**Summary**

Betty and Jughead are amazed by the world of music and acting. That's exactly what brings the two childhood friends together.

Or...

When Alice gets a call from her best friend, a playwright for Broadway shows and musicals, who convinces her to take her daughter for an audition, she has no idea how much her youngest baby's life is going to change.
Age 5

# 5.1 #

Betty got up from the bed with a pout on her face. 6 am was obviously too early to wake up for school. So, as her feet touched the cold ground, she seated herself back on the edge of her bed, looking at her mom with her big green eyes wide and sad. Alice Cooper sighed, squatting down in front of her, taking the girl’s little hands into hers. “What’s the matter, baby?” the woman asked.

“I’m tired,” Betty said.

“I know, so am I. But I need to go to work. And you, need to go to school,” she said softly.

“But I wanna sleep,” the little 4-year-old girl said. “Please?”

Alice chuckled. “No, honey.” She got up as the girl pouted, still sitting on the bed, and picked out her clothes. “Here.” She finally got the little girl to stand up as well and cooperate and help while getting her dressed.

“Do we have pancakes?” the girl asked hopefully while pulling her socks on.

“We have eggs and toast.” The blonde smiled at that big and Alice chuckled, looking at how she managed to tie her own shoelaces, and then slowly walked towards the bathroom. “Baby, if you hurry up, you can watch something on the TV before we go.” That got her moving.

As always, the two little girls chose to watch Lion King before going to school, only seeing some parts of it, but singing to all of them. While Polly sang like a kid was supposed to, Betty’s voice was louder and clearer, but incredibly soft and clean.

Once Charles had come out of his room and eaten too, they were all ushered outside into the car and then driven to their separate schools.

“Hey Al,” FP greeted over the phone.

“Ooh, Jones. You have to have lots of guts to call me after bailing on me a week ago,” Alice smirked behind her table at work, tapping the blue pen against the table at the rhythm of the latest pop song that sounded from outside of the building. “How’s the play? You got it done?”

“That’s why I’m calling you, actually,” FP chuckled. “Yes, I got it made. It was accepted…”

“I never doubted that.”

“Did you read… or well, report about the crisis?”

“Yes,” Alice sighed. “Financial crisis is horrible and always will be. You had something bad happen in the theater?”

“The ones who were there only for money, bailed,” the man reported.

“Okay, what else?” Alice asked, writing this down.
FP chuckled over the phone. “I’m not calling you because I want a story, Al. I need kids. Kids who
love music, who actually want to do this and not because of money. Kids who sing and dance.”

Alice sighed, knowing who and what he was referring to. “She’s not even five yet, Jones. She’s not
trained like I’m sure all the others are. And she’s shy; you know that.”

“I also know how the shyness fades away once she opens her mouth and starts singing.”

“FP—”

“Look, I’m not saying she can full-on be on Broadway at once. I’m just suggesting you give it a
try. Think about her future, Alice. If she sings like that at 5 years old, think about what her voice
will sound like in ten or twenty years. She could make a career out of something she loves. She
could win a fucking Tony Award someday.”

Alice sighed again, deeper this time. “So, what are you telling me? Get a manager for my 4-year-
old?”

“I’m telling you to take a few professional pictures, get her files, and come to the theater on
Saturday. There’s a new audition.”

“FP—”

“We have done so many castings already, but what happened was that from the 30 girls that got to
the third round, ten bailed… So, I showed the casting director a few videos of Betty singing. Think
about it,” he added and quickly ended the call.

Alice groaned in frustration and dropped her phone onto the table in front of her. Being the owner
of a newspaper at least gave her a normal private office while all of her workers were out there, a
table on top of table.

#

On Saturday, they were there alongside with twenty-something other girls. FP smiled big when
seeing the two of them and gave Alice a hug after what he picked Betty up and kissed her cheek.
“Are you excited?” he asked.

“Yeah,” the girl giggled. FP wiggled his eyebrows at Alice which just made her roll her eyes.

“She knows she may not get through, but she wanted to try. I’m not here to let you tell me you
were right all along,” the woman explained as they entered the waiting room full of mothers and
daughters, a few men there too.

“Do you have a song picked out?” FP asked Betty when sitting her down in one of the chairs,
ignoring the eyes on himself, many of the moms knowing he was the writer of this musical.

“From Annie,” Betty said.

FP nodded with a smile. “Perfect. I gotta go now, but I’ll see you soon, okay?”

Betty nodded and accepted the kiss onto her forehead before he got up and smiled at Alice once
again, entering the small gym where the audition was going to be held.

Alice looked around in the hallway with a frown on her face. Half of these kids probably didn’t
even know what they were doing here. The mothers of some had put them into sparkling costumes
already, fake smiles on their faces. She was disgusted. That was exactly why she hadn’t wanted 
Betty to try out the last spring for some roles FP had suggested. And these people here weren’t 
even the bad ones. These were the ones who didn’t care their children would be paid a lot less than 
the usual amount would’ve been.

They were all called into the gym, so Alice took Betty’s hand, still frowning at all the fake smiles 
plastered on some of the women’s faces. When they were inside, the kids had to go and sit on the 
pillows in the front while the mothers had to stay at the back. Betty didn’t really want to go alone 
at first, but when Alice reminded her, she could sing to everybody later, she did go and seemed to 
even have two other little friends a few minutes later.

“Mirella Adams?” a man behind the table with FP and a woman asked. A little girl got up with a 
smile on her face and went to stand in front of everybody on the mini stage. “Whenever you’re 
ready.”

And so, it began. Alice was worried after the first three girls who sang incredibly good, but some 
of the notes went bad for one little blonde. She didn’t have to be a professional to catch that. But 
she did see the girl’s photo being passed onto the right side of the table. Probably it meant she was 
out.

After exactly four girls with their family names starting with A, B or C, they got to Betty. 
“Elizabeth Cooper?”

Betty got up nervously. There was no smile on her face when she went to stand in front of 
everybody, which got the judges’ attention. She wasn’t fake. When the little girl opened her mouth 
though, some of the mothers’ mouths dropped open as the little girls gasped quietly.

Once Betty sang the part of the song, “Tomorrow. Tomorrow. I’ll love ya, tomorrow. You’re 
always a day away!” it was even more amazing. Alice smiled lovingly, proud of her daughter, 
when the judges took some notes, adding some post-it notes onto her picture and passing it to the 
left side of the table. FP’s eyes met hers and he gave her a small nod, already confirming the girl 
was through to the next round of auditions.

The day went by with people teaching the little girls some choreography, watching if they were 
able to do that. Alice noticed that there were two types of kids; the ones who sang amazing and 
danced okay, and the ones who sang okay but danced amazingly. Betty belonged to the first 
category. She messed up many steps, but she didn’t look scared or mad at herself like most did. 
And when it was her turn to improvise some moves, she kept giggling while doing them, definitely 
winning some plus points.

After the dancing round, they were all given about 15 minutes until the three grownups made their 
decision on the 10 girls going forward to the fourth round. Betty ran to Alice when they announced 
that, and the woman kissed her head immediately, hugging her tightly. “You did amazing, honey.”

“Yeah?” Betty asked excitedly, a huge smile plastered on her face. “Did I get it?”

Alice chuckled. “We don’t know yet. They’re going to say ten names and if one of them is yours, 
we’ll have to come again on Saturday, with another song. From ‘The Sound of Music’.”

“They want us to be Gretl?” Betty asked, making sure she had understood it right.
“Mh-hmm,” Alice nodded. “Two or three of you.”

#

Betty’s name was said. When she was called forward to give them a small interview and get some of the songs and text for practicing, she was smiling incredibly big, not able to stop it as she stopped in front of the judges’ table, FP one of them.

After they had given her all of the necessary papers, the interview part started. “Do you like musicals?” one of the men, the casting director, asked with a smile.

“Yeah,” Betty said, back to being a bit shy.

“What’s your favorite one?” FP asked.

“Annie,” she said with an eye roll, knowing he already knew that.

“Hey, I needed to make sure they knew too,” the man joked, the two other grownups behind the table chuckling, loving her energy and attitude.

“Do you have any brothers or sisters?” the brunette woman with a British accent asked curiously.

“My sister’s 8 and my brother’s 11.”

“Can they sing too?”

“I don’t know,” she giggled. “I think so.”

“You said your favorite musical was Annie, right?” the man asked her.

“Yeah…”

“Just so you know, young lady. If there was an Annie production going on right now, I would choose you to play her part.”

The little blonde girl’s eyes went wider, starting to sparkle. “Really?” she asked excitedly.

“Uh-huh,” the man chuckled, handing her the pile of papers. “We’ll see what about Gretl, but you have big chances of getting it,” he assured.

#

After the next audition on the next Saturday, Betty was chosen again. This time it was only the five last girls left. So, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday she was sent to a professional I music teacher for an hour each day. The middle-aged lady loved Betty immediately, teaching her different things and answering all of her questions. Even after the first class on Monday, Alice was starting to regret not putting her anywhere to sing before.

“Do you think I’ll get the role?” Betty asked her teacher curiously on Friday. “Am I good enough?”

The woman sighed with a small smile, turning herself on the piano chair facing the blonde girl. “Even if you don’t get the part, Betty, I would love to have you around. You’re a very good young singer and I think if you keep doing that, you’ll get so many more parts that you won’t even have the time to go to school.”
Betty giggled at that, knowing she wasn’t allowed to tell her if she was better than the other four girls who she was going to be seeing tomorrow.

“Now, honey. Do you remember the notes we studied this week?”


The teacher nodded with a smile, looking a bit restless for a moment as she played the exact same notes on the piano. “Do you remember the other names that you’ll need on the audition?”

“Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do.”

The woman frowned, nodding. “I’m gonna play you some notes, okay? You have to sing them afterward with the right names.”

Betty nodded eagerly, loving exercises like that. Betty sang all of them right, putting the correct names for them, not even knowing that most people couldn’t do that. For her, it was easy and perfectly normal. Therefore, once Alice got there, Charles with her, in his basketball practice clothes, she was pulled aside by the teacher.

“Is everything okay?” she asked worriedly, looking at Betty and Charles for a moment, the little girl clinging on her brother, giggling as he swung her around by her arms.

“It’s better than okay,” the woman assured. “I think your daughter has the perfect pitch.”

# 5.2 #

Three weeks later, on Wednesday, Alice took Charles and Polly to their dad’s place in Queens, before heading to the I theater with Betty. The little blonde was bouncing in her car seat, not able to wait any longer. She had gotten the call a few days ago, announcing that she was going to play Gretl on Broadway. There was going to be an understudy too because the little kids couldn’t work for many hours or days a week. Which meant Betty was going to get most of the shows, but some would get the other girl, and when she got sick the other one would take her showtimes. She was excited to sing and dance and act in front of everybody. But this wasn’t the only reason she was that excited today.

Betty hadn’t seen Jughead since October. The boy was two years older than her, but it didn’t matter. Alice and FP had always been the best of friends, which made Jughead and Betty ones too. Even if Polly and Charles were older, and Betty’s older sister was about as old as Jughead, the boy had always preferred her over the other two. Just because they simply acted like they were more important sometimes. Betty had always been happy Jughead played with her.

“Baby, calm down,” Alice chuckled, opening the back door so that the girl could jump out of her booster.

“I’m excited,” Betty giggled. The blonde had turned 5 just a few days ago, on the 2nd of December. It seemed to Alice as if she had more energy than ever now.

“Come on, you,” she chuckled, taking her hand and leading her to the building. Once they got inside, they were escorted to the little auditorium that many productions used for the first practices.

Today it was all of the kids who had been selected. Since there were seven Von Trapp kids, and four understudies for different roles, today in the auditorium were eleven kids and their parents. (Apparently, it was obligatory that every underaged kid had to have their parents with them on the first few times for information. And just to get to know each other better.)
The moment Betty was let on the stage and Alice sat in one of the front rows as every parent did, the little girl was hugging a dark-haired beanie-wearing boy. The boy chuckled quietly, hugging her back.

Jughead was a tall boy for a 7-year-old. He lived with his dad in a small apartment near the theater. FP was a playwright. He had written different musical plays over the years, starting from little theaters and working his way up to I. Jughead’s mom left after his half-sister was born, taking her with her, so the boy didn’t remember either of them well. Whenever FP needed help, he’d call Alice. Usually, it was the other way around, though.

Alice and Hal separated right after Betty was born. The kids didn’t see their father very often and neither Betty nor Polly really knew him well. Charles was more used to him than the girls were. Betty was even scared to stay for nights. She never did. She was more used to FP than her own father, even if she didn’t see him that often either.

“Why haven’t I seen you?” Jughead frowned when they pulled away.

“Because you were both busy,” FP said, walking past them and giving Betty’s hair a ruffle and pushing Jughead’s beanie down, onto his eyes. The two giggled and took their seats on the pillows on the stage. FP went to sit by Alice in the second row, here as a parent. As a playwright, he had had the privilege of helping to choose the actors, but now he had nothing else to do. He had gotten his pay and was going to get more once the production started. So today, he was here as a parent.

“What’s your name?” an older girl asked with a kind smile.

“Betty,” the blonde said.

“I’m Margaret. You play Gretl, right?” she asked. Betty nodded shyly, holding her head rather down. “I hear you sing really good.”

Now the little girl’s eyes became excited. “Really?” she asked.

The girl chuckled. “Yep. How old are you?”

“Five.”

“Oh wow. I’m 17, I play Liesl.”

“Allright, kids,” a man said, getting everyone’s attention and making them get quiet. “I’m the director of this musical. My name is Peter McCrimmon.” He started introducing all the important people; the musical director, assistant director, a few producers, choreographers, etc. Betty couldn’t remember anybody’s name except for a grey-bearded man’s who told the kids to call him Moose. She liked him immediately.

Then it was the kids’ turn to introduce themselves. She remembered Margaret and another girl who played Brigitta whose name was Polly, like her sister’s. Jughead came easily as well, even if most people were surprised, they cast a seven-years-old for the role of an eleven-year-old. Apparently, he was one of the only ones who could reach the high notes Kurt had to reach and tall enough to play the role.

When it was Betty’s turn after her understudy had had hers, she got kind of shy, all the eyes on her. “I’m Betty. I’m 5-years-old and I play Gretl.”

“Betty, Mrs. James, the music teacher, told me you have the perfect pitch?” a young man asked, looking at her curiously. The girl nodded, getting many more surprised looks. Alice hit FP into the
ribs when he smirked at the woman and wiggled his eyebrows again, his ‘I told you so’ sounding in both of their heads. FP had told her so.

The musical director continued, “Alright. So, when you hear anybody singing wrongly, don’t be afraid to tell them, okay?”

“Okay,” the girl giggled.

#

The days and weeks went by faster than ever. All the kids did school in the mornings, in different rooms, and sometimes ate lunch together. They all became really good friends. It was unusual for everybody to get along that great, but they did, and they all loved each other. After all, they did spend more time with each other than with their real families.

The kids had child wranglers. Everyone under the age of 16 did, which was all of them except for three. Eight kids on their show needed them, and there were two of the professionals. Since Jughead and Betty kept running off in between their rehearsals, one of them was specially assigned to keep her eye on them. Her name was Caroline, she was a bit over thirty. The two loved her.

“Hey, you four. It’s your turn now,” Caroline announced to Betty, Jughead and two of the oldest kids who were just in the same room, lying on the couches and talking with the younger ones or playing in their phones.

“Alright,” Sam, the boy who played Friedrich, said, and got up, making a rapid move to pick Betty up and throw her over his shoulder. The girl screeched but started giggling the moment the boy started moving.

“Put me down,” she ordered in between her laughs.

“Shh, they’re rehearsing,” the 15-year-old mock whispered, the blonde girl still thrown over his shoulder.

Betty raised her head as much as she could, only to see a grinning Margaret and Jughead, Caroline just laughing quietly at them. “Tell me he has to put me down,” she pleaded.

“You have to put her down,” a girl’s voice said from behind her, standing in front of Sam in the huge theater on the stage.

“Oops, I didn’t notice she was there,” the boy joked, lowering the little girl onto her feet and pushing Jughead’s beanie low on his head, making Betty giggle as he walked off, winking at her. They all felt like bigger brothers and sisters for her. She observed Jughead while he grinned, pulling the beanie on his head normally.

“Why do you always wear that?” she asked curiously.

“I don’t know, I like it,” the boy shrugged. “Come on.” They walked to the stage together, both of them wearing a sweater and jeans—the typical casual clothes.

“Kids, on places,” the director ordered. All of them took their spots, surrounded by the grownups.

“Betty, honey, give us an F major,” the musical director, David, said.

“F A C F,” she sang, not having any difficulties even with the highest note.
The man sang it, trusting the little girl totally, the piano not even starting to play just yet, knowing Betty was right. “And one, two, three, four.”

“There’s a sad sort of clanging from the clock in the hall and the bells in the steeple too. And up in the nursery, an absurd little bird is popping out to—”

“Stop, stop!” David shouted, making both the piano and the kids get quiet. “Guys,” he sighed, running his hand through his hair in stress. “You can’t forget the British accents. In every single song, okay? Not little bird, but little bird. And popping. With an O and a strong P. From the top, without the piano.”

Betty sang the beginning note quietly, just in case, as they were directed to start the song all over again.

#

“Ready to go?” FP asked the two kids who were already half asleep, their backpacks with the school and production things packed together now. He helped the warm coats on both of them, feeling bad that they were so tired, but also relieved that they got to wear themselves out during the day and would just fall to bed as soon as they got home. Or probably even earlier.

Betty wordlessly asked to be picked up, stretching her arms out and looking up at him adorably (she was a professional in that). FP did it, as usual, taking Jughead’s hand and walking fast enough to make sure that at least he didn’t fall asleep while walking. Betty was already dozing off on his lap anyway.

He didn’t care the little girl was 5 or that you shouldn’t carry kids around after the age of 2 or so. She had never had a normal father and she loved to give hugs and kisses, so he wasn’t going to stop doing that until Alice would yell at him and tell him not to. He was pretty sure the girl just wanted to feel loved and safe. Alice did as much as she could, obviously, and she loved the kids very much, but she was a single mother with three growing kids, who also had to work all day long. So, FP tried to do as much for them as he could.

“Jug, give me your bag,” he said quietly as they reached the car. The half-asleep boy did it and then opened the back door for himself, climbing into his booster seat. It still had the back as was recommended, but it wasn’t a car seat like Betty had. FP put both of the backpacks into the trunk of the car, and then quietly hit it shut, seeing that Jughead was sleeping too.

He placed Betty in Jug’s old car seat from a year ago, having dug it out because he had to transport the girl home sometimes. He buckled her in and left a kiss onto her forehead before heading to the other side to check on Jug. He had been so tired that the seatbelt wasn’t in the right position, so he changed that too and left a kiss on his forehead as well before shutting the door and heading to the driver’s seat himself.

“First stop, the Coopers,” he murmured to himself, turning the radio on quietly and starting the car afterward.

#

The next day, the full orchestra was there for the first time. The songs were ran over many times; over and over and over again until the kids were tired and the youngest ones were on the edge of crying, wanting to sleep. Betty’s understudy who she had become great friends with had already been ordered backstage to her parents a few songs ago when she couldn’t stop herself from almost throwing a tantrum. Betty was still standing there and singing, feeling like she wanted to go home
and just sleep. Jughead was mostly concerned about the food he would be getting later. He secretly wished it was later already so that he could enjoy his future burger in peace.

“Alright, one last number everybody!” the musical producer called. “Everybody on the stage, let’s do the party one.” Nobody could really say anything against that since they were on I and were very lucky and happy to be there. The kids did let some small sighs escape though, knowing that as most of the songs, this was theirs again. Betty was currently rubbing her eye tiredly when Brian who played her father squatted down in front of her.

“Are you alive still?” he asked. Betty smiled; her eyes still tired as she nodded. The man in his thirties tickled her a little, making her giggle. “Come on, it’s the last song. Keep the energy up.”

She nodded again as the man got up, pushing Jughead’s beanie onto his eyes as everyone was used to doing, and ruffling a few other kids’ hair before going to take his position for literally one word and later another word, singing it with all the other people on the stage.

“Alright, everybody,” the director said into his mic. “I know that everybody is tired and hungry, and it is the last thing we’re doing today. But after this is over, I want you all to come to the table and take your papers, kids first. We just got the schedules, and some other papers to sign for everybody. The ones who have understudies or are understudies, be sure to mark which show is whose to perform… And also, this is the last number today. It will take just as long as you’ll let it take. Kids, energy! Put your accent on, enjoy the singing and dancing. If you do everything well the first time, it will only be that.”

The last promise made the kids take their positions immediately. The orchestra played their part, and then the singing began.

“There’s a sad sort of clanging from the clock in the hall and the bells in the steeple too. And up in the nursery, an absurd little bird is popping out to say ‘cuckoo’.”

At least it was one of everyone’s favorite numbers—it wasn’t much to memorize or dance, just to sing. Betty loved it when she could sing alone in the end and then be carried away. Jughead loved to show off his skills to sing the high notes.

#

It had been six weeks from the very first practice in the small auditorium. Right now, it was the very last practice for the kids. They were used to going to dancing and singing practices every day, and now it was suddenly going to stop, starting to play full shows for people. Tonight was going to be the dress rehearsal and after that the very first show (even though the dress rehearsal was going to be just as full, sold out).

It was going to be the only day when Betty and Jughead had to do two shows—usually, it was just the night ones, four times a week, and on Saturday mornings, when on the night their understudies were going to be hitting the stage.

As usual, as the rehearsal ended, the kids were given free time. Only that this time, it was going to be only an hour of eating and relaxing before they needed to go to the makeup apartment to get everything done and mics added to their clothes and foreheads.

“Juggie,” Betty said, walking up to the boy who had sat down on a couch in the small room in which they liked to be during their breaks. The boy hummed, taking out his food with a big smile. “Do you have food?” she asked curiously.
Jughead frowned, looking up at her. “Didn’t you go to the crafty earlier?”

“I already ate it.” Betty made a face at how ridiculous she sounded, but the older boy just laughed, making her smile shyly.

“Here,” Jughead said, passing her the pack of cereal he had stolen from the kitchen.

Betty’s mouth dropped open, giggling at the amazingly big pack of Captain Crunch cereals. “Did your dad let you bring that?”

“He doesn’t know,” the boy smiled sneakily as the girl jumped onto the couch next to him, crossing her legs and opening the carton box. “Unfortunately, I couldn’t take any milk,” he frowned.

“Do you think maybe they still have some food at the crafty?” Betty asked hopefully.

“Don’t you want the cereals?” he grinned.

“I want milk with it.”

“Let’s go,” the boy said, both of them leaving the food there and quickly sneaking to the room many doors away. They grabbed a carton of milk that was still there, and a pack of potato chips that was the last food, after what they ran back to their previous room and giggled in joy, stuffing their mouths full of cereal and gulping milk on it.

Neither Alice nor FP could ever describe how proud they felt when their kids were up on the stage. And not just any stage, it was Broadway. It felt surreal for both of them, and for Betty’s siblings who were watching from the audience as well, seeing their little sister up on the big stage, singing, dancing and acting with everybody else. She looked like a little professional even after the show, sitting there in the dressing room, the new—the very first official show—starting just in an hour and a half. The microphone was being removed from her as all the relatives and family started getting to the right rooms, all the 7 kids sharing one backstage room.

