

NEVER THE RIGHT TIME

CHAPTER ONE

(The Return)

I always know when we're about to start talking again. It never begins with anything important just a casual message, a joke, a memory sent too late at night. But somehow, every time, it feels like reopening a book I promised myself I'd finally finished. We were supposed to learn how to stay friends. Instead, we learned how to leave... and come back better at pretending. "We're just friends," I told myself for the hundredth time, watching their name light up my phone again. Friends don't hesitate before opening a message. Friends don't reread texts looking for meaning that isn't supposed to be there. And friends definitely don't feel their stomach drop when they imagine someone else making them laugh. I didn't fall in love with you when we tried to be together. I fell in love years later, when we had already decided we were better off as friends and kept proving ourselves wrong every time we came back to each other. The message was simple.

Domo: You still awake?

Nothing dangerous. Nothing emotional. Just four harmless words sitting on my screen like they didn't carry history behind them. I stared at it longer than I should have, my thumb hovering over the keyboard while my mind replayed every version of us that had ever existed. The almost-relationship. The long silences. The random returns that always felt natural, like no time had passed at all. I told myself not to overthink it. I always told myself that. Still, my heart picked up anyway traitorous and familiar as if it recognized something my logic refused to admit. Yeah, I typed back. "Can't sleep." The typing bubble appeared immediately. That was always the first sign. We never eased back into each other slowly. There was never awkward catching up or polite distance. We slipped back into conversation like muscle memory, jokes landing effortlessly, sarcasm understood without explanation. Hours disappeared without notice, replaced by laughter I could almost hear through the screen. It felt easy. Too easy. That was the dangerous part. Because nothing about us had ever actually been simple. Years ago, we tried to give whatever this was a real chance. Back when feelings were obvious, but timing wasn't. I remember wanting him just not enough to risk everything that came with wanting someone properly. I wasn't ready for the expectations, the vulnerability, the permanence a relationship demanded.

So, I stepped back. And he eventually stepped away. Life moved forward the way it always does. New routines. New people. New relationships that were supposed to mean closure. We became occasional check-ins. Birthday messages. Random conversations that lasted a week before fading again. Until one day, we stopped pretending distance meant anything at all. Now, every time we talked, it felt like picking up a conversation paused instead of ended. And I hated how natural it felt. Another message came through. I saw something today that reminded me of you. My stomach tightened before I could stop it. That sentence shouldn't have meant anything. Friends reminded each other of things all the time. Friends shared memories without attaching emotion to them. But I read it twice anyway. Then a third time.

“What is wrong with you?” I muttered to myself, tossing the phone onto the bed beside me only to grab it again seconds later. Because the truth was uncomfortable in ways I didn't want to examine too closely. Somewhere along the years, somewhere between missed chances and emotional safety, my feelings had changed without asking permission. I had learned how to live without them. But I had never learned how not to want them. And wanting them came with rules I silently enforced on myself. We were friends. We stayed friends. We did not cross lines anymore. Even when the conversations lingered too long. Even when flirting slipped in disguised as jokes. Even when the silence between messages felt heavier than it should. Especially then. I replied carefully, keeping my tone light, controlled. Hopefully something good. Three dots appeared again almost instantly. Always something good. I smiled before I could stop myself. That was another problem how easily he still affected me. How quickly he could shift my mood without trying. How familiar the comfort felt, like slipping into something worn-in and impossible to throw away. I told myself it was harmless. That this was what friendship looked like after history. But late at night, honesty had a way of creeping in. Because friends don't notice the exact moment someone else becomes home again. And friends definitely don't feel a quiet, sharp jealousy at the thought of that person building a life that doesn't include them. I stared at the ceiling, phone resting against my chest, his latest message glowing softly in the dark. Somewhere out there, they were living their own life healing from disappointments, learning how to exist alone again, maybe deciding love wasn't worth the effort anymore. Maybe that was why this felt safe now.

No expectations.

No pressure.

No risk of becoming something real.

Just two people who knew each other too well, orbiting a feeling neither of us was brave enough to name. I closed my eyes, already knowing what would happen next. We would talk every day for a while. We would laugh too much. Share too much. Get too comfortable again. And eventually, one of us would pull away not because we wanted to, but because staying felt dangerously close to crossing a line we both pretended didn't exist. That was our pattern. Leave. Return. Pretend. And every time we came back, the connection felt stronger... while my self-control felt weaker. My phone buzzed again.

Domo: I missed talking to you.

The words sat there, simple and unguarded. My chest tightened. Because the scariest part wasn't that he missed me. It was realizing I never stopped missing him at all.

