

Deleted Scene: *James back with Genn*

Sunday Bethany had to go with her parents to bring Darlene back to school. This time Bethany remembered her Walkman and she listened to *Killing Heidi* all the way there. Darlene slept with her head leaned back and her mouth open. She had gone out with her friends last night and had to call Mr. and Mrs. Caleb for a ride home at 4 AM. Bethany thought Mr. Caleb wanted to leave extra early for spite.

It was a long day, considering she had to haul all of Darlene's crap up to her dorm room, then sit through another tortuous meal with her family at a seafood restaurant, then suffer through Mr. Caleb's music taste on the ride home after the batteries in her Walkman died.

When they finally arrived home after six o'clock, it was dark and Bethany was ready to crawl into bed right then. The phone was ringing as Mr. Caleb unlocked the door. Mrs. Caleb answered it, and told Bethany it was James calling for her. "I'll take it upstairs," she said.

“Hi, James,” Bethany said into her cordless phone, closing her door.

“Hi,” he said. “I just wanted to tell you I’m not going to school tomorrow.”

“Why?” Bethany said, then added, “Sorry. I know why.”

“So, I just wanted to tell you. See you tomorrow afternoon? Come over after school?”

“Sure,” Bethany said.

After James hung up, Bethany put on her pajamas and went to bed. She wondered if maybe she should skip school tomorrow, but she couldn’t figure out if she dreaded school or being in her house alone all day more. She decided to go to school until third period then skip out.

The next morning Bethany locked up her house and walked out to the mailbox at the end of the driveway to wait for the bus. Cold air immediately seeped in through the overlap of material at her wrists, waist, and ankles. She positioned her fleece scarf over her ears.

Charlie Haskell, the most popular (and rich) boy at Middleton High drove past her in his red convertible sports car, but Bethany stared vacantly at a second-story window of the house across the street so she didn't have to see that snotty look on his face.

While waiting for English class to begin Bethany tried to read Act III in Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew. Mrs. Greenbaum was late, and everyone just sat in the classroom, talking louder and louder. Shannon and her group walked in five minutes late and didn't seem bothered by the fact that there was no teacher supervising the classroom.

The conversation among Shannon's crowd was mostly concealed by everyone else's talking, but during a lull Bethany thought she heard Shannon say, "—finally beat the crap out of that faggot—" But her voice quickly faded back into everyone else's.

Bethany's hands shook, gripping the book in her hands so tight the pages tore out of the binding. But she couldn't make herself say anything. The thought of Shannon and those

girls ganging up on her in front of the entire class made her insides Jell-O. She heard a loud steady squeaking noise and realized she was grinding her teeth. She stopped, and Mrs. Greenbaum rushed in the door, her arms full of photocopies. Bethany sighed and her jaw relaxed. Taming of the Shrew dropped onto her desk softly and fell shut.

When the bell rang at the end of English, Bethany felt like she was moving through water. She had been staring at the bulletin board at the front of the room. It had a background of blue construction paper and a large print of a Pre-Raphaelite painting on it, "Ophelia" by Waterhouse. All period Bethany thought about how she would never be able to paint anything as realistic as that. Then her eyes would drift to the edge of the scalloped orange border, where her eyes refused to compromise the orange against the blue.

In the hallway Bethany watched the gray and blue tiles alternate beneath her feet, the view occasionally marred by a pair of Nikes or Doc Martens in front of her. Somehow she

found her way to math class without looking up once.

She sat in the desk next to Raina, who looked up and said, “Hi.”

“Hi,” Bethany replied.

Waiting for the math teacher to come, Bethany wished she could think of something to say, small talk, to fill the silence. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Raina fiddling with her pen and curling one finger in her hair. Bethany thought she just didn’t know what to say either. But then Raina said, “Did you know Genn’s out of rehab?” in a kind of low, private tone.

Bethany couldn’t look at her. When did this happen? Genn would mess everything up again. She stared at her pencil, her fingers grinding the lead into the edge of her notebook paper. “When did this happen?” she finally asked, but the teacher walked through the door and Raina shrugged.

Math class took forever. The teacher explained the current section in what sounded like a foreign language, drawing graphs on the

chalkboard, painstakingly plotting graceful curves. The bulletin boards were covered with axioms and theorems and Bethany suddenly realized how much she hated math. The steady streams of numbers in her math notebook seemed hung with hooks to snag her eyes. She opened to a new page and began an elaborate design of waves and flowing lines that intersected into a beautiful scribble.

The bell rang and startled her. A heavy black jag scarred her drawing now. Bethany sighed and put her notebook away. She noticed that Raina was already gone.

Chester intercepted her in the hallway before she got to art class. "Hey, I need to talk to you," he said grabbing her wrist.

"I have class," she said.

"Hold on. Let's go to the band room, there's no one there this period."

He pulled her along to the big soundproof room, and led her into a small back room where some instruments were stored. Bethany sat on a black drum case.

“You know Genn’s back, right?” he asked, peering outside the door, then closing it.

“Yeah.”

“Who told you?”

“Raina Sunderman, last period.” For some reason, the words came out bitter.

“When was the last time you talked to James?”

“Last night on the phone.”

“And he didn’t mention her at all?”

“No.”

Chester ran a hand through his spiky blond hair. “I just knew it.”

“Knew what?”

“Genn went over to his house and they slept together yesterday. Numerous times yesterday. James called and told me last night. He wanted my advice on what to do.”

Bethany’s brain was having a hard time comprehending this information, but her mouth kept the conversation going. “What did you tell him?”

“I completely disagree with what he’s doing to you. I told him he should have thought

for two seconds about the consequences of sleeping with Genn. He hung up on me.”

Now Bethany really didn’t know what to say. She and James had just almost gotten to the point of trusting each other again, then the next day he did this.

“I was already a little irritated at the way he strung you along the whole time he and Genn were going out, and now he pulls this and expects me to side with him—”

“He didn’t string me along,” Bethany said.

“It’s gotten to the point where I don’t think I can work with him artistically anymore. We obviously have completely opposite philosophies.”

Bethany could barely believe Chester was talking about himself. Wasn’t this really about James and Bethany, not James and Chester? And she still couldn’t believe what had happened yesterday, her completely unknowing, out of the picture. The musty air in the band room stuck in her lungs.

“Do you know what you’re going to do?”

Bethany shook her head dumbly. She had no idea what action to take. She felt so betrayed.

“I think you should dump him. He’s a jerk.”

“I guess.”

“How could you still like him after that?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t you have any self-respect?”

Bethany jumped up and shoved her way out of the suffocating storage room, out of the band room, through hallways and out of the school. She felt hands grabbing at her arms, Chester’s she thought, voices calling, “Wait,” “Come back here young lady.” But no one could stop her. She was running across the parking lot, across the street.