“You were amazing!” the father of Polly—the girl who played Brigitta—exclaimed as soon as he got there, lifting the girl off the ground. Everyone’s parents started flooding the room, and when Betty’s mic was finally removed, she jumped up and ran right into her mom’s arms as well. Alice picked her up immediately, hugging her tightly. “I am so proud of you,” she said. “You were wonderful, honey.”
The last few years had gone by in a haze. There were a lot of tears—both happy and sad. There were a lot of laughs and new friends, but also lots of bad grades and a few detentions, even. Alice couldn’t remember any time when Betty cried more than after her audition at the age of 6 when they had finally finished playing ‘The Sound of Music’. The small girl had remembered from the last time she went to auditions that people adored her and loved the way she sang. This time, she was told she didn’t get through because of her young age and because of her height (she was too short). Her acting coach and every different person she practiced with told her there was nothing wrong with being short. But she hated it after that.

The blonde had to go back to real school in March when the musical ended. This time it was first grade. She had been used to studying backstage with her teacher, dressed up as Gretl and ready just in case if something happened to her understudies—a few times it did. She had been used to going to school to do the important tests once in a while and get some new homework sheets she needed. So, the change wasn’t easy. She didn’t have any friends at first either.

She kept going to different auditions, kept going to her singing and dancing classes every day, most of the dancing ones with Jughead. The boy had gotten some small background parts in plays and musicals over the year.

All of this was partly the reason why the—now—8-year-old Betty started crying when her manager called them, saying she got the part of Matilda that she had auditioned for so many months now. She had tried so hard for almost two years to get a part that wouldn’t discriminate against her for being under the age of 8. Now that she had gotten 8 a month ago, she felt like this year was going to be the best one yet. It was only the 4th of January and already she had gotten good news. She loved that.

The Matilda auditioning process had shown her how many kids actually wanted that part. Or any part. She had stood in a line for 6 hours until it was finally her turn. The never-ending callbacks kept coming every week until it was only down to her and nine other girls. In the end, they chose three.

Once they had finished the call with the manager, Betty crying in Alice’s arms quietly as the woman tried to listen to every bit of information they needed to know now. After about twenty minutes, the call ended. Betty didn’t have any tears left, but she wasn’t over the shock either.

“I got it,” the girl said like it would’ve been impossible. “Did I really get it?”

“Yeah, honey,” Alice chuckled, stroking her hair and giving her head a kiss. “You really got it.”

Betty’s eyes got glassy again, full of hope, sparkling. “But I was sick while auditioning.”

“You were,” Alice nodded. “See? I told you you’d get at least one part in the musical. Nobody cares you didn’t have one for two years. You kept trying and practicing and that was all that mattered.”

Betty hugged her mom really tightly, her tears replaced with a huge smile. “Am I the understudy or the real one?” she asked curiously.

“All are real ones,” Alice chuckled. “There will be two more girls, playing Matilda. Fred said that
they’re going to decide during rehearsals who was going to be the main one for most of the shows. And even if you don’t get that part, you’ll still get to perform again.”

Betty smiled big and closed her eyes when Alice kissed her forehead. “Can I call Juggie?” she asked excitedly.

The blonde woman chuckled. “No, Juggie’s at school right now. And you’re going back to bed, come on.”

“Mom,” she whined, being pulled off the couch. “I’m not that sick anymore.”

“You have a huge fever, honey,” Alice said, walking her back to her room and bed. Betty sighed, climbing under her duvet, and smiled again as she had another idea. “Can I call FP?”

Alice smirked at that and gave up. “Sure. But stay in bed.”

Betty nodded, grabbing her small phone and moving with the buttons to her contact section that basically only consisted of her family, and a few friends. She clicked on FP’s name and brought her new burner phone to her ear, beaming while doing so.

#

“Are you going to keep doing Mary Poppins?” Betty asked Jughead when they were seated on the couch in his living room, FP having promised to look after Betty while Alice had to work a few days later, the girl still home with a fever and a headache.

Jughead chuckled. “Yes. Betty, the casting for Matilda has already ended.”

“I know,” the girl sighed. “I just miss being with you. I never see you anymore.”

The 10-year-old Jughead grinned. You’re seeing me now.”

“Only because I’m sick and you didn’t go to the dancing lessons because of that.”

“Hey,” the boy said, trying to make the blonde cheer up. “We do have different shows and rehearsals, but now that you’re going to be in the theater again, we’ll still have the break at the same time as everybody does.”

The girl smiled at that. “Oh yeah. I forgot about that. Are there nice kids right now?”

Jughead shrugged. “There’s not many kids anywhere at the moment. It’s me and Sheila, but she’s older… Now that you’ll do Matilda, there will be loads of them,” the boy smiled.

“I’m just happy I don’t have to go to school anymore,” Betty smiled up at him. “I mean not really. Only a few times.”

“You still don’t have friends?” Jug frowned, not understanding why anybody wouldn’t want to be Betty’s friend. She was amazing and funny and talented.

“No… Mom says they’re jealous. I don’t really know.”

Jug shrugged, “At least you have me.” Both of them smiled at that and the boy passed her the bowl of popcorn. “You sure you don’t want any?”

The blonde wrinkled up her nose and shook her head. “I’m gonna puke.”
“What is it, Betty?” the musical director asked, suddenly all the older kids looking at her.

The blonde girl dropped her hand. “Isn’t it supposed to be sung from F?” she asked.

“Yes,” their music coach, Mary, said. “What about it?”

“We’re singing it from E flat,” she mentioned quietly.

“How do you know?” one of the girls who played Lavender asked curiously as Mary went to the other side of the room to control it on the piano.

Before Betty could answer, the woman answered for her. “She has the perfect pitch,” the music coach said. “Do you know what that is?” she asked Betty. The blonde nodded. “Why didn’t you tell me anything before? We’ve been here for a week, Betty.”

“I didn’t want to be rude…” she said.

Mary chuckled. “It’s not rude. And whenever you hear something’s wrong, tell us, okay?”

“Okay.”

Two weeks later, Betty was sat on the ground, watching how her friends danced ‘Revolting Children’, and how some of them had to do three different parts at different times, being the understudy for all of them. She knew they were paid more from what she had heard, but she didn’t care. She was here for performing and not money. She didn’t even know what happened to her money. Sure, she was bought toys and clothes and food, but she didn’t know where the rest of it went. The girl made a mental note to ask her mother later.

Another girl took a seat next to her on the ground. Her name was Karen and she was one of the other Matildas. Betty didn’t like her much, hating how rude she acted with so many people, including her. They sat in silence for a while until the eleven-year-old opened her mouth, not even looking at Betty. “My mom said you can’t get the role,” she said matter-of-factly. “Because you’re 8. And you’re blonde. So even if you want the role, you can’t have it. It’s mine.”

Betty gulped quietly, getting insecure. “It doesn’t really matter,” she said back politely. “I just want to perform. Even if it’s a few times less than you or Lola.”

Karen puffed, not liking that the younger blonde girl was positive all the time. Betty annoyed her so much with her talent and the perfect pitch. And the boy who she was with at the theater between their rehearsals who wasn’t even her age. “Do you know you’re fat?”

Betty frowned at that, turning her head to look at the girl. “What?” she asked sadly.

“Yup. I weight just as much as you do and I’m 11.”

Betty looked down at herself uncomfortably, the older girl feeling satisfaction, loving that she could make her feel insecure and hopefully mess something up.

“Good job, everybody!” the choreographer clapped. “You’re all free to go. Remember to practice your breathing while dancing and singing. If something hurts, remember it and tell me tomorrow.”

All of the teenagers and kids left, except for the three Matildas whose turn it was now. “Alright
“you three,” the teacher said, sitting down behind her table in the gym. “I have an exercise for you.”

“What is it?” Karen asked.

“I want you all to dance to ‘Naughty’… But not as we’ve learned. I want you to improvise, put your feelings from the song into the moves. You have two minutes to figure out how you’re doing it. Lola, you’ll be the first one up.”

They all nodded, the 10-year-old girl looking nervous she was going to be the first one. They all went to different corners of the room, either trying something out or just thinking about the words. Betty wondered why they were doing an exercise like that. They usually just learned the right choreography and learned how to not wear themselves out with the first dance.

“That was great, Lola,” the teacher smiled as the girl stopped singing and dancing, a smile on her face. “Who wants to be the next one?”

Betty and Karen shared a look before the blonde understood it was going to be her turn because the oldest girl wanted to be the last one and the best. Always. “I can do it,” Betty said, going to the middle of the gym, facing their teacher and Lola who was sat beside her, smiling at the younger girl.

Betty performed the song with her newly learned British accent that all of them had to use in the show and put her own moves to them. And during the last few sentences, “But nobody else is gonna put it right for me. Nobody but me is gonna change my story. Sometimes you have to be a little bit naughty.” During the last sentence, the girl crossed her arms on her chest and with a mischievous smile, winked at the teacher.

Pepper chuckled at that, having smiled at her during the whole thing, and nodded proudly. “That was amazing, Betty. Take a seat.”

Betty giggled while sitting down next to Lola who gave her a hug. These two had become really close during the few weeks and now were very good friends. Lola and a boy names Michael usually hanged out with Betty and Jughead during the breaks (whenever Jughead didn’t have a show, because on Wednesdays and Friday’s he did),

Karen looked at the two girls with a mad face, which made the teacher stop her from starting singing. “Karen, what’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” the girl said with a rude voice.

Pepper nodded. “Alright. Your turn.” She wrote something down on her papers as the girl started singing. Betty wondered if it was about her being in a bad mood. Did the teachers even know she was mean to other kids? Even if they did, they probably didn’t care. It was Broadway not grade school.

#

“Chaz?” Betty asked after dinner, her brother’s turn to wash the dishes and her turn to dry them.

“Hm?” the 14-year-old asked, looking at his little sister’s frowning face as he handed her the wet bowl that he had just finished scrubbing off.

“Am I fat?”

The boy chuckled immediately. “No. Why do you think that?”
“You remember Karen?” she asked carefully, afraid to tell anybody she was being mean again, knowing her mother had promised to next time go to their choreographs and musical coaches.

“Did she tell you that?” he sighed, giving her a glass to dry.

“Yeah… I think she thinks I’ll get more shows. She told me I won’t get them because I’m blonde and 8. And then she told me I’m fat.”

Charles rolled his eyes again. “Betty, you’re like the slimmest person I know; you’re 8 years old.”

“But I have a tummy…”

“That’s normal too,” he assured her. “Why are you even worried about that? Everybody knows you’ll get the part.”

“I’m not worried,” she argued. “She was worried. I told her I didn’t care.”

“That’s my little sis,” Charles smiled, ruffling her hair after he dried off his hands, and then handed her the towel too. “Don’t worry about it. You’re pretty,” he said before going back to his room to play something on his new PS3.

#

“Stop this!” the choreograph shouted, making the orchestra get quiet as did the children. “We need it in sync! The show is in a week. You’re supposed to be giving as much of yourself as possible.” She clapped her hands two times. “From the beginning!”

Betty felt bad for them. Their number ‘Revolting children’ was amazing, and it hadn’t been out of sync at all if you would’ve asked her. It was incredibly hard for them to sing and do this horribly difficult choreography at the same time. She was just sitting and watching with everybody else while her friends got yelled at. The directors and producers were nice usually, but today all of them looked on edge for some reason.

Betty moved her eyes back onto her book once the kids started singing. She had to finish reading it by the end of the week—when the first show was going to be on Monday night, she had to go to school in the morning, doing a few tests, including answering the questions about ‘Charlotte’s web’.

“Hey,” Lola said with a normally loud voice, nobody hearing her over the orchestra anyways. Plus, Betty wasn’t in the first row, trying to get done with the book already. “What’re you reading?”

Betty smiled a little, closing the book half the way and showing her the cover. “It’s for school,” she sighed.

“Yeah, I had to read it last year too… How come you’re in 3rd grade if you turned 8 in December?”

Betty frowned. “I thought everyone who has their birthday at the end of the year is like that?”

The 10-year-old shrugged. “Everybody in my class turned 9 before September.”

Betty frowned. “Maybe it’s just New York? You lived in New Jersey, right?”

“Maybe,” the other girl agreed, laying her head on the younger girl’s shoulder.

Betty let her be like that, but her eyes went back to her book, looking for the place where she had
stopped before. She found it and read the previous two sentences again before continuing. Soon enough, they were called up the stage as well, and all three of them were yelled at. At some point the woman who played their uncaring mom had actually gone up to the directors and producers, saying to take it easy and that they were just kids. She got yelled at, too.

# 8.2 #

After two months of the production going—Betty getting four shows a week while the other two Matildas got three—they were nominated for several Tony Awards. Everybody was freaking out backstage once they found out in the middle of the show. And when the curtain calls were, they announced it to the huge crowd who all cheered to it, understanding the work and sleepless nights that had been put into the project.

Betty was a special kid. For everybody. She by herself had gotten a nomination. Whenever it was a role like that, it had always been all the kids who played the same role. This time it was only Betty; the magazine had explained all about her facial expressions and how she could save the world without even talking, purely by looking at somebody and hypnotizing them with her voice and face... She was natural on the stage. So, even though every other kid in the theater was jealous, they were also happy for her. Really happy.

Alice couldn’t believe it at first. It felt so odd and unreal—how the hell could her 8-year-old baby get nominated for a Tony Award? Well… she did. When Hal found out, he was equally shocked, but he didn’t know what to say to Betty either. He knew the girl wasn’t used to him and her life didn’t depend on him. He had other two children now with another woman; 2 and 3-year-old boys.

Being nominated for a Tony award had its own difficulties. The first one: trying to get Betty to agree to go up on the stage alone. “Alone?” the blonde asked, her green eyes wide.

“Baby, you like performing. You love to see the crowd,” Alice said.

“Yeah, but… I’m usually acting, I’m just Matilda. I don’t wanna be on the stage as me.”

The woman chuckled at that. “I’ll be there. In the crowd. And so will everybody else. The directors and the writer and the producers. Even some of the kids. I’m pretty sure Jacob will be there…” Jacob was one of her best friends on the show who played Bruce.

“But do I have to say something?”

Alice smiled. “If you win, you should thank everybody.”

“I can just thank you at home,” she offered, arching her eyebrows questioningly.

“Betty,” FP chuckled, facing her while sitting around the table, Jughead next to the younger girl. “You should thank everybody. Everyone that works on the show, the producers, writers, the ones who cast you. And then all the kids and grownups who work with you every day.”

“But you’re not sure I’ll win, right?” she asked, unsure.

“Nope.”

“Well then maybe we should hope I won’t?” she joked.

That made all of them laugh. “Hey,” Jug whispered to her soon enough. “Maybe if you win, you can ask your mom for a guitar?”
Betty smiled at that huge, having pleaded her mom for a few months now to get her own guitar. Till now it had always been the one Jughead had at home and his drums. And the bass that Chaz had in his room, too.

“What did you say?” Polly asked Jughead, seeing Betty’s smile.

“Nothing,” the boy teased the 11-year-old.

#

“And the Tony Award for the best actress in a musical goes to… Crystal Marie Williams!”

Betty breathed out quietly, having hoped she would win, but also relieved she didn’t. Now she didn’t have to go up on the stage and also had something to work towards. She had started to understand with some weeks how important Tony Awards were. Apparently, she was the youngest person ever to be nominated. And everyone was proud of her already.

She clapped to the other woman like everybody else and smiled when listening to her speech. She could have never done that, and she knew it. But the woman was a grownup and young, and now she had a feeling like she wanted to be like that when she grew up. She wanted to be brave enough to be up on the stage as herself and not as Matilda or any other character.

#

Betty’s eyes grew huge as she saw an electric guitar on her bed, an amp next to it on the ground with some guitar cables. “Mom?” she called out.

“Yeah, honey?”

“Is that for me?” she asked in shock.

Alice smiled in the kitchen and walked there. Betty looked up at her with a shocked face which only made her chuckle. “If your brother or sister wants to try it too, you have to share.”

“Is that real?” she asked, walking to it and touching the smooth wooden-colored area. It felt real at least.

“I promised I’d buy you one, remember?”

“But I didn’t win…” the girl said with a frown, looking confused. The deal was that if she was going to win, she was going to get one.

Alice went to her youngest daughter, sitting down on the edge of the bed. “It wasn’t about winning. You have good grades at school and you’re on Broadway… So even if you do scream at me when you’re tired, you’ve deserved it.”

The blonde girl hugged her for that really tightly and whispered a thank you, always grateful for everything. “Now look,” Alice chuckled, touching the guitar herself. “You’re little, the guitar is big. Juggie has a smaller one, for kids and teenagers. Yours is the full size.”

“Why?” she asked curiously.

“You’ll grow up one day and this is a really expensive one, so I really hope it lasts and you’ll keep playing… But until then, only when you sit, and always put the strap on, okay?”

“Okay,” Betty said excitedly, sitting down on the bed as well, and lifting the heavy guitar on her
lap. Alice helped her get the strap around her shoulder and back before getting up to connect the
cables to the right places. “Mommy, do you know which notes they should be?”

“No,” Alice said. “I’ll find it on the internet, just wait a minute.”

Once she did, Betty simply listened, playing the right strings, her nose wrinkled up as she tuned the
guitar by her ears, trusting herself on this. She found the right notes surprisingly fast. Alice had an
inch she had done that for Charles who had a bass guitar.

Once the tuning was done, Betty grinned excitedly, taking the small plectrum and pulling it over
the strings, enjoying the sound. Even the amp was an expensive one which made the sound and
bass so much better.

“Look, baby,” Alice said, handing her a capo. “FP said you know how to use this and that it’s so
that it’d be easier to play with your short hands?”

The blonde rolled her eyes at the last comment, but nodded, placing it in the place she liked. And
then she slowly started playing, trying out the thing Charles and Jughead had taught her on Jug’s
guitar.

#

“Hey, you,” FP said to Betty when she finally got off the stage on Saturday night.

“Hi,” she breathed with a small smile, hugging his waist for a moment before going into the
dressing room, FP following her inside as most of the parents did to help their children get the
makeup and electronic devices off.

“How did it go?” he asked as the girl pulled her up on the chair behind her table and took a makeup
wipe.

“Good,” Betty said, removing the small amount of makeup she had on to make her face look
dirtier. “Peter gave us all remote-control cars yesterday for Halloween so me and the others who
weren’t on the stage yesterday played all the showtime,” she said with a huge smile.

FP chuckled at that, having removed her microphone and the earbuds. “And where are the others
now? Why isn’t anybody here?”

“They all left,” she explained. “The audience clapped so long, and the understudies just went away
an hour ago.” Betty giggled and looked at FP, wondering she probably got all the makeup off now.
“I’m sorry you had to wait so long.”

“It’s okay. Jug’s show ends in half an hour, let’s hope the audience won’t clap for him that long.”

“Won’t you take me home before that?” Betty frowned.

“I was going to, but you still need to change your clothes, and by that time he hopefully has
finished too.”

“Okay,” the girl sighed, sliding off her chair. “I’m tired.”

#

“Betty?” Jughead sighed, opening his eyes tiredly. “What’s up?”

“I need your help,” the younger girl said, taking his hand from on top of his pillow. “Please?”
The boy sighed, sitting up on the couch slowly, rubbing his eyes. “What is it? You wanna eat something?” he asked, scratching his head by making his hair messier. “I’m hungry.”

“I need your help… with that,” Betty said, dropping a book onto his lap.

Jughead sighed and looked up at the girl. “You woke me up to ask help with math? Seriously, Betts, can’t you just wait until my dad comes back?”

“No,” the girl said and took a seat next to him. “I don’t understand it. And I have a test tomorrow.”

“Ugh,” the 11-year-old said. “You don’t understand like anything from it?”

“No,” Betty whined. “Help me?”

“Get me a sandwich?” Jughead smiled.

The almost 9-year-old girl moved her nostrils, unimpressed. “Your dad went to get food, remember?”
Age 11

# 11.1 #

The last few years were tough for the children. Betty continued on ‘Matilda’ until she was 9.5 years old which is when they had to give the roles over to new kids. She started auditioning for other things only to be cut off and told that she was either too skinny for a role or too short or too young or too old. It pissed her off, but even as 9 years old, she knew what she wanted, so she took that anger and went on another audition, with Jughead this time.

When Jughead had stopped doing ‘Mary Poppins’, he did a small role in ‘Beauty and the beast’ for a while until he got another, and a bigger role. Unfortunately, the musical he had the role in got canceled only with a few performances and so did the next one, which put him into the same position that Betty was in.

That’s exactly how at age 10 and 12 they ended up booking ‘School of Rock, the musical’. The two were hyped when on their auditions they were asked if they can play any instruments. Jughead talked about his love for playing drums and also a guitar and a bass while Betty said she’s able to play guitar, bass, a bit of drums, and some piano if needed.

In the next audition where they had cut down a lot of children, they were about 15 for every role and there were instruments. When Betty was handed a bass guitar, she immediately understood who she was really auditioning for—Katie. Jughead had to play both guitar and the drums, and then later only drums. He wasn’t quite as good as he had to be for the show—having taken the classes only for a few years, between his performances—but he got the classes he needed, which ended with him booking the role for Freddie.

The two were stoked to get roles in the same musical again. It had been so long.

#

When the show had lasted for a few months already, the news came; they were picked for the national tour. At first, they would be going to different events and talk-shows in between their shows all over North America. And when they were going to get back to New York, they had to perform on the Tony Awards.

The problem was, that there could be one grownup for every two children. They would get the free hotel and breakfast, but if they wanted to see the show, they had to pay for it themselves. It was unacceptable for Alice that she wouldn’t go with Betty. But she had to choose between touring North America for four months with her youngest kid—not being able to work nor be with her other two children—and leaving Betty to go with other parents and child wranglers, going to see their shows whenever they were closest to home.

“Alice,” FP sighed. “She’s going to be perfectly fine.”

“How do you know that?” she asked, pissed. “She doesn’t like to sleep anywhere else than at home or at your place sometimes. I won’t see her for so long.”

“I’ll be there, Al. They’ll all be fine. 17 kids, 3 swings and everybody else are adults. You’ve been to the meetings, you’ve met everybody. It’s fine.”

“Maybe I should ask Hal,” she sighed.
FP arched his eyebrows at that. “You think she’d rather be with him than me? I doubt that.”

“You’re right… Just… God, she’s 11. I won’t see her for months.”

“You will. You’ll buy some tickets, leave Polly and Chaz with their father. Or alone but tell him to look after them or your apartment will be trashed with teenage parties with underage drinking.”

“Fuck,” Alice said in horror, making FP laugh again.

“It’s gonna be okay, Al. You can always call your parents, I bet they’d love to see the kids sometimes.”

“The kids?” the woman snorted. “Charles will get 18. And Polly’s 14 already.”

“Exactly. They’re responsible.” He wrapped his arms around the woman, hugging her tightly. “It’ll be okay,” he repeated.

#

After a few weeks in Toronto, they were now flying to Vancouver. It was 3 am so that the tickets would be cheaper, which was so much worse for all the actors. After an hour of flying, Betty sighed, opening her eyes finally. The plane was a huge one. She wasn’t scared of it, but for some reason, she couldn’t sleep either.

