloe. “Chloe, you’re sick. Don’t you want to, I don’t know, rest? Instead of putting the mack on me?”

Chloe saddled up next to Beca, putting her arms around the smaller girl’s waist. Chloe leaned into Beca’s ear and whispered, “That’s where you’re wrong, Becs. I always want to put the ‘mack’ on you,” she said, placing a soft kiss on Beca’s cheek.

Beca turned her head sideways to meet her girlfriend’s gaze. Beca tried her best to keep a straight face, but the task was made impossible by the flirty glimmer in Chloe’s baby blue eyes. Knowing she had broken Beca’s resolve, Chloe mirrored Beca by cracking into a smile of her own. The action of smiling caused Chloe to break into a fit of coughs.

“Alright, Beale. Game over. We’re getting you inside. Since I can’t make soup due to sudden lack of kitchen space, I’m ordering you soup from someplace.”

“No, wait,” Chloe said in a raspy voice, as her coughs subsided, “I’m fine. Really.”

Beca raised her eyebrows in response.

“Beca,” Chloe said, “I swear to God, if you don’t fuck me right now-”

Beca swallowed hard. She knew she shouldn’t. But Chloe was begging her. And who was she to say no to her girlfriend, right? Beca took a step to close the gap between her and Chloe, bringing their lips together. Beca gently ran the back of her hand across Chloe’s forehead. Chloe was still very hot to the touch. Chloe swatted Beca’s hand away from her forehead, pinning it down to Beca’s side as she continued kissing Beca passionately.

“Inside,” Beca panted.

“You don’t want to give our new neighbors a show?” Chloe teased.

“Maybe next time,” Beca joked. “When it doesn’t look like it’s about to rain.”

Chloe shrugged as she pushed Beca through the door and into the living room. Neither girl
bothered to close the back door, as their minds were preoccupied by other thoughts. Beca gently placed Chloe on the couch and gingerly climbed on top of her.

Beca kissed Chloe deeply, her hands gently exploring the curves of Chloe’s body, as if this were the first time she had felt the other girl beneath her. Beca, who could tell that Chloe was sicker than she let on, was careful with her. Beca elected not to remove Chloe’s clothing, so that the girl could stay warmer. Beca slid a hand down the waistband of Chloe’s pajama pants, lightly rubbing her fingers across the fabric of her underwear.

Chloe inhaled sharply and subsequently, coughed a couple times. Chloe shot her blue eyes open, knowing that Beca would suggest stopping. “Don’t you dare,” Chloe warned Beca harshly, preemptively keeping Beca from stopping exactly what she was already doing.

Beca bit her bottom lip to keep from laughing. She placed another kiss on Chloe’s mouth before moving Chloe’s underwear to the side and plunging a finger deep inside the wet folds of her girlfriend. Chloe gasped. Beca soon added a second finger as she continued to pump at a deliciously slow speed. Chloe bucked her hips upward, needing as much of Beca as she could possibly get. It didn’t take long before Chloe climaxed, hoarsely calling Beca’s name as she collapsed around her fingers.

When Chloe had eased down from her orgasm, she attempted to push Beca on her back so that she could return the favor. Sitting up from where she had been lying down, Chloe suddenly felt a bit dizzy. Her chest hurt from coughing and she just felt sluggish. She was nonetheless determined to make sure Beca was taken care of.

“Chlo?” Beca asked, knowing that Chloe was trying to take care of Beca’s needs, even though she wasn’t feeling well.

“Yeah?” She croaked.

“Maybe we can get some rest and you can return the favor another time?” Beca asked gently.

Chloe tried not to look hurt over the fact that Beca was denying her. Beca noticed this, quickly adding, “And I love you.”

Chloe softened. Of course Beca wasn’t denying her. She was looking out for her. “I love you too, Becs,” Chloe answered sleepily as she settled back down into a lying position on the couch.

As they were lying on the couch, Beca draped a blanket over a curled-up Chloe, who had promptly fallen asleep. As Beca spooned her, she watched the rain begin to pour down from the still-open back door. Beca figured she should shut the door, but didn’t want to disturb Chloe. Beca had gone through all this trouble to get Chloe down to sleep in the first place. Chloe needed her rest. Beca’s mind wandered from the back door. Beca suddenly remembered with a panic that the convertible top was still down on her car. Chloe stirred slightly, as she nuzzled into Beca’s warm embrace and drifted back to sleep. Beca had kind of wanted a new car anyhow, she figured.

As Beca held Chloe tightly, Chloe’s words from earlier that afternoon played back in Beca’s mind. ‘When you know you want something, why wait?’ Beca placed a soft kiss in Chloe’s hair. Once their nap ended, Beca would need to see a man about a horse.
CHAPTER 20 (December 31, 2018)

“Becs? I’m so sorry, but I’m running a little late tonight. I know I said five earlier today, but now I’m thinking it’ll be closer to seven. I just wanted to give you that heads up,” Chloe apologized.

“That’s not an issue at all. I’ll see you when I see you, how about that?” Beca asked.

“Okay that sounds good. And Beca?”

“Yeah?”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too, Chlo.” Beca hung up the phone with a content smile on her face. What was another two hours?

Beca reached into her pocket and grasped the ring box, checking to make sure it was still there. “In good time,” she told herself.

Beca smiled nervously to herself. She was both as nervous as she had ever been and totally placated, if that made any sense. She wanted tonight to go perfectly, for Chloe’s sake, and that’s why she was nervous with excited energy. On the other hand, Beca knew beyond a doubt that Chloe was the one person in this world with whom she was meant to share her life. Asking this question about seemed like the most natural thing she would ever do.

Roughly two months ago, on a rainy October afternoon, Beca had made a very important decision. Once Chloe had gone to sleep that night, Beca snuck downstairs to make a phone call.

“Hello?” The voice answered from the other side of the line.

“Hey, Aubrey,” Beca said.

“Beca, I must say, it’s quite the surprise to be hearing from you. Normally we only talk when I call Chloe or you call Jesse and the other person happens to be in the room.”

“Yeah, I know that. How’s the house treating you?” Beca asked.

The timing of Beca’s move to Atlanta coincided pretty well with Aubrey’s move to LA. Aubrey had to travel a lot for work anyways, so she figured she may as well decide to call LA home. Jesse was there and that counted for a lot. Upon hearing about Aubrey’s move, Beca offered to sell her house to Aubrey. Aubrey refused. It was too valuable of a house and although Aubrey was doing well financially, she wasn’t yet doing that well. Beca cut the asking price in half. Aubrey refused again. She couldn’t take advantage of Beca like that. Beca insisted it wasn’t taking advantage to see her friends happy. And besides, Jesse had grown accustomed to a certain lifestyle and who was Beca to snatch that away from him? Laughing, Aubrey ultimately accepted Beca’s offer, sincerely appreciative over Beca’s generosity. Aubrey closed on Beca’s house in October.

“It’s perfect, Beca. The view from the porch is beautiful. I can do yoga out here every morning and it really helps me with my Zen,” Aubrey answered.

“Zen and Aubrey are two words I never considered in the same sentence before,” Beca joked.
“You’d be surprised, Beca,” Aubrey answered, missing Beca’s joke, “I’ve calmed down considerably since my college days.”

