

Competition is the Last Thing You Need

Kelsey was everyone's idea of a perfect girl. She went to church and youth group without ever missing a meeting. She got perfect grades. And she was too Christian to even consider kissing her boyfriend. Kelsey was exactly what everyone thought a good girl should be and I hated her for it.

There were only a few Christian girls at our school and even fewer boys. Not all of us were friends, but on Wednesdays during lunch we all got together in the math room to do what they called Christian Club. This was just like a youth group meeting except without the games. We would start out singing a few hymns that had been remixed to sound like pop music. They were probably redone just to keep good little Christian kids awake because they obviously couldn't handle the originals like they play at traditional churches. Like the one I grew up in. We would sing these "hymns" while standing up and hands and voices would rise up to heaven like dozens of helium balloons let loose. The loudest and obviously therefore the most meaningful voice was Kelsey's. As a member of Abraham Lincoln Middle School's choir, Kelsey thought that her angelic notes could drown out everyone else's unskilled rabble.

After the competition that was worship, someone would go up to the stool at the front and share their testimony. Those were all bullshit in my mind. What seventh grader has done anything to dramatically turn their life around from the depth of sin and destruction back up to the glory of God's forgiveness? After those we would make a list of prayer requests and someone would be selected (usually against their will) to pray for us. I would usually try to count how many times they addressed God. Saying, "Father God," while praying is like saying, "Umm," any other time. Once Kelsey said it nine times. I preferred not to be called on, I didn't like trying to conform my

prayers to the sermon summaries and weak reminders to be good that filled everyone else's prayers. I liked to keep my prayers honest, like a conversation with God. He already knows the sermon, it isn't for his benefit that we tell it to him again, or ever.

By almost any standard, we should have been best friends, I mean, we just had so much in common! We were girls, we were Christian, and we were in the same class. And maybe I could have been friends with her if she weren't so perfect. I did not feel like she was "too good" for me to hang out with; she was too fake for me to hang out with. When asked if she'd like to work in a group with someone she didn't want to, she would act like it was the biggest sacrifice she had ever made, but she would refuse to refuse their invitation to include her as the leader of the group project. She was the kind of goody-two-shoes who made everyone else seem like they could never measure up to her glory. Not with her perfect grades compared to my 3.0, her too bright spaghetti-straight blond hair next to my frizzy curls, and not her plaster smile that never changes except to twist into a tight frown when she looked on someone with pity.

We were always grouped together by the teachers and students of Abraham Lincoln Middle School because of our overwhelming similarities. One of the girls in our Study Hall even went so far as to call me her name. I was copying a diagram of a cat skeleton out of our science text book when Elizabeth came up to me, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Hey, Kelse, can I borrow your notes from yesterday? I was out sick."

For a second I was so surprised that I couldn't say anything, I just stared at the cat's femur, then when the gears in my brain had processed the fact that I was called "Kelse," my face twisted into what I am sure was not my most becoming expression and said, "Yeah, uh, I can give you the notes, but, uh, my name is Julia."

“Oh, my gosh! I am *so* sorry! For some reason I can’t get you two straight in my mind. I swear I’ll remember.” Elizabeth smiled at me and I handed over the previous day’s notes. “Thank you so much, Julia,” she said, “I’ll give them back to you tomorrow, kay?”

In her defense, it wasn’t the first time, and I’m sure it wouldn’t be the last time someone got us mixed up in their minds. For Elizabeth, it was an honest mistake. Unfortunately for me, I was uncertain whether I should be flattered or insulted. The encounter left me wandering if they all thought I was as shallow as Kelsey. I spent the rest of that class period worried that other people thought I reacted to them the same way that Kelsey would. Do I make people feel unworthy to be in my presence? I think I’m pretty nice, but then again, everyone else seems to like Kelsey. So, maybe it is because we look alike?

I didn’t think that we looked similar at all. Kelsey had straight hair that was just longer than her shoulders and denim blue eyes and a long face. My round face in comparison was framed by a million tiny curls that stuck out everywhere and were almost down to my waist and my eyes were green, not blue. Our styles were totally different too. I almost always wore a tank top and shorts and Kelsey was way too worried about showing a bra strap to ever wear something so scandalous as a tank top. On the only occasion that I ever saw Kelsey wear one, she (very awkwardly) had a short sleeve shirt on under it. Whatever the resemblance was that others saw in us, I decided, was unwelcome.