“Rough night?” Jughead murmured, pushing the armrest up from between them and pulling the girl into his side.

“My head hurts,” Betty said quietly, closing her eyes now that her head was resting on his shoulder.

Jug pressed a kiss on top of her head. “I don’t like sleeping in planes,” he murmured. “But I’m tired.”

“What’s the time?”

The boy sighed, pulling out his smartphone and then pushed it back into his pocket. “4:32 on the east coast.”

“And when will we get there again?”

“8:15. But in Vancouver, it’ll be like 5:15.”

“At least we’ll get to sleep all day.”

The 13-year-old hummed, kissing her head again. “Try to sleep, Betts.”

The girl pulled her feet under her butt and took a comfortable position on her seat, head staying on his shoulder. “You’re making your leg fall asleep like that…” Jughead murmured.

“I don’t care.”

The boy opened his eyes again once Betty had started breathing deeper, hopefully asleep. He had never told this to anybody, but he had a crush on her. The problem was that he was 13 and she was 11. And that she probably took him as her older brother. Jughead didn’t like that, not having looked at her as a sister for years now. He was a teenager. She wasn’t. He didn’t know if 11-year-old girls had crushes or not. But he wanted to know.
“Your mom?” Betty asked doubtfully after Jughead had given her the news.

The boy nodded, a deep frown on his face. “They’ve never seen me performing… And now that we’re in Ohio, she said they’ll come on Sunday.”

Betty knew the boy was used to seeing his mom and little sister about once a year. He talked to his sister on the phone about once a month, but never his mother. So now that he had gotten a call from her, telling him they’d come to see him during the tour, both of them were shocked. They were going to be in Cleveland for three weeks and he hoped maybe he’ll get to be with his sister for a while between the shows every day, twice on Saturdays.

“Do you think she’ll talk to FP?” Betty asked carefully. “Your mom I mean.”

“Maybe,” Jughead shrugged. “He hasn’t even ever told me why they went away. Jellybean doesn’t know either. And if my dad won’t tell me, there’s no way my mom will.”

“Maybe they just… you know… understood they weren’t meant to be together? I mean I don’t know why my parents separated, but from what Charles has told me, they’re a whole lot happier like this than when they were together and yelling at each other all the time.”

Jughead sighed at that. “I just don’t understand why I couldn’t live with my sister. These laws about girls staying with moms are so stupid. And anyway, why didn’t my dad ask for Jellybean too?”

“I love FP and all, but… Maybe your mom got Jellybean and they went to court, and he got you. And your mom had a better job and more money so he wasn’t going to fight for your sister if he knew in the end, he could lose you too… Plus, she was a baby. Babies stay with moms, no matter the gender.”

“How do you know all that?” Jughead asked, frowning. “Has he told you something?”

“No… Maybe I’m just smart?”

That made both of them smile and Betty ran her hands through his hair, his head remaining on her lap. “My mom’s coming with Polly on Sunday too.”

“And your brother?”

Betty giggled. “He texted me and told me he was sorry he couldn’t come and then sent another text telling me that he was going to have a party at home and that I can’t tell mom.”

#  

On Saturday it had officially been 3 months from the very first day of the tour. This meant that the night after the show had ended, everybody was sitting in the hotel lobby, eating ice cream with all kinds of sprinkles and toppings. They had done it two times previously, at the end of every month. Now that the last month of their tour was starting, they were all getting nostalgic, holding the tradition up. This was going to be their last month working together. After that, the show was going to continue, but not with the original cast. Jughead had already outgrown his character’s height and if they wanted, they could have already ended the contract with him. Fortunately, everybody was holding their mouths.

Betty and another girl her age, Lea, who played Summer, giggled, seeing some of the boys asleep.
on the couches. The blonde took it as her duty to wake Jughead up and transport him to their hotel room somehow. She started poking his cheek with her index finger while shaking up another boy next to him.

“Betty?” Jack asked, confused.

“Stop it,” Jughead said at the same time, pushing her hand away from his face.

“If you wanna sleep, you could go to bed…” she suggested, making the boys smirk as they opened their eyes normally, understanding where they were.

“Carry me?” Jughead joked. The girl just took his hand, familiar with the touch, and pulled him up from the couch. She didn’t let go until they were upstairs, having said to everybody they were going to sleep.

At night, Betty woke up. She sighed, seeing that the time was only a bit over 2 am. She hated the nightmares and hated when she couldn’t sleep in her own room while seeing them. At the moment, she was sharing her room with nine other kids. The hotel was big, but not overly fancy, which meant they had enough rooms with many bunk beds in them. As there were a few more girls than boys from the twenty children on the tour, she had agreed to be in the same room with boys and only a few girls. It was like a big apartment anyways, so the other girls were in the room next to theirs, and then the grownups were shattered over the whole hotel, a few parents in the kids’ huge apartment-like room, looking after them.

Betty slipped out from her bed, her feet touching the cold ground, and quickly crossed the room. She found the right ladder in the darkness and as quietly as she could, climbed up, into Jughead’s top bunk. She crawled under his duvet and cuddled up to his side.

“What’s up?” Jughead murmured tiredly, not opening his eyes.

Betty leaned up and kissed his cheek. “I’m gonna sleep here tonight,” she whispered.

The boy smiled in his sleep as an answer, wrapping his arm around her. “Okay.”

“Is that allowed?” Logan asked when Betty was sitting in Jughead’s bed in the morning, rubbing one of her eyes tiredly while Jughead was climbing up the ladder with a bottle of water. “I thought there were parents so none of us would sleep together like that?”

“It’s not like they did anything,” Jayden, a 14-year-old grinned widely. “Right, Jug?”

Jughead rolled his eyes at him while handing Betty the water bottle. The boy climbed right back under his sheets.

“It’s fine,” Claudia said. She was Betty’s age, sleeping in the girls’ room, but having transported herself there alongside with every other kid, all of them liking to hang out like this in the mornings. Even though some of the boys still preferred to be asleep at 10. “They’re like siblings anyways.”

While every boy in the room burst out laughing, the girls just frowned deeply. The boys had had their own talks between the rehearsals, so everybody kind of knew Jughead liked the blonde girl. And when the beanie-wearing boy turned to look at Betty, she was looking down at her crossed ankles, her cheeks a bit red as she screwed the bottle lid open. Jughead felt something bang in his
“You guys ready to go?” Emilia asked the other kids. They had this tradition that after the show, all the kids would leave together. There was a crowd of people waiting outside, wanting a few pictures and autographs, so they always liked to do it together.

Everyone nodded, having their bags, the child wranglers ready as well. Betty held Jughead’s hand when they left, seeing how nervous he was about seeing his whole family together (and about the fact that his mom and sister saw him performing for the first time, scared that maybe they weren’t impressed or proud).

Once they were outside the theater, she gave his hand a squeeze before letting go so that they could go and smile on different pictures. Jughead was so grateful that the blonde was like that; supportive.

Once they had signed a normal number of leaflets and taken selfies with some of the fans, mostly grownups as always, Betty found Jughead again. The boy looked incredibly nervous as the two wordlessly agreed to go and find their families now. They walked towards the place where most of the kids were with their families—who had all come to the show, getting some discount on the tickets—and both abruptly froze. There were Betty’s mom and both siblings, which was surprising for her, talking with FP, Gladys, and Jellybean.

The only thing the blonde girl could think about that moment was about how Jughead’s little sister was only two years younger than her. Which meant maybe they could be good friends. She had last seen her when Jellybean was 4, anyway. “Come on,” she whispered, taking Jug’s hand again and pulling him towards their families.

As soon as Jellybean saw them, she was in Jughead’s arms. So Betty smiled, looking at how the two hugged, the girl much shorter than her brother, but a few seconds later also went to hug her mom.

“Hey hon,” Alice said quietly, showering Betty’s cheek in kisses while hugging her tightly. “I missed you.”

“Me too,” Betty giggled, pushing her face away a little. “Stop.” She hugged Polly and then raised her eyebrows at Charles, crossing her arms on her chest. “I thought you weren’t coming,” she accused.

“Polly was a blabbermouth. I’m grounded now,” he smiled.

“Burgers?” Betty smiled.

“Don’t tell me you’ve been only feeding her burgers,” Alice sighed, looking at the guy.
FP shrugged. “They eat pancakes or cereal in hotels every morning.”

“FP—”

“I’m kidding. They’ve been asking about a normal diner for weeks now, I promised we’ll go after tonight’s show.”

“Yes, really?” Jughead asked suddenly, looking excitedly at his father as his sister was back in his arms once again.

“Wait, you promised all of these kids to go out for burgers?” Charles asked doubtfully.

“No, just these two,” FP said. “Everyone’s families are here tonight. So, I think tonight everybody’s going to different places.”

“So, we’ll go and eat milkshakes and burgers?” Betty asked excitedly.

“And fries and chicken nuggets and cheese balls and—” Jughead started.

“Whoa,” FP said, stopping the two who were now suddenly frowning at him. “You have to stay fit, remember? If you gain a pound, they can kick you out.”

“Juggie’s been an inch taller for like a month and nobody cares,” Betty protested.

“They will if you scream like that,” Polly smirked.

“Shut up.”

Halfway through the dinner, the word exchange before FP and Gladys got worse and worse by second. Betty and Jughead, who were separated by Jellybean sitting between them, shared a look when the two got up to go and talk outside for a moment. Neither of them liked that. Alice tried to keep all the kids light and happy while they all obviously saw the two yelling at each other outside.

“Mom?” Charles asked quietly. “Can’t you go and tell them to stop?” It was a pain for him to look both Jughead and Jellybean sad, picking on their food.

Alice sighed. “It won’t help anything. I tried. For years.”

“Hey,” Betty said quietly to Jellybean when she saw the two parents were about to come back, furious as ever. “Give me your number.”

She quickly did just that and smiled at her new older friend just before Gladys said they were leaving. Jughead didn’t hug his mother, but he did hug his sister and so did FP for as long as he had the chance to. Once they were gone, everybody looked awkward, and Jughead excused himself to the bathroom, tears pricking in the 13-year-old’s eyes.

(He spent that night in Betty’s bed, crying.)
“Alright, let’s see it,” Jughead smiled when Betty got home from the dentist. He was spending a few days at her place as FP was away in LA, trying to sell one of his scripts to yet another movie company.

The girl wrinkled her nose slightly. “No.”

Jughead noticed her tongue sliding over the braces all the time under her lips, trying to get used to them. “Come on,” he smiled.

“I look stupid,” Betty said.

“No, you don’t,” Jughead insisted. “You wanna hear a joke?”

The girl laughed at that already but holding her mouth shut so that her teeth weren’t showing. When the boy’s hands moved onto her waist, tickling her lightly, she let her lips loose though, laughing as she tried to pull his hands away. When she finally managed, she was still smiling, their fingers lacing together automatically.

“So?” she asked nervously.

Jughead smiled. “You look cute.”

“Yeah?” the girl sighed. “I’d gravitating more towards quirky or an idiot if I’m being honest.”

“Stop it,” Jughead insisted, letting go of her hands to push a strand of hair out of her face that had fallen out of the ponytail she wore all the time. “You look beautiful. Definitely not an idiot.”

Betty rolled her eyes at that, turning to sit normally on the couch, grabbing the remote. “At least my orthodontist was nice… She said they’ll start hurting in a few days. And that if I was too moody, my mom would understand.”

Jughead laughed at that. “You’re too moody anyway. You’re gonna be throwing glasses onto the ground once it actually starts hurting.”

“What would you know, you have the perfect smile,” Betty accused.

Jughead’s stomach flipped at the way she said it. Her tone was all soft and loving as always, and he loved that she said perfect smile and not perfect teeth. Did she think he was handsome?

“Did your doctor say anything else besides that?” he teased. “You know like asked for your autograph as most people do.”

Betty chuckled, turning Simpsons on in the TV. “She said I was one talented young lady. And then added that also very lucky and that not everybody has the possibility to be on Broadway. Especially for multiple shows… And she was surprised to hear when I said they won’t continue doing Annie.”

“Really?” Jughead arched his eyebrows. “Ever since you grew out of the Pepper phase and they got the new casting for all the parts, the ratings have been going down. They were losing more money than gaining.”
After they had ended ‘School of rock the musical’, Jughead got the name role in Billy Elliot and Betty auditioned for Annie. She got the role of Pepper and was delighted to actually be around younger kids, used to being the youngest on the stage usually. So, she played Pepper when she was 12 and 13, and now had gone to school for half a year, it being January already. The first year of high school wasn’t at all as bad as she had thought—she had even made some friends.

Jughead was going to finish Billy Elliot after playing him for two years now. And then he was supposed to go to school in September as well (if there weren’t going to be any other roles). He was turning 17 in October which meant he was going to be a Senior now. At least he and Betty went to the same school at the moment, which meant that hopefully if they were going to go to school in September, they were going to hang out sometimes.

“You should choose green next time,” Jughead commented absentmindedly, observing the way Betty’s finger kept brushing over her new braces.

“What?” Betty frowned, looking at the boy in confusion.

“The braces… Pink’s pretty too. Just green would kinda match your eyes.” Betty blushed at that, looking back at the screen quickly. “I changed my mind; they match your cheeks.”

“Shut up,” the girl said, shoving him into the armrest and making him laugh as she smiled and covered her cheeks with her hands, knowing they were red now.

Two days later, Betty couldn’t even go to school. She was crying the whole day, hitting her pillow and wanting to scream at everybody. The braces were fucking uncomfortable and hurt and felt like a tractor had rode over her teeth. The fact that she was 14 didn’t help. She had hormones and she just wanted to hit everybody. She found that Jughead was right and throwing a glass onto the ground actually did help. When she did it on Saturday while she was home alone, she lied to her mom later, saying it was an accident. (Once she told that story to Jughead, he died in laughter.)

“Betty?” Charles called out once he had closed the door behind himself and pushed his shoes off.

He didn’t get an answer, but he could hear the sound of an electric guitar being played far too professional and loud. So, once his jacket had been thrown over the chair in the hallway, he went to his little sister’s room and gave a few knocks on the door before pushing it open.

Betty’s eyes were red and puffy, and her jaw was clenched together as her fingers ran over the guitar strings aggressively, playing it better than ever before. Charles hadn’t even heard that song, so he wondered it might have been improvisation. He waited for a few minutes, staring at his little sister’s hands in amazement, but when he understood how loud it really was and that she wasn’t going to end the song, he walked over to her, getting her attention. Immediately, he squatted down, turning the amp off.

Betty looked at him madly as he did that, but he only grinned at her grumpy face. “Teenage hormones? Mom said you can’t go to school or you’ll punch somebody in the face.”

“Mom’s just being nice; I wouldn’t mind killing anybody either.”

Charles smiled at that. “They tightened the things in your mouth yesterday?”

Betty rolled her eyes at his word use, but nodded, knowing what he was referring to. Charles saw
“So, what’s the problem? Your braces or that you think you look ugly or something else, like your hormones and a particular boy tied together.”

“Shut up,” Betty frowned, turning her head away. She hated how Charles read into everything she did. And he was right. That pissed her off more than anything.

“So, which one?” the 21-year-old asked, still squatting next to the amp in front of her bed.

Betty rolled her eyes. “All of them.”

The man nodded and pushed himself to stand up. “The rage makes you play good,” he said, pointing at the guitar on her lap. “Have you taken painkillers?”

“No, I’m just sitting here crying and wanting to kill people without trying painkillers,” she said madly, puffing as she placed the guitar on the stand on her wall, next to all the posters.

“Alright, so you can’t do anything for that part,” he said, placing the amp and the cords under her bed where she always held them. “What did Jughead say when he saw the braces?”

Betty rolled her eyes. “That I look cute.”

Charles smiled at that. “So why do you worry?”

“Because he isn’t the only person in the world, and most don’t think that.”

“He’s practically the only person in your world, so why are you worried about what others think?”

Betty shrugged, sitting back on the bed. “Because I’m in high school?”

“Fair enough…”

The blonde raised her eyes onto her brother when he was quiet for a few seconds, smirking. She knew what he was going to talk about next. Betty arched her left eyebrow when he still didn’t say anything.

“I brought McDonald’s. We can order pizza later if you want to. Eat your emotions away, come on.”

Betty smiled at that as she got up and followed her brother out into the living room, grabbing Jughead’s hoodie while she did so. She was still in her short pajamas and it was a bit chilly in the apartment, so she pulled it on—an action not going unnoticed by her brother.

So, once they were settled in front of the TV, some horror movies picked out, they unwrapped their burgers and took big bites. “Ow,” the girl murmured, mouth full, face wrinkled up as she chewed.

Charles made a face when he saw the tears on her face. “Fuck. You know what, let’s cancel that pizza thing and order like ice cream sundaes later, okay?” Betty nodded, dropping her head against his shoulder as she took another bite. “It’s not like you really seem to mind though,” the guy grinned.

“It’s too good to stop,” Betty murmured when she had swallowed, trying to get the food out from her teeth with her tongue. These braces were the worst thing to ever happen to her. She wished she could just go back to January and not let them put them onto her teeth in the first place.
After eating all their food, the ice cream on their way, Charles finally brought the topic up. “So, what’s the thing with Jug?”

Betty sighed. “Like I’m gonna tell you.”

“If I were you, I’d tell me,” he grinned, which just made the girl roll her eyes. “Seriously, Betty, if you can’t talk to Polly about it, just talk to me.”

“Who says I can’t talk to Polly about it?”

“Oh please, her teenage shit is worse than yours with pain and rejection multiplied by ten.” Both of them knew that was true. “Now come on. Spill.”

Betty rolled her eyes at his word choice once again. “There’s nothing to tell you about. I like him, he’s two years older; it’s awkward.”

“Why?”

“Because he’ll be fucking 17 and I’ll turn 15 two months after.”

“Oh please,” he rolled his eyes. “You want to know what’s awkward? A 13-year-old boy having a huge crush on an 11-year-old girl who doesn’t even realize boys exist.”

“I did realize,” she protested. “Just not… that way.”

Charles held his laugh back. “Seriously, Betts. You’re 14. Focus on school and make some friends and wait until you’re like 16 to start hooking up. If you still like him after having sex with at least 5 guys from the football team, which you will do by the way, then go for it.”

“You’re so stupid,” she said, hitting her foot against the couch, feeling like breaking something all over again.

“Here,” Charles said, passing her the coke he still had. Betty accepted it with a sigh and drowned all the remaining drinks, knowing her mom wouldn’t be happy with it.
Betty was nervous. She could swear on her life that she was going to die this instant. And Jughead was right there next to her, standing like everything was okay. He wasn’t affected and she felt so fucking stupid that her body couldn’t stop shaking now. And all these eyes on the six of them were horrible.

They had just been told they needed to kiss. Of course, everybody had seen ‘Sound of Music’ and everyone knew that Rolf and Liesl shared a brief kiss after the ‘Sixteen going on Seventeen’ song, but she hadn’t thought they needed to do that at the audition. She was paired up with Jughead which was good for their dancing and the trust and playfulness in the number, but it was just stupid that she was now forced to kiss him.

“Alright, Mason and Lisette, you two are the first ones.”

Betty turned around and kept her eyes on the ground as she walked to sit down in the corner of the room. There were three pairs auditioning for the roles and all of their parents plus some siblings. She felt restless, feeling Jughead’s eyes burning into her skin as she kept her eyes on the ground. Until the music started.

Her emerald eyes flickered up to look at how the first pair did their number. And how they kissed. The two looked incredibly awkward while doing that, but it was a short one and after that, when they separated, everyone clapped. They even managed to smile at each other.

“Forsythe and Elizabeth.”

Betty clenched her jaw, feeling like she was going to throw up. She slowly got up from the ground, her eyes avoiding FP’s and her Alice’s who were obviously holding their laughs back. It hadn’t gone unnoticed to anybody how affected the two kids had been from their early teenage years. Now that Betty was 15 and Jughead 17, about to finish high school in some months, it was funny for the two parents to look at how the two teenagers really tried to avoid each other’s touch, even though they were best friends.

“It’s okay,” Jughead whispered to her when they took the starting positions on the bench in the middle of the room. Betty’s eyes moved up to look into his and even though he said it, both of them knew it was a lie, “It’s just acting.”

When the music was put on, Betty messed up some moves and cursed herself for it, trying to go back to the playfulness they had previously shown in the dance number. Only that then it was too late already. She had told herself while sitting in the corner that she needed to kiss him and be a professional to get the part, but when Jughead messed up yet another dance move and she saw the judges shaking their head from the corner of her eye, she said fuck it. The parts weren’t going to be theirs anyway.

When Jughead’s lips collapsed into hers, her hands moved into his hair so naturally, as if she had been doing this for years, and neither of them made a move to pull away. Their lips felt so right against each other’s and the pressure was just amazing as his tongue slid into her mouth.

Betty’s whole body was buzzing, and she had been pulled flush against his body, thanking the god that her braces had been removed a month ago. She had had it easy apparently, with only 13
Neither of them acknowledged the coughs they got from the people around them but did break apart when one of the boys who was auditioning blew a whistle. While Jughead was still frozen on the spot, Betty’s eyes flickered open as she breathed out sharply. “Fuck,” she cursed, lowering herself back onto the balls of her feet, and ran out of the room.

Jughead’s eyes opened just in time to see her sliding out of the door, into the hallway. The blue globes moved their journey to his dad’s and Alice’s faces—one amused, the other one shocked—and then onto the casting crew. They were not impressed.

He gulped, holding the eye contact with the man behind the table, but couldn’t bring himself to apologize because there was no way he was going to apologize for kissing Betty. So, without saying anything, he turned around and went after the girl, hoping she hadn’t gone far. It was clearer to him than anybody else that they didn’t get the parts. And right now, he didn’t think about it, his lips missing hers on their place and his body still warm inside.

Jughead found Betty in the girls’ bathroom. There obviously weren’t anybody else, just the blonde, gripping the edges of a sink and looking down, face dripping of the cold water she had been splashing onto her face just a minute ago. Her face was so red that it was adorable.

The boy gave a few soft knocks onto the door, making Betty’s head fly up, their eyes interlocking involuntarily. Jughead’s eyes were soft while Betty’s were red already. “How did you manage to cry with two minutes?” he murmured in astonishment.

The girl’s eyes rolled themselves a little as she turned her head away. Her hands that had just previously been in his hair, filled with water as she washed her face some more before grabbing paper towels and drying them up. By the time she had tossed the wet papers in the trash, Jughead had crossed the bathroom. So, when the blonde turned around, she jerked, and awkwardly moved her hands up a little, clasping them together, before understanding it was a wrong and unnatural move, and burying them deep into her pockets instead.

Jughead chuckled, bringing his hand to her chin and tilting it up carefully. Betty got goosebumps from the touch but met his eyes anyway. “Are you going to be *that* awkward with me from now on?” Jughead asked.

The girl swallowed and pulled her chin away from his hand, looking at their feet, only an inch apart. Her forehead moved to rest against his chest, and the beanie-wearing boy moved his arms to rest around her, kissing the top of her head.

“You’re going to college,” she stated quietly. Jughead had said he’ll take a gap year if they got the parts, but since they obviously didn’t, it wasn’t going to happen. “You’ll be in California,” she continued in a whisper. “And you’ll turn 18.”