Beca bit her bottom lip to keep from laughing.

“My father always said,” Aubrey continued, “That worrying is like a canoe. You make one wrong turn and you’re up the creek without a paddle.”

“I didn’t call you to talk about your dad,” Beca said with a wave of her hand. She really didn’t have the mental stamina to decipher Aubrey’s latest twisted words of wisdom.

“Why did you call, Beca?” Aubrey asked.

Beca sighed. This was it. She knew she still wanted to talk to Chloe’s parents about this, but aside from parents, Aubrey was the one other person Beca cared to ask.

“I want to propose,” Beca said.

Aubrey squealed with delight. Beca exhaled. She was half expecting Aubrey to come flying in from California brandishing a knife with which to stab Beca. Beca knew that she and Chloe had only been officially dating for a few months, but the short period of time did mean she was acting impulsively. Beca was sure about what she wanted to do. She had been in love with Chloe for years and was tired of waiting. Beca was relieved that Aubrey seemed to understand this.

“Really? That’s so great, Beca! Have you got a ring picked out?”

“No, not exactly. I was hoping you could help with that. I don’t know, I figured you or Stacie would be good at that, yeah?”

“Absolutely,” Aubrey assured. “I know Chloe’s taste well. Listen, let me chat with Stacie about this and then you should bring Stacie with you to pick out the ring.”

“Yeah… That sounds… that sounds good,” Beca said.

“Beca, I can’t believe that two of my closest friends are about to be engaged to one another!” Aubrey exclaimed, unable to contain her excitement.

“Well, assuming she says ‘yes.’”

“Aca-scuse me?”

“She still needs to agree, Aubrey,” Beca repeated.

“No, no, I heard you just fine,” Aubrey answered, “But I swear on the Dixie Chicks’s thirteen Grammys that she’s definitely going to say ‘yes.’”

“I hope so,” Beca confessed nervously.

“She will,” Aubrey assured. “I think Chloe’s been waiting for this moment since the day she climbed into your shower all those years ago.”

“Wait… She told you about that?” Beca asked, her face growing red.

“Beca, Beca, Beca,” Aubrey started, “Chloe always told me everything about you. I swear, back in college I knew your class schedule better than my own. I knew your favorite foods, what music you were interested in at any point in time, how ‘totes adorable’ you looked on any given day, all
Beca grinned. “That’s… really sweet.”

“Well, really annoying if you were me. I was just counting down the days until she finally got you out of her system.”

“Hey!” Beca objected.

“But,” Aubrey silenced Beca by continuing, “As I got to know you better, I came to respect… and then like you. You’re it, Beca. I’ve never been surer about anything. You are everything Chloe wants and needs and you have my complete blessing.”

“Thanks, Aubrey,” Beca said sincerely.

“Oh, and Beca?”

“Huh?”

“When are you going to pop the big question?”

“That’s the other thing I need to talk to you about,” Beca answered.

Beca talked through her plan with Aubrey. If Amy could have a New Year’s engagement party, couldn’t Beca have one as well? Beca wanted the actual proposal to be private, a shared moment just between Beca and Chloe. But after that, assuming Chloe said “yes”, Beca knew that Chloe would want her closest friends around to celebrate. Plus, it would be a wonderful excuse to get the girls together again.

Aubrey was beside herself with joy. Of course she would keep the entire matter a surprise, Aubrey agreed. Over the following months, Beca and Aubrey secretly worked together to put the wheels in motion for the secret engagement party. All of the Bellas were going to arrive in Atlanta on New Year’s Eve. Since Beca and Chloe’s house was pretty large, there would be enough room for everyone to stay at their house if they so chose. Beca would propose to Chloe that evening, and then around nine o’clock, the Bellas would show up to surprise Chloe and ring in the new year. Beca stealthily accessed a lot of Chloe’s business contacts. Between Beca, Stacie, and Aubrey, they were able to plan a pretty stellar New Year’s party to take place at Beca and Chloe’s home.

Beca waited for Chloe to return home from work. Like clockwork, Chloe’s headlights appeared as her black Range Rover pulled into the driveway exactly at seven o’clock.

“Home!” Chloe shouted to a seemingly empty house. “Beca?” She asked, calling through the house. Chloe soon realized that Beca was perching nervously on the arm of the couch.

“Hey, babe,” Chloe greeted breezily, pecking Beca quickly on the cheek.

“Hey, yourself,” Beca tried her best to answer evenly. Internally, her nerves were practically igniting fires.

“What’s up?” Chloe asked, knitting her eyebrows together. Something was up, she knew it. Why else would Beca be sitting nervously on the arm of the couch, almost as if she were waiting anxiously for Chloe to show up?

“Let’s go, I need to grab my keys.”
“Tell me what’s going on,” Chloe requested, grabbing Beca’s hand.

“I will, we just need to go,” Beca promised, giving Chloe’s hand a light squeeze.

“Why?” Chloe asked.

“Because I have somewhere special I want to take you,” Beca answered.

“My, my, my, aren’t we being cryptic?”

“Just… indulge me, okay?”

“I would love nothing more,” Chloe whispered into Beca’s ear as she wrapped her arms around the brunette, “Than to indulge you.”

Beca turned pink as she began sputtering incoherently. She would think that after all this time, she would be able to exhibit any amount of chill around Chloe. No, it seemed that Chloe still had the amazing ability to fluster Beca just as much as always.

“Come on, let’s go upstairs,” Chloe suggested, giggling over the effect she had on Beca. Chloe still loved how easy it was to push Beca’s buttons. Beca forgot her game plan momentarily and began letting Chloe lead her up the stairs and into their bedroom.

“Wait… no!” Beca, backtracked, remembering that now was not a moment in which she could allow Chloe to seduce her. Chloe frowned, her big blue eyes filled with hurt. Beca sighed. Damn it.

“I’m sorry. Yes, I want you so much right now. But please, for the love of God, just… come do my thing first, will you?” Beca asked. Chloe smiled, relenting. Beca must be really serious about whatever it is she wanted to do.

“Alright, Becs, you got it,” Chloe said with a wink, as she linked arms with Beca and the two walked out the front door.

Beca remained silent as to the special location in which she was taking Chloe. It wasn’t until they arrived, that Chloe realized they were back at Barden University.

“Becs! We’re back at Barden!” Chloe exclaimed excitedly. Beca and Chloe hadn’t been back on campus together since graduation three and a half years ago.

“That’s right, Chlo. Ignore the fact that it’s cold and dark outside, but I just wanted to come back here again with you.”

Chloe kissed Beca. “This is aca-adorable,” she said, getting out of the car.

Beca walked hand in hand with Chloe from the car to the quad. On the way, the girls reminisced. Seeing Barden again reminded them so much about the time in college they had shared together. They passed the science hall where Chloe and Beca met for bagels most mornings before Beca’s chemistry class. They passed the tree under which the Bellas frequently met between classes to hang out. They passed the auditorium where many a Bella practice was held. Beca stopped under a lamppost.

“What’s up, why’d you stop?” Chloe asked.

