



Chrystalla Thoma

Evasions
Valentine's interlude

A Boreal and John Grey short story

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Valentine's Day. A time for paper hearts, chocolates and teddy bears. But Ella is feeling out of sorts. She hates this day and can't understand why Finn is hell-bent on celebrating it.

Funny how the past always finds a way to come back and haunt you...

This story takes place during Season Two of Boreal and John Grey.

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Cover design by Chrystalla Thoma

Acknowledgements:

Huge thanks to Harlow Fallon for her help with this story.

Author note:

The phrase "We accept the love we think we deserve" is from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky.

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This song I sing
to the end of time:
the song of songs,
the turn of tides.

The pharmacy was quiet, relatively empty. Hot air blasted from the heater. Finn and Mike stood by the door, talking, and through the glass store front, she could see people outside huddled in their coats as they waited for the bus.

“We have special offers for Valentine’s day tomorrow.” The young woman behind the counter smiled at Ella. “Travel kits and colognes for men—”

“I don’t celebrate Valentine’s.” Ella handed over her card and rapped her fingertips on the counter as they payment went through.

“Oh. Why’s that? I mean,” the woman blushed, “I know it’s none of my business.”

Ella shook her head. She had never given this much thought. Why indeed? “I guess it never came up. I mean,” she waved a hand, “I don’t know.”

Not having had a steady boyfriend in ever probably had something to do with it. And she did hate the cheesy things everyone bought — the hearts and chocolates and gaudy underwear. Besides, why should anyone determine when she should celebrate love? It offended her sense of independence and free will.

She blinked. It all sounded like excuses. They made perfect sense — but was that the reason she felt so uneasy right now? She was in kind of a funk and had no clue why.

Surely Finn wouldn’t care much for red hearts and roses, would he?

She turned to find Mike whispering in Finn’s ear, a mischievous gleam in his eyes. Finn listened, head cocked to the side, arms folded across his chest. Today he wore another of Mike’s gifts — a light blue hoodie with the words *‘Mostly human’* emblazoned on the back in purple.

“Here you go,” the vendor said, returning Ella’s card. “Have a nice day.”

“Thanks.” Ella grabbed her painkillers, bandages and antiseptic spray — their medic kits both at home and in the car were running low — and walked over to Finn and Mike. “Okay, what are you two plotting?”

Mike put on his angelic face — arched brows and wide eyes that said, *who, me?* as he reached out and slung an arm over Finn’s shoulders. He grinned.

Yep, definitely plotting something. “Finn, what did he tell you?”

She half expected Finn to smile and shake his head, but the look he gave her was grave and worried. It made her chest clench. “Okay, Mike, what the hell did you say to him?”

“Nothing, I swear!” Mike dragged Finn outside, leaving her no option but to follow into the icy breeze of early evening. She zipped up her jacket, heading toward the car, and Mike was still whispering in Finn’s ear, dammit. What was going on?

“So,” Mike said, sliding into the back seat, “whatcha doing for Valentine’s Day?”

“Why’s everyone so obsessed with Valentine’s Day?” Ella groused as she started the car and watched Finn gingerly lower himself onto the seat and straighten his bad leg before closing his door and belting himself in. “It’s too commercialized. Its sole purpose is to rob consumers of their money.”

“Oh come on, don’t you have a single romantic bone in your body?” Mike huffed.

“It’s a celebration. Why don’t you take advantage and show your man some *lurve?*”

Ella's face heated. "None of your damn business." In the rearview mirror she caught a glimpse of Mike wagging his brows.

Idiot.

Finn slid a sideways glance at her, and he still had that worried glint in his eyes. It made her antsy.

"Is everything okay?" She tried to read his face but he turned away and nodded — not very convincingly.

Fine. She'd grill Mike later.

An epidemic of red and pink had taken over the city. Every store front sported hearts and flowers and teddy bears and people bustled in and out, carrying huge shopping bags.

The same fate had befallen the cafe-bar where Scott worked most evenings. The small, round tables were decorated with red roses and ribbons.