Jughead nodded even though he wasn’t sure if she could feel that. “You’re gonna get 16 and you’re going to make out with every single boy at your school,” he said in a hushed tone.

“You’re gonna hook up with many girls in college, and then you’ll find a long-run girlfriend from your course. You will break up and find another one and you’ll move in together.”

Jughead gulped at that, not liking the way she was seeing his future.

“You’ll get a job. You’ll have a family.”

“Maybe,” he said softly. “Maybe not.”
“You will stop texting and calling me…”

“Stop it,” Jughead said now, wanting to pull away, but also knowing she was crying and didn’t want for him to see. “Betts, you’re still my best friend. You always will be.” Her shoulders shook a little, her breathing shaky, so he leaned down again and pressed a kiss on the crown of her head.

“I’ve had a crush on you since forever,” Betty whispered, voice sounding choked up. She sighed, “Why can’t I just be older?”

Jughead pulled away at that, letting go of her gently. His hands cupped her warm face, thumbs brushing the hot tears away as their eyes met again. “I’ve been crushing on you since you were 7. I had a crush on you all these nights you slept with me on the tour, remember? I was 13 and I had just discovered through some older boys on Broadway that porn existed.”

Betty chuckled at that, looking at him a bit pitifully. “Sorry,” she said with a sniffle, the smile still lingering on her face.

Jughead sighed with a small smile himself and kept holding her beautiful face in his hands. “Betts, we don’t know what will happen in four years. I love Broadway, I love theater. I don’t think I’d be able to live in California. Even if I do the computer animation degree, I might never get a job and it’d be more like a hobby, I think. Maybe I’ll get back to performing. I’m pretty sure I’ll come back home, to New York. Maybe when you’re still here and it’s actually legal, something could happen between us… Maybe not. Who knows?”

Betty sighed at that, but nodded a little, her hands falling out of her pockets, one of them coming up to her face to wipe away the remaining tears in the corners of her eyes. When she was done with that, it moved to touch his jaw. He tilted his head downwards and Betty leaned up onto her toes as they kissed briefly, both hoping it wasn’t the last one to come.

“Friends forever?” Jug asked quietly once they pulled away, taking her hand into his.

Betty interlocked their fingers. “Friends forever,” she repeated and stood on her tiptoes to kiss his cheek.
“Hey, girls,” Alice greeted, seeing Betty and Veronica sprawled out on the couch, some dirty dishes on the table in front of them.

“Hi, mom!”

“Hey, Mrs. Cooper.”

Alice sighed, pointing at the dirty plates and looking at Betty. “You did the dishes like I asked you to?”

The blonde girl made a face, quickly getting up and grabbing the ones from the coffee table. “I was just about to,” she lied, obvious to everybody.

Veronica giggled, pausing the movie, while Alice just rolled her eyes. “Elizabeth, I work long days. I’m not supposed to come home and—”

“I’m doing it,” Betty interrupted and kissed her mom’s cheek while passing her. “Relax.”

“How was school?” Alice breathed, calming herself down, knowing she was stressed because of work and not because of her daughter.

“It was fine,” Betty said as she threw the towel to Veronica, wanting for her to help and dry the dishes. The raven-haired girl wordlessly agreed with the plan, knowing they could keep watching the movie faster if she helped.

“The dinner’s in the oven,” Betty said.

Alice raised her eyebrows at that. “You made dinner?”

“I might not like washing the plates, but I do realize you get home late every day.”

Alice sighed with a smile. “Thanks, honey.” Betty smiled in answer, handing Veronica the first cup. “I got a call from your manager.”

Betty’s eyes lit up at that. “Yeah? Which show are they canceling and what do they want me to audition for?”

“Not Broadway,” Alice said. “Disney.”

Betty sighed, disappointed. “I’ve told them many times I don’t want to be on Disney Channel, and no, I don’t want to be famous.”

“What?” Veronica asked in pure disbelief. “You’ve been asked to have a show on Disney Channel, and you said no?”

“Of course, I did. I mean like the last good show ended like what, 5 years ago? Now it’s just shit, people with perfectly symmetrical faces and only blondes. I do not want to be a part of that.”

“Calm down,” Alice chuckled, having heard all of that already before. “Not Disney Channel, baby. Disney.”
“What?” Betty frowned, handing yet another plate to Veronica who was trying to catch up with the speed.

“Animated movie. Voiceovers. They’re making—and you both better keep your mouth shut about it or they’ll sue us—a new Disney princess.”

Veronica almost dropped the plate at that information. Betty’s eyes grew huge, forgetting the few more plates she was supposed to wash, leaving the water running. “What?”

“A new Disney princess movie. They’re looking for girls aged 16-22. With theater or animation experience,” Alice explained with a small smirk on her face, seeing how excited she was now. “Apparently there are three phases in that. The first is the table read with voice actors, but usually, they cast new ones; it’s just for a try as Marie told me. The casting process started a few days ago. She sent me a script and a solo sheet of some song and you’d have to videotape.”

“Oh my god,” Betty breathed in shock.

“But, honey. Think about it, okay? It’s not like you would get it 100%. And if you do, you would be famous. Famous in a way Broadway can’t do. Over the world-famous. Something that I’ve understood you don’t want to be.”

“Fuck yes,” she breathed.

“Language.”

“Wait, but is it a real Disney princess or are they going to exclude her from the list like Anna and Elsa and all the new ones?”

“Betty, I have no idea.”

(Veronica was freaking out.)

“You have to be quiet, okay?” Betty asked Veronica, her best friend at school. The raven-haired girl always had pearls around her neck and always dressed stylishly. Her family was rich and famous for all the business they did. Sometimes she could be a real bitch, but never with Betty, and only for acceptable reasons. So, while she and Betty were the complete opposites, they were getting along great.

“I won’t even breathe,” she promised. Somehow, she had talked Betty into being able to watch her making the self-tape. Alice was helping her put the camera into the right position and the right height and helping with the lighting and microphone as the previous time.

Once they got the equipment set up and camera rolling, Betty started. “Hi. I’m Elizabeth Cooper, number 308.”

She had gotten through the first round already with a ten-second song everybody had to perform and a short dialogue that wasn’t actually going to be in the movie. Now, she had her own number (308) and had to pick two Disney songs, one from the 20th century and the other from the 21st. She, obviously, picked ‘Part of your world’ from The Little Mermaid and ‘Do you wanna build a snowman’ from Frozen. She needed to be able to show her emotions and her acting skills while also showing off her voice. So, she picked the ones that always made her cry.

After two takes of ‘Part of your world’, she went to wash her face with ice-cold water. And after
one take of the Frozen song, she couldn’t do more, her mom and best friend crying with her. When they looked at the tapes, she was surprisingly satisfied with her performance, starting to cry all over again as she watched it.

“Girl, the way I can see your emotions from your eyes is incredible,” Veronica said, her hand softly stroking the blond hair of hers.

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“Jug!” Betty exclaimed into the phone as the boy answered. “I got an email. I got a fucking email and they want to see me!”

“Betts?” Jughead asked in confusion, voice all groggy and tired. He eyed the girl next to him in the bed and held back his sigh. “It’s four in the morning. What email?” he asked in confusion.

“From Disney production! I got an email and they’re gonna fly me to LA to see me in person,” she explained excitedly. “Oh god, can I see you too?” And even though he was hangover and his head hurt, he smiled proudly. “That’s great, baby.”

Betty’s heart fluttered at the nickname. He had only used it a few times, and all of them over the phone. Once when she was sick and they were face timing, once after she was too tired to study but still answered his call, and one just now. “I’ll come on Friday. Do you think you can take off from school for the weekend?”

“I will don’t worry.”

Both of them grinned at that, not having seen each other since Christmas. “I’ll uh…” Jughead said with a deep frown on his forehead as the girl next to him in the bed opened her eyes and looked around in confusion. “I gotta go, okay? I need to get some sleep. Have a nice day at school.”

“Who’s that?” the girl heard over the phone.

“Yeah,” Betty sighed, feeling a bang of jealousy now. “You too.”

“Wait, Betts,” Jughead called with a louder voice, knowing she was already about to end the call and about to start crying.

The blonde heard that but still pressed the canceling button, dropping the phone onto her bed and face into her hands. Jughead in California though, sighed deeply, pushing himself to sit up normally. She had been so excited, and he had fucking ruined it with a stupid girl he didn’t even like.

“Babe, who’s that? Come back to bed,” Sarah said, sitting up as well as Jughead stood now.

“I need to call her back,” he said firmly so that the girl wouldn’t follow him and went to the kitchen in his small studio apartment. He tapped on her name as he turned on a small light, and led his phone back to his ear.

“Her?” Sarah asked, looking pissed. Jughead gave her another look as he heard Betty’s voice over the phone.

“Hm?”

“I’m sorry,” he apologized, hearing the girl sniffling on the other end already. “I really am proud of
you, baby. Really really proud, okay?”

“Yeah?” Betty asked quietly.

“Yeah,” he breathed. “Why would you ever think I weren’t?”

“I don’t know,” she sniffled.

“Did I just ruin your day? Please don’t cry because of me.”

“I’m not crying because of you.”

The guy’s eyes moved onto his girlfriend on his bed who looked incredibly pissed, probably because of the fact that he called a girl ‘baby’ over the phone while he had never called Sarah that.

“Betty—”

“It’s fine, Jug. You’re allowed to have girlfriends. I’m just being stupid.”

“No, you’re not,” he insisted. “Look, I got drunk last night and I’m really hangover right now,” he explained, resting his head on his hand, attempting to hold it up.

“You’re 18, Jug. You’re not supposed to drink without a parent,” she joked, smiling a little now, wiping her tears away. She was being stupid anyway, as she told herself.

“Yeah well, when you’re in college, you’ll understand.”

“Believe me, I think high school parties are worse.”

“Nope…”

“I’m sorry I woke you up,” she said quietly. “I didn’t acknowledge the time there. Sorry.”

“It’s okay, you were excited. I’m really happy for you. And I can’t wait to see you. I miss you.” By the time of that statement, his—probably—ex-girlfriend was already half-dressed.

“I miss you too,” Betty said quietly. “You’ll come see me in LA?”

“How could I not? I’ve been dying to see you for months.”

“Well then, go back to sleep. Take some aspirin. And don’t puke on your bed.”

“It’s not that bad,” Jughead chuckled, ducking his head when the girl in his apartment let one of his books fly towards him, and then slammed the door shut behind her as she left.

Both Betty and Jughead jerked at the sound. “What was that?” the blonde asked anxiously.

“I don’t think my girlfriend of 2 weeks really liked the way I was talking to you,” he said. Betty smiled to herself. “Sorry.”

“You’re not,” he smirked. “Go to school, don’t be late. And I’ll see you on the weekend.”

“I really am sorry,” the girl said, and he could hear she was being genuine right now. “You don’t deserve to be lonely or unhappy. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I have hormones, I needed sex. She’s a bitch, kind of. She doesn’t like it when I talk about you either.”
“You talk about me?”

“Don’t let it get to your head,” Jughead smirked. “Goodnight now, I need to lock the door and then throw up and go to sleep.”

Betty smiled at his lazy attempts of humor. “Night.”

# 16.2 #

Betty wanted to die when she saw him. He didn’t only hold a huge poster over his head with ‘HAS SOMEBODY SEEN BETTY COOPER??’ written all over it, but he was also wearing sunglasses and had just for the fun of it put an earbud into his ear, looking like a stalker or a professional driver or something. At least his clothes were still dark, and he still had his suspenders hanging low on his hips.

She could tell he saw him when his lips twitched into a smirk and he opened his mouth. “Betty Cooper?” he called. “Has somebody seen Betty Cooper?”

All the attention was on him and Betty wanted to die right there when she reached him, pressing her hand over his mouth so that he’d stop making it a public thing. Jughead laughed into her cold palm, wrapping his arms around her, the poster pressed against her back now. The blonde let her own arms slip around him as well once she was positive about the fact that he wasn’t going to scream anymore.

Jug’s arms lifted her into the air for a moment, her body flush against his. Once they had pulled apart a few minutes later, his lips touched her forehead tenderly, kissing it a few times before actually pulling away, both of them smiling.

“How tall are you?” was the first thing he asked as he carefully let go of her hand, not wanting to confuse or hurt her any more than he already had.

“5 foot 4.”

“Shorty,” he chuckled, taking her small suitcase.

Betty rolled her eyes with a smile, knowing very well he was six feet tall. “You came with your car?” she asked, walking close to his side as they stepped outside into the burning spring heat. The girl smiled, closing her eyes for a short moment to enjoy the sun on her face.

Jughead’s face got softer and softer by minute just by looking at her again over a long time. And once his heart was warmed up again, she reached for his hand wordlessly and he didn’t pull away, intertwining their fingers instead.

#

“So, uh…” Betty said, looking at Jughead whose side she was curled up in on the hotel couch. The boy looked down at her with an amused look, knowing what this was about. “There’s just one bed…”

“I can sleep on the couch. The room is paid for you to stay in, so you have all the rights for the bed.”

The blonde sighed quietly, turning her head back normally, facing the TV screen again. She could still feel his thumb brushing over her shoulder blade every second, his arm around her, which just made her sink deeper into her thoughts. “You could… Sleep next to me?”
“Wouldn’t you like that,” he replied, a huge smirk on his face.

“It’d be more comfortable, that’s all…”

“Right.”

Betty rolled her eyes, siding off the couch, onto her feet. Jughead looked at her with the same smirk still on his face, discovering she looked hot when she was pissed. “Right. I’m going to bed then.”

Jug watched her go and climb under the thick covers, just as her hand moved and shut out the light. He chuckled, shutting the TV off as well, and crossed the room in the dark, both of them in their pajamas already. He could see the girl’s eyes opening as he climbed under the sheets.

“You’re being an idiot,” the blonde murmured when Jughead pulled her into his arms, spooning her.

He planted a soft kiss onto her nape. “I just don’t want to confuse you, that’s all.”

“Right, because kissing my neck in the dark is not confusing at all.”

“Betts,” he said seriously now. “You live in New York. I live at the Stanford campus. I’m not making you do long distance from the first second of the relationship. And I’m not making you stay away from boys at your school. You’re 16. Just have fun.”

“I don’t want to have fun,” she said quietly, turning around. Her cold fingers touched his jaw in the darkness, seeing his eyes far too well. “I want to be with you, Jug.” She sighed quietly, continuing. “You said we were doing this so that both of us could be happy and have relationships and friends and to trust each other… But what you’re doing isn’t that. Every time I talk to you, you have a new girlfriend.”

“Betts—” he breathed.

“No, let me finish. Juggie, I want you to be happy, okay?” she asked, cupping his face tenderly. “And I understand hormones, believe me, but… Having sex with literally every girl you see isn’t the answer. Do you understand that you hurt them too while saying you don’t care about them?”

“Betty,” he sighed again. “Baby, it’s not like that. They come to me at a party. They say they want to get over their exes or over their emotions or whatever. And I need to do the same. So, yes, I do have sex with a different girl every week, but they also know it’s sex and nothing else.”

“Wouldn’t you like a real relationship?” the blonde frowned. “One with trust and love and future. I’m not saying it has to be with me, but at least with somebody who you care about… I know what you’re doing, Jug. You don’t want to hurt me. But believe me, I’d rather meet at Christmas with some awesome girl that you’re dating than see you unhappy and alone on the other side of the country where I can’t even hug you. We were friends first, that relationship is more important.”

“You’re the kindest person ever, you know that?”

Betty smiled sadly. “I’ve been told.”

Jughead planted a soft kiss onto her cheek. “Can I still sleep here?”

“Sure. Just as a friend, though. So, don’t touch,” she whispered, kissing his jaw before turning around again. Jug nuzzled his nose into her hair, keeping his arms wrapped around her. “That’s really not what I just said,” Betty giggled, feeling his smile grow.
“It’s what I had in mind.”

#

Five weeks later, Betty was face timing the casting director and filmmakers of “Rainey”, the new Disney movie that was going to be ready in about three to five years. After the first videotape, she had gone to LA two times, and know as she had to do the Junior SATs, she couldn’t fly out, so she was video calling them instead.

“Okay, that’s great, but… Could you play this scene still a little happier?” one of the men asked with a kind smile, everybody else in the table doing the same.

Betty made an unsure face, biting her lip with a smile.

“Imagine we gave you the role,” the other man said. “Imagine you got the role of Rainey. Act it from that happiness.”

Betty took a deep breath, not able to not smile at that. So, she did the small dialogue two more times, before being stopped again. “Alright, Betty. Listen. We’re not kidding.”

The girl raised her left eyebrow in question, confused. “Kidding about what?”

“You got the role.”

With just a millisecond, the girl’s emerald eyes went wide in shock. “Are you serious?”

“We’re serious,” the man smiled, waiting for her reaction.

“No way,” she breathed, tears starting to stream out of her face without a warning. “No way no way no way.” Betty’s hands covered her hands as she fell into a squatting position, knees weak suddenly. The filmmakers watched with warm smiles on their faces as she chuckled quietly while crying. “Thank you so much,” she cried.

“Thank you,” the woman chuckled. “Not only are you amazing in acting, singing and all related to it, but I think Rainey also gained some new facial expressions.”

Betty laughed at that in pure joy, pushing herself to stand up, trying to wipe her tears away, but still unable to stop the crying. “My eyebrows move a lot,” she said, making all of the people behind the table on the other side of the screen laugh.
“Betty, come and help me,” Alice called.

“I’m not ready!”

“I need your help.”

“You have your other two children today!” Betty called, earning a laugh from her sister and brother in the living room.

“We’re the guests!” Polly shouted back to her even when she did stand up to go and help their mother.

“Wrong house!”

Betty sighed, sliding her fingers over her pale cheek gently. She didn’t know how she was supposed to be acting tonight. Of course, Jughead had told her two weeks ago already that he was bringing his girlfriend for Christmas, but she still wasn’t ready to face her. Or well, face them together, really.

She had missed Jughead for the few months they hadn’t seen, so she was excited to see him and talk to him and hug him and all, but she was not ready to meet his girlfriend. She knew Sofia was sweet from what Jug had told her, but she also knew the boy seemed to be in love with her. And Betty was jealous, even though she would never even admit it to herself.

They were going to FP’s place for dinner, so at least it was going to be more of her home than Jughead’s girlfriend’s, which made her relax a little. She just had to act cool, and it really shouldn’t have been that hard for her.

But now that she was stood there in her tonight’s outfit—a black jumpsuit, thick white sweater pulled over it—not much makeup on, hair half up, she didn’t feel so great. Which meant she wanted to vomit, cry and hit somebody all at once. Fortunately, after a deep breath, she was able to exit her room.

“Wow, you’ve got style now,” Charles said, impressed by her outfit.

The blonde smiled a little. “Yep. Mom let me take some money from my funds, so I got myself a new wardrobe.”

“Nice,” Polly said too, smiling at her little sister as she came out from the kitchen. “You wanna lend me some of that money?”

Betty opened her mouth to agree, but Alice got to it before her. “No. It’s hers. If you want some, ask me.”

Both of the girls rolled their eyes at that, knowing very well Betty was going to have even more money once her Disney voice acting had ended too.

FP opened the door for the Coopers with a smile on his face, hugging everybody and shaking
Polly’s boyfriend, Peter’s hand. “Hey, honey. You feeling better?” he asked Betty when she slowly removed her boots, head spinning a little as she did so.

“I’m okay,” she lied. The truth was, she didn’t know if the nauseous feeling was from anxiety and worry or from her flu.

“You’re burning up,” he sighed when he finally got to hug her. “Does your mom know?”

“Yes. Now, where’s Jug?”

“In the living room.” Betty hung her coat up and observed FP, trying to read something out of his facial expressions. “She’s nice,” he said.

The blonde nodded slowly and followed him into the living room. Once they got there, she immediately saw her best friend standing there, his chestnut brown-haired girlfriend next to him, talking to Betty’s family. She was pretty; wearing glasses, hair loosely around her shoulders, looked about 19 or 20—Jughead’s age. And she looked sweet. So, the blonde really hoped she was just that, and also that she didn’t know anything about her.

“Hey, you,” Jughead smiled, suddenly in front of her. Betty grinned right back, wrapping her arms around his torso, and hugged him tightly. “Are you feeling better?” the boy whispered, pressing a kiss onto her forehead.

“Yeah, a bit.”

“You’re burning up,” he murmured, planting a soft kiss onto her cheek before pulling away.

The girl smiled, genuinely happy to see him. “I’m fine, Jug.” She arched her eyebrow at him, making the guy press his lips together as he turned around, leading Betty to his girlfriend. The two girls smiled at each other before he had even introduced them. “So, uh… Betts, this is Sofia, my girlfriend,” he added slowly. “And Sof, that’s Betty.”

“I’ve heard so much about you,” the brunette said with a smile.

“Yeah, me too.”

#

“Hey,” Jughead breathed, dropping himself down next to Betty on the couch. She was officially freed from the kitchen duty thanks to her fever and the headache.

“Hey,” the blonde smiled, playing her feet onto his lap.

The boy chuckled, starting to massage the balls of her feet gently, making Betty smile and close her eyes, enjoying it. “So…”

“Soo…” Betty smirked, popping her left eye open.

“How do you feel?” he asked carefully, not about her flu, but about her mind, trying to read something out of her face.

“She’s really nice, Jug,” she said calmly, a big smile on her face.

“Yeah?” the boy breathed in relief.

“Yeah. I really like her.” Betty opened her eyes and looked into his, trying to find the deep blue
color in the middle of them that she had fallen in love with. “And I really like seeing you happy.”

Even though the blonde hated to admit it to herself, she didn’t mind them kissing either. Sofia had pecked Jug’s lips shortly a few times, but Betty didn’t even feel jealous or sad anymore. She was growing up, out of her hormones and her childhood crush, into a woman. It was her last year in high school anyway, and she had to have fun too, enjoy life. Which was why she tried to find a boyfriend, but they usually just lasted for a few weeks. At least they gave her experience in kissing and teasing and—only Veronica knew about that one—having sex.

“You never tell me about your boyfriends, so…” Jug smirked, making the girl do the same, opening her eyes for him. “You have somebody?”

“I’ve had a few,” she said honestly, with a teasing tone.

“Oh yeah? Did they treat you okay?”

Betty rolled her eyes at that. “They were fine. It’s high school, it only lasts for some weeks or months and then there’s heartbreak and a new one the next day.”

“Just boys?” Jughead asked curiously.

“You see, now that’s what I talk to girls about,” she said. “Ronnie helps me with that, and I don’t need you to do that or it’d just be awkward.”

“Oh, so you have done something with a girl?” he teased.

“You would never know.” Betty cleared her voice quietly and threw her head back a bit.

“JUGHEAD’S HERE, GET HIM TO WORK!”

“Arsehole” he murmured once the others laughed either in the kitchen or the dining area and called him back to help them. Betty giggled at that and kicked his butt carefully when he got up. Before Jug went away, he squatted down next to the couch, touching Betty’s forehead for a moment. “But really, are you feeling better?”

“I’m probably not gonna eat too much,” she confessed with a small sad smile.

“Do you wanna take a pill?”

“I’m just gonna sweat and have chills. It’s fine Jug, go help them set the table.”

