“You’ve become so independent!” Felix laughs as I snatch the last box from his car before he can and I carry it inside. “At this rate, eventually you won’t even need me anymore!”

I turn to Felix to see his half pouty half smiling expression as I smile and laugh, “Oh shut it, you know I’ll always need you.”

We enter the house together as I drop the final box in a crash along with the rest of them, completely filling the living room from wall to wall. “Welp, that’s the last one!” I say as I brush off my hands.

Felix doesn’t say anything, and I curiously turn to see why when suddenly I feel his lips planted onto mine. “Felix!” I giggle, as I pull back to see his bright and proud smile.

“Sorry, I couldn’t help it, you were just too perfect not to kiss.” He smiles brightly, “I’m just so glad this day has finally come, after everything that happened, I thought it never would have.”

It’s been a month since I returned home. After being ripped from this world and sent to an alternate universe, a lot has changed. The morning I arrived back, I ran to Felix’s home where we were reunited. His parents called my parents and then after that, they called the police. Everyone was so shocked and relieved I was alive, after all, they all thought I was kidnapped and killed. Through all the relief and joy, though, one question that was on everyone’s tongue:

“What happened?”

What happened? What could I tell them? ‘Oh you know, just was transported to a different dimension, that’s all.’

I had to lie.

“I don’t remember.” I told them, “I have no idea.”

I said that I woke up in a warehouse and the first thing I thought to do was to run to Felix, since he was the last person I remembered being with.

The police questioned me, saying I needed to do my best to remember, but all I kept saying was, “I really have no idea.”

Since I was back home safe and sound and I could give them no leads on what happened, I’m pretty sure they just assumed I had run away and didn’t want to admit up to it and the case was dropped.

After about a week, everything was returning to normal. Graduation had already passed and summer was half over. In the time I was gone, I was told that the school held a candle light vigil for me and search parties were sent out to find me, but clearly none succeeded. When Kylee heard I was alive she was so ecstatic that she rushed over to my house and nearly tackled me to the ground. It was such a relief to see the old Kylee and not the strange one that had no idea who I was.

As for Felix, well, during my disapearence he became a suspect since he was the last person I was with the night I vanished. He was kept under survelliance, but now that I am back and I said nothing to indicate he had any part of it, they left him alone.

Once things calmed down and Felix and I had some peace, we went out to the treehouse and he sat me down saying, “Analiese, really, what happened? I can tell when you lie. You remember, I know that you do. Please tell me darling, I need to know.”

So I told him.

I told him everything.

Everything about the alternate universe, the disease, the rebels, about meeting Chance and how he thought I was his girlfriend Lullaby. About how I met Flip and thought it was him and that he was with Robin who nearly killed me. I even told him about my ability to shatter space and send people flying across the room with just the swat of my hand.

I told him everything.

Everything except for having sex with Chance.

The guilt of what I did never leaves me, and not telling him makes it even worse.

I don’t know what to tell him, because his reaction to what I had already told him about everything was one that didn’t seem very convinced. He just sort of nodded his head and reacted similar to how Chance did when I was telling him about Felix and Kylee and this world.

I told Felix it was real, it *really really* was. You have to believe me, I’m serious.

Eventually he just said, “I believe that you believe that happened, but I don’t know analiese. That is a pretty crazy story.”

I tried to convince him it really was the truth. I tried to shatter space or knock over some cans that were on the other side of the room but when I snapped my wrist or swatted my palm, nothing happened.

I figured it was because I was back in my own universe, so my power no longer existed. Felix figured I had just bumped my head while I was missing.

Either way, he loved me all the same and life went back to normal for the most part. This is what lead us here today.

Moving day.

Just as planned, I moved out of my parent’s and into a brand new condo with Felix. I guess one good thing came out of my disappearance, because my parents were so glad I was alive, that they had no problem with me moving in with Felix anymore. According to them, “A daughter that breaks a few of God’s rules is better than no daughter at all.”

Felix and I spent the rest of the day unloading our things from the boxes. Most of my inventory was clothing and practical items such as blenders and silverware. Felix, on the other hand, was pulling out far more bizarre things, such as car gears, flattened glass bottles, makeshift dolls he created out of random household items, and tons of rather large gemstones.

As he says, he is a collector of things.

I smile in admiration at him, watching as he unloads his unique trove of treasures. My eyes locked on him, he turns just in time to catch me staring, in which I immediately look back down shyly and continue unpacking the things of my own.

I hear him chuckle as he says, “Oh darling, I love you so.”

I smile, still staring at my own newspaper wrapped items, warmth filling me through and through.

*It feels so good to be home. I can’t even imagine what it would have felt like if I had to go the rest of my life without him. Go the rest of my life watching Flip, the closest person I would have to Felix, love another woman besides me. It would’ve killed me.*

I unfold the crumpled newspaper of time long passed to reveal a blue robot with a built in clock Felix had given me a long time ago.

“Hey, remember this?” I ask cheerily as I wave the small plastic bot in the air.