Youth group, like Christian Club, was held once a week and all of the middle school Christians from our church would gather in the basement of church and cause a ruckus that could only be heard from the outside through three long windows that ran across the top of the renovated storage area under the stage that the church never uses. We called it the Lions’ Den and the window

sills were covered with Beanie Baby lions that all fell to the ground whenever some of the guys would crawl through the windows and dropped the seven feet to the stained carpet below. Kelsey's boyfriend Drew was one of those guys. Drew and I lived near each other our whole lives and even though we were friends when we were little, we hadn't talked much in the last few years. I was shy and Drew and his friends were the popular boys at school and in youth group. They were only known to be Christian by those who saw them in the youth group and I bet most people wouldn't believe that they were going for the church part, not with the way they lived the rest of the week. Oh yeah, they thought they owned the world and I guess in a sense they did. They could pretty much do whatever they wanted and get away with it.

On one Thursday evening, we had just turned down the most recent Christian pop hit and opened with prayer when Drew and one of his buddies sent the little lions flying as they made their dramatic entrance into the crowd of young Christ followers. Drew landed on the balls of his feet and the tips the fingers on his left hand touched the ground like Ironman. His buddy attempted to do the same, but just flopped to the ground like a new born giraffe.

"Nice of you to join us, boys," Drake, the Youth Director said with a smile at the trouble makers.

"Anytime," Drew said with a flick of his hair as he and Taylor swaggered over to sit by Drew's girlfriend Kelsey. Taylor was like a taller, nicer version of Drew, it was obvious why they were best buds. Everyone around Kelsey scooted out of the way and the boys took seats next to her while she blushed and giggled at her boyfriend's bravado.

My hands still clasped in prayer, I looked at my friend Jessica and rolled my eyes. We thought they were absolutely ridiculous. Drew was ridiculous! But kind of cute.

When the commotion was calmed down and the prayer was finished, Andy, the small group leader of seventh grade guys, was up at the front doing the week's announcements. "This Sunday after second service, there will be a meeting for anyone who wants to go on the missions trip to Mexico this spring and next Tuesday night there is an event that I think you all should go to: The Bigger Or Better Scavenger Hunt!" Andy bellowed the last six words like a WWF announcer.

This was one event that I knew I would not miss. Bigger or Better was one of my favorite games and one of the few group events I actually enjoyed going to. It was a big event where we would split up into teams that were the same as our Bible study groups and each team would be given a penny and told to go door-to-door asking each house that answered for something bigger or better than the penny or whatever it was the last house had given up. One time the penny that my small group started with morphed into a giant teddy bear! It was exciting to see what people would be willing to give random people who came to their door. As I imagined the possibilities of what my core group would end up with at the end of that night, something on the other side of the room caught my eye. Drew was looking at me. *Weird*, I thought. I gave him a weak smile before looking away but as I was turning away, he winked at me and tilted his head to the side.

Drew winked at me. That was so bizarre I don't even think my mind could process what just happened. I ducked my head and looked at my lap. Did he really wink at me? Or did I just imagine it? Why would I imagine that? *Ew*. The only time he ever came into my mind was when he was being annoying. What the heck was he thinking?

"Did you see that?" I whispered to Jessica, as I peeked back over at Drew. Taylor was hitting Drew's arm and Kelsey was giving him an annoyed look that didn't meet her eyes.

"See what?"

"Drew just winked at me," I tilted my head in his direction, looking back down.

“What the heck?” Jess gawked at them wide-eyed.

“I know, that’s what I thought! Stop looking!!” The worship team was up front and Jess and I had to save our conversation for later. *Time to worship God to the sound of Kelsey.*

The next day, I saw Kelsey and Drew on their way to English class. Drew was dropping her off, he had class with me that period. They were holding hands, but gingerly, like she didn’t want Jesus to see. They were going the other direction toward the math room and this time Kelsey saw Drew look at me. I saw that she saw, but I knew it was beneath her to do anything about it and that made me feel guilty, but I’m not sure why.

In science class, we were about to start the unit on volcanoes and Mr. Pope was already at the board drawing when, yet again, Drew arrived late and caused a disruption. Since he was late, Drew missed the change in the class’ seating arrangement and the only available seat was next to me. *Great, I get to sit with Winky,* I thought as he slid into the seat to the right of me. *What if he winks at me again? Did I want him to?*

“Hey,” Drew said to me with a peek from his deep, golden brown eyes at the papers on my desk.

“Hi,” I replied without looking at him.

