

Spellbound

by
Alessa



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There was a rumour going around about me in school, and no matter how hard I tried to play it down, I knew it was a lost cause. I was too obvious; even junior high students could tell I was completely under her spell.

"Please, Ally," she had begged. "Please ask Mr. Harper if you can transfer out of basketball..."

I shook my head sharply as if I were confident, as if I had the strength to refuse her, but I looked up at the ceiling to avoid her pleading eyes.

I was *not* under her spell.

"C'mon, Ally... Out of all those girls in my P.E. class, I'm not friends with *one* of them." Sienna grabbed onto my hand and swung it lightly from side to side, demanding my attention. She thought nothing of the simple action, but it made my heart skip a beat.

I swallowed the lump in my throat and shook my head again. I really loved basketball, and I didn't want to leave my team, but I sensed she could tell by my furrowed expression that I was weakening.

First off, I couldn't have been under her spell. I'm a girl, and girls could never come under the spell of other girls. Sienna was my best friend; she always has been and she always will be. It was as simple as that.

"Ally," she whispered, her face seemingly troubled. "Please. Please do this for me. Self-defence is a completely partner-involved class. I don't know anyone in that class. C'mon, Ally. You're my best friend. I'm begging you."

I didn't respond. I just inhaled and sighed, letting my shoulders slump forward. My expression fell, and I finally looked directly at her. Knowing that these were signs of defeat, her mouth split into a stunning grin, and she threw her arms around me.

I know, I know, I was under her spell. But it wasn't because I was in love with her or anything. No, really. She was my best friend, and I cared about her. I'd do anything to make her happy.

That explained why I was currently sitting in the wrestling room during my seventh period P.E. class with a bunch of other fifteen-year-old schoolgirls. As we sat against the padded wall, Mr. Harper paced slowly back and forth, checking our names off on an attendance list. Finally, he looked up.

"Okay, ladies," he said. "We have a new student today, so be gentle with her." A few of the girls snickered, but Sienna put her hand over mine and gave it a reassuring squeeze. Mr. Harper continued. "This is a two-week self-defence course. Within that time, you will be taught how to properly guard yourself if you ever happen to come into contact with an attacker. Although you will be learning some moves that are potentially very dangerous, please remember: safety first. I'm not going to be too happy

if I have to escort a student to the nurse because their partner kicked them in the face." Mr. Harper clapped his hands together and motioned for all of us to stand. "Alright, partner up and spread out."

Sienna and I were located in a corner of the wrestling room. Mr. Harper had instructed us to practise getting out of a wrist hold. The two of us took turns clamping onto each other's wrists, so the other could twist out of it.

"Good. Just like that," Mr. Harper's voice echoed from across the wrestling room. "No, twist *toward* the thumb. There you go. Good, Kelly." He clapped his hands again. "Now, ladies, try the two-hand hold."

"So you want to come over tonight? Play some video games, maybe rent a movie?" I asked Sienna. I placed my hands on either of her arms, and she quickly manoeuvred out of my grasp.

"I can't... I've got something going on tonight. I'm sorry," she said. Her gaze immediately went to the floor.

I raised an eyebrow. Sienna always told me about her plans, even if they were still unconfirmed. "Are you hanging out with Jenny tonight?"

She shook her head.

"Got another babysitting job?"

"No, that's not it." Sienna kept her gaze on the wrestling mats beneath our feet.

"Sienna, why aren't you looking at me?" I asked.

Mr. Harper sauntered towards us. "Less talking, more self-defence," he grumbled. "Try the move for when someone attempts to throw you over their shoulder."

Rolling my eyes, I took a step towards Sienna as if I were preparing to pick her up. In order to push me away, the heel of her hand lightly connected with my jaw line. Mr. Harper nodded and moved on to bother someone else. I waited until he was out of earshot before I resumed our conversation.

"Sienna... What is it? You can tell me."

She cleared her throat as I performed the defence move on her. "I—I just have a date. Okay?"

"Oh," I said, furrowing my eyebrows. Then, becoming aware of the disillusionment in my voice, I pushed it away with a half-smile. "Oh. Is that all? Why didn't you say so?"

"I dunno... I just... I didn't think..."

"Now try your punches," Mr. Harper declared from the other end of the room. "Remember, tuck your thumb under and use the flat side of your knuckles."

"Didn't think what? What's up, Sienna?" As I tried to get her to catch my eye contact, I made a fist, extended my arm out, and carefully placed my knuckle on her jaw line, just barely touching it.

As Sienna prepared to throw her defensive punch, she lowered her gaze and cleared her throat again. "With Chris Perkins."

"Chris Perkins?!" I spat. In my initial shock, I leaned forward at the exact moment Sienna was throwing her pretend punch. She wasn't able to slow it down in time, and the fist that was supposed to just barely brush my jaw line smashed directly into my cheekbone.