Ugh.

Ella parked outside, making a face.

"Will you two be fine by yourselves?" Mike asked, his hand on the door handle.

Ella blinked stupidly. "Why, where will you be?"

"Good god, girl, sometimes I feel you never pay me any attention." Mike stuck his tongue out and she rolled her eyes. "Told you that Scott and I are going out of town for a weekend of lurve. With Valentine's falling on a Friday — and that's tomorrow, in case you've forgotten — it's perfect." He opened the door. "Be good, all right, guys?"

"Mike, wait." Sudden panic hit her. "What about Missy? And do I need to water your plants? And—"

"You have my key. Missy would love to see you, and so would my plants. Have fun and use protection!"

"Wait, Mike!"

But he was already gone, slamming the car door behind him.

Friday the fourteenth dawned grey and dreary, with a frigid wind whistling through the cracks and rattling the window panes. How romantic, Ella thought as she stumbled blindly into the kitchen, following the scent of freshly-brewed, blessed tea.

A steaming mug was shoved into her hands and she was guided to a chair. She sank gratefully, took a sip of the dark sweetness, and blinked blearily up at Finn.

He leaned back against the counter, all six feet and something of him, and folded his arms over his bare chest. He gleamed in the grey light like a sculpture. For a moment he seemed made of molten silver, all shiny planes and faint hollows, his muscled chest—

No. Ella returned her focus on her tea. Why was she feeling so out of sorts? It wasn't that Finn had drawn her gaze and captured her attention — he always did — but why did she feel bad doing it on Valentine's Day? Of all days, the best for ogling your boyfriend and dragging him to the bedroom for some between the sheets fun.

Instead, she found herself gulping down the rest of her tea, scalding her tongue, and getting up so fast she almost upset the chair.

“Office,” she said. “Lots to do.”

Finn arched a brow and opened his mouth but she didn’t give him a chance to speak. She ran out of the kitchen and jumped into the shower.

Okay, what was wrong with her?

She massaged shampoo into her scalp and tried to find a rational explanation for being so uneasy on Valentine’s.

Which was easy. It was a commercial thing, consumerist and shallow. *Right?* It just wasn’t her kind of thing.

But she could treat the day as any other, so why did she feel like climbing the walls?

The suds ran down the drain as she considered the question. No clue why. Maybe it was the fact everyone was asking if she was going to celebrate. All that pressure.

Get out of the funk, Ella. It was a working day, same as any other, and then weekend, to relax and try to catch up on some sleep. Sounded good.

Feeling better, she stepped out — and smack into Finn’s still naked, hard chest.

She squealed and pushed off him, slipping on the bathroom floor, the room tilting — then Finn’s hands were around her, holding her up, saving her from dropping on her ass.

“You okay?” he asked, his voice rumbling in his chest, against her ear, and she felt it all the way to her toes.

“Fine,” she said a little too quickly and pulled back. “I’ll go get dressed.”

He was giving her that worried look again, and rightly so. Under any other circumstances she’d have jumped his bones right then and there. His scent was all around her and she thought she could still feel his heartbeat and the firm muscles of his—

Stop. Not today.

Whatever the reason. It’d come to her. *Later.*

Dressed in warm clothes to ward off the cold and piddling rain, she headed to the apartment door. Finn already stood there, wearing his sweater and pulling on his jacket.

“Ella.” He frowned when she sidestepped him and opened the door. “Dave said—”

“I know what he said.” *To stay home and rest.* Well, now she felt bad, because Finn definitely needed his rest. *Dammit.* “You can stay and laze about, read.” He’d confiscated her Scandinavian folklore book the last week and was reading it like someone possessed. It had to do with his past and his people, so she understood why. “You’ll be well guarded.”

The bodyguards Dave had appointed stood right outside the door, ready to intervene if anything tried to snatch Finn.

“But why?” Finn muttered.

In Finn-speak: *why do you want to go to the office when Dave said we can stay home and relax, and you’ve been going on for weeks now that we need a goddamn break?*

“It’s a work day,” she said. “Nothing special about it.”