Mr. Pope began lecturing then and saved me from having to say anything else to Drew. The lecture on volcanic eruptions, however, did not prevent Drew from talking or from joking around with his friend on the other side of him. They were calling our teacher “Mr. POP!” instead of Pope. They were harmless shenanigans and because they were Drew and Taylor, they didn’t get in trouble for talking during the lesson. It even seemed like they were paying attention somehow.

I couldn't help but looking over at them every so often and smiling at their jokes. Every time I looked at them, one of them was looking at me, so I stopped and focused on my notes.

As science class was wrapping up, and I was putting my notebook into my backpack, I heard, "So, Jewels, are you going to Bigger or Better on Tuesday?"

I looked up to see Drew standing next to his desk watching me Taylor was standing by the door looking at us. Drew hadn't called me that nickname in years. He was one of the first people I met when I moved here in sixth grade and we had been really close for a while, but then I became best friends with Jessica and Drew started hanging out with all the guys and we didn't have as much in common anymore. I didn't even think he would have remembered it, much less call me it again. "Uh, yeah. I am," I said. The class was almost empty by now and I had to get to my next class, "See you there?" I asked as I walked by Taylor to the door.

"Yeah, Taylor and I wouldn't miss it!" he called after me.

I smiled back at him as I walked out the door. In that glance, I saw that he was smiling at me.

He was just being friendly, I told myself as I walked toward history. He talks to everyone he sits by.

My next class was math which I liked because I was pretty good at it. I'd say one of the best in my class even. But, not as good as Kelsey. She was still the queen bee and she let everyone know it every time a test was handed back. I don't remember a single test that she got back that did not produce the A+ Dance of Joy. It was a little jig that Kelsey would do and it just drove me crazy. Today's test was no different. I got an A- and I was rather pleased with myself. Until I saw Kelsey set her test down on her perfectly straight stack of folders and do the A+ Dance on the other side of the room. Heaving a sigh, I looked down at my missed answers.

Taylor sat next to me in math and unlike my sigh of jealous contempt, he sighed in disappointment. “I studied so *hard* for this one!” he said. There was a sad look on his long face as he looked down at his D-. “What’d you get?” Taylor asked, looking up at me from where he was slouched.

“I can help you,” I told him while I flashed him my grade.

“That’d be so great! I, uh, I’d really like that.”

“Sure. After school sometime?”

“Yeah. I can text you next time I need help. Can I, uh, have your number?” He said while looking down at his bad grade.

And that’s how Taylor got my phone number. And because of the way Jr. High works, Taylor gave my number to Drew, Kenney, Max, Fred, and Paul. *Thanks, Taylor.* For the next week, after so kindly offering to help Taylor out with the algebra, I was plagued with stupid prank calls. “‘This is Jerry Brian from KLOS.’ ‘Stop, Taylor.’ ‘If you can answer the next question correctly you’re going on an all–expense paid vacation!’ ‘Bye, Matt.’” The most inconvenient of which I got when Kelsey had my phone.

We were assigned to work on a project for history together. If we had the choice of project partners, I would have been working with Jessica instead of Little Miss Perfect, but at least working with her probably ensured a good grade on the project. It was a presentation on Civil War Era Politics and we worked on it every day in class, in study hall, and after school. The project started out pretty well, we reluctantly moved seats in class to work together and we talked a little about what little we knew about the topic. It wasn’t very much, so we ran out of things to say pretty quickly, which was fine with me. After about a week, we finished the project in the school library

and we had nothing more to talk about, but then Kelsey, ever the polite one, started making small talk.

“Are you ready for Bigger or Better tonight?” she asked cheerily, pointedly looking at my bra strap from where it peeked out like half a centimeter under my tank top strap.

“Yeah, I’m actually really excited for it. How about you?”

“I can’t wait for it! Drew and I have a bet going to see whose team will win. Obviously we both voted for our own. So, I hope we win!” she exclaimed with a too bright smile before she took the conversation in a complete one-eighty, “So, do you like anyone from youth group?” Kelsey prodded, leaning closer to me.

Immediately Drew’s face flashed through my mind. *No, I don’t like Drew. Drew is Kelsey’s. He obviously likes her and plus, why would anyone leave perfection for me?* I couldn’t tell Kelsey that I had a crush on her boyfriend and if I told anyone, I was sure, she would know by the end of the day. Not because Kelsey told them, but because Kelsey’s BFF would tell them in complete confidence. So, after a split second I answered, “No.”

“Oh, that’s too bad, Drew and I first talked at year’s Bigger or Better. Competition is a good way to meet guys,” Kelsey said.