The boy sighed, leaning to kiss her forehead, and then got up, hand sliding over her hair before he walked back to the kitchen.

Betty hit Jug’s foot under the table, making the boy look up at her. “Ow.”

“You remember Archie?” she asked, pulling him out of the conversation with the others.

The beanie-wearing guy chuckled. “How could I ever forget Archie?”

Betty passed him her phone and he burst out laughing as he saw the picture on it. The girl grinned big, “I didn’t know he was the redhead who dated Veronica.”

“You just found out?” Jughead smirked, handing her the phone back.
“Yes. She’s like ‘oh, you probably deserve a picture and a name now’. Idiot,” she chuckled, texting her girl-best friend back.

“Who’s Archie?” Polly frowned, having heard their conversation.

“Our manager’s son,” Jughead said.

“Ohh, that Archie. The one who crushed on Betty.”

“Right,” Jughead chuckled. “The one who hanged with us during all the parties.”

Polly leaned towards Betty. “Well… He’s grown up. You might as well think about it.”

“Stop,” Betty protested. “He’s dating Veronica and besides, he’s not cute at all.”

“Right, because abs and muscles are not hot.”

“I don’t want hot.”

“Right, because the Johnny guy isn’t hot at all,” Charles murmured with a smirk.

“Will you shut up? I was talking to Jughead okay? Stay out of it.”

Her siblings chuckled from both sides of her but nodded mock-seriously. Once Betty had texted Veronica back and placed her phone on the table, screen touching the wooden material, Peter cleared his throat quietly. “Uh, guys, we’d have an announcement to make.”

Polly cringed at the formal use of words and just said it casually. “I’m pregnant.”

For a second, everyone seemed to get quiet, Charles’ jaw dropping open as Polly basically just waited for her mom’s reaction. And FP’s. The first one to say something though was Betty. “Oh shit,” she breathed, making her older sister smile. “Oh shit. You’re sure about that?”

“Yeah, positive.” Neither of them acknowledged the fact that the younger girl had asked her if she was sure about wanting to have babies already. So, Polly just answered to the question, both ways a ‘yes’ anyway.

Alice was in a total shock, but once her eyes met with Betty’s, she was able to get up and hug her older daughter too. They were going to have to talk about this later. At least both Polly and Peter, who was a few years older than her, looked happy. That was all that mattered.

Somehow, the topic from babies and pregnancy suddenly converted to college, which led to everybody eyeing Betty once FP asked her about colleges. He was like her father, but even he didn’t know the news yet. She had held it for exactly tonight. So, she swallowed down the juice and raised her left eyebrow a bit, facing the man who had grown her up. “I got accepted to NYU.”

(Jughead was proud as fuck, as was everybody else.)

# 17.2 #

“Okay, your turn,” Claudia told Betty with a grin on her face. “Which musical?”

Betty sighed, thinking about it. “Matilda?” she suggested. “Naughty,” she added in an English accent, making the others grin. The blonde let her head fall onto her nape, looking at Lola behind her who was sitting on the couch. “We can do it together.”
So many of the Broadway kids knew each other, so today some of them were hanging out, most of them already over 18. It was Betty, Lola (from ‘Matilda’), Claudia (from ‘School of rock’), Kevin (from ‘Matilda’) and Marta (from ‘Annie’). They were taking turns on singing the songs from their old musicals and gradually everyone would join in, the lyrics on Betty TV’s screen.

Once it started playing, Betty smiled, memories running through her head once again. “Jack and Jill, went up the hill. To fetch a pail of water, so they say. Their subsequent fall was inevitable. They never stood a chance; they were written that way. Innocent victims of their story.”

The front door opened during the last sentence, and Alice walked in, Jughead following her.

“Like Romeo and Juliet,” Betty sang, starting to grin big, but also looking extremely surprised as she got off the couch. “’Twas written in the stars before they even met. That love and fate, and a touch of stupidity. Would rob them of their hope of living happily. The endings are often a little bit gory,” she sang, walking towards them slowly, doing weird moves. Once she did get there, both her best friend and her mom were laughing as she finally threw her arms around Jughead’s neck and hugged him tightly. Lola continued the singing, everybody smiling at the reunion.

“I wonder why they didn't just change their story? We're told we have to do what we're told but surely. Sometimes you have to be a little bit naughty.”

Both of the girls shrugged their shoulders during the last three words, and Betty let go of Jughead, joining her friend in the singing again. Jughead grinned, watching all of them there on the couch in the living room, and went to hug them as well while the two girls were dancing ridiculously, sometimes adding some of the moves they remembered.

And when the song was over, Betty hugged him all over again. “I missed you. I didn’t know you were coming.”

“Yeah, that’s because it was a surprise,” the boy said, booping her nose for a moment. “My turn,” he smiled at Kevin. Everyone cheered at that, while Alice just chuckled and rolled her eyes, looking at them.

“You kids got something to eat?”

“Everyone just ate a whole pizza, Mrs. C, don’t worry,” Claudia smirked, pointing at the empty carton boxes.

“Mom?” Betty asked. “I’m going out later. We’re going to the park, maybe we’ll see some of our friends.”

“Sure, just be home before 11.”

“Yeah, okay,” Betty smiled and then turned to Jughead. “You coming with us?” The park they were planning to go to, was a place where the Broadway kids always hung out. New or old, young or already grownups, they had all been kids on Broadway and most of them knew each other. Of course, there were other people too in the park and on the playgrounds, but it was kind of their place.

“F’course. That’s why I’m here, right?”

“I have no idea,” Betty reminded him.

“Right,” he chuckled, scratching the back of his neck for a moment. “I needed to see my dad. And also seeing you wasn’t a bad option.” He kissed her forehead, hand sliding over her hair.
"Hey Jug?" Lola asked. "How did you stretch the beanie to grow with your head?"

Betty and Jughead fell a little behind from the others and they gave them some privacy, knowing they needed it just to catch up with each other.

"So… Why are you really here?" Betty questioned, looking up at the guy.

Jughead sighed, hitting a small rock with his foot as they entered the huge park and kept walking towards their normal meetup place. "I just need a break."

"From what? School?"

"That too… But also, I have a feeling like I just need to be alone sometimes you know."

"What do you mean? Everything okay with Sofia?" Betty asked, frowning worriedly.

"I don’t know," Jughead murmured, hands buried deep into his pockets. "I feel like we never talk anymore."

"Well, why won’t you talk to her about that?"

"I did. But she said everything’s fine. We live together, but we both have a fucking lot of work to do for school and she’s trying to finish her bachelors with a few months, so she’s either asleep or studying."

Betty rolled her eyes at him. Sofia just ended her third year in college, Jug his second, and now the girl was trying to get through the fourth year with a few months which Betty took nothing else but inspiring. "Jug, you’re being stupid. She wants to get through college fast and if she has the possibilities to do the whole next year in one summer, then that’s amazing."

"I know," he breathed. "It just doesn’t feel right anymore," he murmured.

"You’re out of the honeymoon phase," Betty stated. "Now you have to try the real world."

"How do you know about this that much, again?" Jughead smirked.

"I read books," the girl said with a proud smile. "Just do something special for her, Jug. I’m sure she won’t study for one night if you take her out or make her have a movie night with you. Whichever you or she would like more."

"I’d love just chilling, but when we’re at home, she’d still get her thoughts on school."

"Right. Then take her out for dinner or movies or if she’s not that kind of girl, something else."

"That’s the problem. You see, I’m not sure anymore. We’ve never really had normal dates since we were in the ‘honeymoon phase’ as you say it. Just sex."

"Okay. I do not need to know that," Betty said teasingly.

"Help me?" Jughead asked.

"How?"

"Which kind of girl she seems to be?"
“Juggie, you’ve been dating for 10 months, living together for 4. How do you still not know that?”

“I know you,” he breathed. “Movies on the couch, eating some takeout, cuddling. If needed to go out: flowers, movies, walking in the cold, hot chocolate. Or theater. Always theater.”

Betty smiled at that proudly. “Why don’t you try the second one for her? No girl can resist that.”

“You can’t resist that,” he said with an adorable voice and added, “She’s not that kind of girl.”

“I don’t care which kind of girl she is; you need to buy flowers.”

Jughead laughed at that, and without either of them noticing, took her hand into his. Once they did notice when they reached the bunch of kids, they let go immediately, ignoring each other’s eyes for a while.

#

“Hey,” a woman approached the seven teenagers/grownups on the grass, lying or sitting down, playing cards and eating junk food.

All the seven heads turned to look at her and smiled kindly. “Hi?”

“Are you all… On Broadway?”

“We’ve all been on Broadway,” Jeremy said. “Gradually auditioning, but overalls everyone’s just spattered around theatres until we get bigger parts.”

“Look, my daughter just got accepted and I was told that if I wanted to know something about what’s life like for the kids in there, I should come here and just ask everybody… So, if it’s not too weird—”

“Don’t worry, many parents do that,” Betty said, her back resting against Jughead’s stomach as she was sitting between his legs, his arms wrapped around her, sharing one pair of cards.

The others nodded with the blonde, which made the young mother smiled and breathe out in relief.

“Were the days long?”

“It depends on the age,” Claudia answered. “I’ve only done one role, and I was 11. It was ‘School of Rock’, so we all had big parts, but it wasn’t like I was the only one on the stage. And the rehearsals were fun. Made some friends,” she grinned, hitting Jughead’s foot all of them chuckling at that.

“What role did your daughter get?”

“Amanda on ‘Matilda’. They’re bringing it back.”

Betty started beaming at that. “Who’s the director?”

“Matt Thompson…?”

“This is going to be awesome,” she breathed and looked at Lola. “La, let’s try to get the discounted tickets, pleaseee.”

“Off the point, Betts,” Jughead murmured.

“Right,” the blonde said, turning back to face the mom who was now smiling. “‘Matilda’ is
amazing. Me, her, and one another girl shared the part when we were kids. The whole class and actually all the kids on the stage have to work really hard and have to know what it means to work. But if she enjoys dancing and singing, it’s going to be easy. The friends will come with a second and the next thing you know, she’s gonna be begging to hang out with them after the shows and rehearsals too.”

“It’s not that hard,” Lola said. “I would never give up the opportunity to perform again like we did back then. “When you’re off the stage, just a backup half of the days, I remember loving playing with everybody. And once you’re on stage, it is just an amazing feeling.”

“The truth is…” Jughead started, making the others look at him now, “They’re not too hard on the kids. Sometimes, yeah, you get said you did something wrong, but it’s a whole bunch of experiences I would never change for everything in the world… They play games with you, backstage, which make you get better at singing, and you have to write down your choreography and everything, but it’s all really fun.”

“And, it’s easier for the parents because once the kid gets home, they fall straight into bed,” Kevin piped in. In the end, the mother was content about letting her daughter be on Broadway.

“Where are you going?” Jug asked when Betty got up from his arms and slid her phone into her back pocket.

“I just need to take care of something.” The girl jogged towards some kids on one of the benches on the playground, two of the older ones bullying the younger girl. “Hey!” she called, making all the three of them look at her with big eyes. “What are you doing?” she asked them.

“We’re just having fun,” the boy said, about 12 years old.

“How is this having fun? Would you like if someone did that to you?” she asked, looking at the pack of chips spilled into the sand, and sighed. “Where are your parents?”

“At home,” the two said, the smaller girl they were bullying staring at the chips as well with a huge frown on her face.

“Are you all siblings?”

“No.”

“Where are your parents?” Betty asked the smaller girl, with a soft voice now.

“Yeah, Sandra, where are your parents?” the oldest girl asked mockingly.

“Shut up,” the girl, Sandra, said madly. The two older ones just walked off, and Betty sighed, squatting down in front of the small girl who was sitting on the bench, her brown eyes staring into Betty’s grumpily.

“What’s your name?”

“I’m not supposed to talk to strangers,” she said quietly.

“I just want to know if you’re okay. And if you’re here alone.”

“I was with them,” she said.
“Why? They’re not really nice friends if they push you and destroy your food.”

“They’re not my friends… Their parents foster me.”

Betty sighed deeply. This situation was worse than she thought. “Are the parents nice? Do they know the kids bully you?”

“They’re better than the last ones,” the girl murmured. “No.”

“How old are you?”

Sandra gulped “8.”

“I’m Betty,” the blonde said. “Do you think your parents could come if we called them?”

“Maybe.”

“Do you have the phone number?”

“Yeah,” she whispered.

“Can we try and call them?” The girl looked unsure, but Betty could tell she had a phone with her. “Are you hungry?” she asked instead, a frown on her face once again.

“Kind of… It was the first money I’ve gotten in a month,” Sandra murmured, looking at the chips in the sand again.

“You like Doritos?”

The brown eyes got big and hopeful. “Yeah,” she said.

Betty nodded, getting up. “I have a pack. Stay here.” The blonde jogged back to her friends and things, all of them starting to question her, but she just grabbed the pack of Doritos from Jughead’s bag with a promise that she’d buy him new ones later. Once she got back to the girl, she opened the pack and ate them happily until Betty called her foster parents and explained the situation.

The dad came in half an hour and she could immediately tell he was a good parent at least, hugging the girl and letting her tell him what happened. After they thanked Betty, and the dad gave her some change for the new chips, they left.

Betty felt like she just saved a life, which wasn’t true, but it felt amazing.
The Disney film took longer than anybody had thought. It was a bit longer than the others, so instead of the 3-year animating time, it took 4.5. In February, the news of a new Disney film and the cast were released, which already made Betty more famous than she had ever been. Now, with the premiere around the corner, she was getting a bit anxious. She was just about to turn 21, but it wasn’t legal for her to be drinking just yet, which made the situation really weird.

When Betty got back to her apartment, the first thing she did was changing her jeans for her sweatpants and take off the bra. Once that was done, she placed her laptop onto the small kitchen island—which separated the kitchen from the living room—and logged into her office program. Once that was done, she opened the right document and then just left it there, waiting for her, while she made herself late lunch. Just as she the sandwich maker beeped and she had taken out the two cheese sandwiches, she got a phone call.

“Hey Jug,” she said smiled tiredly, placing the phone on the cabinet so that she could see him.

“Hey,” the boy sighed. “Look, I should start driving in an hour to get to the apartment at the right time, but I really don’t know what to pack. Help me?” he pleaded.

Betty laughed while placing the tomatoes on the salad between her sandwiches and grabbing a knife to put some mayo between them, too. “Clothes?”

“Yes. I did know to take my toothbrush,” he joked.

Betty giggled quietly, pressing her sandwiches together. “The premiere clothing, a couple of t-shirts, jeans. I don’t know, a coat if it’s cold, sweatpants for the apartment we’re getting. Pajamas. Oh, and your beanie,” she grinned.

Jughead laughed quietly. “Thanks, you’re a lifesaver.”

Betty smiled, transporting him on her screen and her food and juice to the island, seating herself down on one of the two stools there.

“You feeling okay?” Jug asked. “Nervous?”

“Overwhelmed, kind of,” Betty said, taking a sip from her juice. “I just got home. The classes and homework are killing me. At least the professors let me study online for this week. I need to send five poems in by tomorrow night and I only have written three.”

Jughead chuckled softly. “Yeah.” He had graduated from college one and a half years ago, and after that started giving kids—and now grownups, too—drum classes and guitar classes. He was a licensed teacher now, having taken these courses online during the last year of college. “And what about the premiere?”

“It’s gonna be a big one,” Betty said with a small smile on her face. “Getting photographed by paparazzi, seeing the movie before it’s in movie theaters all over the world, crying at it, and then later drinking which I have to get a license for.”

Jughead laughed at her. “So, shortly, you’re excited?”
“I’m a Disney princess, Jug. That is every little girl’s dream, especially the ones who knew every word to every song.”

“I can’t wait to hear your voice there,” he smiled softly

“Yeah?” the girl smiled excitedly.

“Mh-hmm,” Jughead said. “But you have to come here, and I’ll tell you tonight.”

Betty huffed at that. “More like tomorrow morning. It’s 12 hours away, Juggie. Come on.”

“Well, what’s the time there? 4, right? You’ll get here at 1 am.”

“4 am,” Betty corrected with an eye roll. She hated when he cut the time zones, saying she was traveling back to the past. Even though she did find it kind of cute that he was trying to take her mind off the 6-hour flight.

#

“Hey,” Jughead chuckled when Betty’s arms wrapped themselves around his torso and she hid her face into the crook of his neck.

“Hi,” the girl murmured, half-asleep.

Jug hugged her back for a few minutes, after what he pressed a kiss onto her temple, “Come on, my car is just a few minutes away.”

“Carry me,” she joked lamely, really hoping he would.

“Right,” Jughead chuckled as she unwrapped her arms from around himself. “Come on,” the man said, grabbing her suitcase and sliding his other hand into his pocket so that she could hold onto his arm if she wanted to. She did, gripping his biceps gently as they moved towards his car, the air cold even here.

When they reached the black vehicle, he took her backpack as well and put it all into the trunk. When he got onto the driver’s seat, she was almost asleep already, so he helped her put the seatbelt on.

“Juggie?” she murmured.

“Yeah?”

“Polly’s taking June with her, I need to go buy her something in the morning. Please wake me up.”

“I will,” he chuckled.

Betty had come tonight because she still had to meet some of the Disney crew members tomorrow. Her mom, sister, niece, brother, and his girlfriend, were coming on Thursday, as was FP. And Veronica and Archie who she had attended college with, too. She had originally been able to invite 10 people, but she wondered she wouldn’t need to call his dad since they hadn’t talked for about a year now. She didn’t talk with her little brothers much either, which was sad, but they had never even spent a night at the same home, so she guessed she could never get that bond with them.

#

“So, uh…” Jughead started when Betty was eating the pancakes and bacon he had made for the
breakfast. The girl raised her left eyebrow at him. “The news…”

“Oh, right,” she smiled. “It’s good news, right?”

“Yeah,” Jug chuckled. “I’m uh… I’m coming back to New York.”

Betty’s mouth fell open at that, but a few seconds later she was smiling hugely. “Really?” she beamed.

“Yeah,” Jug said softly and laughed when the blonde embraced him immediately. “I wondered it was about time I started auditioning again.”

Betty smiled so big as she kissed his cheek, and then pulled away, sitting back down next to him. “You’re coming to New York. When?”

Jughead chuckled. “Relax, Betts. I’m looking for apartments and I should be able to move there in about January if I get one. Just gotta stop the lessons with my students, that’s all.”

Betty kept smiling, excited that she was going to have her best friend back close to her. “And auditioning? For Broadway or for theaters?”

“Both, probably. I mean, it depends on where I get callbacks and which roles I prefer in the end.” A smirk appeared on Jughead’s face as he added, “Dad’s musical was accepted. Last time, we were lucky.”

Betty giggled at the wink he gave her and nodded. “I know. And this time he’s the director too… I’m for sure going to audition.”

“Me too,” Jug chuckled. “Let’s just not fuck up this time, okay?”

Both of them grinned at the memory of themselves back in high school, kissing in front of a whole bunch of people and messing it up. “Deal,” Betty agreed. “Now, eat faster, we need to go shopping.”

“Betts, she’s coming here because her auntie’s a Disney princess. Why do you need a gift?”

“No just for her. I need to get shoes.”

“Shoes?” Jughead questioned, raising his eyebrows.

“I have a dress. There’s a store where I can get free heels for the event tomorrow. And as it’s your lucky day, it could take the whole day,” she teased with a smile.

“As long as we get something to eat every two hours,” Jug winked.

“Deal,” Betty giggled.

#

“Jug?” Betty called out.

“Yeah? You ready?”

“Bring me the shoes, please!”

Jug grinned but pushed himself off the stool in the kitchen, where he was having his pre-show
snack at. “How can one person never get full nor go fat?” Polly asked at that, making the others chuckle too. Jug winked at her, grabbing the shoebox they had bought yesterday.

“How can one person never get full nor go fat?” Polly asked at that, making the others chuckle too. Jug winked at her, grabbing the shoebox they had bought yesterday.

“Betts, can I come in?” he asked through the door, knocking on it. All the girls had gotten ready there and, untraditionally, Betty took the longest.

“Yes.”

He pushed the door open carefully and abruptly stopped on his spot, eyes stroking over her skin and the dress. It was a white snow-ball kind of dress. The material could have been transparent if there weren’t so many layers of it, and he felt like is somebody touched it, it was all going to fall off. She was amazingly gorgeous, and he needed to make sure she knew that.

“God,” he breathed. “You’re stunning. Wow.”

Betty smiled shyly at the reaction, the hairstyle and makeup her prep team had done brought out her emerald eyes, which made his blue ones even softer as she stared into them. “I uh… Can you help me put the shoes on?” Betty asked quietly. “I feel like if I squat, the dress is going to broke.”

Jughead nodded slowly and gave her a smile before he walked to the bed, where she had been sleeping in the previous night, and squatted down in front of her. Betty giggled quietly when his hands touched her foot, carefully placing it in the high heel. “I feel like Cinderella,” she murmured. Jug looked up at her with a smile when he had gotten the first strap around her leg and took the next heel.

“You’re even more gorgeous than Cinderella,” he said quietly, and as her cheeks turned pink, he smiled a little and looked back down, putting the second shoe on her as well.

When he was done, he smiled up at her once again, having felt her eyes on him the entire time. Betty loved the fact that he was wearing suspenders with his dark blue dress shirt and black suit pants. So, once he did look up, her fingers gently touched her jaw before tilting it upwards and leaning a bit down, catching his lips in hers.

They kissed for a few seconds, amazed by how amazing it was. So much better than back when they were teenagers. This time it felt right. And with Jughead moving to New York in about three months, it could have actually happened. They both smiled at each other lovingly, looking excited for their future, and got up.

They held hands the whole night, kissed a couple of times when there were just the two of them, but slept in separate beds as they had been doing the previous night. They never mentioned the kiss again for a few months, until January…
Betty was finally back from the 3-month tour. Ever since the world premiere, there were also premieres in other countries. So, she went to Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and finally, Italy, until she flew back to New York. She had loved the exploring, with some famous cast-mates who had by now converted to be her friends, but she was happy to be home. She was happy to be in her small apartment, a cup of tea between her cold hands, sitting on the couch under her blanket, watching old movies.

It was January 11th. The girl was sad she had missed thanksgiving and Christmas with her family, but she had also seen the world and grown a lot during the trip. As she was 21 now, she had yet to buy her first wine bottle from the grocery store. Because in Europe the age had been 18, in UK 16 with adult supervision. She hadn’t bought anything, but she had gone out clubbing and partying with others. Only that, when she woke up hangover next to a strange man, she regretted it.

The doorbell rang. Betty smiled, stopping her movie, and got up, leaving the cup on the coffee table. She swung the door open with a big smile on her face and the next second she knew, she was in Jughead’s arms, lifted up from the ground as he practically swirled her around.

“God, I missed you,” he groaned once the girl had been placed back onto her feet, Jughead’s lips on her face everywhere.

“I missed you too,” she chuckled, cupping his face to look right into his eyes and keep his lips away. “You’re gonna stay here tonight?”

“If you’ll have me…”

Betty grinned, letting go of him, and locked the door. “Food?” she asked.

“Nah,” the man said, grabbing her hand and pulling her to the couch again. “What are you watching?”