“It’s Valentine’s Day.”

He said it as if it was something mystical. “I know. So what?”

Finn shook his head and followed her out. She hadn’t really expected him to stay, although for once she might have preferred it. His beauty was distracting as always, and it kept stirring that feeling of unease in her stomach.

The drizzle came in waves, driven by the wind. They made it to the car wiping water off their faces and Finn was silent during the ride to the office.

Nothing strange there. It was the looks he kept shooting her she found unnerving. It was as if he wanted to ask her something but wasn't sure if he should. She probably looked like she wanted to bite his face off.

"I just have a lot to do," she mumbled by way of apology as she parked outside the Bureau. "Filing. And other paperwork."

Finn didn't speak another word for the rest of the morning.

Then again, that wasn't that unusual.

Maybe she was reading too much into things.

Dave practically kicked her out of the office in the early afternoon, telling her she wasn't supposed to be at work during a day off. *So what?* Couldn't she be anywhere she wanted on her day off?

Finn sent her another long and undecipherable look as she stormed out of the Bureau and headed to the car. She sat behind the wheel and thumped her head on it.

"Ella?" Finn slid into the passenger seat and watched her with wide eyes. "What's going on?"

"Nothing. Just... I don't want to go home."

Finn buckled himself in and was silent for a beat or two. Then he said, "We could go someplace."

"Like where?"

"A cafe. The movies."

"I thought you don't like going to the movies."

Mike had dragged them to see a rerun of *Avatar* one day, and it had been a typical disaster. The whole experience, especially the 3D effects, reminded Finn too much of the Gates and he'd had a panic attack. It had been terrifying.

He shrugged. "You like it. And it's what people do on—"

"No."

Finn glared at the dashboard, his mouth tightening.

Ella sighed. What was wrong with her? "I'm going to the firing range to practice. Wanna come?"

Finn shrugged.

She drove in silence, heading out of the city to the indoor shooting range used by the Bureau officers. It was quite cold and the parking lot was almost empty. Inside the building the air was just as frigid, but without the wind.

They went to grab earmuffs and program their targets in the main computer, then went through to the shooting bay. They selected adjacent lanes and drew their guns.

Ella stepped to the firing line and loaded her pistol, when a prickling sensation told her Finn was observing her. She turned, pulling her earmuffs down.

"What is it?" she asked.

His earmuffs also hung around his neck, and he held the gun in one hand as if forgotten about it. “Ella, you...”

“Yes?”

He fidgeted with the earmuffs, tugging them to the side. It wasn’t like Finn to fidget.

“Yeah? Spit it out, Finn. You’re making me worry here.”

“I’m making you...?” Finn sputtered. Another first.

Ella blinked. “Are you sick?”

“Sick?”

“You sound like Dave. That has to count as sickness.”

“I’m not...” Finn passed a hand over his face. He let his hand drop and took a deep breath. “Do you like flowers?”

Ella gaped. That was what had gotten his briefs in a twist? “You wanna put some pots in the apartment, knock yourself out. No problem with me.”

Finn grabbed his earmuffs, pulled them off his neck and threw them to the floor.

Ella stared at them, then looked up at Finn. “Um. Why did you...?” She shook her head. “Nevermind. Shall we do some practice now that’s settled?”

“Can’t we talk?”

Okay, the sky was falling. Finn wanted to talk. “About what?”

“Today. Tonight. Valentine’s.”

Oh, for god’s sake.

“What’s there to talk about? I’d rather do shooting practice. Don’t you want—?”

Finn lifted his gun and fired bullet after bullet into the target.

Ella yipped and pulled on her earmuffs, sparing her eardrums some damage as he continued shooting. At some point she realized he was still pulling the trigger but had run out of bullets. The target swung round and round.

Looked like he’d hit the bull’s-eye every single time, though.

Wow.

She dragged the earmuffs down. “What was that about?”

“I’ve practiced,” he said, face blank. “Finished. Just tell me something.”