Beca nodded directly ahead of her, referencing a specific spot in the quad where Chloe and Aubrey had been handing out flyers at the Activities Fair, so long ago. “That’s where you were the first
time I ever saw you,” Beca pointed out.

Beca was right, Chloe thought. Even though the years and seasons had change, that was the spot where Chloe had stopped Beca about joining the Bella’s, despite Aubrey’s initial judgment that Beca was ‘too alternative.’ Chloe laughed softly. Beca was being quite the romantic tonight. She usually hated sentimental crap. Her words, not Chloe’s.

“You’re right,” Chloe answered to Beca. “That’s where you shut Bree and I down by telling us how lame a-capella was!”

“I obviously thought I was cool shit back then… Which we now both know I’m not. I mean, I joined an a-capella group for God’s sake,” Beca joked sarcastically.

“Hey,” Chloe protested, lightly pushing Beca’s shoulders.

“But anyhow,” Beca continued, “I remember that day. You looked so… hopeful. It was cute,” Beca added.

Chloe beamed, grabbing ahold of Beca’s hand. “You looked… well, I was really super into you back then, too,” Chloe said.

“Yeah?” Beca asked.

“Definitely,” Chloe affirmed with a nod of her head.

The two girls continued along, walking from the quad, down to the outdoor theatre at Barden. The first a-capella party had occurred here, not one hour after Beca officially became a Bella. Over the years, a number of a-capella parties had been thrown here. Beca and Chloe both knew the venue quite well.

“So is this stop number two on our tour?” Chloe asked.

“Sure is,” Beca answered. “This is where we were when I had just joined the Bellas. And you came up to me and said…” Beca trailed off.

“I told you that I thought we were going to be really fast friends,” Chloe remembered, giggling as she kissed Beca’s cheek. “And by the looks of it, I think I was right,” Chloe added in a sultry tone.

“I remembered wondering what a bubbly, beautiful girl like you got from a friendship with a girl like me,” Beca confessed. “I don’t think it was until later that year until I had enough confidence to realize that you weren’t the only person contributing to our relationship.”

“Oh, Beca,” Chloe said, throwing her arms around the other girl. “It may have seemed that way to you, but I felt a little bit empty inside until I met you. Sure, being a Bella was still fun before you came along, but having you there gave it meaning. Substance. It made me feel like I was living for something.”

Beca smiled genuinely, looking Chloe in the eyes as she brought her lips to the other girl’s mouth, savoring the feel of Chloe’s mouth against her own. “Thank you,” Beca said. “Really, thank you. You and the other girls showed me that I can make a difference to other people. That I can count on them and vice versa.”

Finally, Beca led them down to the pool where the Bellas had participated in a number of riff offs over the years. Beca helped Chloe down into the emptied out pool.
“Last stop, Chlo, I promise,” Beca said. She knew Chloe wouldn’t complain, but it was rather cold outside.

“Alright, Becs, what’s the story here?” Chloe asked, eager to hear what Beca would have to say about this special spot.

“Well, I remember the riff offs we did here, back in the day. And those were fun, but what I remember most fondly is the time we came out here and found our sound. Remember that, Chlo? You sang Bruno Mars’ “Just The Way You Are” and I sang Nelly’s “Just A Dream?”

“Our voices felt like one,” Chloe recalled softly.

Beca nodded. “Chlo, will you do me a favor?”

“Anything.”

“Will you sing with me, for old time’s sake?”

“Of course!” Chloe answered warmly. Singing with Beca was about one of her favorite activities in the world.

“Okay, I think you probably know this one,” Beca began. Beca began singing and immediately, Chloe picked up on the tune and began harmonizing. Locking eyes, trusting the other’s voice, Beca and Chloe sang the tune that had come to mean so much to them.

“I got my ticket for the long way ’round
Two bottle ‘a whiskey for the way
And I sure would like some sweet company
And I’m leaving tomorrow, wha-do-ya say?
When I’m gone
When I’m gone
You’re gonna miss me when I’m gone
You’re gonna miss me by my hair
You’re gonna miss me everywhere, oh
You’re gonna miss me when I’m gone.”

“Wow,” Chloe said, goose bumps running up her arms. Singing with Beca still elicited this response. To this day, she still loved singing with Beca every chance she got. She reached out and brushed lips with Beca. Beca didn’t deepen the kiss but instead took a step back. It appeared there was something she had to say.

“Chlo, I wanted us to come back here tonight for a reason.” Beca searched Chloe’s eyes for any indication as to whether or not Chloe knew where this was headed. Chloe’s gaze, although gleaming and loving, didn’t seem to register any knowledge as to what Beca was about to say.

“I wanted to show you how much you mean to me. I respect and love you as a person. You’re the warmest, most caring and hopeful person I know. You’re also my best friend. And you’ve shown me compassion and support from the beginning. Finally, you’re my soul mate. You’ve got the one other voice out there that matches mine. And Chlo, there’s not a doubt it my mind. I feel it stronger than I’ve ever felt anything before. I love you so much. Would you make me the happiest person in the world and marry me?” Beca asked, as she pulled the ring out of her pocket and got down on one knee.

Chloe gasped, clapping her hands over her face, as her eyes teared up with joy. She couldn’t believe
this was happening. She hadn’t been expecting it at all. This moment was beyond her wildest dreams. It was so romantic, thoughtful, perfect. It was so Beca.

“Yes!” Chloe exclaimed, unable to contain her pure joy, as she ran into the brunette’s arms.

Chloe wrapped her arms tightly around Beca’s shoulders, squeezing the other girl hard. Chloe couldn’t stop herself from crying tears of happiness. Beca hugged Chloe back around the waist, still holding the ring between her forefinger and thumb. For a minute, the girls just stood there, hugging one another.

“So, uh, do you want the ring or not?” Beca finally asked.

“Oh, right!” Chloe said, momentarily overcome by the grandiose of the entire unfolding of events. She looked down and saw the most beautiful ring she had ever seen in her life. Small diamonds lined the ring, but Chloe noticed that the main stone wasn’t a normal diamond at all.

“It’s beautiful, Becs, is it…?” Chloe trailed off, as she observed the ring in awe.

“A champagne diamond,” Beca finished Chloe’s thought.

“I love it,” Chloe squealed, as she tried on the ring. It fit perfectly. Chloe ogled her hand, loving how the ring looked on her finger. Although the ring was certainly beautiful, she was far more excited over the meaning behind the ring. She was engaged to Beca. Beca was engaged to her. In this moment, they had just promised their lives to one another.

“And Beca, I love you more than anything in this world, I want you to know that,” Chloe said, her dewy eyes meeting Beca’s. “Really,” Chloe continued, “I thank God each day that you’re in my life. Words can’t express the way I feel when I look at you. But I just know that I’m the luckiest girl in the world with you by my side.”

Beca smiled and blushed. “Thanks, Chloe. That means a lot to hear,” Beca answered. For the first time ever, she had just taken a compliment.

Chloe leaned in and kissed Beca, hugging her tightly. “So what about you?” She asked the smaller girl.

“What about me?”

“I have a ring and you don’t.”

