

FOREVER OURS

Bonus Scene

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BONUS SCENE

Chris

Forever Playing

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The text I just received from Claire says that she and Senia just got here to The Pinhook club in Durham. I text her back to let her know we're still setting up, then I slide my phone into my back pocket. Tristan is helping Jake set up the drums while I do a quick sound check on my guitar. The floor is already packed with so many people, I can hardly hear myself think. My eyes scan the crowd, searching for Claire's blonde hair as I test each guitar string. Everywhere I look I see Duke, UNC, and NC State T-shirts. Reminders of all the studying that's been keeping me from Claire for the past five weeks since she moved into the dorm.

A few minutes later, I'm adjusting the mic stand when I spot Claire's blonde ponytail bouncing across the front of the club near the bar. I finish setting up the microphone, then I tap the head. The chatter in the crowd is suddenly replaced by screaming and a few wolf whistles. I flash one of the whistlers near the stage my *crowd smile* and she blows me

a kiss.

I wet my lips, then I look out across floor to where Claire is making her way toward the stage. “How’s everyone doing tonight?”

The collective roar of two hundred people shouting two hundred different answers to that question is ridiculous, but it gets me pumped. I love playing to an enthusiastic crowd. My eyes lock on Claire as she tries to squeeze past a guy in a newsboy cap. He gives her an angry look, like she’s crazy if she thinks she’s getting past him.

“Hey, you,” I say, pointing at the guy in the cap. “Let the girl through. She’s a special guest.”

The guy rolls his eyes as he lets Claire and Senia to scoot past him so they can get right up next to the stage. Claire shakes her head as I wink at her, but Senia’s too busy hugging her drink to her chest to keep it from spilling to acknowledge me.

Tristan is still setting up his bass, so I decide to engage the crowd while we wait. “We may be waiting a while, so I’m gonna tell you all a little story. Do any of you know who Neil Hardaway is?” About two-thirds of the crowd answers affirmatively, which isn’t surprising since he a blues legend in the Carolina music scene. “Well, when I was about eleven, I sent Neil Hardaway a letter asking if he could send me the

tabs for his song ‘Greensboro Blues.’ I never received a reply, so I figured he was just too busy to send them to me himself. So I sent another letter to the same address, but this letter was addressed to ‘Neil Hardaway’s Assistant.’ I was certain that one would get a response.” Claire smiles and shakes her head. She’s heard this story before. “Well, I didn’t get a response to that letter either. So a couple of years later, I had a brilliant idea, and I decided I’d try again. This time, I addressed the letter to Neil Hardaway and I included a picture of me dressed up as Neil, in a blue suit and black tie, electric guitar slung across my chest, a cigarette hanging out the corner of my mouth. And I signed the letter ‘Future Neil Hardaway. If you don’t send me the tabs, I can’t go back in time to 1991 and write this song.’ I got the tabs in the mail four days later.”

After a brief moment of laughter, I glance at Tristan and he nods. I count to three and we go right into a hard-hitting rendition of one of our earliest tracks, “Justified.” During the first song, Senia convinces a guy standing behind her to get her a few drinks. I can see Claire trying to talk some sense into her as Senia places her three drinks on the floor next to her feet, but Senia is not hearing it. She’s hell-bent on getting shit-faced tonight.

When the second song is over, I decide to have a little

fun and play the first few notes of a song Tristan and I made up a few months ago called “Easy Fuck.” It’s not something we would ever play for a crowd, but just plucking out the first few notes makes Tristan roar with laughter as he watches Senia pick up a glass from the floor and chug it. Having made my point, we continue onto the third song of the night.

Halfway through the set, Senia is crossing her legs and fidgeting as if she has to piss. But she never goes to the restroom. She just keeps staring at Tristan with a dreamy look on her face. There’s no way this is going to end well.

“We’re gonna slow it down a little for the last song of the night. This is called ‘First I Saw You.’” When the song is over, I thank everyone for coming and the frenzied cheers from the crowd are exactly what I came for. I take a bow while Tristan comes up behind me and pretends to grab my hips. I roll my eyes back and moan like I’m having an orgasm. Then we all take another bow and say goodnight.

Claire’s eyes are narrowed at me as I hop off the stage into the crowd. But all is forgiven when I grab her by the back of the neck and kiss her. Her lips taste like iced tea. The flavor combined with the sound of the girls around us mumbling their disappointment gets me hot. I slide my tongue into her mouth and she whimpers as she grabs

fistfuls of my T-shirt.

I move down to kiss her neck and she pushes me back.
“Okay, okay. That’s enough.”

I laugh as I plant a kiss on her cheek. “It’s *never* enough.”