@LOLAAAKII

CHAPTER TWO

(Familiar Territory)

Seeing him again was a mistake I agreed to too easily. It started innocently it always did. We should catch up sometime, they had said the night before, slipped casually between jokes and late-night honesty like it didn't carry weight. I told myself I could handle it. We had done this before. Food, sleepovers, conversation, laughter, then distance again. A temporary return to something comfortable. Safe. At least that's what I told myself while standing in front of my mirror longer than necessary, changing outfits twice before settling on something that looked effortless but absolutely wasn't. Friends didn't prepare like this. That thought followed me the entire drive. The closer I got, the louder my memories became old conversations, shared glances, the version of us that almost existed years ago. My hands tightened slightly around the steering wheel when I pulled into the parking lot and spotted his car already there. Of course they were early. He was always early. I sat in my car for a moment, taking a slow breath. This is normal, I reminded myself. Just two friends catching up. But my heartbeat disagreed. When I walked inside, I noticed him immediately. I always did. Some people you search for in a room; others your eyes find without trying. Domo looked up at almost the exact same moment, like some invisible thread had pulled our attention together. And then he smiled. That same familiar smile warm, effortless, dangerous in how easily it erased time.

Domo: Hey! He said, standing.

Lyyric: Hey! (I answered, hoping my voice sounded calmer than I felt.)

The hug lasted a second too long. Not inappropriate. Not obvious. Just long enough for recognition to settle in you know the kind that said this still feels like home even when it shouldn't. We pulled apart, both pretending not to notice.

Domo: You look good! (He said casually.)

Lyyric: So, do you! (I replied quickly, focusing on sliding into my seat before my thoughts could betray me.)

Conversation came easily after that. It always had. We talked about work, life changes, mutual memories, the small updates people give when they're trying to summarize years into minutes. I laughed more than I expected to. That was the dangerous part how natural we felt together. No awkward pauses. No forced effort. Just familiarity settling around us like it had been waiting. At one point, he said something sarcastic under their breath, and I laughed before Domo even finished the sentence. He noticed.

Domo: You still do that? He said.

Lyyric: Do what?

Domo: Laugh before I'm done talking. Like you already know what I'm going to say.

Lyyric: Maybe I do. (I shrugged, smiling into my drink.)

His eyes lingered on me a second longer than necessary. And suddenly the air felt heavier. There it was the shift. The invisible line we always approached but never crossed. I looked away first.

Lyyric: So... (I said quickly, stirring my drink though it didn't need stirring) How's life treating you these days?

He leaned back slightly, exhaling.

Domo: It's... quiet. (He admitted.) Different than I expected.

I knew what he meant without asking. His situation-ship, the ending, the disappointment he rarely spoke about directly but carried subtly in the way he talked about relationships now it's more carefully, like someone who no longer trusted permanence.

Lyyric: You happy? (I asked softly.)

Domo hesitated.

Domo: I'm learning how to be! (Hey said finally.)

Something about that answer made my chest ache. Because part of me wanted to be the person who made that easier for him. And another part knew I had once been the reason things never became more. The conversation drifted again, lighter this time, but awareness lingered between us. Every accidental brush of hands reaching for the same thing. Every shared look that lasted just long enough to feel intentional. I caught myself noticing details I shouldn't have the way he smiled when he was amused but trying not to show it, the familiar tone of his voice, how comfortable silence felt when it fell between us. Comfortable... but charged.

At one point, a woman across the café laughed loudly, touching his arm as she passed by to greet someone else nearby. It was harmless. Completely meaningless. Still, something sharp twisted in my chest. Jealousy arrived before logic could stop it. I hated that feeling most of all the quiet possessiveness I had no right to claim. You chose friendship, I reminded myself firmly. You chose distance. But emotions didn't care about decisions made years ago.

Domo: You okay? (He asked, noticing my sudden quiet.)

Lyyric: Yeah. (I said quickly.) Just tired.

He studied me like he didn't quite believe it but decided not to push. We stayed longer than planned. We always did. When we finally stood to leave, neither of us rushed toward the door. Outside, the evening air felt cooler, grounding in a way I needed.

Domo: This was nice!

Lyyric: It was. (I agreed.)

A pause settled between us. It wasn't not awkward, just full. The kind of silence where something important almost gets said. For a brief moment, I thought maybe this would be different. Maybe one of us would finally acknowledge what lived underneath years of almost and restraint. Instead, we smiled politely.

Lyyric: Well... (I said softly, stepping back toward my car.) I'll talk to you later.

Domo: Yeah! (He replied.) Later!

I drove away knowing exactly what would happen next. We would text when we got home. We would replay the conversation separately. We would both feel the pull growing stronger again. And neither of us would admit it or at least I won't. Because wanting each other had never been our problem. Choosing what to do about it always was.