“Oh, uh, I guess it is. I guess I feel like I know all of the guys though.” *Trust me, honey, competition is the last thing you need,* I thought as I pulled my phone out to text my mom to let her know that I could be picked up. I set my phone on the table and went across the library to the printer to pick up the completed copy of our project. While I was gathering the papers that the printer had dropped to the ground, I heard the buzzing noise of a phone on vibrate getting a call and I heard Kelsey gasp.

“What’s up?” I asked, walking back to our table. I looked down at my phone and saw a missed call from a number that I didn’t know but I could tell that it was one of the guys who had been pranking me since Taylor gave out my number.

Kelsey cleared her throat, looked me in the eye, and said, “Why is my boyfriend calling you?”

“Is that Drew’s number?” I asked. “I don’t know, maybe he—”

“No, don’t play dumb. Why was he calling you?”

“I– I don’t know. Taylor must have given him—”

“Why would Taylor do that? Hmm? Why would Drew want to talk to *you*?”

Ouch. I looked down and started packing up my things. “I don’t know, Kelsey.” Why would Drew, or any guy, want to talk to me? It’s not like they could want to be my friend, or think I’m pretty, or like me. I could feel the blood rushing to my cheeks and up my neck. I couldn’t look at her.

“Whatever,” Kelsey said, getting up and flinging her purse over her shoulder. “I’m so done with you,” she said when she got to the door of the library she turned back around, “Don’t talk to my boyfriend.”

My face was red with shame and I felt a guilt I couldn’t explain. I had done nothing wrong. It wasn’t my fault that Taylor gave out my number. It wasn’t my fault that Kelsey’s cute boyfriend had called me. It was probably something lame too, like all of the guys’ prank calls. Kelsey was mad at me for someone else’s actions and I had no idea how to tell her.

Bigger or Better was that same night and Jessica couldn’t come. She had a family event happening or something. That meant that I had to face Kelsey alone. And Drew. They were sitting

as close as they could and still be in their core group teams. I could tell that she was mad at him, but not as mad as she was at me. Every so often, I'd look over and she'd be giving me the death glare. What did I do so wrong that he wouldn't get the brunt of the blame? He called me, after all. I didn't even answer the phone! Girl's never blame their boyfriends for their mess ups. He sat there looking at her as if he were completely bewildered why she wouldn't look at him. I saw him try to take her hand, but she wouldn't have it, she was too busy hoping that looks could kill and gossiping with her besties. I'm sure she told them all about my treacherous ways by now.

After a long time of going over instructions, we were finally handed our pennies and sent out into the local area to try to convince people resting peacefully in their homes to give us something bigger or better when we come to their door. The seventh grade girls, my team, were sent up to Sycamore Street for our quest. We were taking turns going up to doors and talking to the people who answered.

Every time it was my turn, Kelsey would give me a scowl and prance up to the door in front of me and her girls would let her. Since Jessica wasn't there I didn't have anyone to complain to, all of the other girls in core group were too buddy buddy with Kelsey to take my side, so I stayed quiet about it and waited for my chance to grab the thing and run. We had traded our penny in for a silver dollar, a rubber duck, a banana, a pineapple, and a stuffed animal cat, among other things.

When it was again my turn, I took the stuffed cat out of Sammie's hand right before Kelsey could snatch it away and marched up to the next house. It was an older brick house that had a big front lawn and a low hedge around the walk way. I took a deep breath, paused in front of the red door, and knocked three times. I was going to get something so much better than a stuffed animal from this house. I would show Kelsey that I shouldn't be ignored. I listened for sounds inside the

house, waiting for someone to walk up and answer the door. If I remember correctly, an old man lived in this house. He would probably be pretty generous and give me something really good. I listened and heard nothing. I waited a good minute before I started to walk away from the door, stuffed animal in hand, completely deflated. This was the first house who didn't answer the door. I shuffled down the front path and shook my head at my core group. Kelsey had a look of mock pity on her face. I hung my head and hugged the stuffie as we made our way across the street.

"Nice cat, Jewels," I heard and as we approached the other side of the street. The guys of our grade had the street kitty-corner to ours and they were crossing as well. Drew was exactly what I needed to make this night even better. Especially since he called me Jewels. Kelsey must have just loved that. They walked toward us and Drew was shoving Taylor along as they went.

"Hi, Drew," I said without looking at him in the eye. He stopped pushing his buddy when he walked by me on his way over to Kelsey as he reached out to embrace her.