“What?”

“The reason you wanted to go to work and then come here — the reason you don’t want to go out — is you don’t want to celebrate Valentine’s with me, right?”

“Yes.” It came out with more vehemence than she’d meant to. “I just don’t—”

“I understand,” Finn said, turned on his heel and left the firing bay.

Whoa. The day kept getting better and better.

Ella found Finn in the car, back to his silent self. She didn’t feel like talking, either, and between his weird behavior and her bitchy mood, it was probably for the best. They drove by her favorite sushi place and got some takeaway. It’d turned out Finn loved sushi, so she hoped he’d see it as a peace offering.

Though she still wasn’t sure why he’d been upset. Over the flowers?

That made no sense.

They sat in their living room, the curtains drawn as always, yellow light from the overhead lamps gilding the old furniture. They ate quietly, then Ella went to feed Missy. She found her under Mike and Scott's bed — a pair of small yellow eyes. The kitten came out reluctantly, so Ella dished out some cat food and won Missy's trust back in one stroke.

Some things were simple like that.

Finn, on the other hand...

She returned to their apartment, determined to talk it out with him, see what was bothering him. She waved at the bodyguards as she passed them by and they nodded at her.

Guess they weren't celebrating Valentine's either that night.

Finn wasn't in the living room.

Okay.

She stepped into the bedroom and sat beside him on the bed. He held something — her folklore book, but he wasn't looking at it. His gaze was distant.

She took the book and put it down beside her. "All right, what's on your mind?"

Finn opened his hands, palms up, then fisted them. "Nothing."

"Yeah, right. As if I don't know you by now." She nudged him in the ribs. "Come on. I want to know."

He took a long moment to speak, but she was used to that. She could be patient for Finn.

"There's a festival," he said. "No, not a festival. A holy day?"

"A holiday?"

"A holy day." He pronounced each word separately. "Set by the gods in the Nine Heavens as a day to celebrate."

"Celebrate what?"

He touched two fingers to his chest and bowed his head.

Love. He looked so solemn when he made that gesture. It made her heart beat faster.

"And what do you do on that day?"

"Give gifts." He puffed out a breath. "Dragon eggs. And ice flowers. Eat buttercake. And drink sweet wine."

Buttercake. Huh. "Sounds nice."

"It's not nice."

Come again? She blinked. "It isn't?"

"Not nice. It's *important.*" Finn got up. Tension ran through his body. "It means... a lot."

Ella nodded to herself. "And who have you celebrated it with?"

"No one," Finn said.

No one.

Ella cleaned up the mess on the coffee table, the word echoing in her ears. Of course he hadn't celebrated it with anyone. It was a lovers' celebration. Who did he have before crossing over? His army comrades. And nightmares.

No one.

Why did this bother her so much? Celebrations, festivities. Who cared? She hadn't celebrated Valentine's, ever.

Besides, love wasn't something you proved with a box of chocolates, was it? You proved it every day and every night, and god knew they'd had plenty of opportunity to do so since they'd met. He'd saved her life, she'd saved his time and again. They shared his dreams, for Chrissakes. How much closer could you get to someone?

But something bothered him, like a thorn under his skin, and she had the impression he was giving her clues, but she couldn't put the picture together.

Evening was falling, the light dimming under the curtains.

Finn stood in the kitchen, cradling a cup of coffee. She studied his broad back, the way the soft green cotton stretched across his shoulder blades and the draw-string pants hung low on his narrow hips. There was something entirely vulnerable and sweet to the curve of his neck as he bent his head over his mug.

"Hey," Ella said, suddenly awkward as she went to stand beside him.

His eyes flicked in her direction, half-lidded and pensive.

"So, um." She chewed on her lower lip and crossed her arms under her breasts.

"Wanna go out for a drink?"

He turned away. "You don't really want to go."

"No," she agreed. "But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe a drink will do me good. It'll help me relax. I'm tense."

"Why?"

Yeah, excellent question. "It's this day," she muttered. "I hate it."