CHAPTER THREE

(Lines We Don't Cross)

The message came thirty minutes after I got home.

Domo: Did you make it back safe?

I smiled despite myself. We had just spent hours together, yet somehow the conversation never felt finished once we separated. It never had. Talking to them existed outside normal rules. There was always one more thing to say, one more joke, one more moment neither of us wanted to end first.

Lyyric: Yes, thank you.! (I replied.) You?

The typing bubble appeared immediately. Of course.

Domo: Yes. I had a good time today.

I stared at the words longer than necessary, warmth spreading slowly through my chest. "Me too", I typed, then erased it. Too simple. Too honest. I rewrote it.

Lyyric: It was nice catching up.

Safe. Neutral. Friendly. A lie. My phone buzzed again before I could put it down.

Domo: You always say that like we're strangers.

Lyyric: What am I supposed to say? (I laughed softly under my breath.)

The reply came slower this time.

Domo: I don't know... Something real.

My heartbeat shifted. The room suddenly felt quieter, heavier, like the conversation had stepped into familiar but dangerous territory. I sat on the edge of my bed, rereading the message as memories crept in, every almost confession we'd ever danced around, every moment we chose comfort over honesty.

Lyyric: We are being real. (I typed carefully.)

Three dots appeared. Disappeared. Returned. Then:

Domo: Are we though?

I swallowed. Because the answer was obvious. No. We never were. A few minutes passed before another message came through.

Domo: Someone asked me today if I was seeing anyone.

My stomach tightened instantly.

Lyyric: And? (I replied, forcing casualness into my words.)

Domo: I told them no.

Relief came faster than it should have. Followed immediately by guilt.

Lyyric: You should. (I typed.) You deserve to be happy!

The response took longer this time. Long enough for anxiety to creep in.

Finally:

Domo: What if I'm tired of trying?

I leaned back against the headboard, exhaling slowly. I could picture their expression. The thoughtful, guarded, honest in ways they rarely allowed themselves to be. And without warning, jealousy slipped into my thoughts again. The idea of someone else sitting across from him someday, learning his habits, earning his attention, hearing his laugh the way I did. Someone else getting the version of them I secretly felt connected to. My fingers hovered over the keyboard. I had no right to feel that way. No right to want exclusivity when I refused commitment. Still, the feeling stayed.

Lyyric: You won't be alone forever. (I wrote.)

The reply came almost instantly.

Domo: You sound sure.

I hesitated. Because the truth sat heavy behind my ribs. I didn't want him alone forever. I just didn't want him with anyone else. The silence after that message pulled me backward into memory and into the version of us from years ago. Back when everything could have been different. Back when he had looked at me with open certainty instead of careful distance. I remembered sitting across from him in my car after one of our early dates, nerves and excitement tangled together. He had been honest then unafraid.

Domo: I want something real with you! (He'd say.)

Simple. Clear. Brave. And I had panicked. Not because I didn't care. Because I cared enough to know I wasn't ready for the responsibility of someone loving me fully. My life felt unstable then, my sense of self unfinished. The idea of being depended on and emotionally chosen had terrified me more than losing him.

Lyyric: I don't want to mess this up! (I told him back then.)

What I meant was: I don't know how to be loved yet. So, I asked for space. And space slowly became distance. Distance became timing. Timing became regret. My phone buzzed again, pulling me back to the present.

Domo: Can I ask you something? (He wrote.)

Lyyric: (My pulse quickened.) Sure... (I replied.)

The typing bubble lingered longer than usual. Then:

Domo: Why does it always feel easy with you? Even after everything?

I stared at the question, emotions rising faster than I could organize them. Because I knew the answer. Because some connections didn't reset with time. They waited. Quietly. Patiently. Because we never actually let each other go. My thumbs hovered over the screen. Honesty pressed against the back of my teeth. Because I love you. The words stayed trapped inside my head. Instead, I typed:

Lyyric: Some people just understand each other.

Safe again. Always safe. A few seconds later, their reply appeared.

Domo: Yeah... I think that's it.

But something about the pause afterward told me he felt the unfinished truth too. We stayed texting long past midnight, conversation drifting back into humor, shared memories, comfortable territory. Still, the earlier moment lingered underneath everything unspoken but alive. When the conversation finally slowed, I placed my phone beside me and stared at the ceiling. The realization settled quietly, impossible to ignore now. I wasn't afraid of losing our friendship. I was afraid of changing it and discovering that wanting more meant risking losing him completely. So instead, I stayed exactly where it hurt the least. Close enough to have him. Far enough to never truly be his. And somewhere, deep down, I knew the most dangerous truth of all: Every time we came back to each other, it wasn't coincidence. It was choice. Just never a complete one....