Felix tilts his head up to see what I am talking about and he says, “Oh, Shocky! I haven’t seen that little guy in such a long time!”

“I know, right? I’ll put some new batteries in him and we can use him for our alarm in the morning to wake up for class.” I say, as I set it down.

I turn to continue unpacking, when suddenly, I feel something furry brush past my feet and I turn around to see what it is. “There you are, Little One!” I say, as I reach down and pick up the now much bigger skunk than we started with.

During the time I was gone, Little One was taken to a rescue where they nursed him back to health. Seeing as he was most likely the runt of the litter and rather submissive for a male skunk, they took him to a rescue where Felix tracked him back down and adopted him. Today, he is our live-in pet.

“Hi there sweetie, hi there!” I coo as I tickle his nose.

I feel Felix place his hand on my shoulder and like a father looking at the mother holding their new born child, Felix looks me in the eyes with the kindest expression one could ever imagine as he says, “I love you Annaliese. You really are the best.”

I smile and turn to press my lips onto his, as his scent encompasses me completely. I stay locked onto him as the moment turns to minutes and I get lost in the time my lips are on his skin. Little One jumps down and off of me as I shift my body and move onto Felix’s. Our body heat mixes as he takes his strong hands and grasps my tiny waist saying, “I don’t think so. I’m the one on top!” And with that, he flips me over and pins me down, kissing and biting my neck, trying to put me into submission.

Usually, this would have worked on me, but instead of taking the submissive swooned mindset of the average teenage girl, I took it as a challenge. “Wanna bet?” I utter through my soft moans, as I put all my strength into my arms and power him off of me just enough to get him sitting on the floor by my feet. I crawl to my knees, my arms holding him in place as I kneel on top of him, sitting in his lap, face to face, our breath mixing as I whisper, “Can’t take me that easily, love.”

Felix looks unconvinced and bored as he raises his eyebrows, saying in his deep handsome voice, “Uh huh, let me show you a little something about strength, dear.” And suddenly, I am slammed back to the ground by him, his grip so tight on my wrists, I can’t move an inch. “This, is called upper body strength, something that I have more than you do.” I stare at his arms, his muscles toned and apparent, flexing underneath his skin. “And though I love you dear, I’m not just going to let you win.”

With that, he took me again, kissing and biting me all over, our tongues intertwining in perfect rhythm. I fought it for a moment, then gave in, realizing there was no way I was going to overpower him again, and with that, I let him have me.

Felix had really been a lot more into me ever since I returned home. I guess being away made him long for me more than usual. Now that he has me again, he takes me whenever he can.

Our bodies intertwine and the room heats up, but despite our best efforts to make this comfortable, we instead find ourselves rolling over onto sharp gemstones and car gears among many other rather hard and uncomfortable objects.

“It would be really good if we had our bed right about now.” I sarcastically laugh.

“Ugh.” Felix groans, seemingly to finally give up, “Yea, well we won’t be getting that till later this afternoon. The movers probably aren’t even awake yet.”

“Hey! You’re the one who wanted to wake up at 4 a.m. to start moving!” I laugh, calling him out.

“Hey now!” He chuckles, “We’ve waited how long for this? I just couldn’t wait any longer, I had to!”

With that, he pins me down one last time and kisses my lips, before getting up and putting his shirt back on. “Come on, let’s go somewhere to eat, I’m starving.”

“Where you wanna go?” I ask curiously as I sit up and fix my messed up, blustery hair.

Felix looks off in thought as he says, “hmm… How about the mall? It’s close by and we can get some shopping done while we are there. You were saying you wanted to check out that new RustPunk store they just opened, didn’t you?”

I had already told him about going there with Chance in the other dimension, but he just defaults on logic and believes I just saw an advertisement for its grand opening while I bumped my head and actually thought I went there for myself.

“Er, yea, I, um, yea I do. I hear it’s pretty cool.”

I can’t even fight him on it anymore, it just makes me look like I’m crazy.

“Cool.” He says with a cheery smile as he reaches his hand out and pulls me up and off the ground. “We’ll make a day of it. Hopefully by time we get back, the movers will be here already.”

I smile and nod as we step over the mess of treasures spread and scattered upon the floor. “What about Little One?” I ask, turning around to find him.

“Oh he’ll be fine. We won’t be gone for long anyways, don’t worry.” He softly says as he pulls me forward towards the door.

I shrug as we exit the dimly lit house into the blaring sun saying, “Alright, if you say so!”

~\*~

When we arrived at the mall, the place was completely packed.

For being so early in the day you would think there wouldn’t be as many people but I suppose since it’s summer break and everyone is off from school, the mall crowd gets a big increase.

We walked past all the busy shops and made straight for the even busier food court. “We’ll go shopping after.” Felix said, “I’m starving now and seriously need some food.”

Approaching the food court, the scent of cheaply made fast food fills the air and the commotion of the mall goers is maddening.

I almost liked it better here during the apocalypse.

“So where you wanna go?” Felix asks as he holds my hand, swinging it side to side, pointing it at the different resturaunts.

“It’s up to you.” I state, “I’ll eat anywhere.”