“Casablanca.”

Jug nodded as he sat down, letting the girl snuggle up into his side, his arm wrapped around her securely as he wrapped both of them up in the blanket. “You know this is the only time I’ve heard you say no to food. Like ever.”

“I just want to be with you tonight,” he said, nuzzling his nose into her hair. “I missed you so much you have no idea. Three months is too long.”

“Can we go to your place tomorrow?” the girl smiled up at him. “You know… Let me check it out.”

“It’s a studio apartment and there’s nothing to see,” he smirked.

“Nuh-uh, I’m checking it out,” she said, leaning up to kiss his cheek. She turned the movie back on and comfortably laid her head on Jug’s chest, not even realizing the guy’s eyes were on her the whole time, even as his hand stroked her hair.

“Betts?” Jughead asked quietly in a while, making the girl look up questioningly. “I uh… What are
you doing on Saturday?"

“Studying. I’ve got my exams coming in a week y’know.”

“Can I… take you out somewhere?”

Her eyebrows raised themselves on their own as her heart started thumping in her chest. “Uh, like on a date?”

“Yeah. If you’re okay with that.”

Betty started beaming, hugging him back so tightly that he wasn’t able to breathe anymore. “Yes. Yes. Yessssss.”

Jughead laughed at that, kissing her nose. “Alright. I’ll pick you up at 7?”

“You already have something planned?” Betty teased. “What if I said no?”

“Well, I would’ve stayed at home and pitied myself.”

The blonde rolled her eyes. “So stupid.” But even as she did so, she kept smiling as Jughead kissed her forehead happily and then looked back at the movie, hoping she’d do the same. “Does that date include hot chocolate?” the girl asked instead, making him smirk as his eyes moved back onto her and winked.

Betty beamed at that and placed her head back onto his chest, pulling him over to lie down on the couch instead of sitting. Jughead laughed but positioned himself normally before wrapping his arms back around the blonde and looking at how she nuzzled her face into his chest instead, apparently done watching the movie. He sighed contently, resting his cheek against the top of her head, his hand stroking her hair. He kept doing it way after the girl’s breathing had slowed down and deepened. Once the movie had finally ended, he somehow managed to carry her to bed, and instead of going back into the living room, snuggled with her under the covers.

#

“Juggie,” Betty murmured in her sleep when the boy was kissing her all over her face. His lips formed a smile against her jaw, and he pulled away, hoping her eyes would open finally. “Stop, I’m sleeping,” she said instead, taking the opportunity to move her face into the crook of his neck.

“I’m bored,” the guy said, trying to see her face, moving his head in order to do so. “I’ve been up for an hour. I’m hungry and I need to use the bathroom.”

“Then go.”

“No, I don’t want you to wake up alone,” he whispered.

“I’ve been waking up alone my whole life, I’ll be fine,” she murmured, popping her eyes open and pulling her head back, smiling at him tiredly. Jughead chuckled at her pillow face but thought it was incredibly cute. “Go make us pancakes or something,” she said quietly, staring at his slightly parted lips, not daring to take the first move.

“You wanna kiss me?” he teased.

Betty smiled, placing her head onto his biceps where it had previously been, and closing her eyes. Jug sniggered as he tilted her chin upwards and leaned his lips against hers. Betty’s hand moved to
the back of his neck in a few seconds as she pulled away, letting both of them breathe before diving in again.

At one point, he pulled her on top of himself, making the girl yelp and then giggle into his mouth, her knees on both sides of his torso, sinking into the mattress. Soon, they had pulled away, grinning at each other, Betty still sitting on top of him. Neither of them could explain the happiness they felt at that moment nor could they wait for their date that night.

“You know I’ve been dreaming to make out with you in your bed since you were 8,” Jughead said, smiling while his hands caressed the soft skin on her sides under her shirt.

“Mm, I got that feeling a bit later,” she smirked. “You know like 4 years later.”

Jughead nodded with a mock seriousness but break out grinning when he observed their position. “You’re gonna stay there?”

“Maybe,” she teased, leaning down to kiss him again. Jug groaned into the kiss, flipping her off, onto the bed again. The girl giggled, pulling away, and accepted him pulling her into his arms again.

“Stay like this the whole day?” Jughead murmured, really hoping she’d agree, and he didn’t have to get out of the bed.

“I’d like that, but didn’t you have to go to the bathroom and make pancakes?” Betty asked with a smile.

“Nuh-uh, the pancakes were your idea,” he replied absentmindedly, more interested in the strand of blond hair he was twirling around between his index and middle finger.

Betty looked at him with her big green eyes, practically making a puppy face that caught his attention. He eyed her adorable face for a moment before groaning and untangling their feet, sliding his onto the cold floor. The girl smiled victoriously as he kissed her and then sat up. “Betts, you have like a pair of my sweatpants or something?” he asked, pretty sure she did.

“The lowest drawer,” she said.

Jug smiled and stood up in his boxers and t-shirt, leaving his jeans there on the ground where he had thrown them the last night, and walked to the dresser, pulling out the grey pair. Betty tried to hold back her laugh while also trying not to blush when she saw his huge boner through his underwear, but she couldn’t help the pink cheeks and a grin on her face once his eyes moved onto her face.

“Something funny?” he smirked, knowing exactly what it was.

The girl shook her head before glancing at his hips once more, now in the sweatpants, and turning herself onto her tummy, laughing into the pillow his head had been on. Jug shook his head to himself but left her to be, going to the bathroom instead.

#

After about twenty minutes of the man cooking, Betty walked out of her room, still in her old light-pink flannel pajama pants that she had gotten for Christmas 3 years ago and the blue t-shirt that was Jug’s once, warm socks on her feet which weren’t there before, because Jughead knew how much she hated sleeping with socks, removing them for her last night. “Hey baby,” he said naturally, earning a cute smile from Betty as she wrapped her arms around his waist from the back,
her cheek pressed into his shoulder, looking over it.

“Is the food ready?”

Jug chuckled. “Like ten of them. We need to make twice as much more.”

“Juggie, I’ll eat like two or three,” she protested with a smile.

“I’ll make you eat more.”

“I’m gonna puke.”

“I’ll make you eat more after that, too.”

Both of them giggled and Jughead turned his head, making the girl lean up on her tiptoes and kiss him. Once that was done and Jug looked back at the stove with a ridiculously big smile on his face, Betty let go, sighing as she walked to the fridge.

“You need some help?” she asked, taking out a bottle full of milk.

“Nope. I do have a question though. Who the hell puts their milk into a glass bottle?” he asked, pointing at it in her hands.

Betty smiled while pouring herself a glass. “Me, because my fridge isn’t big enough to have space for a gallon of it?”

“Oh god, seriously? I feel bad. I need to get you a bigger fridge.”

“Shut up,” Betty giggled, taking a gulp from her glass after she had placed the bottle back into the cold temperature. “Did you want coffee?” she asked suddenly, face wrinkling up with a smile.

“Yes, I did, but since you don’t have it in any cabinets, I’d like an explanation as well.”

“Well, there’s a café right across the street, so I haven’t bothered buying it nor the press; I just get one there before I go to school.”

“Oh, Betts, you need food education. Every normal household has either the machine or the presser or the grinder or at least just coffee in the cabinet so that you could make it into your cup.”

“You’re really dramatic, you know that?” the blonde grinned.

“I may be dramatic, but you’re uneducated.”

“That’s why I go to school,” she teased with a cheeky smile.

#

Because Jughead insisted on picking the blonde up before their date, he needed to leave in the afternoon. He had made the metro trip to his apartment, changed his clothes, brushed his teeth twice, eaten, brushed them again, then ridden back to Betty’s place. Since his small apartment was in Brooklyn while Betty’s was in Manhattan, the metro ride lasted for 45 minutes. It was kind of annoying, but he had his earbuds and a sketchbook which allowed him to listen to music and draw out people on the metro as cartoon characters.

Once he reached Betty’s apartment building, he rang the bell and was buzzed inside in some seconds. When he was back on the 5th floor he had been at this morning, a goofy smile appeared
on his face, clenching the flowers in his hand. He hadn’t gone on dates after Sofia broke up with him two years ago. And he had never given a girl flowers on their first date. On any dates, really. Only on Valentine’s day and their birthday. This was new.

And so was the feeling when Betty opened the door, looking beautiful and grinning at him when he handed her the pink roses. The girl kissed him after that and quickly got the flowers a vase and found a place where she’d see them, before locking the door behind them.

“So…” Betty started when they got outside, Jughead intertwining their cold fingers, their free hands buried deep into their pockets. “Where are we going?”

“Your dream date is movies and pizza Betts, I needed to think of something more original,” he joked.

“So, what are we doing?” the girl smiled, her nose buried into her scarf as she observed the different people walking past them on the crowded streets. The Christmas lights were still up, and she wished they would stay that way. It made everything so much more magical.

“You’ll see,” he smiled.

Betty’s mouth fell open once they reached the skating ring. “Juggie,” she smiled in shock. “How the hell can you get tickets for Saturday night?”

“I have my ways,” he winked, taking their place in the line of people who had all bought their tickets before. The ice rink was packed, but once they had gotten the skates and put their things into the small locker, they climbed into it, still holding hands as they tried to get used to the different ground under their feet. It was damn slippery.

“Come on,” Betty smiled, pulling him with her.

“I don’t remember how, let me remind myself,” Jughead said back, trying to get his feet to work.

Betty smirked, turning to face him, taking his other hand as well. “Just relax,” she said softly but yelped the next second when Jughead pulled her into his arms safely, away from the teenager who was about to crash into Betty with his huge speed.

“Sorry!” the boy yelled afterward but kept doing the same thing with other people.

Both Betty and Jughead grinned, looking at each other, one down, the other one up, before he leaned down and kissed her, having stopped moving.

They kept doing that for a few times and kept stealing kisses all through the date until they were too cold to keep on moving, and went to get their boots back. After the skating, Jug led them to a small café in central park where they got hot chocolate, Betty’s favorite.

And after that when they went back to the city, they stopped at a packed pizza place where they somehow were able to get the table thanks to the staff recognizing Betty. She needed to take pictures with a few kids who were eating there with their families, and then with a few grownups who had recognized both of them from Broadway.

Their hands were cold, and their faces were red from the snow falling outside, so they enjoyed the warm pizza more than they should have, and after eating it, made their way back to Betty’s apartment.
And then—even though their night had been amazing, and it had been the best date either of them had ever had—came their favorite part of the night. Neither of them were the kind of people to have sex on their first dates, but they had waited for it damn long, for years, so they wondered it was okay.

(It was better than okay.)

# 21.2 #

With a month, they had started a relationship. They hadn’t told their families just yet but promised each other that they would soon. Jughead had his own drawer for clothes in Betty’s apartment for when he stayed over and so did she in his. And he purchased a coffee press for her, which only made things more official.

They both had auditioned for the musical FP had written and had gotten callbacks, which meant they were only a few auditions away from getting the roles. He invented a story of Romeo and Juliet, but a version for teenagers, with drugs, phones, etc., but with the same storyline. Everybody was so excited to do the project, and it was going to be the first time FP was the director, too.

“Mhh, Juggie,” Betty giggled into Jughead’s mouth when the doorbell rang for the second time already. The man sighed, pulling away, but leaving his hands onto her waist, holding her close to himself in the bed. “Can you go and get it?”

“And say what? What if it’s one of your old boyfriends? What will I say… Sorry, she’s taken now?” he teased, making her chuckle again as his mouth pressed against hers once again.

Once there was an aggressive knocking against the door and the doorbell started ringing every second, the two frowned at each other and both slid out of the bed from opposite sides. Jug pulled on his shirt as he was already in some sweatpants and went to open the door while Betty pulled his blue sweatshirt onto her bra and the short pajama pants, already wearing warm socks as she always did in the mornings.

Jughead met an annoyed-looking Polly with Juniper standing next to her, obviously having fun with the doorbell, keeping ringing it even as the door opened. Jug’s eyes widened a little, knowing they were supposed to meet their parents and Betty’s siblings with their families for dinner in a few days to tell them about the two of them dating. Polly being here kind of messed everything up, seeing that Jughead had spent his night here.

“Hey,” the guy said with a surprised voice.

The almost 25-year-old woman’s face suddenly got confused as well. “Jughead?”

“Uncle Juggie!” June smiled now and stopped ringing the bell as she hugged his leg.

“Hey kid,” Jug said, picking her up onto his lap. “What’s up?”

“Why you here?” the 3.5-year-old girl asked curiously, smile still on her face.

“Hey, June,” Betty smiled, kissing her cheek before looking at Polly with an apologizing face. “Sorry, Polls, I kind of forgot I was supposed to babysit today, so I wondered if I didn’t open the door the person would go away…”

Polly grinned at that, handing her a bag. “I’m really getting late now, so thank you. I’ll pick her up at 7.”
“Okay,” Betty said.

And with another confused look, the older girl went, but turned back in a second, looking at her sister. “Do you want to tell me something?”

“Uh, no… Why?” Betty asked, Jughead looking at the two of them with an amused face.

“Okay… Not my place,” the blonde murmured with a smirk and winked at her little sister before hurrying to the elevator, and Betty closed the door. The girl sighed deeply as Jughead chuckled.

“Sorry, Jug. I really forgot I had to babysit today.” She finished college a week ago, which meant she had a lot of free time at the moment while she was trying to find a job in theatres or get a role on Broadway.

“It’s fine,” the guy smiled. “Hey, you hungry?” he asked the little girl, who nodded eagerly. “You like coffee?” he asked, carrying her into the kitchen, Betty following.

“No,” the preschooler giggled. “I’m 3.”

“Did mommy make you breakfast?” Betty asked when Jug placed the kid to sit on the table.

“Yes,” she smiled, now looking at Betty as Jughead started getting out ingredients to make waffles.

“Hmm, then why are you still hungry?” Betty asked, tickling her, making the little girl giggle.

“Hungry,” she said simply.

“How about waffles?” Jughead asked.

“Yessss!”

“Jug,” Betty chuckled. “She has eaten.”

“Please waffles,” the girl said. “Auntie Betty hungry too.”

The blonde sighed, ruffling her chestnut-colored hair. “Fine. But you can’t tell your mommy, okay?”

“Okay,” she beamed. Both of the grownups chuckled.

“You wanna go watch cartoons until then?” She nodded, so Betty lifted her onto the ground and eyed the outdoor clothes. “Let’s get you undressed at first.”

Here you go,” Jughead smiled in half an hour, placing a cup of fresh hot coffee in front of Betty, having added the milk she liked with it and two sugars as always.

“Thank you,” the girl smiled and leaned up to give him a kiss, forgetting about the little girl next to her who looked at them weirdly afterward but didn’t say anything. “Want syrup?” Betty asked Juniper, who nodded eagerly and drowned her waffle in it before Betty stopped her, taking it away. “You’re supposed to have a waffle with syrup not syrup with a waffle,” she reminded her, making the girl giggle as she started eating with her hands.

Jughead laughed at Betty’s face who knew she had to clean her up later and also make sure Polly didn’t know about the extra breakfast.
A few days later, Betty and Jughead were headed from his apartment to Manhattan, close to her apartment, where they were supposed to have breakfast with their families. They were running late since they had missed the right metro, but as they stepped off the next one, they still didn’t hurry. Charles was going to be late anyway, since his girlfriend, Olivia, was pregnant and had the period right now when she vomited all the time.

So, as they got out of the metro, they kept their hands clasped together, and walked towards the small café they loved, slowly, enjoying the cold February weather and the snow falling down from the sky. Jughead’s hands were freezing, but he would never admit it since he had given Betty his gloves when he noticed she wasn’t wearing any. And it wasn’t like he wanted to let go of her hand either. So, he suffered in silence, a smile on his face when the girl leaned up to kiss his cheek once more.

They talked about all kinds of stuff, sharing their thoughts about people who passed them or the places they passed. Until the conversation moved on ‘Game of Thrones’ which Betty had not seen—a fact that Jughead was mad of. “How can my best friend not have seen ‘Game of Thrones’? I mean… It ended years ago and it’s a classic, Betts.”

“No, it is not,” the girl chuckled. “No, it is not,” the girl chuckled. And it’s too long. I’ll never get it watched if I try.”

“Yes, you will. We’ll watch one or two episodes every night and you’ll have it watched with like two months.”

Betty sighed deeply. “I’d rather watch movies with you.”

“Well, I rather we watched that. Believe me, you’ll be obsessed,” Jug winked, opening the door to the café for her.

“How do you know that? I mean it’s a bunch of elves having sword fights in order to either die or get a new kingdom to possess, right?”

“You wound me, woman,” he said in mock seriousness as they reached the table, all their family there already.

“24 minutes. New record,” Polly mentioned with a smirk.

“It’s morning, okay?” Betty asked as she finished hugging her mom and leaned down to hug her brother from behind him, even though he was grinning, obviously knowing something was up already. “And we missed the metro.”

“You missed the metro?” Olivia asked at that. “Like together?”

Jughead smirked, lifting his eyebrows at his girlfriend, wordlessly telling her it was her fault and she had to answer now. Betty just cleared her throat quietly while handing him her coat so that he would hang it up with his. “Yeah. I stayed at his last night.”

“Hm, interestingly he stayed at yours three days ago. You have a graphic for that, or…?” Polly asked.

Now Betty started smirking too as the two sat down and she kissed FP’s cheek quickly. “No, we just hang out at nights.”

At that, almost everybody looked at her questioningly, which made Jughead chuckle. “You just
keep making it worse and worse, you know that? Shut up.”

“Mind telling us what’s up?” Polly grilled.

“Sure, let us order first,” Jug said, noticing the others didn’t have foods either. “Did you guys do that already?”

“10 minutes ago,” FP smirked, not able to wait to tell them his news either.

While the others kept talking about whatever they had before, Jug and Betty checked the menus and when Jug couldn’t choose if he wanted a full burger meal or an actual breakfast, he sighed and leaned down to rest his chin on Betty’s shoulder. The girl smiled, turning her head a little so that the corners of their mouths were just half an inch apart, and their cheeks were touching.

“What are you getting?” Jughead asked quietly. Betty looked back at the menu and pointed at a breakfast bowl which was yogurt, muesli and different fruit including strawberries and kiwi. The boy sighed and raised his hand, pointing at the eggs and toast with bacon and a small part of salad. “Mind getting that instead?” he murmured.

Betty giggled. “Yes, actually.” She was back to looking at him, her eyes having to focus really close since his blue eyes were only a few inches away. “Why?”

“I want a burger, but I want that too,” he complained.

“Well then, get both.” The guy’s eyebrows raised questioningly, but Betty just smiled. “Come on, you get 5 different breakfasts every day anyway, it would just save some time to get two at the same time, no?”

Jug smirked and moved his head a little so that he was kissing her lips. Betty pushed him away just a second later, feeling the eyes on them as she groaned and hid her face into her hands.

“Well,” Charles smirked, waiting for his explanation.

Jug’s lips formed a lazy half-smirk as he looked at the guy who had been his older brother his whole life. “We’re dating,” he said casually and then looked back at Betty who was clearly not happy with him, her face still in her hands, head fallen back onto her nape. “Can I get my kiss now?”

“No,” the girl laughed and dropped her hands to look at him, not able to keep the smile away from her face.

“Oh wow,” Alice breathed. “I thought you weren’t… What?” she asked in confusion, not understanding anything at the moment. The two had hidden their feelings for the whole time since their first kiss at that audition. Betty had been so normal with Jughead’s girlfriends and Jughead had done the same with her boyfriends. How did they still have feelings for each other and how had they managed to hide them, she didn’t understand.

“We’re dating,” Betty breathed, agreeing with Jughead’s earlier confession. “Have been for a bit over a month now. We wanted to tell you today, but not like this,” she said, hitting Jughead’s arm with the back of her hand.

“Ow,” the boy murmured with a smirk, his hand falling onto her jean-covered thigh that was brushing against his.

“I knew it,” Polly smiled hugely.
“I knew it would happen someday,” Charles agreed, nodding.

“Oh please, you told me to sleep with at least 6 guys from the football team before deciding if I still liked him.

“And obviously you did do that,” her older brother smirked. “And you still did like him.”

“How can you…” FP spoke up, frowning. “You had different girlfriends and boyfriends for years. Did you just like lose your feelings? How is it possible to be nice with a person who is dating the person you love?”

“Exactly,” Alice said.

Fortunately, at that moment the waitress came with their food and took Betty and Jughead’s orders too. So, the two had a few minutes to actually mentally prepare themselves for the confusing questions.

#

After about an hour of sitting, talking, and eating, everybody was happy for the two, especially when they had described their thoughts from the earlier years and how friendship meant more for the two of them than a relationship. FP wondered he could finally tell everybody the news.

“So, uh… I have some news too.”

June, who was sitting on his lap, looked up at the man who she called her grandpa, even though she knew he was not. Betty raised her eyebrows next to him as well while everybody else’s eyes moved onto him as well, Jughead eating his second burger.

“You should get the calls in a few days, but…” he started, looking at Betty and Jughead. “You both got the part.”

Betty’s eyes filled with tears immediately, knowing what he was talking about, while Jughead had to swallow his bite before letting his jaw drop. “Um… Are you sure, dad?” he asked doubtfully. “I got the part?”

“Hey, takes a real Romeo to play one, right?” Charles teased.

# 21.3 #

Betty could relax now that she was positive she had a job. No more googling the internet, no more trying to get a job in different theaters without an acting degree, no more trying to score practices as an English teacher in smaller schools.

Jughead’s stress had melted, too. He had a job, he could keep paying for the apartment, even if most of the time he spent at Betty’s place. After a few weeks of chemistry reads and casting the other people for the musical, they had started to wake up together, morning after morning, making each other breakfast, a cup of coffee, or cuddling way too long until they had to get some from small not too crowded cafes.

Today was one of those mornings. Betty had no desire whatsoever that she should’ve gotten up from the bed, which was why she was tangled up in Jughead’s arms and legs, resting against his bare warm body only fifteen minutes before they were supposed to leave home.

“Baby,” Jughead murmured into the blond hair, “We have to get up. It’s late.”
“It’s cold outside this bed,” Betty yawned into his chest. “I don’t want to get out.”

“We’re already going to be late,” Jughead said, tilting her head up with his index finger, eyes on her pouting lips immediately. “Dad might kill us.”

“But I don’t want to get out.”

Jug leaned down, taking her lips in his for a moment and kissed her wrinkled up nose afterward. “What do you wanna wear today? I’ll get you the clothes.”

The blonde sighed, “You don’t know what to get.”

“Tell me,” Jug murmured, sliding his feet off the bed and carefully making sure Betty stayed under the covers as he sat up and pulled on the boxers he wore yesterday. When he walked to the closet, Betty described the items and he located them quickly, only grinning when his girlfriend mentioned the black bra on the other side of the room.

By the time he was dressed, and he placed Betty’s clothes on the bed, both of them were grinning, the blonde girl sitting up on the bed, their duvet pulled up to her chest, held up by her armpits. Jug dropped her bra onto her lap with a wink and a kiss, rushing into the kitchen to make both of them coffee to go.

#

“You’re late,” was the first thing Cheryl Blossom, a young woman who was about Jughead’s age and the producer of this musical, said.