CHAPTER FOUR

(Too Close)

The next weekend, we ended up at the same late-night event. A small gathering of friends neither of us really cared about, except that being there meant we'd be together again. I had told myself I would be casual. Friendly. Observant, not emotional. It didn't work. From the moment I saw Domo across the room, my chest clenched, my stomach twisting in ways I had no right to feel.

Domo was laughing at something someone else said, the easy way he leaned in, shoulders relaxed, eyes bright. My jaw tightened. Because I didn't just want to be near him. I wanted to exist inside his world entirely, a part of the laughter, the comfort, the attention. And yet I could only watch. We made our way to each other like some gravitational pull neither of us resisted. He greeted me with that same smile you know the one that made me question all the rules I had imposed on myself.

Lyyric: You're dangerous. (I teased lightly, bumping my shoulder against Domo's as we walked to get drinks.)

Domo: Why? (Domo raised a brow.) Because I'm charming?

Lyyric: Because you do this to me every time. (I said, voice low enough that only he could hear.) A subtle smirk tugged at Domo's lips.

Domo: What exactly am I doing?"

I stared at him a second too long. My heart was louder than I wanted it to be.

Lyyric: Making me feel things I shouldn't.

He laughed softly, leaning closer, and my pulse spiked. Flirting. Innocent, playful, but charged. Every gesture, every word, felt like walking a line that could shatter control.

And then I saw her. The woman who had been chatting with Domo before I arrived. Laughing at a joke, touching his arm lightly. Harmless. Completely harmless. Yet jealousy hit me like a punch to the ribs. My fingers curled into my cup, knuckles white. I couldn't help it. I wanted to tell him: You're mine in ways I don't even understand yet. But I didn't. I reminded myself that we were friends. Friends! A word I was beginning to hate. Domo noticed my shift.

Domo: Hey... you okay?

His voice had that soft concern reserved for moments like this especially when the mask I tried to wear faltered.

Lyyric: Yeah! (I muttered quickly, not meeting their eyes.) Just... something silly.

And we laughed it off, like we always did. Like the tension wasn't there, like I wasn't ready to admit that I could fall completely for him right here, right now. Later, outside under the dim glow of the streetlights, we walked together, side by side. The air was cool, crisp and perfect for pretending normality. I stole glances at him when he wasn't looking. His laugh. His hair catching the light. The way he leaned slightly toward me without realizing it. Every detail reminded me why the almost-relationship from years ago had ended because I wasn't ready for everything he deserved. But now, I realized, maybe I was ready. Maybe I was tired of being safe. Tired of wanting without admitting it. Yet words failed me. We paused at the corner where we had to part ways. I could feel the heat from his body lingering beside me. I wanted to lean in, touch his arm, say something dangerous you know something that would destroy the fragile boundary we had. Instead, I said,

Lyyric: See you later.

He nodded, eyes holding mine a second longer than necessary.

Domo: Later.

Walking away, I could feel the pull in my chest. The almost. The tension. The longing that refused to be ignored. And I knew, as I glanced back at him disappearing into the night, that this was far from over. Because wanting him without permission had always been the easiest part. The hardest part? Not letting him know.

CHAPTER FIVE

(Almost Confessions)

The next night, we ended up at the same spot again. A quiet bar, dim lights, the kind of place where everyone else fades away and all you notice is each other. I told myself I was fine. Completely fine. And then he appeared, leaning casually against the counter, that smile that made my chest tighten before I even spoke.

Domo: Hey! (He said, voice low, playful.) Fancy seeing you here.

Lyyric: Yeah. Small World. (I shrugged, pretending it was casual.)

It wasn't small. Not for me. Not anymore. We ordered drinks, and the conversation began. It was easy, natural, teasing. Flirtation threaded through every joke, every glance. He brushed a hand against mine accidentally. I let it linger longer than it should have, feeling sparks where there shouldn't have been sparks.

Domo: You know... (He said, leaning closer across the table) You always do this. Make it impossible to just... be friends!

Lyyric: (I froze for half a second too long.) I'm just... harmless.. (I said, trying to smile, trying to downplay what I felt.)

Domo: Harmless? (He laughed softly.) I don't think that word means what you think it does.

And just like that, the air between us thickened. Every joke carried something unspoken. Every brush of fingers held a weight neither of us named. Then she appeared. Someone from his past,

laughing, touching his arm. It was friendly & casual. But I couldn't stop the sharp sting twisting in my chest. Jealousy. Raw and undeniable. I took a breath.

Lyyric: I'll grab another drink... (I muttered, standing quickly.)

He caught my wrist.

Domo: Hey... it's nothing. Don't do that.