“Right,” Beca began, “I figured you would bring that up. And I don’t know about your thoughts, but I kind of take us as a ‘one for all, all for one’ type deal. We’re equals, you know? If you wear a ring, so do I. So I figured maybe we’d go pick one out next week? I don’t know, I don’t want anything flashy, but I do want to symbolize this.”

“Beca Mitchell, it would be my honor to go shopping on your behalf,” Chloe said with a wink.

After several more minutes passed, and more than a few happy tears were cried (mostly from Chloe, but several from Beca, despite her vehement objection), the girls decided to walk back through campus to Beca’s car. Chloe didn’t know this, but while the two were away, Stacie and Aubrey were setting up for the engagement party. All of the Bellas would likely be at Beca and Chloe’s home by the time they returned.

Hand in hand, Beca and Chloe walked through campus as an engaged couple.
“So, Becs?” Chloe asked.

“Yeah?” Beca answered.

“You said I was the one other voice that matched yours?”

“I recall,” Beca responded.

“And then you said…” Chloe trailed off, waiting to hear Beca’s response.

“I said?” Beca asked, furrowing her eyebrows together. Where was Chloe going with any of this?

“You said I was your soul mate,” Chloe finished, playfully bumping shoulders with Beca, their hands remaining intertwined.

“Lord, don’t start,” Beca begged dryly.

“How’s it taste, Becs?” Chloe further teased.

“How does what taste?” Beca asked, bracing herself for whatever clever response Chloe had queued up and ready to unleash.

“Hypocrisy,” Chloe answered with a grin, flashing her pearly white teeth over at Beca.

“Jesus,” Beca muttered. “I can’t catch a break around you, can I?” Although Beca pretended to be annoyed, both girls knew that Beca was anything but annoyed.

“Nope, nothing slides past me,” Chloe answered lightly.

“Says the girl who, last week, literally walked into a tree and apologized,” Beca sparred back jokingly.

“Now I’m the one who can’t catch a break,” Chloe mused rhetorically.

“The irony isn’t lost on me,” Beca answered with a chuckle.

“Real irony or Alanis Morisette irony?”

“Stop.”

By this point in time, the girls were nearly back to Beca’s car. The two passed Baker Hall, Beca’s dorm from freshman year.

“Bring back memories?” Chloe asked, nudging Beca.

“Sure does,” Beca answered flatly. “I wonder where Kimmy Jin is today.”

“Oh, she’s at MIT,” Chloe answered cheerily.

“What? How… how do you know that?” Beca asked suspiciously.

“We’re friends on Facebook,” Chloe answered, as if it were the simplest thing in the world.

“No, really,” Beca said in disbelief.

“I’m not lying. Kimmy Jin and I kind of became friends.”
“Dude! Kimmy Jin and I weren’t even friends, and I lived with her for a whole year!”

Chloe laughed. “I think she liked you more than she let on.”

“Doubt it,” Beca said. “So what’s the story with you and her? I gotta know.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’d stop by the room a lot, which, uh, I guess you know,” Chloe said with a wink. “It turns out, I had a hopeless crush on Kimmy Jin’s roommate. And one day, when she was away, I came clean to Kimmy Jin about how I was digging her roommate. One thing led to another, and we got to talking. It turned out Kimmy Jin was pretty cool after all. She helped me pass calculus and I helped her get a date with this guy she was into.”

“Wow, I had no clue,” Beca said. “About the embarrassing crush you had on me,” Beca added jokingly. Chloe lightly punched Beca in the arm. “I mean, that’s… really, super embarrassing,” Beca continued with a laugh.

“Beca, we’re engaged,” Chloe protested, holding up her left hand as evidence.

“I know,” Beca answered with a playful grin. “I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of hearing that.”

“Me either,” Chloe mused, “It’s kind of a huge turn on.”

Beca swallowed hard as her heart skipped a beat. Despite the cold weather outside, Beca felt a little overheated. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” Beca asked, dropping her voice an octave.

At the same time Beca said “Car sex,” Chloe responded with, “Let’s break into Baker Hall and have sex in the shower.”

“Wait, what did you say?” Beca asked, completely shocked and taken aback.

Chloe winked, as she snaked her arms around Beca’s waist. Beca should have known in this moment that she was a goner. “I said,” Chloe began again, leaning her mouth in to lightly brush Beca’s ear, “That we should go back in there and finish what we started in that shower.”

Beca blushed, trying her best to keep her growing desire in abeyance. “Dude,” Beca began, trying to mask how turned on she actually was, “That’s breaking and entering… which is a crime.”

“I won’t tell if you won’t,” Chloe whispered, biting down on Beca’s earlobe. Beca moaned loudly. Chloe grinned. She knew she had Beca right where she wanted her.

Beca, forgetting that breaking into a locked building was trespassing, and also forgetting that a house full of party guests were waiting back at home, found herself agreeing with Chloe. They walked up to the door at Baker Hall.

“Watch this,” Chloe said, pulling a bobby pin out of her hair and using it to jiggle the lock open.

“Chlo, what the fuck?” Beca asked although the question came out more like a statement. She was half-impressed, half-shocked. Where had Chloe learned this skill?

“It’s hardly a thing, Becs,” Chloe said with a sultry grin.

“Um, no. It’s definitely a thing. I like, didn’t know you were gonna go all ‘Italian Job’ right now,” Beca answered.

Chloe jiggled the doorknob, which easily opened. Chloe held open the door as Beca reentered the dormitory that had been her home during her first year of college. “I did this all the time in
“Jesus, sure makes me feel safe about where I’d been living for a whole entire year,” Beca muttered to herself.

Chloe and Beca made their way to the bathroom. It hadn’t changed a bit from her memory, Beca mused, as the girls found the particular stall where the showdown had occurred, all those years ago. Chloe turned on the shower, before turning around to face Beca.

“Alright, Becs, if we’re going to recreate this scene, let’s lose the clothes,” Chloe said, cutting directly to the chase. Chloe couldn’t wait to rewrite this scene the way she wished it had played out the first time.

“Well aren’t you bossy?” Beca asked with a smirk.

“Either you strip, or I’ll fuck you in the shower with your clothes on. Your choice, Becs.”

Beca swallowed hard, trying to ignore the pool of wetness forming between her thighs. Damn, Chloe was sexy when she was demanding and in charge. Beca could hardly handle it. Before Chloe could ask again, Beca began shedding her clothing. Chloe followed suit. Within seconds, both girls were totally naked. Beca didn’t make any pretense of hiding her lingering gaze as her eyes slowly raked the length of Chloe’s wet body.

“Come here,” Chloe commanded in a throaty voice. Beca didn’t hesitate for a second as she immediately joined her fiancé in the shower.

“How high does your belt go?” Beca asked in a flirty voice as she locked eyes on Chloe’s lips and leaned forward at a deliberately slow pace. Beca wanted to savor every moment of this rendezvous. After all, she had been playing this shower scene out in her head for the past five years.

“You’ll find out pretty soon,” Chloe responded with a smile, her gaze not leaving Beca’s lips, which were now mere inches away from Chloe’s lips.

“Soon, huh?” Beca asked with a sly smirk. “You’re really not playing hard to get tonight, are you babe?”