“Sorry, we got lost,” Jughead lied while Betty apologized with a few quiet ‘sorry’-s.

The redhead hummed, unimpressed, while FP raised his eyebrows at the two. “Really? You’ve been having classes in here for more than 15 years now.”

“Well…” Betty started, trying to think of something, but as Jughead could see she was going to be bad at lying as always, he was the one who continued.

“We slept in.”

“Lying,” FP nodded.

“Fine. We sort of slept in,” Jughead said, biting back his smile, loving the morning memories.

“Oh,” the young redhead woman said. “So, you are a couple.”

Jughead was already annoyed by her, but Betty didn’t let him be rude on the first day of actual rehearsals. “Yeah,” she said softly instead and gave Jughead a look before going to sit down in one of the empty chairs.

“Alright, now that everybody is here,” a young man, probably about in his thirties, started. “Let’s get to know each other. I’m Reggie Mantle, your musical director.”

“You can call me FP. I’m your director and playwright, so if you have any questions or suggestions about anything, feel free to say so.”

“Cheryl Blossom,” the redhead started with a big smile now. “Producer.”

“I’m Toni Topaz,” another young woman said, giving everybody a welcoming smile.
“Choreograph. There are going to be more of us in practices.” Betty liked the way she had colored her hair pinkish purple.

“No coffee in rehearsals,” Cheryl said with a cold tone when Jughead handed Betty her cup back that he had held while she put her hair up in a bun. Kevin, their friend who Betty knew from Matilda, jumped at that a bit. He was holding a cup of coffee, too.

“Actually, Blossom,” Jughead started. “It is allowed. And if you want everybody to live in the same room with you for the next months, you should accept it.”

“Jug,” Betty sighed.

“I see, Jones. Still mad at me because of high school?”

“Still mad at me for turning you down?” Jug hit back with a smirk, making the girl cough in annoyance. Everybody in the room raised their eyebrows, not having had an idea they went to the same class. Jughead looked a bit younger, somehow. Even Betty had no idea he had known the redhead from earlier.

“No thank you.”

“Alright,” FP cut them up by clearing his throat. “Let’s keep on going, shall we?”

“Kevin Keller. I play Mercutio. Or Merc as we’re calling him.”

“My name’s Fangs Fogarty. I play Benvolio. In this version, just Ben.”

“I’m Betty Cooper. Juliet, if it wasn’t a joke.”

Jughead smirked at his girlfriend but continued anyway. “Jughead Jones. I play Romeo.”

“No thank you.”

“I see, Jones. Still mad at me because of high school?”

“Still mad at me for turning you down?” Jug hit back with a smirk, making the girl cough in annoyance. Everybody in the room raised their eyebrows, not having had an idea they went to the same class. Jughead looked a bit younger, somehow. Even Betty had no idea he had known the redhead from earlier.

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“I’m Betty Cooper. Juliet, if it wasn’t a joke.”

Jughead smirked at his girlfriend but continued anyway. “Jughead Jones. I play Romeo.”

“Of course, you do,” Cheryl said under her breath.

“Babe,” Toni murmured quietly, but loudly enough to make Betty hear it. The blonde raised her left eyebrow but kept quiet as well.

“I’m Felix Featherhead. And I’m playing Paris.”

“Isn’t Paris supposed to be… You know…” Fangs started.

“Young?” Felix smirked, making everybody nod. The older man chuckled. “I thought so too.”

“Paris is over 50,” FP commented. “We’ll talk about the modernization of the musical later. But, yes, he is a business partner of Julia’s father in this one. He wants to marry the girl cause he’s a pervert. Julia’s dad agrees, just because of the money he can’t lose.”

“Oh god.”

“Okay. Betty, Jug. You’re up. Show everybody the number you learned with the last few weeks,” FP said.

This musical was so different from the classical version of Romeo and Juliet. It was, indeed, modernized, which meant phones, drugs, easier names, and no soldier costumes. They were playing 17-year-olds on the stage. In the musical, the Romeo and Juliet book did exist and both
Betty and Jughead had to read from it over the phone to each other, etc. But the story was still the same. Only that the two teenagers kept saying they will make a better ending. They didn’t.

Betty and Jughead went to the middle of the small gym/dance hall and took their squatting positions as the others who had just ended their number went to sit down and watch them. Betty quietly sang Jughead the D major, but when the guy was supposed to start, he was still staring at her.

“What?” the blonde asked.

“C sharp?”

“You seriously can’t get a C sharp with this?”

“Hey, not everyone has the musical gift you do.”

The girl rolled her eyes, singing the note for him. He began singing the love ballad just a moment later, leaving everybody to shut up as they acted their way through it as they were supposed to, and in the end were about to kiss as scripted. They pulled away once they had stayed half an inch away from each other’s lips, and thought the time was right for the pounding voice that was supposed to come in the play.

Everybody clapped and FP gave them an approving nod, having lectured them not kissing in the practices until they were obligated to.

#

“Betts?” Jug whispered, looking down at the girl who had closed her eyes on his chest, listening to his heartbeat. The girl hummed questioningly, not bothering to open her eyes anymore. “You gonna fall asleep here? Wanna go to bed?”

“No,” the girl whispered.

The corners of Jughead’s mouth tumbled in amusement. “Not gonna fall asleep or you don’t wanna go to bed?”

“Just stay,” she breathed, melting into his body. “Just stay.”

“I’m not going to go anywhere; I just think you might be more comfortable in bed?”

“It’s perfect right here,” Betty whispered. “Just stay.”

“Alright.” He pressed a kiss onto her forehead, pulling her closer to his body as he nuzzled his nose into her blonde hair and kept his eyes on the screen, where they were supposed to be watching a play of Romeo and Juliet. It had been made in some small country, in a small theatre, but it was where his dad had gotten the inspiration. It was quite interesting, actually. Betty had just been tired after going to the gym in the basement of this building. Jug thought she was crazy for keeping her workouts up, but she wouldn’t let him say anything bad about it.

The blonde had fallen asleep, head on his chest, a while ago, but she was still moving and talking, which meant she was half-conscious. Jughead kept watching the play until he was sure she was definitely asleep, which was when he shut the TV off and carried Betty to bed, only going back to the living room for a moment to shut off the light. Once that was done, he climbed back into the bed that had slowly become theirs and snuggled up to his girlfriend.
“I love you, baby,” he whispered. It wasn’t anything unusual. They had always told each other they loved one another, but… It was different this time. He loved her as the love of his life and not as his best friend. It felt so weird but so incredibly good. It felt so fucking amazing that he couldn’t put words to it.

“I love you too,” Betty smiled into his shirt, popping her left eye open for a moment to look at him.

The guy smirked, booping her nose. “You were asleep,” he accused softly.

“Your heart started beating too fast,” she joked, making the boy chuckle as he leaned down to kiss her.

“I do love you,” he whispered once her head was on his biceps and he was on his side, the girl safely tucked into his body.

“I know. I do too,” she sighed contently, falling back asleep at once.

# 21.4 #

“You two coming out tonight?” Brian, a guy who liked to be called Sweet Pea, asked.

Betty arched her eyebrows on Jughead’s lap. “Out where?”

“Out clubbing,” Cheryl piped in, a big smile on her face. “Unless you’re too—”

“Where?” Jughead cut her off, not wanting to agree only because the redheaded girl manipulated him again. Over the months, everybody had become amazing friends, and the younger ones hung out a lot, off the stage. Now that the show had been running for over three months already and it was the beginning of September, they weren’t able to go and hang out outside in parks anymore, so their usual destination was a restaurant or a club.

“Clubbing,” Toni said. “We’re going to the one we were at a week ago. You know…” she smirked, making Betty do the same. The number of inner jokes they had was crazy.

The blonde turned her head, looking at Jughead questioningly. Jug sighed. “Let’s stay in,” he said pleadingly, pressing his lower lip over his upper one like Betty had always done when she wanted to get something from him.

“That’s not—” The blonde got cut off by Jughead starting to kiss her all over her face, making her grin as her nose wrinkled up. “Alright. Alright,” she agreed, cupping his face to push it away. “We won’t come this time, guys.”

“Jones is an idiot. You can still come, cousin,” Cheryl said, rolling her eyes at the beanie-wearing guy. That’s another strange detail that had happened over the months. Betty found out she and Cheryl were related. Apparently, their dads were cousins. While Cheryl had known that, Betty hadn’t. So, the blonde had had to explain for hours why she didn’t talk to her dad. The list was a long one.

“You know, Cheryl, if your hair wasn’t red, I’d say you were a blonde. You know… No brains,” Jughead said.

Betty pursed her lips with a smirk and the others laughed as she looked at her boyfriend who suddenly looked surprised, understanding she was blonde, too.

“You got to admit, you can be pretty stupid sometimes,” Jughead joked, earning a slap onto his
shoulder. “Kidding,” he whispered, pecking her lips and moving his to rest on her temple in order to whisper into her hair. “I need something to get back at Cheryl with.”

“I heard that,” the redhead said, flipping her hair over her shoulder as she went outside the room to organize things.

“Baby, pass me the popcorn, please,” Jug said quietly. Betty raised her eyebrows, looking down at his empty bowl and then at his happy face. “Oops.”

“Juggie,” the girl whined.

“What? I got distracted. The movie’s great and I have the world’s most beautiful girl in my arms,” he whispered, pressing a kiss onto her soft cheek.

Betty sighed, not able to tell him ‘no’ if he kept doing that. She passed him the full bowl of popcorn from the other side of the couch and observed his happy face as he started eating it, looking back at the screen. “You’re really enjoying this, aren’t you?” the girl smirked.

Jug’s eyes moved onto her relaxed and happy face. “I am,” he said softly, brushing his thumb over her jaw. “I’m really happy here, with you. I really really really love you.”

Betty giggled at that. “I really really really love you, too.”

Jughead kissed her softly, and when she pulled away and popped a few popcorins into her mouth, he smiled, pressing another kiss onto her forehead. “I’m happy you made me move here. I can’t imagine being without you anymore.”

“Hm, that’s like really cheesy, but really sweet at the same time,” Betty said.

“I’m serious, though. I love you,” he vowed, staring into her incredibly green and loving eyes. “Thank you for making me move in.”

The blonde smiled and leaned up to kiss him all over again. Jughead had moved into her apartment almost a month ago. One day Betty asked him if he’d like to do that, since they were at her place all the time anyway, and it was close to work. So, a few days later, they had gotten a truck and moved his boxes of books and everything that was his, into her apartment. Some of them were still in the hallway, but neither of them had the time nor desire to put them away any time soon. It felt fresh and new.

The kiss went on longer and longer until the movie was forgotten, and Betty was straddling Jughead’s lap. They were both in their short pajama pants and t-shirts, which meant it was easy for Jughead to slide his warm palms against her bare sides and pick her up when he stood.

Betty smiled into the kiss, wrapping her legs around his waist, and kept kissing him when he carried her to their bed. Jughead lowered her onto the mattress carefully, his knees buried into it on both sides of her, making sure she would stay on the place. Betty had no objections about that; only a small sigh of happiness escaped her mouth when she pulled his shirt over his head and slid her hands over his abs.

“Enjoying that?” Jug whispered against her neck, making the girl moan loudly as the hot hair hit her pulse point that he had already sucked a hickey into.

“Mhmm,” Betty said shortly, breathing getting cut off when his lips started making a trail of kisses
down her throat. “Shirt,” Betty breathed, and arched her back, letting the guy pull it over her head and throw it to the other side of the room.

Both of them had the habit of getting handsy during sex, which meant that it didn’t matter if they kissed each other’s bodies or just touched, they would always make sure to stay close enough to express their emotions without words. Betty always tried to pull his sweaty body flush against hers, even if it wasn’t the most comfortable position. If she couldn’t do that, she would have pushed her nails under his skin on his back or shoulders, which wouldn’t be very healthy.

So, even when Jughead kissed her breasts like right now, she pulled his head against her chest, making the guy chuckle into her skin, knowing without looking that her eyes were pressed together and she was desiring to hurt herself somehow to release the amazing feeling that made her hurt inside.

“Just in a minute, baby,” he promised quietly, leaning upwards to kiss her swollen pink lips as he slid down her panties. His boxers were far gone by that point.

When he lowered himself inside her, she suddenly flipped them over, leaving both of them grinning as he slid even further inside her, her on top meaning they had more room for that. Betty started to move, sliding on and off every few seconds until her muscles were hurting and Jughead started helping, gripping her hips so that she could go faster.

And afterward, when they were tangled up in each other under the duvet, the window opened to get fresh air inside, neither of them thought about the empty bottle of pills in the trash that Betty was supposed to take every morning. They just simply forgot.

(When they did remember a few days later, it was already too late.)

#

Betty was panicking for weeks after she found out that she hadn’t taken the pregnancy pills for a few days when they had had a lot of sex as usual. Jughead was calm, trying to ensure her that everything was okay and even if it wasn’t, he wouldn’t make her keep the baby if she didn’t want to. The girl was just freaking out about her young age. It wasn’t like she wouldn’t have wanted babies with him, ever.

The symptoms never came. So, after two more months when they were headed to Riverdale, the town their parents grew up in, on the Thanksgiving break, having gotten a few days free from the theater, the blonde had started to calm down. Everything was fine. She had taken multiple tests which all came out negative, she had no symptoms. Which did bother her was the feeling in her heart. She wanted babies with him. But she didn’t want them yet. And she had slowly started to wonder what Jughead thought about that idea. He must have known, she wondered, he had always known how much she loved children. He did too.

“Jug?” Betty asked carefully, making the guy look at her for a moment before turning his head to face the road again. “Do you ever want babies?”

The boy smiled softly. “Still nervous?”

“No,” Betty sighed deeply. “Just answer me.”

“Did you get a positive test?” he kept teasing. “You know if you keep buying those, we’ll lose all our money.”

“Juggie,” she whined, hitting his arm.
“Alright,” he laughed, placing his hand on her jean covered thigh. “I think so,” he said. “Not many, just one or two is fine. And like when I actually get old enough to dream about it.”

“Okay,” Betty sighed in relief, smiling out of her window.

Jug squeezed her thigh. “And you?”

“Yeah.”

“For sure?”

“For sure.”
“Babyyyy,” Jughead whined, shaking Betty’s sleeping body.

“No,” the blonde murmured back.

“Your mom said the dinner was ready. I’m hungry. And I am not going without you.”

“Why not? Just let me sleep,” the woman murmured into the pillow.

Jug sighed, brushing the blond hair out of her face and kissed her forehead tenderly. “Please? I can’t face all of them alone. It’s the Christmas Eve dinner, Betts,” he spoke softly.

Betty opened her eyes slowly, observing his pleading face. “Your sister’s a grownup, Jug,” she stated, caressing his face with her two fingers. “Why are you still nervous around her?”

“I haven’t seen her in years, baby. I haven’t talked to her for a long time. I don’t know who she is anymore. And I’m not even sure if she wants to be here right now, so please come with me and let’s go and eat.”

Betty sighed. “You know for my best friend you’re incredibly annoying.” She still accepted his kiss without protesting and sat up once he stood. “My clothes might need some ironing now…” she murmured, looking down at her wrinkly blouse and the jeans she had fallen asleep with.

“You’re beautiful,” Jughead said, taking both of her hands and helping her to stand up. The two of them smiled at each other and before they knew it, they were both in bed, Betty on top of Jughead, knees sinking into the mattress as always.

They both grinned when Jughead pushed her hair out of the way and leaned in to kiss each other again. The door opened suddenly, which neither of them were expecting. Fortunately, they still had all the clothes on.

“Guys—” Charles stopped when Betty rolled off of Jughead, sitting up while unconsciously wiping her mouth, not realizing the makeup had been smudged from the nap she had taken anyway. June was giggling on his lap while Charles had his eyebrows lifted up. “That’s what you do when you’re supposed to be having dinner? Come on you two, we’re all hungry.”

“I uh… Need to fix my makeup,” Betty said.

“Just leave it, who cares,” Charles breathed. “I’m hungry.”

“We’ll be there in a sec,” Jug promised.

“You better hurry up. There are amazing snacks right now,” he warned, knowing that always got Jughead moving. Once the older guy had left with their niece, leaving the door open behind him on purpose, Jug looked back at Betty who was sitting up, giggling.

“Got my own little snack right here,” he murmured, pulling her back to lie down, taking her smiling mouth into his.
The two finally emerged from the room fifteen minutes later when Betty had taken off her makeup and added just as little amount of it as before. (There might have been a strong make-out session as well.) As they had been warned, the others hadn’t been waiting for them anymore. Everyone was seated around the table.

“Well, finally,” FP said.

“You were kissing,” the 6-year-old June teased with a smile on her face.

“Yes, we were,” Betty said back with the same kind of voice, sitting down next to the little girl.

“Can I sit here?” Jug asked, already lifting June up and onto his lap, taking the seat that was meant for him anyway. He kissed her cheek softly before taking the clean for and eating one of her potatoes.

“Uncle Juggie, that’s mine,” she giggled.

“Hm, well I already ate it.”

Betty was listening to her sister but grinning at the two of them at the same time. “When you two have babies, I’ll make sure to have sex with somebody in front of them,” Polly said quietly so that her daughter wouldn’t hear her.

“We were kissing,” Betty chuckled.

“In the bed,” Charles nodded.

“On top of him,” Polly stated.

The girl’s face turned a bit pinker at that as she accepted the bowl of salad from Jughead. The guy just grinned at that, eyeing the small hickey on Betty’s neck that he was quite proud of.

#

Jellybean left faster than Jughead would have thought and the two Jones men were really sad when she went. Jug tried not to show it, excusing himself to go to the bathroom for a moment. Betty kissed FP’s cheek and looked at her mom for a moment before going after Jughead who was just in her old room, sitting on the bed, head in his hands.

“Hey, you,” Betty said softly, closing the door behind her quietly. She walked to the bed, climbing on it, and kneeled behind him, wrapped her arms around his shoulders and leaned over the left one to kiss his neck, cheeks in his hands which made it unable to kiss them. “Everything’s okay, Jug. She didn’t feel comfortable here. She still loves you.”

“She’s not my sister,” he whispered.

Betty frowned at that worriedly. “What? Are you mad at her?”

“No,” Jug said, raising his head to face Betty. “I haven’t talked to her regularly since that night when we saw them in Ohio. I don’t know who she is. Your siblings are more of my siblings than she ever will be. And it hurts to admit it, even to myself, but it’s true.”

“But Jug,” Betty sighed, raising her hand to cup his right cheek softly. “Is that really that bad? You know us. You know my brother and sister. Their kids take you like you’re their uncle, which you are… You don’t know your mom and sister, but you’ll never be able to restore the relationship
with them entirely. So, is it really that bad being part of another family?”

Jughead smiled at that sadly, tears in his eyes. “I just don’t want to give up on her. Not yet,” he sighed.

“Then don’t. Keep talking to her, get to know her again. But if she isn’t comfortable, let her choose… Jug, she has another family as well. She has your mom and her new man. She’s used to them; she grew up with them. Just like you grew up with us.”

“More like you grew up with us,” Jughead smiled, referring to her youngest age.

Betty showed him her tongue which only made him laugh and her smile when he kissed her forehead. “I love you; you know that?” the boy whispered.

“I know.”

#

“Hey. You okay?” Polly asked Jughead when the two emerged from Betty’s old room again.

“Yeah,” the guy sighed. “I’m fine.”

They sat down on the couch and Bruce, Charles and Emma’s 2-year-old son climbed onto Jughead’s lap immediately, ready to fall asleep there. “Hey little dude, you wanna go to bed?” he asked quietly.

The boy shook his head, closing his eyes. “So then what are you doing?” Jughead smirked.

“Sleepy.”

Nobody really understood, but Jug looked at the two parents for permission to take him to bed. They only smiled at him, which was an obvious yes and a thank you, and Polly managed to get Juniper to agree to go to bed as well if Jughead was going to invent one of his funny stories for her.

So, Jug was on the baby duty, and Betty’s heart ached, seeing how amazing he was with them. And as she started thinking about it, Wicked the musical was going to end in a few months, her role of Elphaba was going to end, and she didn’t have any new movies coming up, only the occasional travel to L.A to record Rainey 2. They had enough money, Jughead’s musical was going to start in January.

That was the first night she thought what it would be like to be a mom.

#

“Juggie?” Betty asked a few days later, back at their apartment, the guestroom behind the wall of their bedroom feeling suddenly too empty for the blonde not to question it.

“Hm?” Jug murmured, fondling her hair softly while her body was pressed against his, both of them warm and cuddly tonight.

“What would you say if I stopped taking the pills…”

Jug’s hand froze at that as his head turned, his eyes meeting Betty’s green ones. Once he saw she wasn’t kidding, he started stroking her blond hair again. “Okay.”

“What?” the girl frowned.
“If you want to stop taking the pills… I’m okay with it.”

Betty stared at him in surprise, before she started smiling excitedly. “Really?”

Jug chuckled, already liking the way she rolled herself on top of him. “You want a baby,” he stated.

“Do you?”

“I mean we need to talk about it,” he whispered, pulling her in for a kiss. “But yes. I do.”

The best part was making the baby. Once the vomiting and nausea came, Betty started hating herself immediately. They had talked it all through in December, they had made plans, started saving more money, etc., but right now, kneeling in front of a toilet, puking out everything that she had eaten that day, wasn’t ideal.

It was early July; Betty was 10 weeks pregnant. Jughead kept working in the theater, two shows every day, but since they lived in the center of the city—really close to all the theaters—he could still come home in the meantime, even if he did have to keep the makeup and hair on most of the time. Betty mostly stayed at home—the plan of being a substitute English teacher faded away after her third try, the teenagers just freaking out over her Disney and Broadway roles. So, she had started writing a book. Having learned English at the university anyway, it didn’t need much effort. And she had a lot of words and feelings to write down.

“Done now?” Jughead asked softly, rubbing her back as she nodded. He helped her to stand up as the blonde closed the toilet lid and flushed, hoping all the gross and smelling evidence that she vomited would go away. Once she had brushed her teeth, Jug chuckled at her grumpy face when they headed back to bed. “It’ll be worth it in the end, y’know,” Jug said, flicking the table lamp off and letting the woman snuggle close to him.

“I know,” Betty breathed, resting her head onto his biceps. “It will be worth it.”

“After hearing the heartbeat, it’s all getting kind of real, huh?” Jug whispered into her hair, planting a soft kiss there.

“Yes. Very.”

“Hey, hon,” FP said, taking Betty into a long warm hug. “How are you feeling?”

“Nauseous,” she said but smiled at him when they pulled away. “I’m okay.”

“Are you sure?”


“By things you mean hormones?” the man smirked.

“Maybe…”

FP chuckled but followed her into the living room where Jug and Charles were at. “Hey, guys.”
“Hey dad,” Jug said while Charles gave him a smile and a wave.

“Betts, you okay?” her brother asked, looking at her pale face.

“I feel kind of sick…”

“See? Then why are you telling me you’re fine?” FP asked, looking at her worriedly.

“Jug, I’m gonna—” she started, trying to grab onto something, all the world spinning around in front of her eyes. Jug quickly got up as did Charles, all the three men grabbing onto her arms really quick and sitting her down. They kept quiet when Betty rested her head onto her hands, elbows on her thighs. If anybody knew how irritated she was going to be in a few seconds, it was them.