"Because you don't want to celebrate it with me."

"What?" His choice of words made her look up. He'd said that before, hadn't he? "I don't like Valentine's. But it's not because I don't want to celebrate it with *you*."

Finn put his mug down on the counter, his shoulders stiff.

"Finn, it really isn't like that. I just... don't like it."

"Why?"

Because it's cheap and pretentious and shallow and Christ, why do I have to do what everyone else is doing, like a robot?

But what came out of her mouth was, "Bad memories."

She blinked. There were bad memories, weren't there? She couldn't quite grasp them; they floated beneath the thin film of her thoughts.

His brows drew together. He reached for her, clasped her wrist loosely. "A man?"

She shook her head. "Never celebrated Valentine's with anyone, so no, it's not that." He stood so close to her now she had to look up to meet his stormy gaze. "I... don't want to talk about it right now."

Avoid the topic. Evade the questions. Shun the truth.

Too late. A faint memory rose from the murk, sharpening — a memory of someone shouting and something crashing and unbearable fear and guilt...

"Ella?" His hands grasped her shoulders, then traveled up to cup her face. His eyes were narrowed. "Are you okay?"

She nodded. "This is so fucked up." She wanted to snicker but she also wanted to cry, so she swallowed it down. "Dammit. I think my parents..." God, now it was coming back. "They fought. They fought every year on this day."

He frowned, still holding her face, still watching her lips. "Why?"

“They always fought. Over me and my strangeness. Over everything and nothing. But on Valentine’s... My mom, you see, expected more. More gifts, more flowers, more chocolates. More jewelry. As you may have noticed, my mom isn’t easy to please on the best of days.”

Finn’s thumbs brushed over her cheekbones, rough and warm. His eyes took her in, checking her over, as if he wasn’t convinced she was okay. “Did they hurt you?”

“What? God, no.” She gripped Finn’s wrists and shook him a little, finally getting his serious look. Of course it made sense he’d think that after they way his father had treated him. “No, they didn’t. Just scared me, I guess, and since then...” She swallowed. “Since then I don’t care much for Valentine’s.”

Wow. That *was* fucked up. Then again, for someone who could barely remember their childhood up to the age of seven, gaining back any memory was a bonus, awful as it was. Funny how the older the memory, the sharper the fear it carried with it. She shivered.

“I understand,” Finn said.

If there was one person who could understand, it had to be Finn. But now she felt stupid, refusing the chance to have fun with him because of a vague old fear.

“Well, then, traumas aside, I don’t have a real reason not to have a drink with you,” she said brightly, trying to get her head out of the memory. “Where did you want to go?”

Finn let his hands drop and took a step back. “No, let’s stay here.”

Stunned, she could only stare as he turned and opened a cupboard. “I thought the day’s important to you. That you wanted to celebrate.”

“Not if you don’t.” He shrugged. “I got you presents.”

“You did?” Okay, now she was getting excited over getting chocolates and hearts? Was she out of her mind?

Finn pulled a few things out, placed them on the counter, glancing at her out of the corner of her eye. “Mike insisted these were appropriate gifts.”

Ella stared at the box of pralines and the bunch of red roses. Then stared at Finn as he opened the fridge and brought out a bottle of white wine and strawberries.

He arranged everything on the kitchen counter and turned toward her, rubbing the back of his neck. “I got the wine you like, and the pralines. I don’t—”

She wrapped her arms around him, her eyes filling up. Ridiculous how touched she was by the gesture. By the fact he hadn’t grabbed whatever was on offer for Valentine’s but had chosen her favorite fruit, favorite chocolate and wine. And above all, that he’d wanted to celebrate with her. “Thank you. It’s perfect.”

Now she knew the reason for her unease, sitting down with Finn to sip crisp white wine and eat strawberries and chocolates was nice. More than nice. Great. The scent of the roses filled the room and her shoulders began to loosen, her head to clear. Funny, that. Seeing more clearly through a haze of alcohol.

Finn’s solid arm around her helped, too.