Chloe leaned in, closing the gap between Beca and Chloe. After one slow, passionate kiss, Chloe forced their lips apart again. Even though she had more to say, she couldn’t resist the momentary feel of Beca’s soft lips.

Chloe leaned into Beca’s ear and whispered, “That’s because I’m not going to be hard to get tonight, Becs. I swear, I’m already almost ‘got.’”

Beca’s hooded eyes became hazy and glazed over with lust as the shower kept pounding water down atop the girls. Hearing how close Chloe already was to the brink of orgasm did nothing to calm her own raging hormones. “Well then, I’d better lend you a hand,” Beca whispered.

“Becs, I swear… You get me… so hot,” Chloe said, forcing her lips upon Beca’s for a second time, hungry for the contact. The kiss was wet and sloppy, involving a lot of tongue. Beca responded, massaging Chloe’s tongue with her own as steaming hot water poured down on the girls. Chloe moaned into Beca’s mouth while her hands fondled Beca’s boobs. It seemed that Chloe wasn’t interested in taking her time about things. Her desire for Beca was fire-hot. She needed Beca and she needed Beca now.

Chloe bit down on Beca’s bottom lip, dragging her teeth and pulling. As their lips pulled apart,
Chloe pleaded in a husky whisper, “Becs, please.”

“Please what?” Beca asked with a wink, her hands exploring the wet, naked body of her fiancé. “Use your words, Chlo. Tell me exactly what you want me to do to you.”

“I want you inside me, right now.”

“God dammit, Chlo, you’re so fucking hot when you talk like that,” an out of breath Beca responded.

Grabbing Beca from the back of her neck, Chloe pulled Beca back in for another predatory and passionately hot kiss. With her free hand, Chloe grabbed Beca’s hand, guiding it downward. Even though they were in the shower, Beca could feel how soaking wet the other girl was from desire. Beca took the hint. Without any furthering lingering, Beca plunged two fingers deep inside the wet folds of her girlfriend. Chloe hissed with pleasure. In case Chloe’s hunger for Beca hadn’t been evidence enough, the wetness coming from Chloe’s core told Beca just how close to the brink she was.

After scarcely one minute of action, Chloe tensed up, coming harshly and loudly around Beca’s fingers. Beca eased Chloe down from her climax, now more turned on than ever. With her fingers still moving in slow circles inside a shaking and wobbly Chloe, Beca said, “God, Chlo, you feel so good. I love how fucking wet you get.”

Chloe’s eyelids fluttered as she leaned heavily into Beca, still panting. “Say it… again,” Chloe pleaded, her hips rocking up and down slowly against Beca’s fingers.

“Again?” Beca asked. Chloe nodded.

“You feel so good. I love when you get wet for me. God, I want you… so bad,” Beca panted, still working her fingers inside Chloe as the water from the shower pounded down on them. Chloe began clenching around Beca’s fingers again. Beca didn’t think she could remove her fingers even if she wanted to.

“You’re gonna make me… I’m gonna…” Chloe trailed off, as she rode Beca’s hand to the brink of orgasm a second time. Chloe yelled loudly again as she came undone against Beca.

Easing down from her orgasm, an exhausted Chloe sighed heavily, leaning her head down to rest on Beca’s shoulder for support. Chloe hardly felt as though she could stand up anymore.

“You finally done there?” Beca asked. Chloe lifted her head and nodded.

“Or do you want to make the score three to zero?” Beca continued. Smiling, Chloe shook her head and Beca pulled her fingers out from Chloe’s core.

“God,” Beca whispered, bringing her two fingers up to her own mouth and licking them. Beca could never get over how good Chloe tasted.

“I think I need to finally take care of you,” Chloe said.

“Please… I don’t know how much longer I can hold on,” Beca answered.

“That’s about to change,” Chloe said with a wink as she went down on Beca.

“Jesus fuck, Chlo!” Beca called out as Chloe’s mouth made contact with Beca’s core.
Chloe did, indeed return the favor. Twice. Eventually, the girls left the shower, totally drenched, tired and in love. Neither Beca’s nor Chloe’s hair was totally dry by the time they made it in their front door at ten that evening. Beca opened the door to their house, cringing as she knew what was waiting for them.

“SURPRISE!” Nine very excited Bellas screamed in unison as Chloe stepped into the threshold of the house. Chloe brought her ring-clad hand up to cover her gaping mouth. The Bellas were all here. To see them. She felt incredibly touched.

“Oh my God!” Chloe yelled excitedly, running into the living room to properly greet her friends. Beca smiled as she closed the front door and followed Chloe into the living room. Chloe embraced Aubrey in a hug, before making the rounds and greeting the other Bellas.

“Beca, did you know…” Chloe trailed off, recognizing the knowing smile on Beca’s face. Of course. Beca knew about these plans. Beca had planned this.

“You threw us a party!” Chloe exclaimed, literally jumping up and down as she grabbed Beca’s hand. Beca couldn’t help but smile because this was about the cutest thing she had ever seen.

“I knew you’d want to celebrate alongside your best friends.”

“Aw, Beca, you softie,” CR joked.

“Hey, don’t call me that,” Beca warned, trying her best not to smile.

“Hey, erm, why are you all wet, Shawshank?” Amy asked Beca. “And you too, Red,” Amy continued.

“It doesn’t matter,” Beca shot back quickly, hoping to shut down this discussion before it really began.

“We may have had a little rendezvous in Beca’s freshman dorm shower,” Chloe answered Amy with a wink, as she wrapped an arm around Beca.

“Ooh, that’s hot!” Stacie exclaimed.

“It sure seems like you two have a lot of sexy times in the shower,” Amy pointed out. Amy still remembered that Chloe and Beca had gotten it on in the shower on the morning of her wedding.

“Beca can’t resist me,” Chloe teased. “I mean, I’ve got all this going on,” Chloe continued. Stacie and Chloe shared a laugh.

“Why are we still talking about sex, when we haven’t even seen the bling yet!” Aubrey interjected.

“Yes!” Beca agreed with Aubrey. “Please! The bling! Er, I mean, ring!”

The girls spent the next bit of time showing off the ring and telling, and retelling, the story of the engagement. Chloe couldn’t believe that Beca had gone to all this trouble to give her the perfect night. She really felt like she had won the lottery with Beca. Despite her self-proclaimed tough exterior, Beca really was a total softie. After about ten minutes of reminiscing, Amy insisted the party ‘properly get started.’

“No surprises tonight, right Ame?” Chloe asked. She was hoping Amy hadn’t done anything stupid, like invite strippers over, or insist the girls go swimming with piranhas. The thing about Amy, was you never really knew what to expect.
“No promises, Ginger,” Amy said back. “The night is still young… and so is my edible underwear.”

Beca giggled, despite trying to hold it back.

“Your what?” Aubrey asked in disbelief.

“Edible underwear,” Amy repeated. “For later. When I need a snack.”

“Oh. Gross,” Jessica muttered, saying what was on everyone’s mind. Aubrey’s face contorted as she tried to hide a look of judgment.