But it wasn't nothing. It never was. Later, outside under the streetlights, the tension followed us. I could feel the heat of their presence beside me, the weight of all the words we'd never said, the history that refused to be forgotten.

Lyyric: Why do we keep doing this? (I finally asked, voice quieter than I meant.)

Domo looked at me, and for a moment, the teasing faded. Eyes serious. Honest. Dangerous. “

Domo: Doing what?

Lyyric: This... this back and forth! (I said, gesturing vaguely between us.) Pretending we're just friends when we... aren't!

The silence stretched. My heart hammered. Finally, he exhaled, a breath I could feel through the night.

Domo: I don't know! (He admitted.) Maybe because you're scared. Or maybe because we always come back no matter what.

I swallowed. Because I knew he was right.

Lyyric: You're... hard to stay away from. (I said softly, words trembling at the edge of everything I wanted to confess)

Domo: So are you. (His eyes softened.)

And then the streetlights flickered overhead, a soft breeze stirring between us, and it felt like everything could happen in that instant. Everything we'd avoided saying for years. I wanted to step closer. To say it all. To throw caution aside and finally admit: I love you. But I didn't. Instead, I let my hand brush his. It was brief, almost casual, just long enough to send a spark neither of us could ignore. He smiled that same familiar, knowing smile.

Domo: I should probably head home.

Lyric: Yeah. (I said, voice low.) Me too...

We parted. Again. And the ache of almost. The pull, the tension and the longing followed me all the way home. Because wanting him had never been the problem. Saying it? That was the risk neither of us was ready to take. Well me. Yet somehow, after tonight, I knew it wouldn't be long before one of us finally did.

CHAPTER SIX

(Midnight Truths)

The night air was heavy with possibility, and I felt it the second I saw him waiting outside my apartment building. We hadn't planned to meet, but somehow, here we were, drawn together like we always were.

Lyyric: You came... (I said, trying to keep my voice steady.)

Domo: Wouldn't miss it! (He replied, that familiar smirk tugging at the corner of their lips.)

We walked in silence at first, side by side, each of us pretending the tension wasn't there. But pretending had never lasted long.

Lyyric: So... (I started fidgeting with my keys.) How have you been?

Domo: Better. Not great, but better. You? (He tilted his head, eyes scanning me in that way that always made me feel exposed.)

Lyyric: Same (I said and laughed softly.) I'm surviving. You know... adulting.

They chuckled, and for a moment, the world felt lighter. Until I saw her. A woman just casual, laughing, standing a few feet away caught his attention. Not for long, just a glance, but enough. Jealousy hit me instantly, sharp and unrelenting. My chest tightened. My stomach twisted. I wanted to step closer, hold his hand, claim something I knew I couldn't. I looked away before he noticed, but of course, he did.

Domo: You okay? (He asked softly.)

Lyyric: Yeah. Just... distracted. (I nodded, forcing a smile.)

He studied me for a second, then let it go. But I could see it in his eyes you know the understanding. The same understanding we've always had that allowed us to communicate without speaking everything. We found a quiet spot in the park nearby, a place we had discovered years ago and returned to whenever life demanded clarity. The air smelled like rain from earlier in the evening. The streetlights cast long, soft shadows, wrapping us in intimacy.

Lyyric: I don't get it (I said suddenly, words spilling before I could stop them.) Why do we keep doing this?

Domo: Doing What? (He exhaled, looking away for a second, then back at me.)

Lyyric: This! (I said, gesturing vaguely between us.) Flirting, laughing, texting at midnight... pretending we're just friends when we both know we're not.

A pause. Silence heavy and real.

Domo: I don't know if I can be just friends anymore! (He admitted quietly, voice low, serious.)

My heart stuttered. I could feel the weight of their words, the honesty I had wanted for years. I wanted to reach out, to say the thing that had lived inside me too long.

Lyyric: I... I feel the same! (I whispered, almost confessing, almost freeing myself.)

Domo: Then why do we keep holding back? (His eyes softened, searching mine, lingering in that vulnerable space we both feared.)

I wanted to say: because I'm scared. Because I've loved you for years and I wasn't ready then, and now... now I don't know if I can handle being fully yours. Instead, I leaned closer, just enough to brush our shoulders together.

Lyyric: Maybe we're waiting for the right moment. (I said softly.)

Domo: Maybe. (He smiled faintly.)

The tension between us crackled like static. One step closer, and everything could change. One word, one touch, and the boundaries we had enforced for years could vanish. But we didn't cross the line. Not yet. We stayed there, side by side, letting the night hold the unsaid words. And in that moment, I realized something: Wanting them had never been a problem. Saying it, claiming it, risking it... that was everything. And the hardest part? We both knew it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

(Close Enough to Burn)

Domo called me unexpectedly that night.