I saw Kelsey glare at me before acknowledging her boyfriend. I guess she forgave him. He walked away smiling and our groups went separate ways.

For the rest of the night my face was hot and I could feel Kelsey's glare where it landed on the back of my head like lasers boring a hole into my skull. Our group went down three more blocks before we had to go back to the Lion's Den to see which core group won this year. When we arrived, I was holding my group's final earnings: a flat screen TV! Kelsey had gotten it for us, of course, and we had to return it right after the competition, but we weren't going to tell the judges that. I could see right away that the eighth grade guys had something really cool: a hot pink Beach Cruiser with tassels on the hand bars. They were totally going to win.

Drew and his guys came in just as Drake, the Youth Director, was asking for representatives from each group go up and show off what they had turned their penny into when

their group was called. Sixth grade girls went first, then guys, then it was our turn. Since I was holding it and Kelsey was the Queen Bee, we both went up to the front. Just as I was starting to speak, Drew and his guys came barreling in through the windows one after the other in their typical fashion. Taylor landed right next to me. As they came down they Iron-Manned their landings and took a bow before going to find a seat. As Drew gracefully came down right after Taylor, I looked back at the window to see if anyone else was after him. As I turned, the 18” TV, which I was holding like a surfboard, turned with me and bumped right into Taylor’s butt as he was taking his bow. He looked back at me, with a smirk on his face and blew me a kiss.

I was so startled by Taylor’s reaction, I just went red faced and couldn’t speak.

Kelsey, annoyed by my inability to form words, grabbed the TV out of under my arm, held it on the side with both of her hands, stepped forward, forcing me to hold it the same way and step forward or else it’d fall, and she began: “We win because we got a TV.”

All the other girls on our team clapped.

She paused for a moment, looking around the room for approval before she went on, “We got this TV from an old woman on Sycamore Street. She was so happy to help us, she even said that she would come to our church on Sunday.” Kelsey’s sudden try at evangelism was sure to win some brownie points with the Youth Leaders. The leaders and our team clapped.

“The TV is eighteen inches, color, high definition, and we even have the remote!” I added.

“Aaand it plays DVDs!” Kelsey countered, adjusting her grip slightly on the flat screen so that she could turn it sideways and show off the DVD slit to the audience. The way I had to hold onto the TV now was really awkward and I couldn’t keep my fingers around the bottom of it. Before I was able to readjust my grip, the TV started slipping and I couldn’t catch hold of it again. The sudden shift of weight startled Kelsey and the TV plummeted from her manicured fingers

down onto the wooden stage. It landed with a crack and the whole room went, “OOOOoooooh!” in unison. Kelsey and I immediately dove for it and bumped heads and fell back. All of the youth group leaders came rushing forward to help us and so did Drew and Taylor who were sitting front row. I landed on my butt just off of the stage and within seconds Taylor was beside me asking if I was okay and helping me up. Back on the stage, Drew and Kelsey were turning the TV over to assess the damage. The screen was cracked and between the cracks the film over the screen was separating.

Kelsey looked at me with so much anger and hatred on her face I thought she would tackle me, but instead she just snapped, “Why’d you drop the TV, Julia?”

“Kelsey, she—” Drew stopped at Kelsey’s glare.

“I didn’t! You ripped it out of my hands!” I said, I could feel Taylor behind me.

“As if! You totally dropped it!” Kelsey exclaimed, leaning toward me.

“Girls! Stop!” Drake interjected, coming between us. “The TV is broken. It doesn’t matter who dropped it.”

But—” Kelsey started.

“No buts! Now, I want both of you to take a deep breath. Go sit down, boys.”

My face was flushed and Kelsey looked so mad.

Drake looked at us, “I think you two should settle this outside. Everyone else, quiet down!”

I followed Kelsey as she stormed out the door and into the hall. When we got to the Parish Hall she stopped and turned around, “Look. I know you did that on purpose so just fess up, okay?”

“I didn’t break it, we dro—” I started.

“You dropped it! So you have to take it back and apologize. It isn’t my fault,” Kelsey said.

“It isn’t either of our faults. We can take it back and—”

“No! You can’t take it back...”

“God! I’m so sick of you blaming things on me! I didn’t break the TV, I didn’t call your boyfriend, and I don’t care if you’re mad at me because I didn’t do anything wrong!” I yelled at her.

Kelsey just stood there shocked, slack mouthed. “Ahuh,” she scoffed, “But you did. You always try to outdo me and you flirt with my boyfriend!”