Champagne was poured and the Bellas toasted to the engagement. “To my favorite aca-parents!” Emily began, taking charge of the toast. “When I first joined the Bellas, I, uh, well… I thought Beca and Chloe were already dating. It wasn’t until Cynthia Rose told me otherwise until I knew they weren’t. But anyhow, I still kind of thought of them as this married couple. Like Chloe was the mom, and Beca was the dad. And I was like their child or something. So yeah, I’m so happy you guys are together and I can’t wait for another aca-wedding in the next year,’” she said with a nod over to Ashley. Ashley was getting married in the summer. If Chloe and Beca decided to get married this year, then that would make two weddings.

“Here, here,” everyone toasted with their champagne.

“Are we getting married in the next year?” Beca whispered over to Chloe after they had each taken a sip from their champagne glasses.

“I guess we haven’t discussed it yet, have we?” Chloe asked. “But I hope so,” she added.

“Me too,” Beca answered.

Chloe placed a kiss in Beca’s hair. Honestly, she would marry Beca that very day if it were acceptable. “As much as I love being your fiancé, I can’t wait to be your wife.”

“And I can’t wait to be yours,” Beca responded.

The party began as a playlist of songs began circulating through the house. Aubrey and Stacie had decided to keep the party low-key, which meant not hiring a DJ. They figured Beca was the best DJ they knew and anyone apart from Beca just wouldn’t cut it. They also figured the Bellas cared more about enjoying one another’s company than they did about attending a fancy NYE party. The one splurge Stacie and Aubrey had agreed upon was the booze. There was lots of booze.

“Alright Bree, please tell me you or Stace ordered food? I’m starving,” Beca said.

Aubrey smiled. “You just called me Bree,” she pointed out.

“No I didn’t.”

“So did,” Stacie affirmed.

“I’m not admitting anything,” Beca said. Stacie smirked. Beca could deny it as much as she liked, but her and Aubrey were genuinely friends.

“Fine. Then I guess you won’t get any of the pizza we ordered. Which is too bad, really. Because the only thing in your pantry is black eyed peas,” Aubrey responded evenly.

“The band or the food?” Stacie asked jokingly.
“The food,” Aubrey answered, completely oblivious to Stacie’s joke.

“Ew. Gross. Why on earth do we have black eyed peas?” Beca wondered aloud. She figured Chloe must have bought them because that was about the last food on earth Beca would choose to eat.

“Well, it could be one of two things,” Aubrey began evenly. “It might be because eating black eyed peas on New Year’s Day is supposed to bring good luck for the coming year.”

“The band or the food?” Beca asked sarcastically, cutting her eyes over to Stacie and smiling.

“The food,” Aubrey answered, again completely missing the joke. “But my bet is on option number two. Which is that someone is trying to poison you,” Aubrey said with a straight face.

“What are you talking about, you weirdo?” Beca sputtered.

“Wait a minute…” Stacie trailed off, the cogs in her brain turning. “Goodbye Earl!” She exclaimed excitedly, clapping her hands. Everyone knew that Aubrey loved the Dixie Chicks.

“Very good, Stacie,” Aubrey answered. “Someone here knows a joke when they hear one.”

“Dude!” Beca answered in flustered disbelief. “In the past minute alone, Stacie and I made two separate Black Eyed Peas jokes… Which, by the way, went right over your head. No offense but you have like, no sense of humor.” Chloe, upon seeing Beca’s exasperated expression, walked over to listen in on the conversation. She loved the banter between Beca and Aubrey.

“The mere fact that Aubrey made a Dixie Chicks joke, despite being self-proclaimed as ‘Dixie Chicks serious,’ shows that Aubrey isn’t as Dixie Chicks serious as she likes to let on,” Stacie said with a shrug.

At this point, Chloe piped up. “Isn’t that ‘Ironic,’ Becs?”

Beca clutched her head in pain. “Fucking… stop. Seriously, I can’t keep up with you guys. This conversation was the metaphorical equivalent of being brain-fucked by a chainsaw. Please… I need… pizza… and superficial conversation.” Beca walked away in the direction of the pizza while the other three girl giggled at Beca’s expense.

By midnight, everyone was drunk and having the time of their lives. At ten ‘til midnight, Beca turned on the TV. Everyone grabber party hats, blowers, and refills on the champagne. Finally, the countdown began. “TEN… NINE… EIGHT… SEVEN… SIX… FIVE… FOUR… THREE… TWO… ONE… HAPPY NEW YEAR!” The Bellas shouted in unison, although Amy was by far the loudest.

"Happy New Year, Chlo," Beca said sweetly, as she smoothly brought her lips to those of her fiancé.

"Happy New Year, Becs," Chloe returned in between kisses. A whole year had passed. Exactly this time one year ago, her and Beca had just made up from a giant fight. So much had happened in the past year. They became friends again. They had realized their feelings for one another. They began dating. They moved in together. And now, they were engaged.

So in the end, everything felt perfectly normal. And what was better, was that perfectly normal was perfect in their eyes. Arm in arm, their eyes scanned the room. Amy was dancing on a tabletop, chugging wine from the bottle. Flo, Stacie, Ashley, and Jessica were playing a drinking game in the kitchen. Lilly was quite literally hanging from the chandelier, while CR tried to coax her down. Emily and Aubrey were messing with the play list, because they hadn’t heard any songs by the
Spice Girls yet that night. Beca and Chloe were together forever and they were happy, their friends never too far away.
Chapter Notes

So this follows the storyline, but is its own standalone moment. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Oh my God, oh my God," Beca panted between clenched teeth. "Stop."

Chloe recoiled in confusion. Stop? Everything about Beca's actions indicated consent. I mean, Beca's hands were still palming Chloe's breasts, for God's sake.

"What's up, babe?" Chloe whispered, her lips hovering mere centimeters from Beca's lips.

"We can't... not here. In your parents' house. I mean, Christ, your brother is in the next room over. And your parents are down the hall."

Chloe raised her eyebrows as if to say, 'your point'?

"Chlo," Beca forced out. "You're driving me crazy."

"So let me drive you crazy," Chloe purred back, her fingertips lightly tracing patterns along Beca's collarbone.

Beca bit down on her tongue to suppress a moan. "Fuck."

Beca could no longer resist the urge. She leaned her head up a fraction of an inch and kissed Chloe heatedly. Chloe smiled as she kissed Beca back, bringing her hand up to support Beca's head. After one long, passionate kiss, Beca forced her lips apart from Chloe for a second time. Chloe frowned. She didn't like where this was going. Or wasn't going, if she was being more accurate.

"This is really wrong," Beca forced out in a husky voice.

Did she want Chloe to stop? Fuck no. She was so completely worked up and wanted nothing more than to have Chloe to keep doing exactly what she was doing. Her stomach twisted with unbridled excitement. She needed Chloe, craved her more than the air she breathed. But she also didn't want Chloe's family to hear Beca's moans and screams as their daughter/sister got it on with her new fiancé.

"It is," Chloe agreed with a devilish smile, "So wrong," she continued as her right hand trailed the length of Beca's torso, inching closer and closer to-

Beca moaned before instantly bringing her fist to her mouth and biting down to keep herself from making more noise.

"Beca, you'll wake everyone up!" Chloe admonished playfully with a wink, as her hand continued by grazing Beca's thigh, drawing circular patterns and driving Beca wild with the lightest of touches.