After a minute of staring onto the ground, finally getting her head to stop being dizzy, she slowly looked at all of them, who were intensely observing her. They looked a bit scared, which made her smile a little. “I’m not going to kill you. Thank you.”

Jughead breathed out in relief, kissing her cheek softly, and raised his arm around her shoulders. “You okay?”

“Yeah… It pisses me off that I could just die right now if I’d fall against something, but…”


“If I were you, I’d regret telling him that,” Charles grinned, FP laughing along while Jughead was totally in his own thoughts. He had been annoyingly overprotective ever since they started trying to have a baby, not knowing if Betty was already pregnant or not, which was many months ago. Now that Betty was 16 weeks already, it was just getting worse and worse.

“You wanna go lie down?” Jughead asked worriedly. “Or like… Throw up?”

“I’m fine, Jug,” Betty sighed patiently, looking like she was trying to hold her new hormones back. “I’ll just get some food.”

“Are you sure?”

“I said I’m fine, Jughead,” she said madly, moving her shoulder so that his hand would fall off of it, and went to the kitchen, face back to being pink.

“I swear to god if she faints in there…” The beanie-wearing guy’s head moved to look at Betty’s brother. “Chaz, can you go there?”

“I don’t want to die if she has a knife,” the man chuckled, raising his hands up.

FP rolled his eyes when Jughead got up and pushed the boy back to sit down. “I’ll make sure she’s fine.” The 57-year-old said, following Betty to the kitchen. The funny thing was that FP still looked almost exactly like he did when he was 40. (Except for the gray hair.) “Hey,” he said softly, seeing Betty just leaning against a counter, eyes closed, the back of her head resting against a shelf.

“I don’t want to die if she has a knife,” the man chuckled, raising his hands up.

Betty raised her eyebrows at that, opening her eyes, but made them roll a minute after, seeing FP wasn’t moving, leaning against the table, arms crossed, and looking at her. “Hon, you need to calm down,” he said.
Betty sighed deeply. “I can’t,” she said. “And it pisses me off.”

“It’s normal… You’re 16 weeks, it’s perfectly normal.”

“No, it’s not. He’s so fucking overprotective and it’s driving me crazy.”

“He’s just worried. He wants to make sure you’re safe.”

“I’m scared too,” Betty said, tears pricking in her eyes. “He doesn’t understand that. He can go to work and he can do normal stuff, and I can’t. I can’t even go outside, because I’m scared of fucking falling and hitting my head or just something happening to the baby.”

FP sighed, going closer to her and taking her into a hug as before. He rubbed her back softly while Betty sniffled, crying quietly. She was really emotional, but it also wasn’t anything new for FP.

“Maybe you should tell him that?” he asked when they pulled away and Betty was wiping her eyes.

“Yeah…”

The man gulped, looking at how tired she really was. “Baby it’s fine. It’s going to be okay soon, I promise.”

“How do you know?” she sighed, raising her emerald eyes to meet his brown ones.

“I’ve watched two pregnant women being just like you are right now. Multiply your attitude by 10 and you’ll get your mom’s. Multiply hers by 20 and you’ll get Gladys’.” Betty smiled sadly.

“When Alice was pregnant with your brother, she had no idea what to do and she was 21. The times were different then, you were 21, you were as immature as you and Jughead were at the age of 15. Now you educate yourselves on the internet, but then it wasn’t possible… So, she was a child herself when she got pregnant.”

“Yeah but… You were both in Riverdale at that time, no? She had her parents.”

“Yes, but she was also overly emotional. And your dad was with other women at that time, which made her lonely and sad.”

“She had you…”

He nodded with a sad smile. “I was just a friend. She needed someone to… You know, be the father.”

“You were so much more than just a friend,” Betty promised, and wanted to hug him again, but stopped at the last minute, squeezing her eyes shut and grabbing the edge of the kitchen cabinet, holding herself up.

“Come on, let’s get you to bed.”

“No, but you—”

“I’m fine. You can go to sleep for a bit; we’ll still be here later.”

Betty sighed but nodded, and once they went back to the living room her gestured for Jughead to get up, nodding towards the bedroom. The guy did just that, leaving FP and Charles into the living room, playing the console games the two still had from when they were teenagers.

“Can you give me your shirt?” Betty asked quietly, back to him as she pulled off hers. Jug gulped,
looking at how she removed her bra and covered up her breasts before turning around. Betty raised her eyebrows with a small smile, and Jughead smiled back, pulling the shirt off of his head. He tossed the grey tee to his girlfriend, and the blonde smiled, pulling it over her head. Jug saw a glimpse of her nipples, which made him smile again. The blonde just rolled her eyes, pulling off her jeans, and climbed into the bed.

“You want me to join you?” Jughead asked softly. The girl nodded, which made him really happy inside, knowing very well why she had tried to be away from him for a few days now. He took off his jeans and socks as well before climbing under the sheets, and smiled when she climbed against him, resting her cheek onto his biceps.

“Juggie?” she asked quietly, not opening her eyes.

“Yeah?”

“I’m sorry.”

Jug smiled softly. “Why? I know I’m really annoying, but I’m really scared something will happen to you. And the baby.”

“So am I,” Betty whispered, earning a confused look from Jughead. The girl sighed, bringing her warm hand up to his face, caressing it gently. “I’m the one losing the balance all the time and vomiting once every hour. I’m scared about the baby too. I’ve never done this before and I don’t know what it’s supposed to feel like, even if my mom and sister say it’s normal… It’s new for me too, Jug. I just have these horrible hormones that won’t even let me think straight and I keep yelling at you for being worried… I’m sorry.”

“I love you so much, you know that, right?” Jughead whispered.

Betty smiled, new tears in her eyes, and dropped her hand as Jughead’s two thumbs wiped away her tears and his lips touched her forehead. “I love you too,” the blonde whispered.

Jug smiled softly and leaned down, kissing her lips for a few minutes until he felt she was too tired. “Get some sleep, okay? Wake me up if you run to the bathroom.”

“You always wake up anyways…”

#

Two weeks later, with Archie and Veronica on one side of them, and Kevin and Fangs on the other side of the couple, Jughead pulled the paper out of the envelope that Betty was holding. Toni and Cheryl were standing behind the couch, waiting for the right word as well. And just like that, as they were both staring at the empty blue paper he had pulled out, they were all grinning at it.

“It’s a boy,” Betty whispered excitedly. Veronica squealed at exactly the same time, hugging the blonde as tightly as she could in that position. Everybody just started hugging and gushing about a baby boy and how Archie was going to teach him football, and how they were going to get so many cute clothes. Jughead and Betty were actually the very last ones to hug each other. And when they pulled away, their lips connected in a powerful kiss, the others shutting up, thinking they maybe had to leave now.

But then Jughead took a step back, pulling Betty with him, and while still kissing, led them towards one of Veronica and Archie’s guestrooms. “Pull the sheets off later! It’s soundproof, be as loud as you need!”
Kevin and Fangs laughed at that, but Archie just rolled his eyes lovingly, knowing Veronica loved the fact that all the rooms were soundproofed and awesome to make music in. They had done that especially for Archie and the carrot couldn’t be happier about that.

“You’re such an overdramatic person,” Cheryl said to Veronica with a big grin. “If I didn’t have my TT, I’d try to score you.”

“Hey,” Archie protested, chuckling at the same time.

Two months later, at exactly 27 weeks pregnant, Betty felt huge. She was just entering the third trimester which was supposed to be harder than the previous one, but she was still feeling okay. Pressed there against Jughead’s body, in their room, under the warm covers, she was happy. The baby’s room one door down the hallway was amazing—soothing, adorable, and very humble.

That’s when Jughead started humming an old song, a huge grin on his face. Betty raised her eyebrows in surprise, looking up at him as he quietly sang “Marry you” by Bruno Mars. She started humming to it with a giggle and when they finished, they were both grinning at each other mischievously.

“Let’s do it,” Jughead whispered as if someone would’ve been able to hear them if he didn’t.


“Yes. You’ve never wanted a big wedding. You’d only do it for your mom and sister, maybe my dad, too… But I love you. And I want to do it now. Just the two of us. Please?”

Betty looked at him with big watery eyes. “You want to marry me?” Jughead nodded eagerly. “Tonight?”

“Yes,” he breathed.

And after making out for some minutes, both of them slid out of bed and got dressed in their jeans and Jughead’s sweatshirts, pulling on their boots and coats. It was only 6 pm, which meant that when they went out, it was dark outside, but the lights were already on. It had been snowing for a few days already (which was unusual for the beginning of November), and the moon and the stars in the sky made the night even more magical as the snow fell down from seemingly nowhere.

Their hands were clasped together excitedly, walking slowly, both peeking at Jug’s phone, trying to find out how to get married in NYC. They found the closest place they could get the license at and waited in the few-persons line. And when it was finally their turn, the workers smiled big, knowing who both of them were.

“Gentlemen,” Jughead greeted, paying the small amount of money to get the license that they had to sign. “We have a question… Is there possible to marry the same night when you get the license?”

The two older men looked at them curiously. “Are you two high?”

“We’re not,” Betty said with a smile. “We’re uh… We really want to get married. Like right now. We can’t wait for tomorrow.”

Jughead squeezed her hand reassuringly when her face fell as the two men shook their heads. “I’m Jughead,” Jug said. “Jones. Do you know who I am?”
Betty held her breath, also holding her laugh back. She loved when he used their names to get out of parking tickets, etc. “We do, sir, but—”

“I can get you tickets,” he mentioned. “Front row tickets for both of you and both of you can bring someone.” The two older men shared a look. “I have a small part on Broadway’s Hamilton. All we need is for you to write yesterday’s date on the paper and somehow get yesterday’s stamp.”

“How do we know you’re not bluffing.”

Jug sighed, pulling out his wallet, and handed both of them 50 dollars, making sure nobody was around. The two men were shocked. “I need your numbers. If I never call, you keep the dollars, if I do, you’ll give the, back and get the tickets to the front row which cost hundreds.”

The men nodded to each other and Betty started beaming when they somehow got the right date written on today’s stamp.

#

Just an hour later, Jughead pulled out the ring he had carried for months, getting down on one knee in the middle of Times Square, not caring about the paparazzi that were probably already around them. Betty cried when he told her all those beautiful things, and kissed him passionately, earning an applauding from the people who were surrounding them.

Another hour later, Betty was wearing both her wedding and her engagement ring, and a golden one was shining on Jughead’s finger as well. The night ended with ice skating and hot chocolate, before really really ending with a good amount of sex and cuddling.
On January 23rd, 2026, at exactly 6:38 am, Betty held her son the first time in her arms. The woman was hurting and crying, bleeding seemingly everywhere, but she had the most beautiful baby in her arms and the most supportive husband hugging both of them gently, so she was happy. It was the happiest day of their lives. Now, a year later, it seemed very unreal.

They had done it. The baby was still alive, they hadn’t dropped him even once, he was walking, he was happy, and he loved music. He wasn’t saying any words, but the doctor said not to worry yet, and to talk to him as much as possible, which they did. Even though he wasn’t saying words just yet, he was babbling and singing to the music like crazy and humming all the time.

“Jug,” Betty murmured tiredly, hearing the baby crying.

“Hm?”

“Go get your son.”

The man sighed, sliding his feet over the edge of the bed, and reluctantly opened his eyes. He smiled at Betty’s sleeping face softly and dragged his feet to the nursery. Jake was always screaming louder at nights than during the day, which was why now that he pushed the door open, the voice just cut Jughead’s ears.

He sighed, picking the baby up and kissed his forehead. “What’s the matter, bud?” he asked, sitting down in the rocking chair, wiping his son’s small tears, in the light of the small nightlight in the corner of the room. Once Jake had calmed down, but still kept looking at Jughead with his huge blue eyes, the guy wasn’t too tired anymore. “Did you have a nightmare?” he asked. “Or maybe you’re hungry. I know I am.”

The boy kept looking at him calmly, a small frown on his face. Jug smiled, and stood up with him, taking him into the kitchen, but making sure to pull their bedroom door closed before turning on the light. Maybe at least Betty was able to sleep at night.

“Today you’re going to have a big day, you know,” Jughead said after placing him into his highchair. He quickly warmed up some milk in the machine they still had and poured it into a sippy cup before handing it to Jake. The boy drank it eagerly, making Jughead grin. “You’re definitely my son,” he said, ruffling the curly blond hair on his head. “Even though you look just like mommy.”

Jug started making a sandwich for himself (or a few), and while doing that, he explained to his son about who were coming to see him today. If you could name it the same day since it was still 2 am. “You’re going to get all kinds of different toys and clothes…” he continued after taking a bite of his sandwich but narrowed his eyes at his son who didn’t look even a tiny bit tired even after the warm milk. Instead, Jake looked like he was waiting for something else.

“I’d give you fruit loops, but I don’t want you to have a sugar rush and not go to sleep,” Jughead apologized, handing him a cut up pickle instead. Apparently, that wasn’t a problem since the small boy ate it with his seven and a half teeth. Jughead chuckled when he reached for his sandwich, and gave it to him, watching him with a grin plastered on his face.

The baby babbled something and tried to turn the sandwich somehow to fit it into his mouth. “You
know what—” Jug smiled, taking another sliced-up pickle from the can. “Here, let’s trade.”

While Jake accepted the slice, he still kept holding the sandwich and made a loud screaming noise when Jughead tried to take it away. “Come on, bud, it’s daddy’s.”

Jake shook his head, managing to take a bite from it. Jug sighed with a smile, giving his hair a soft kiss, before turning to make himself another one.

Once he had made two more sandwiches and another cup full of warm milk, he went to the living room and sat on the couch, cuddling with his son. He put on some show for babies, hoping it would calm him down and they could go back to sleep. Before that could happen though, his sandwiches were gone and the milk was gone, too. So, with a few minutes, Jughead fell asleep.

Betty walked into the living room about half an hour later, having noticed she had started getting cold somehow, and that the bed was empty. She stopped on the doorway with a smile, looking at how both of the boys were asleep, cuddled up on the couch. Her heart started jumping, looking at the two so peaceful and happy. She loved moments like this.

After carrying Jake back to his crib, he turned off the TV and kissed Jughead’s cheek softly. “Jug, wake up. Let’s go to bed,” she said quietly, shaking her husband. The guy’s confused blue eyes opened for a moment and then widened as he looked around quickly. “I took him to bed,” Betty chuckled, letting him relax. “Now come on.”

#

Twelve hours later, their family was in the living room, eating, talking, and just enjoying each other’s company. Betty was sitting on Jughead’s lap on the accent chair they had lately gotten, and the two were just talking and snuggling, knowing there were other people to watch their baby and they could relax.

There were Jughead’s dad and Betty’s mom. Polly with her new husband, Michael, who the 8-year-old Juniper adored. And Charles was there with his family: Emma, and the now almost 5-year-old Bruce. They were an odd family, but at least a happy one. The kids called FP their grandpa even though none of the Cooper kids had ever called him their dad. They did think of him as their dad though, so it wasn’t weird for the kids to call him their grandfather. It was adorable.

“Do you think he likes it?” June asked Bruce, observing their baby cousin playing with a toy, curious about what way he was seeing the world.

“Everyone does,” the boy said with a smile, not knowing anybody who wouldn’t like cars like that.

“I don’t,” the older girl said.

“You’re a girl.”

“So?”

“You don’t like them.”

Juniper frowned, getting annoyed. “Butthead,” she said, crossing her arms on her chest. The boy frowned at that, hitting her arm. “Ow.” She prepared her hand to hit him back, but Polly got there first, separating them.

“Drama,” Jughead whispered to Betty, both of them observing the way the two kids fought.
“You know if that was Polly and Charles, they would’ve hit each other’s teeth out,” Betty smirked back.

“Oh, I remember,” the guy chuckled, kissing her cheek softly.

#

“You’re a married woman and a mother,” Jughead agreed, making the girl chuckle as he kissed the top of her head. “I’m a lucky guy, Betty.”

“Hell yeah, you are. I mean I’m so talented and beautiful, right?” Betty grinned. “You have the most adorable son in the world…”

“And you have a beautiful husband with a gorgeous old beanie he will never stop wearing,” he grinned back.

Betty rolled her eyes at him but kept smiling. “Can’t believe you got Jake a beanie, too.”

“Hey, if he keeps taking mine to fill it with sand, I need to get him his own,” Jughead protested with a smile, pleased with himself. “Besides, it’s a plain one which means it won’t be hard buying a new one when he’s older.”

“You’re so cute,” Betty said with a baby voice, looking up at him. “I love you.”

Jug smiled. “You wanna show me how much you love me?” he asked, pulling the woman on top of him again.

Betty giggled, straddling him as she leaned down, kissing his mouth once again. Somewhere between their panting, she breathed, “You know if we keep having sex like this, you’ll have another baby in the next room soon.”

“Can’t wait,” he chuckled back, against her neck, making her moan.

(She wasn’t wrong. In two years on August 5th, their daughter, Calla, was born.)
“Come here,” Jake whispered, helping his 3-year-old sister onto the bed after he had climbed on it. The boy smiled big when climbing to sit on his dad’s stomach, making Jughead groan and open his eyes. He had thought it would be dark, but the sun was shining through the blinds and when he looked at his kids’ excited faces, he knew it was Christmas.

Betty woke up at Calla pressing her cheeks together, trying to make Betty look like a fish—something the girl had started doing a little while ago and that always made her giggle. Jughead turned, flipping Jake off of his body, and between Betty and him instead, grinning at his wife.

“What are you two doing up?” he asked, Betty helping both of them climb under the duvet as well.

“Is Christmas, daddy,” Calla announced.

“We know that I mean why are you both up already?” Jug asked, throwing his arm over the three of them, the kids pressed in between his and Betty’s bodies.

“Because we want to eat and then we want the presents,” Jake smiled.

“Who said there are any presents?” Betty asked with a smile, stroking her daughter’s dark curly hair while Jug was doing the same with their son’s blond one.

“There are always presents,” the almost 7-year-old boy stated. “Right, Calla?”

“Right,” the little girl agreed, not having any idea about what there was ‘always’ and what wasn’t.

“I want waffles,” Jake stated, looking at Jughead and then at Betty, before turning back to look at the ceiling. “With syrup. And strawberries.”

“You want to go to Pop’s?” Betty asked with a smile. They were all at her grandparents’ place, who had died years before, which meant Alice now owned the house. Everybody had always gone to Riverdale for holidays, and they kept the tradition up, only that the few last times both Jughead and FP had stayed there too. The younger Jones with the youngest blonde Cooper, and the oldest with the oldest Cooper.

Somehow, FP and Alice had restarted their relationship that the kids had had no idea ever even existed. It wasn’t really weird, but it was odd that they did that when they were over 60. They had just wasted their whole lives trying not to have feelings for each other, going on different dates with different people, and now they had finally given up, getting together. They were cute together, and Betty and Jughead were happy for them. If anybody knew what it was like to keep away from the love of their love, only trying to be best friends, it was them.

“Go wake grandma and grandpa up,” Jughead said to both of the kids. “Tell them ‘Merry Christmas, we want food!’ and look at what they do,” he chuckled.

Betty didn’t reach to hit his arm, so she hit his head softly instead, making all four of them giggle. She kissed both of her kids before letting them go, and then rolled closer to Jughead, looking up at him goofily before kissing him on the lips.
“Dada,” Calla said, bouncing in his arms, pointing at her older brother who jumped into a heap of snow. Betty sighed, knowing his clothes were going to be drained, while also smiling at the same time.

Jug placed the girl onto the ground and looked at how she too ran into the snow, throwing it up and occasionally eating some from the clean places. Betty had taught both of the kids to at least eat clean snow, knowing they weren’t going to stop eating it anyway.

“Hey, you two, let’s go inside, the others should be here already,” Betty said while Jughead took her hand now and she intertwined their fingers with a smile.

“And we can open presents now?” Jake asked excitedly.

“Presents!” Calla agreed with a smile.

“Alright, inside,” Jughead said with the same excitement, just to get them moving. They did start running there. Both of the parents chuckled, and Jug tucked Betty into his side, his arms moving around her for a moment while they kissed. After that, both of them smirked at each other and went inside.

“Hi!” Bruce said happily, hugging the two rapidly before running back into the living room.

“Well that was fast,” Betty said, kind of missing when the kids were younger and would hug them for hours. Now, Bruce was 10, almost 11, and Juniper was 14. Betty felt so old.

Jug grinned at Betty while the two went into the living room, too. “You’re cleaning it up,” was the first thing Charles said, pointing at Calla who was still in the same clothes she had been in outside, even the boots still on.

“Baby,” Betty sighed. “You’re wet. Come here,” she sighed, picking her up as the girl giggled, nose and cheeks a dark pink shade.

“Like you are every night,” Charles said under his breath, earning a hit from his wife. Betty looked shocked while Polly eyed her daughter whose eyes were huge, staring at her uncle. Jughead laughed out loud while the kids were confused, only Juniper’s face was priceless, trying to hold her laugh back while also looking like they were all extremely gross.

Michael, Polly’s husband, laughed with the guys while Betty just shook her head, cheeks just as pink as her daughter’s were, only that not from cold.

“Betty,” Jughead read the name on the present that his daughter handed him. The little girl sighed, trying to find hers so desperately, but not able to read what whose names were on the packages.

“I’ll take that,” Betty smiled, ruffling her daughter’s curly black hair.

“Mommy, where’s mine?” Calla asked.

“See that big pink one there? I’m pretty sure that it’s yours,” Betty pointed at a huge one next to the tree. The girl beamed at that, running there. “Alright, let’s see what you got me,” Betty murmured with a smirk, talking to Jughead, next to who she was sitting on the couch.
“Why do you think it was me? It’s Santa,” Jughead grinned.

“Only one Santa has your packing skills,” Betty teased, making the guy chuckle and kiss her cheek. “Plus, I can tell it’s a book.”

“Hmm, you’ll see,” Jughead smiled, and looked at how the blonde ripped the packaging paper off. Betty raised her eyebrows, seeing a thick notebook. But, as she opened it, she was taken aback, tears pricking in her eyes.

Into the blank notebook had been drawn many different drawings, the first page titled “Our Story”. She gulped, flipping the page, and was met with animated characters—her and Jughead when they were little kids.

“It took quite some time to draw it all,” Jughead whispered, pressing a kiss onto her temple. “I love you. I love the family we have. This was our story,” he explained quietly, flipping some more pages, and then skipped the rest, showing her the last one that had been filled, in about the middle of the notebook. “These are all the pages still waiting to be filled…”

Betty was crying by that time, a smile on her face. “And see that?” Jughead continued, pointing at the puppy drawn on the last picture. “That’s the little guy waiting for us at Veronica and Archie’s place.”

Betty looked at him with a shocked face, having talked with him before, trying to convince him to take a dog for the kids. He had said that it was way too much responsibility for all of them since the two of them were always working in the theater and the kids were still little. “I thought you…”

“Veronica works from home,” he said softly. “And she and Archie were more than happy to babysit the little guy. And I mean like more than happy.”

Betty chuckled, cupping his face. “I love you. You know that, right?”

“I might have an idea,” he smirked.

Betty leaned in to kiss him, sighing contently, hearts jumping in both of their chests.

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