Domo: Come out. Just for a walk (The message read.)

I hesitated. Every rational part of me screamed no. Every emotional part of me screamed yes. I left my apartment, letting the cool night air hit my face as I walked toward the park where we always ended up when the world felt too loud. And there he was leaning against the railing, the dim streetlights casting shadows across his face, eyes that seemed to see right through me.

Domo: You came! (He said softly, voice low, teasing, and somehow dangerous all at once.)

Lyyric: I wasn't going to ignore your text! (I replied, trying to sound casual, though my chest was pounding.)

We walked in silence at first, side by side, letting the night itself speak for us. The air smelled faintly of rain and something earthy, the kind of smell that always seemed to make the world shrink until it was just us. Then:

Domo: You know... You're impossible... (He glanced at me, that mischievous spark in his eyes.)

Lyyric: How so? (I raised an eyebrow.)

Domo: Every time we're close, you pull back. Every time I almost cross the line, you push me away. And yet... you keep letting me in.!!!

My stomach twisted. Because he was right. Every time we got near, I wanted more, but I had learned to hold back. To protect myself. To protect them.

Lyric: I... (I started, then swallowed, forcing a laugh.) Maybe I like the chase.

Domo: Maybe I do too!!! (He smirked, stepping just a little closer.)

The distance between us was small now. Too small. My pulse spiked when our arms brushed accidental, maybe, but enough to send a jolt straight through me.

Lyric: We shouldn't (I muttered and looked away, pretending to watch the trees sway in the wind.)

Domo: We shouldn't what? (He asked softly, not pressing, just letting the words linger in the night.)

Lyric: We shouldn't feel like this. (I said, voice barely audible.) We shouldn't want more than... friendship...

Domo: Do you think it's that easy to stop? (He paused, letting the words settle. Then, in a voice low and dangerous and then whispered.)

I didn't answer. I couldn't. My hands curled into fists at my sides, wanting to reach out but afraid that one touch could undo all the restraint we'd built over the years. For a moment, the world disappeared. It was just us. The smell of the night, the faint rustle of leaves, the sound of our breathing. And then he leaned just slightly closer, close enough that I could feel the warmth radiating off them. My stomach flipped. My chest tightened. Everything in me wanted to close the distance completely. But I didn't. Not yet. Instead, I whispered...

Lyyric: We should head back! (My voice trembling slightly, betraying the calm I tried to maintain.)

Domo: Yea... Probably.! (He smiled softly, eyes locked on mine, like he could see every thought I wasn't saying.)

We walked back slowly, side by side, silent except for our steps. Every glance, every accidental touch was loaded with unspoken desire. When we reached the corner where we'd part ways, my chest ached. I wanted to reach out, to tell him everything, to collapse the years of almost-love into one honest confession.

Lyyric: Goodnight! (Instead, I smiled faintly.)

Domo: Goodnight! (He replied, voice soft, almost a whisper.)

And as I walked away, my heart in my throat, I realized something terrifying. The problem wasn't keeping my feelings hidden. The problem was knowing that with him, keeping secrets had never been an option. Because every time we were close... I burned quietly, helpless, loving him too much to say it....

CHAPTER EIGHT

(Lines We Can't Ignore)

The café was crowded, but I noticed Domo immediately. He was laughing with someone... A woman I didn't recognize. Casual, easy, the kind of interaction that made me ache in a way I couldn't control. I felt it instantly. Jealousy, sharp and sudden, like a hand closing around my chest. I told myself it didn't matter. We were friends. That's all. That's supposed to be enough. But it wasn't. I walked over, trying to keep my face neutral.

Lyyric: Hey! (I said softly.)

Domo turned, eyes lighting up, but I caught the way he glanced back at the woman. I was friendly, harmless, oblivious to the storm brewing inside me.

Domo: You came out! (He said, smiling.)

Lyyric: Yeah! (I muttered, forcing calm.) Just needed... Tea.

The woman waved politely and moved on, leaving us alone. The tension between us was immediate, heavy, impossible to ignore.

Domo: You okay? (He asked quietly.)

Lyyric: I...yeah. I'm fine. (I looked down at my hands.)

Domo: Liar! (He said softly, smirking but serious) I can always tell when you're lying.

I flinched, caught. And just like that, the dam broke. Not in words, but in everything else. My eyes, my posture, my heartbeat.

Lyyric: You don't understand! (I blurted, louder than I intended.) I hate seeing you with anyone else!!!!

He froze. Eyes wide, unguarded. Silence stretched between us, heavy and dangerous.

Lyyric: I... I don't want you with anyone else!!! (I admitted, voice trembling.) Even though I know I shouldn't feel this way. Even though I'm supposed to be 'just friends.'