Beca didn't know what came over her. Maybe it was blinding desire. No, scratch that, it was
absolutely blinding desire. Chloe was irresistible in every sense of the word. Beca grabbed Chloe's neck, pulling her down to meet Beca's lips. As their lips met, Beca opened her mouth and ran her tongue along Chloe's bottom lip, desperately seeking entrance.

Chloe responded with a satisfied hum, massaging Beca's tongue with her own. While her hands still explored Beca's body, running her fingers along Beca's slender frame, Chloe let her knee slip between Beca's legs, lightly applying pressure on Beca's core and creating the friction that Beca so desperately needed. Beca grinded herself into Chloe's leg and moaned a second time, before ripping herself apart from Chloe for a third time.

"Babe?" Chloe asked. She was met with silence as Beca's chest heaved up and down and Beca bit down on her lower lip. Chloe grinned. "People are definitely gonna hear us. This is so inappropriate. We should really stop," she continued with a gleam as her knee pressed a little further between Beca's legs.

"Fffffffuck," Beca exhaled, unable to control her reaction as her hips involuntarily jutted upward to meet Chloe's knee. Chloe was messing with her. And not just that, she was getting some perverse joy from this whole situation. And even though Beca knew these things, she couldn't find it within herself to particularly care. Chloe had officially driven her past the point of no return.

"Are you sure you want me to, Becs?" Chloe whispered, bumping noses with Beca. "I mean, you're totes a screamer. And this whole situation is just... really, really wrong," Chloe teased with a deadpan expression as she repositioned her knee to create even more friction with Beca's core.

"I swear to God," Beca seethed through a clenched jaw as she tried to maintain any level of self-control and mask just how completely turned on she was.

Chloe smirked, amused over the effect she had on the other girl. She could tell that Beca was practically in a frenzy, Chloe could see it in her eyes. Beca's pupils were dilated with desire and her nails were digging so hard into Chloe's back she thought they might leave marks.

"Does that mean you want me to fuck you?" Chloe asked in a sultry voice, hovering her body inches over Beca's. Making Beca this way- so irrevocably consumed with desire- was Chloe's favorite thing in the world. And it did nothing to keep her own growing horniness at bay.

"To push all of your buttons," Chloe continued in a seductive whisper as her knee ground a little further into Beca's core and her hands found Beca's boobs. Beca clenched to teeth together hard, her eyes narrowing as she looked up at the hot redhead, who was totally dominating her right now.

"And touch you in all the right places," Chloe added as her thumbs circled Beca's nipples. Leaning down so that her mouth was next to Beca's ear, Chloe whispered, "Until you scream?"

Beca's stomach tightened as a muffled groan escaped her closed lips. Trying to be quiet while Chloe did and said things like this was impossible.

"It's okay, Becs," Chloe added with a wink. "I'm that good."

"You love this don't you?" Beca choked out brokenly while she gathered the bed sheets in her fists and braced herself.

"I just don't see why you're denying yourself what you so clearly want," Chloe answered brazenly, her lips curling into a smug smile.
"You and I both know exactly why."

"Here's a solution," Chloe answered, clapping her left hand over Beca's mouth.

Beca allowed herself to be silenced by Chloe. In fact, the whole clamping-the-hand-over-her-mouth thing gave Beca even more of a thrill. Beca ran her hands down Chloe's back, stopping at her waist. Beca yanked Chloe down on top of her, closing the gap of space between the two girls.

"Oh, Becs," Chloe whispered, repositioning her body so that her leg found the right position between Beca's legs.

Beca jutted her hips upward and made contact with Chloe's leg, causing a jolting, indescribably satisfying sensation to flood throughout her body.

"Mmmmpfh," came a muffled groan from Beca.

"I love you like this... So..." Chloe trailed off, pausing to rub her leg against Beca's center, "Out of control." She continued, as Beca rode Chloe's leg closer and closer to release.

"It's so hot," Chloe whispered with a wink.

Keeping her hand clamped across Beca's mouth, Chloe brought her hips down on Beca's leg. All of this dirty talk was riling Chloe up more than she anticipated. It was causing such an itch. One that she really needed to scratch.

"It makes me wanna..." Chloe trailed off, biting her bottom lip and grinding herself against Beca's leg again. God, this felt so good.

"Mphffff," Beca groaned again beneath Chloe's hand.

"God, Becs," Chloe said with a breathy moan as desire overtook her every move. "I can't..." she whispered brokenly as she drove her hips down against Beca again and again, coming closer and closer to her own release. "I need... Oh, fuck… I'm gonna-

Chloe climaxed suddenly and unexpectedly against Beca's leg. When she came down from her orgasm, Chloe opened her eyes and met the gaze of Beca, still squirming helplessly beneath Chloe's body and making the occasional muffled noise beneath Chloe's hand.

"You close, Becs?" Chloe asked in a whisper.

A nod and another muffled noise came from Beca while she pressed herself against Chloe’s leg again.

"Good, because I wanna feel you come for me," Chloe decided suddenly, removing her leg from Beca's center. Beneath her hand, Chloe could practically feel Beca scream in frustration. Beca was at the brink of orgasm before Chloe pulled herself just out of Beca's reach.

"It's okay, babe," Chloe mused, before using her one free hand to plunge two fingers deep inside Beca without warning. Yet another loud, muffled scream was silenced by Chloe's hand.

Chloe smirked, curling her fingers in and out while simultaneously rubbing her thumb in circles around Beca's clit. She felt Beca's core tightening around her fingers as Beca squirmed beneath her. Wow, this was really, really hot.

"I'm not gonna stop," Chloe reassured Beca, "Until I know I've fucked you to exhaustion."
Chloe dipped her head to softly bite Beca's neck at her pulse point. Beca’s eyes shot wide open as she sharply inhaled. Chloe smirked before biting down on Beca's neck a little harder, eliciting more response from the brunette. Still working her fingers in and out of Beca, Chloe continued biting and sucking on Beca’s pulse point, driving the brunette impossibly close to the brink.

Chloe’s fingers began plunging into Beca faster and faster, with a little more force each time. Beca’s core tightened as she used her hips to drive herself upward and into Chloe’s fingers until an intense orgasm ripped through Beca's body while she squirmed helplessly on the bed and screamed muffled profanities into the palm of Chloe's hand. Chloe continued working her fingers in and out of Beca until she was sure that Beca had ridden out the duration of her orgasm.

"Exhausted yet?" Chloe asked with a wink.

A heaving Beca nodded her head, barely able to move. She felt as though she might pass out.

Satisfied with Beca’s answer, Chloe pulled her fingers out of Beca's center and removed her other hand from Beca’s mouth. "Wow, babe," Chloe observed her wet fingers that had just been inside Beca before licking them clean, "Spray it, don't say it."

"Oh my God," Beca rasped, her chest still heaving as her breathing returned to normal pace. "That was..."

"The quietest you've ever been?" Chloe supplied playfully.

"Was that quiet to you?" Beca asked rhetorically. Sure, Chloe's hand had been clamped across Beca's mouth to keep her from screaming and cursing, but the muffled yells were still far from silent.

"Sure," Chloe dismissed as she placed a soft kiss on Beca's cheek. "Quiet for you."