“I do not!” I sighed, my throat tight. “I- whatever, I don’t even care. Let’s just split the cost of the stupid TV and get over it.”

“You can’t just do that! We have more to talk about!” she shouted.

I balled my shaking hands and shouted, “Look, Kelsey, I hate you, okay? I hate you! I can’t stand you. So stop yelling at me and get over yourself!”

Kelsey looked at me in disbelief, then ran out of the room.

After Kelsey left, I called my mom and told her about the TV. She said that she would go with me to the lady’s house and explain what happened so we could figure out what how the youth group can repay her. When we got off the phone, I went outside to wait for my mom by the fountain on the other side of the building. My mom likes to pick me up over there because almost none of the other parents pick their kids up there so it is quicker. I waited to text my mom until I was over there so I wouldn’t have to talk with one of the leaders. They were all very nice, but it could also be really awkward talking to them. They were like snoopy, best friend adults, with all of their innocent probing questions. And besides, I did *not* want to tell them about our fight.

As I was putting my phone back into my pocket, I heard step behind me, right behind me. I turned around on the bench to see Taylor walking up to me.

“Hey,” he said, taking seat beside me. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.”

“Kelsey can be kind of a bitch, can’t she?”

I laughed, “Yeah, she can.” The blood in my cheeks that had just flared up at his harsh language was embarrassing so I just stared down at my hands.

Taylor slid down onto the bench next to me and put his hands together. He sighed. “I know Kelsey is a bit much— no, hear me out,” he put a hand up, “but I think you should cut her a little slack. I’ve been friends with Drew for a long time and since Kelsey is always around him, I’ve gotten to know her pretty well and, well, she’s going through a lot of crap. I know it doesn’t excuse her from being a jerk, but her parents just got divorced and she’s been really upset. So, uh, yeah...”

That night as I lay in bed I prayed about Kelsey’s parents and our fight. I wanted guidance. Kelsey was an uppity prissy-pants, but I did feel bad for her because her parents split up. I told God about how she started being super preppy when school started last year because she decided that she was the greatest thing that ever graced the halls of Abraham Lincoln Jr. High. I left out the “Father, God’s” and just talked to him. The idea that she was going through a lot made my contempt for her turn into pity. Well, not completely. But because of that, I felt conviction for making life harder for her. I didn’t get to the “in Jesus name, Amen” part of my prayer because I drifted off to sleep thinking of ways to apologize for getting in the way of her and Drew.

I went straight to Kelsey’s locker when I got to school the next morning. She wasn’t around so I fiddled on my phone nearby and waited for her. I looked though my phone calls and over the course of the last week, Drew and Taylor had called me around twenty times and I had answered around five of them. It amazed me how persistent they were.

Kelsey passed me to get to her locker and walked by without looking at me.

“Hey, Kelsey.”

“Hi.” She wasn’t looking me still. She opened her locker and used it as a barrier between us.

“I want to talk to you.”

She closed her locker door a little bit and looked at me her eyes in slits, “what?”

“My mom and I returned the TV to Mrs. Jones last night and she only wants a hundred bucks for it. I’ll pay it back. And I, uh, I want to apologize for yesterday,” I said, “I’ve been thinking about it,” I swallowed, “and think I was kinda mean.”

Kelsey scoffed.

“I don’t want to get between you and Drew. I should have told you about Taylor– he’s been prank calling me like every day and Drew and Matt got in on it too, or he’s been using their phones, or something. I don’t know. I just want to let you know that it is obvious how much Drew likes you and I don’t know why he’s been talking to me, but it’s gonna stop. I’m sorry, okay?” I took a deep breath and looked at her.

“Yeah, I guess,” she huffed, closing her locker all the way. “I forgive you.”

Thank God!

“I just get really jealous when it comes to him. Especially when you’re all they talk about now.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“Are you kidding?” Kelsey gave me a long, side glance and raised her eye brows. “Taylor?” She said pointedly. When I didn’t respond, she said, “C’mon, it’s like so obvious he likes you! Haven’t you noticed he’s been acting like crazy?” She paused before going on, “calling you,

getting Drew to see if you were going to Bigger or Better, Drew like shoving Taylor into you!”
She rushed the last words and looked behind me down the hall. “Like this!”

Kelsey shoved me around and I was suddenly face to face with Taylor and Kelsey was gone, disappeared through an open doorway.

“Hi, Julia.” He smiled down at me and I noticed suddenly how striking his eyes were.

“Hey, Taylor.”