“So.” She picked another chocolate and on a whim turned and brushed it over Finn’s mouth. “What else did Mike tell you?”

Finn’s lips parted and took in the chocolate cube, licking her fingers; leaving her breathless. His eyes closed for a moment and she trailed her wet fingertips on his jaw, leaning in to replace them with her lips. He tasted salty and faintly sweet.

“Mike?” she prompted and Finn blinked, his gaze dazed.

“Mike.”

“What did he say about today? Apart from the chocolates and flowers and stuff.”

“He said...” Finn made a visible effort to gather his thoughts. “That it’s an important day. That certain gifts are expected. That girls like—”

Ella kissed his mouth, swallowing his words. He tasted like chocolate and nuts and cream and wine. “So you were afraid,” she murmured against his lips, “that I’d be upset if you didn’t give me gifts?”

He pulled back, his eyes darkening. Then he looked away. “No.” He grimaced. “I was afraid you wouldn’t want to celebrate it with me.”

“Who would I celebrate it with if not you?” Made no sense whatsoever. “Why be afraid of that?”

Silence stretched.

Then Finn shrugged. “It’s an important day in Aelfheim. Choosing to spend it with someone means...” He frowned. “Means a lot. Means,” he touched two fingers to his chest, “together. As one. And I wanted...” He shook his head. “Wanted to spend it with you.”

As one.

Not a commercial Valentine, but a Valentine of the heart. But then why did he doubt...?

She looked at him, at the sweep of pale lashes against his cheekbones, the arch of his neck, the silvery hair that brushed his jaw, and wondered how he could doubt she loved him. How could anyone *not* fall for him, not love him?

Then again, his own people had pushed him off a cliff. His parents had watched it happen, then walked away.

‘We accept the love we think we deserve.’

She reached up and stroked his cheek. “Didn’t I tell you I love you more than anything in the world?”

Finn blinked, and swallowed hard.

It was the truth. And although it scared her a little — and the darkness of the old memory lingered, like a shadow cast over the day — she meant it. She and Finn weren’t like her parents; their relationship was different, forged through pain, cemented with trust. Who needed flowers and candle-lit dinners?

She realized he was watching her, his eyes wide.

“You’re the only one I’d celebrate something like this with,” she whispered.

His lips tilted up in a smile. He lifted a hand to her face, trailed it down to her throat, making her shiver.

But a shadow lingered in his eyes.

“What’s on your mind?” she whispered.

“Have you ever thought...” He stopped, the sound of his even breathing filling the quiet.

“Thought what?”

“Elves and humans. So many stories of elves and humans marrying and having children. And yet...” He shook his head. “All destined to fail.”

That word. *Destiny*. It always made Ella see red. “Destined to love, destined to fail... I don’t give a crap about destiny.” Then it dawned on her. “You’ve been reading these stories. In my book that you filched, the folklore one. Thidrek’s Saga and Hrolf Kraki’s saga. Those tragic tales.”

He didn’t deny it. “Do you think the last John Grey and his Stabilizer cared for each other?”

The sagas didn’t say, did they? She was supposed to give him stability; was it the same as love?

What about her and Finn? Was it fate that she should fall in love with him? The thought bothered her more than she was willing to admit.

She couldn’t quite put her finger on the why. It probably had to do with lack of choice. In love and everything else. Like her life had been planned by someone in advance and she was a puppet, moved along her path, making the choices another had already made for her.

“It doesn’t matter,” she said, holding his grey gaze. “I don’t care how others fared. This is our story. Our celebration. We don’t have to follow any rules, or precedents. There’s never been anyone quite like us before, so forget the tales.”

He grinned now as she drew him back against her. “New rules?” he asked.

“Yes. And a new *holy day*.” She winked. “How about the fifteenth of February?”

He blinked. “Tomorrow?”

“Why not? It’s Saturday and we don’t have to go to work. No bad memories attached to the day. Fewer people crowding the cafes and restaurants. In fact...” She nuzzled his neck. “Why get out of the apartment at all?”