For the first time in years, he didn't smile, didn't tease, didn't brush it off. Domo just looked at me and I mean really looked. I felt every ounce of honesty between us.

Domo: I... didn't know! (He said softly.) You feel that strongly?

Lyyric: (I nodded, almost ashamed.) I do. Every time we talk... every time we're together... I want you. And I can't have you. And it hurts more than I can say.

Domo: I feel the same! (His hand hovered near mine, not touching, just there Domo whispered.)

The words hit me like lightning.

Lyyric: You do? (I asked, breathless.)

Domo: Yes! (He said.) I always have. I just... I didn't think we could.

And in that moment, the truth we had both avoided for years stood between us. It was undeniable, raw & impossible to ignore. We didn't kiss. We didn't reach for each other. But the tension... the electricity... it was enough to shatter every rule we had made for ourselves. I realized, with frightening clarity, that wanting each other had never been the problem. The problem had been fear. Fear of ruining what we had. Fear of timing. Fear of being vulnerable. And now, with the words finally spoken, that fear was staring back at us unrelenting, daring us to finally cross the line or step back and lose the chance forever.

Lyyric: So... what do we do now? (I took a deep breath)

Domo: We figure it out. Together. (Domo smiled faintly, eyes soft and warm, brushing a strand of hair from their face.)

And for the first time in years, I believed we could.....

CHAPTER NINE

(Crossing the Line)

It started with a text.

Domo: Can I come over?

I hesitated, heart hammering in my chest. Every rational thought screamed no. Every emotional instinct screamed yes. Now, I typed back. When he arrived, the night was quiet. No one else, just the dim glow of my apartment lights and the faint hum of the city outside. We stood awkwardly for a moment in the doorway, words failing both of us. Then he laughed softly.

Domo: We're terrible at this, huh?

Lyyric: Terrible at... what? (I smiled nervously.)

Domo: Talking. Acting normal. Pretending we don't want each other.

My stomach flipped. Because they were right. Always right. Always able to see exactly what I was trying to hide. We moved to the couch, sitting closer than "friends" should sit, but not too close. That space between us was electric, charged with every moment we'd spent teasing, flirting, holding back.

Lyyric: I can't believe I'm doing this... (I said softly, almost a whisper.)

Domo: Doing what? (He asked, voice low, almost dangerous.)

Lyyric: Letting myself want you. (I admitted.) After everything. After all the years of pretending...

He reached out slowly, just brushing his hand against mine. Not fully holding, just enough. My chest tightened.

Domo: I've wanted you for years! (He said.)

Lyyric: You... you have? (I froze. Words caught in my throat.)

Domo: Every time! (He admitted, his voice barely above the hum of the city.) Even when we told ourselves it was just friendship.

Lyyric: Me too! (I whispered. My heart nearly stopped.) I didn't fall in love with you then, but I did later. And now... I don't know how to stop.

He leaned closer, closer than I expected, close enough that I could feel the warmth radiating from them. My breath caught. The space between us shrank until it felt impossible to exist apart. We didn't kiss. Not yet. But the intensity was unbearable. A collision of years of almost love, restraint, and longing that couldn't be ignored any longer.

Lyyric: I'm scared... (I admitted, my voice trembling.) Scared of losing you. Scared of... everything.

Domo: Me too! But we can't keep pretending either. Not anymore. (He nodded, eyes soft, warm and understanding.)

Our hands found each other fully this time, fingers interlacing like they had always belonged together. The touch was electric, intimate, yet safe. For a long moment, we just sat there, breathing, hands together, hearts racing, acknowledging everything we had held back for so long.

It wasn't perfect. It wasn't complete. But it was real. And for the first time in years, it felt like we were finally moving forward. Because wanting each other wasn't the problem. Being honest and finally, completely honest was the beginning of everything....

@LOLAAAKII

CHAPTER TEN

(Everything We Almost Had)

It started like every other night we shouldn't have been together. The air between us was charged, heavy with unsaid words and years of tension. I had called him over under the guise of needing to "talk things through" but really, I needed to see him, to feel him, to finally confront everything I had buried inside for too long.

Lyyric: You can't keep doing this to me (I said, voice sharp, trembling with frustration and longing all at once.)

Domo: Doing what? (He flinched slightly, like my words had cut deeper than they expected.)

Lyyric: This! (I gestured vaguely, my hands shaking.) Flirting, teasing, pretending we're just friends when every single thing between us screams that we're not. Every time we come close, we back away. You're married to the past, and I'm dying in the present!

Domo: I've never pretended, not with you. You feel the same, don't you? (His expression softened, but his voice remained calm, dangerous.)

Lyyric: Feel the same? You don't even know what I feel! You've been running from us as much as I have! And now you think we can just... act like this makes sense? (I laughed bitterly, a hollow sound.)