"Great, well let's hope the rest of the house agrees."

"Only time will tell," Chloe answered breezily, squeezing Beca's arm gently before rolling over in bed to go to sleep.

"Wait, what?" Beca asked. Beca was met with no response. "Chloe, what?" Beca repeated. Beca felt beyond mortified at the thought that any of Chloe's family members may have overheard them. Beca was not met with an answer, but rather, a light snore.

Chapter End Notes

I really and truly appreciate everyone's support- I don't have the kind of life where writing for fun is a thing I often get to do. But this story has been a lot of fun and I'm thinking about starting a new one when I'm done here! Please let me know y'all's thoughts and/or suggestions!
“Why does Axelrod have black spot now?”

Beca squinted her eyes. Sure enough, the damned little goldfish had a black spot on his back.

“Oh, I don’t know, Bud. He’s just growing, I guess,” Beca lied through her teeth.

At this moment, Beca heard the click-clack of high heels entering the room. Chloe walked into the kitchen, wordlessly raising her eyebrows at Beca. Beca shrugged back a non-verbal ‘I don’t know.’ Chloe pursed her lips together to keep from smiling and shook her head. Beca had to hand it to her. Even when Chloe was wearing her stern-mom face, she looked downright sexy.

“Kathryn, are you about ready for school, sweetie?” Chloe asked her daughter.

“Yeah, Mommy, I just gotta feed the fish real quick,” the eight-year-old answered. Tucking her dark brown hair behind her ears, Kathryn turned her blue eyes back towards the fish bowl. She took a pinch of fish food and dropped it into the bowl. Within seconds, Axelrod the Goldfish attacked the flecks of food.

Alright, go upstairs and get your book bag,” Beca said. “Oh, and when you come back down, make sure you bring your twin brother with you, yeah?”

“Right Mom. Like there’s any chance Sam is ready yet,” Kathryn said, rolling her eyes as she walked out of the room and up the stairs.

“He’d better be,” Beca muttered mostly to herself. Sam was a chip off the old block in the sense that he was not a morning person. Getting Sam out the door and to school on time was the bane of Beca’s existence.

Chloe, who had just checked to make sure “The Bachelor” was set to record on their TV that night, turned off the television set. Beca was a self-proclaimed hater of the TV show, yet made a fuss each time she missed an episode. Chloe silently let Beca keep up the charade by making sure the TV show was recorded each week. That way, Beca could still claim to hate the show without having to seem like the hypocrite who recorded the show to watch. Chloe quickly smiled over at Beca, before cutting her eyes through the doorway to make sure Kathryn was out of earshot.

“Becs,” she said, once she was satisfied that Kathryn had made it upstairs, “You’ve got to stop buying a new fish each time an Axelrod dies. I’m afraid it’s not good for the kids. They’ve got to learn at some point that goldfish deaths are just a part of the circle of life,” Chloe said, her bright blue eyes boring into Beca’s eyes with concern.

Neither of the children were any the wiser, but Axelrod was technically Axelrod Number 8. Each time the goldfish went belly up, Beca would swing by the pet store after work and secretly replace him with a new goldfish. This was just as much for the children’s benefit as it was for Chloe’s. Beca didn’t dare tell Chloe this, but she knew how Chloe would take the news of an Axelrod death. Several years prior, the family had kept a pet toad, Rocky. When Rocky died after a week and a half, Beca could’ve sworn that Chloe cried harder than either of the children. Seeing Chloe cry broke Beca’s heart. It was for this reason, that Beca never told Chloe about a new Axelrod until
after the fact. Chloe never seemed as upset about a goldfish’s death when there was already a new
goldfish to take his place.

“You’re right, Chlo. I promise this is the last time.”

Beca leaned in and kissed her wife on the lips. Chloe grabbed Beca’s jacket and yanked her closer,
deepening the kiss. Before things could heat up any further, the girls heard stampeding footsteps
coming down the stairs. The kids.

“We can pick up where we left off tonight, once the kids are gone,” Chloe promised with a wink.

“I’m counting on that,” Beca quipped back. Thank goodness the children were having sleepovers
with Aunt Stacie and Uncle Marcus that night.

“Mommy!” Sam came bursting into the room. Running into Chloe’s arms, he continued, “I just
remembered that I need a poster board for school today.”

“Hon, why didn’t you say something last night when I asked you if you were ready for school
tomorrow?” Chloe asked, smoothing Sam’s dark brown hair back from his blue eyes.

“Didn’t remember,” the kid answered.

Chloe sighed, biting her bottom lip. She had a full workday in front of her and hadn’t factored in
time to run by the store for poster boards.

“I got this,” Beca piped up, shooting a look to her wife. Chloe exhaled, grateful that Beca could
step in to handle the situation. “Bub, you’re coming with me today. Get your shoes. We need to
roll if we’re going to both make it to the store and get you to school on time.”

Sam ran out of the room to get his shoes.

Kathryn asked, “So which one of you is taking me to school today?”

“Still me,” Chloe answered. “You ready to go?”

“Yeah,” Kathryn answered. “And Mom?”

“Yes?” Beca answered.

“Our troop is still coming by to the studio today, right?”

“That’s right, Bud. Four o’ clock. Can’t wait.” Beca was lying somewhat. While she was excited
that her daughter was visiting her office that day, she was less than thrilled over the fact that fifteen
other Girl Scouts would be accompanying her.

“Me either! After today, we’re gonna have our Golden Microphone badges!” Kathryn exclaimed.

“So that’s still a thing, huh?”

“Totes,” Kathryn answered. Beca laughed. The girl took after Chloe so much.

“Reminds me of those Girl Scouts from Las Vegas,” Beca said to Chloe.

“What Girl Scouts from Las Vegas?” Kathryn asked, interjecting.

“Nothing, just a weird story involving a Girl Scout troop getting their Golden Microphone badges
from this sketchy competition we did one time,” Beca said. She deliberately withheld the fact that the competition was held in a sinkhole-turned-nightclub by a man who was now serving time in federal prison.

“Oh, okay,” Kathryn said. “Well, I’ll see you at four!” Beca hugged and kissed her daughter goodbye.

“Oh, and you’ve got your bag packed to stay with Aunt Stacie and Uncle Marcus tonight?” Beca asked.

“Yep!” Kathryn responded as she darted out the door and towards Chloe’s car.

Beca next leaned in and kissed her wife goodbye. “Have a good day at work, Chlo.”

“You too, Becs,” Chloe said back. “Happy Anniversary,” she added with a sultry wink.

Beca’s stomach flipped. “Happy Anniversary. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

Alright, so that’s officially a wrap! I think this is a really bittersweet moment, as it’s the first fiction I’ve ever written and I enjoyed creating this far more than I thought possible.

We really are a wonderful fandom, no matter what is happening in the world out there. Each and every one of you matter and I think we’ve all made such an important difference through our support of this franchise and its incredible cast of ladies. Whether we’re outspoken advocates or simply quiet supporters of Bechloe, I think we’re putting our support behind something much larger than we realize. We’re supporting love, acceptance, and friendship—something this world probably needs a bit more of. I’m really proud of all of us :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!