The steady thud of a strong heart marked her sleep, always there when she twisted and turned, tangled in the quilt.

Then came feather-light touches on her forehead, on her lids, on the tip of her nose, on her lips.

Ella groaned, rising from the deep well of dreams to Finn’s familiar scent, his warmth. She was in the circle of his arms, her head resting on his shoulder. She blinked, staring straight into Finn’s bemused grey eyes. One corner of his mouth lifted in a crooked smile.

“Morning,” he said.

“How come...” She scrunched up her face, trying to force her brain to work. “How come you’re still in bed? Normally you get up at the butt crack of dawn to exercise and you’re still going at it three hours later. Not that I’m complaining,” she hurried to add. “Because I’m not. Not at all.”

How often did she get the chance to lie plastered on Finn’s perfect body, eye-level with his bare chest, and...?

“New rules.”

“What?” She was walking two fingers along one pec, poking the muscle just hard enough to feel its solidity. “New rules?”

“You said.” He shifted under her, spilling her onto the mattress and turning so he looked down at her, “today is a holy day. And we make our own rules.”

Okay, she remembered now. So sue her, she wasn’t a morning person, and under Finn’s blazing gaze, in full view of that sharp-angled face, the broad shoulders, the muscled chest, well, it was a wonder she still remembered to breathe.

“You said,” Finn leaned over her, white-blond hair tumbling in his face, “today we stay home.”

And in bed, for sure, because hey, it was as good a place as any to have her wicked way and corrupt Finn for a few hours.

“You said...” He stopped, swallowed hard. Why was he looking so unsure now?

“Boy, I sure said a lot yesterday,” she muttered and reached for him, tangling her fingers in the softness of his hair, pulling him down. “That was a damn good idea, though, staying at home. I’m a genius.”

He grinned and lowered his face until his lips touched hers. “You want to stay here?”

“Right here sounds excellent.” She wagged her brows. “Unless there’s an—”

Finn’s lips covered hers, hot and soft and demanding. His tongue slid into her mouth, exploring, coaxing a deep moan from her throat. God, she felt that all the way to her toes.

Without breaking the kiss, he rolled over her, a hand on either side of her head.

Oh yeah. Please, more. He felt so good that way, a certain hard, manly bit of him pressed snugly against her girly bits.

Her bits loved his bits.

God, who was she kidding? She loved every inch of him, the whole of him; loved his muscles and his scars, his brows and his small mouth. His strength, his heat.

His big heart.

Finn pulled back, but only to kiss a trail of fire to her jaw and to bite lightly on her earlobe, setting off small explosions along her spine.

“Finn, wait...” She wanted to tell him those things she was thinking. Make sure it was clear for him as it was for her.

He lifted up to see her face. His eyes crinkled in the corners. “You want me.”

That made her snicker. “No shit.” He looked pleased at that. What, he didn’t know? “Sometimes, Finn, I swear...” She shook her head against the pillow.

“No, I mean...” His eyes warmed. “You want *me*.” He touched two fingers to his chest. “You’re celebrating today with me.”

Oh. His first. Her first, too. Who cared what day it was? There was a burn in her eyes. *Today and always, baby.*

“Happy to be with you, Finn,” she whispered and touched two fingers to her chest, too.

He smiled, his cheekbones coloring, his eyes bright with joy and smoky with desire.

Oh yeah, it was going to be a perfect day.

Author note:

I hope you have enjoyed *Evasions* (Valentine's Interlude, a Boreal and John Grey short story).

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About the Author:



Greek Cypriot with a penchant for dark myths, good food, and a tendency to settle down anywhere but at home, Chrystalla likes to write about fantastical creatures, crazy adventures, and family bonds. She lives in Cyprus with her husband and her vast herds of books. She writes mainly fantasy and science fiction. Her dystopian YA science fiction series “Elei’s Chronicles” (*Rex Rising*, *Rex Cresting*, *Rex Equilibrium*, *Rex Aftermath*) is available electronically and in print.

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