Domo: You don't get it. I can't just leap in, not after everything. Not after what we've been through. Not after...(His eyes darkened.)

Lyyrics: After what? (I demanded.) Not after what? Because we waited too long? Because we were too scared to admit we wanted each other? Or because you think someone else could do what I've wanted to do for years?

Domo: You know it's not that simple! (He said quietly. Domo flinched, guilt flashing across his features.)

Lyyric: It is that simple! (I shouted.) I want you. I've wanted you for years. And every time we start to get close, I know that I pull away, and you're left wondering I even cared but when you carry on without me you leave me wondering if I've ever mattered at all!

They were silent for a long moment. Then, finally, his voice broke:

Domo: You do matter. You always have. But I can't promise anything. I can't promise we won't fall apart. I can't...

Lyyric: Then why are we still here? Why do we still come back to each other if not for this? (I cut them off, tears spilling now.)

Domo: Because... I don't know how to let you go. I've tried. I fucking tried. But every time I do, I feel like I'm losing a part of myself. (His eyes locked with mine, fierce and full of honesty.)

The room went quiet, thick with emotion, until our breaths were the only sound. I wanted to reach out, to erase every year of waiting and almost, to finally close the distance. But just as I leaned in, ready to cross the line... my phone buzzed. A text from someone else.

Their name. And a simple question: Are you free tonight?

My stomach sank.

I looked at Domo. He froze.

Domo: Who—

Lyyrics: It doesn't matter... (I said, voice tight.) But... I can't do this if you're still...

Domo took a step closer, eyes desperate now, gripping my shoulders.

Domo: Stop! Don't even start with that! You think I want someone else? You think I'd even look? I'm here. Only here. Only with you!

But the words, raw as they were, couldn't erase the doubt already settling in my chest. I pulled back, tears burning.

Lyyric: Then prove it! Stop hiding. Stop pretending. Show me that you mean it!

Domo: I do! I swear, I do! (Domo reached out again, trembling now, eyes pleading.)

Lyyric: I can't... not if this keeps happening. (I shook my head, half in frustration, half in longing.)

We stood there, breaths heavy, hearts pounding, both of us craving closeness but terrified of breaking the fragile thread holding us together. Then... the doorbell rang.

Neither of us moved. I knew, without looking, who it was. And in that instant, everything changed. The night that was supposed to bring clarity, passion, and confession now felt like the edge of a cliff. I turned slowly toward the door, heart in my throat, knowing that whoever was out there would either end everything... or force us to finally choose. I glanced back at him. His eyes were wide, desperate, honest and for the first time, completely unguarded.

Lyyric: I... I can't do this anymore! (I whispered.)

And then the door opened. The words we had both been avoiding for years. I'm talking words of love, desire, and fear that stayed trapped on our lips, waiting. Because tonight, nothing would be simple. Not even us.

@LOLAAAKII

EPILOGUE

The Door That Changed Everything

The door clicked shut behind him, and for a heartbeat, nothing moved. Then, finally, he turned toward me. Eyes wide, unsteady, heart pounding... A mirror of my own.

Lyrri: You came (I whispered.)

Domo took a step closer, close enough to feel their warmth, to smell the faint scent of his cologne.

Domo: I had to (He said softly.) I couldn't stay away. Not tonight. Not ever again.

I wanted to collapse into his arms, to let every fear, every hesitation, every year of almost-love dissolve into one embrace. But then he paused, just short of touching me fully.

Domo: But... (Their voice trembled.) We need to be careful. We can't rush. Not after everything. I... I don't want to hurt you. Or me.

Lyrri: Then tell me what we are. Tell me what you mean it. (I swallowed hard, torn between relief and frustration.)

He hesitated, eyes searching mine, a storm of emotions flickering across their face. The love, fear, desire & uncertainty.

Domo: I do! (He said finally, voice low and steady.) I've always meant it. But tonight... tonight is just the beginning. We figure it out. Together. Slowly. Or... we risk losing it all.

My chest tightened, hope and fear colliding. Slowly. Carefully. Together. Those words promised everything... and nothing. I reached out, brushing my fingers against theirs. The touch was electric, trembling, real. A promise, a question, a dare all at once. And just as we leaned closer, ready to close the years of distance, a sharp knock echoed from the door behind us.

We froze. Neither of us moved. The night had promised clarity. But now, it promised danger, secrets, and choices we weren't ready to make. I looked at them, heart in my throat, breath caught in my chest. And in that frozen, perfect moment, I realized: some things like love, desire and trust was never simple. But maybe... maybe he was worth the risk. The door hadn't opened yet. And neither had we.

@LOLAARK