

## CHAPTER 11

The fall of 2006 went by in a blur. I was thriving in college classes, and I even ended up finally picking a major. It was strange to feel almost like my old self again, but also like a completely new person at the same time. I would ride the trains writing in my journals, and watch the people moving all over the city in various directions. I roamed around record stores with Lena and Lucy and met Greg – sometimes with Sullivan too – for drinks or dinner at least once a week. In October, after they decided they were not going to move just yet, I visited Clark and Devin up in Columbia for a few days. I was, well, for lack of a better term, feeling like I had a normal life again, and enjoying it more than I expected.

I continued writing Jordan letters that I would put in different places after they were finished. I told him about the cute religious studies professor, Dr. Allen, that I kind of followed around for a little while as he told me about different faiths and their interpretations of sexualities. I told him about the two dates I had – with a guy named Brian from my work and a woman named Marcy from school – that, while nothing all that special, occurred without any real freak outs. I told him about my growing collection of new skirts, and the shops where I found them. I told him about Clark's transformation, and listening to a mix tape Devin made for him years ago when he asked about a jazz band Devin was in love with. I played the tape all the way home from Columbia, once again using the beat-up Chevy truck paid for with more sappy morose poems. I told him that I didn't feel the same emptiness when I drove through the area where we grew up on Interstate 20, but that I also no longer felt even the slightest urge to maybe stop and look around. I told him everything, like I used to, but just in a new way.

I turned my ritual of getting rid of the letters into a little game. I would leave them in odd places and try to imagine – and at times write stories about – the people that might find them. In my head, these people felt an uncontrollable urge to read them and try to figure out who we were. I left some of them in college classrooms, others

in restaurant bathrooms, and still others in the pockets of new and used clothes in different stores I visited. I put some of them into the sleeves of vinyl and compact disc albums that were created by artists Jordan liked. I even left a couple on gas pumps in between Atlanta and Columbia during my trip. To this day, I still wonder if anyone ever read the letters, and if they did, what they might have thought. I guess I'll never know, but it is fun to imagine the possibilities.

I was thinking about this while listening to an album one of my classmates gave me a copy of when Lena came out on the porch the day after Thanksgiving. "Are you listening to that same damn song again silly," she said laughing and sitting with her legs crossed in her usual chair. She brought the remainder of the wine bottle I was drinking from, and a glass for herself. As she topped off mine and filled her own, she asked, "What is it about that song?"

"I don't know," I said laughing, and realizing that I had been playing the song on repeat for close to two hours while I was finishing a project for my Humanities class. "I think I like the fact that I have both agreed with this song more than words, and currently would scream the opposite with all my might, I don't know, it just kind of hits me." The song was by a band called the Drive-by Truckers that were out of Athens, Georgia, and completely new to me. The song, called "Goddamn, Lonely Love," was, for me, about a guy trying to kill a painful breakup or loss, and I remembered feeling that way for years even though now I wanted to hang onto the love without the constant sense of loneliness. The song just spoke to me and led me to start looking for records by the band every time I went to a music store. My classmate had been playing the record while we worked on a project together, and I just fell in love with the thing so he made what he called a "burned" copy – a new word to me at the time – and I'd been blaring it every day since. I was lucky that Lena liked the song because otherwise she may not have only picked on me about the repetitiveness.

"I guess that makes sense," she says tossing her hair and lighting a smoke. "How is the project going?" For my humanities seminar, I had to compose an original story that was based on my life, and I was struggling with it more than I would like to admit.