“Hm, in that case, how about Wendy’s? I hear they have some awesome new teriyaki chiken meal for sale.” He says with a smile as he pulls me forward.

“I freakin’ love chicken. Yes please!” I sing.

Felix laughs as we approach the counter to order the food. “Yes, I’d like one teriyaki chicken meal with a set of chicken fingers, large fry and two sodas.” Felix says with his usual charm.

“What kind of sodas?” The woman at the counter asks.

Felix looks at me for what I want as I say, “Just sprite, please.”

The woman then looks to him and he says in response, “Okay, I know this is going to sound a little weird, but I want a little of each soda all in one cup.”

The woman gives him a strange look without moving and Felix says, “Yea, I know, It’s odd, but that’s how I like it. Could you please, ma’am?”

The woman just shrugs her shoulders and nods, then walks back with the order to get our food.

“Youre so weird, Felix.” I laugh as I poke his side.

He jolts back and laughs with the most beautiful and genuine laugh you would ever hear as he says, “What? I like what I like! One day you’ll try it an know what I mean!”

“Nooo, thank you!” I state as I shake my head, holding up both my hands in rejection. “That is all you, sweetie.”

Felix continues to chuckles as the woman walks behind him with the bag of food saying, “Here you go.”

He passes the bags to me, then grabs the drinks, handing me the one that isn’t a cluster messed together.

“Yea, thanks, I’ll deffinetely keep my sprite.” I say with a wink.

Felix shrugs, “Suit yourself!” As we walk over to one of the empty tables and begin to eat.

“I hear the meat at Taco Kingdom has worm pieces in it.” I whisper in his ear.

“Oh yea, where’d you hear that? From Kylee?” Felix laughs as he rolls his eyes.

“No! It came from a very reliable source, I’ll have you know!”

I lied, I totally heard it from Kylee.

“Oh yea, like what, the internet?” He questions more as he nudges my side with a playful smile.

“Hey, I have the right to remain silent you butt! You can’t make me tell you!” I laugh as I jump away from his poking and stick my tongue out.

Felix looks to the left and right of him at the crowds surrounding when he says, “If there weren’t so many people here, I’d pin you down and kiss it out of you!”

Continuing to walk backwards rolling my eyes, I say, “Oh yea? I dare you to do it now! Unless you’re too much of a scaredy ca-”

Suddenly, my voice is cut off from backing into someone and I begin to fall when they catch me and say, “Hey there Tumbilina, don’t hurt yourself now.”

I turn, knowing that voice, to see Kylee behind me lifting me up.

“Oh, h-hey! Random running into you here!” I choke out, catching my breath from the adrenaline that just shot through me when I almost fell.

“Not really.” She says, “I practically live here. Anyways, it’s real nice of you to remember who I was this time. I see you changed your hair back already. Was blonde not suiting you?”

Suddenly, chills run down my spine, and I look up at her with shaken eyes, uttering, “What?”

“Oh you know, don’t play dumb Anna! I saw you last night at the Southern Diner serving tables. I can’t believe you would pretend you didn’t know me! Is it really *that* embarrassing working there?”

My heart skips a beat and I repeat, “The Southern Diner? Where is that?”

“Oh, come on! Drop it already, I know it was you. Seriously, if you’re not going to fess up to it, this conversation is over.” Kylee says as she folds her arms.

I stare at her not knowing what to say.

It wasn’t me and I know it wasn’t me, but she is completely convinced it was.

Kylee is my best friend, she would never mistake someone else for me unless they were completely identical.

It had to be…

“I was on the phone with her last night.” Felix states as he steps forward next to me, “So there is no possible way it could have been her. She doesn’t work at the Southern Diner or at any resturaunt for that matter.”

Kylee just rolls her eyes then looks back at me saying, “okay, I see where this is going. This is one big secret that you don’t feel you could tell me, your freaking best friend. I see how this is. Well fine, trust Felix, and whoever else, but when you feel like telling me the truth, you have my number.”

“Kylee, wait!” I yell after her as she storms away, but Felix grabs me and says, “Anna, just let her go, it’s only going to cause a scene, and you know her, she loves causing scenes.”

Knowing Felix is completely right, I stop, watching her walk away through the crowd feeling completely guilty for something I didn’t even do. I look back up to Felix and I say, “I really don’t work there tho-”

“I know.” He cuts me off, “I know you don’t, darling. She must be confused, it had to have been someone else.”

I stare down at the ground thinking of the only other possibility it could have been besides her just simply being mistaken.

It had to have been lullaby.

“Well, come on.” Felix groans as he grasps my hand, “She’ll get over it. Untill then let’s get some food and get back to the house

And just like that, everything is perfect now.

Well, although…

There was one thing I had left to do. Before I left, I promised Chance I would find Lullaby.

I’ve been here for over a month now and everywhere I go, I keep an eye out for someone who looks identical to me. The mall, the grocery store, the park, everywhere.

No sign of her.

I’m not sure if there is some weird way I can channel my doppelganger or not, but that would be pretty convenient if I could.