Needless to say, Mr. Harper hadn't made it all the way until seventh period without having to escort a student to the nurse's office for ice and a checkup. He wasn't too happy about it.



"Ally, I am so sorry," Sienna repeated for the millionth time. Clinging onto my arm, she looked up at me and winced upon seeing the bruise forming directly under my eye.

"Honestly, I'm fine, Sienna," I replied, shrugging. As we exited the school through the front doors, we headed across the playground towards the east side. That was our usual route back home.

"I really didn't mean to," she told me. "You leaned forward, and I couldn't stop in time, and..."

"Sienna, relax," I said, offering her a smile. "It doesn't even hurt anymore."

I put my hands into the pockets of my hoodie and looked up at the sky. Now that it was winter, the sun was setting much earlier. Even though it was only about 3:30 in the afternoon, the light was already starting to disappear behind rose-coloured clouds in the western corner of the sky.

The playground was empty of students who had left, eager to get home for the weekend, while we were waiting in the nurse's office. We walked slowly down the deserted street as I stared absentmindedly at the chain-link fence that marked the borders of our school. I tried to think of how to phrase my words so I didn't sound so protective of her.

"Sienna..." I began.

She sighed lightly, as if she knew what was coming.

"Look... About tonight, I just really don't think it's a good idea."

"Ally," she implored, her voice soft. "Please, don't start with this. I'm not a child."

I began wringing my hands around my schoolbag. "I know, Sienna... But I'm just looking out for you. He's hurt you so many times, and I... I don't want to see it happen again."

She shrugged helplessly. "I've been waiting for this for months, Ally. Ever since he and I broke up, I've been hoping that he'd come back, and now he has. I mean, I've never really gotten over him, you know?"

"Maybe that's why you shouldn't get involved again." I turned and faced her. "Look. Even when the two of you were dating, he'd blow you off and... and do really impulsive shit that upset you, and—"

"It's different this time," she insisted. "He promised it would be. He said he'd prove it. He's taking me to the movies tonight and a snack at the mall."

"The one up by Bedford Road?"

Sienna nodded. There was a short pause before she spoke again. "Chris promised, Ally. Don't worry about me, okay? Everything will be fine."

She knew that it was impossible for me not to worry about her, especially if an asshole ex-boyfriend was thrown into the mix. Nonetheless, I nodded and responded only with a short sigh, then swung my schoolbag from one shoulder to the other and tried to put a smile on my face.

The walk home was mostly silent, with only a few words exchanged here and there. As we approached her street, I stole a glance at her out of the corner of my eye.

No wonder Chris Perkins wanted her back. She was beautiful. Her wide green eyes stood out against the raven colour of her hair. She had a few scarcely placed freckles on the bridge of her nose, and her skin was a pale ivory colour. However, Sienna wasn't placed in the "popular" category with girls who wore the latest fashion and too much make-up. Her prettiness was natural, and one could see it the second her smile reached her eyes.

She wasn't like most girls in personality, either. Her interests were different, including things like old movies and classic books, watercolouring, and her acoustic guitar. She didn't like things that were simply popular; Sienna was deeper than that. She was carefree, innocent, and breathtaking.

As we reached her house, Sienna turned to look at me. She shot me a reassuring smile, thanked me for the walk home, and quickly hugged me. She gave me a quick wave and then headed for her front door, fishing her keys out of her bag as she did so.

Sienna disappeared through her door before it shut again. Partially in a daze, I stared at the motionless house and thought about how I was absolutely nothing compared to someone like Chris Perkins. Sienna would never fall for a girl like me when there are boys like him who are confident and smooth. Chris worked out on a regular basis; he had deep eyes that girls never got tired of staring into; and he got whatever he wanted with a snap of his fingers. I knew I could never compete with a guy. Guys like Chris were always boyfriends.

Now, Girls like me, however... Girls like me were no comparison, with my brown ponytail, dorky glasses, lanky stature, and tendency to care too much. Girls like me were always the best friends.

As much as I hated Chris Perkins for everything he'd done to Sienna and everything he was about to get back at the snap of his fingers, I prayed that he'd show up tonight. I prayed that he'd make Sienna happy, because, after all, I would've done anything to make her happy.



Sometime around seven o'clock, I slowed down to a stop at the sidewalk of Sienna's house. I had on a blue and grey striped hoodie and black jeans. Held tightly in my hands, there was a pack of Hershey's Chocolate Kisses; they had always been her favourites.

Despite all the preparation that would go to waste, before I brought my gaze up to the house, I silently hoped to God that he had already picked her up. As much as I would've loved to be even her backup date, I couldn't bear to see her heart crushed all over again.

Finally, I forced myself to glance up. Only one light in the entire house was on; it was hers, and through the Venetian blinds covering her window, I could see that one of her old black-and-white movies was playing on the television screen.

The bastard hadn't shown.

I took a deep breath and headed up to Sienna's front door. I pressed the doorbell twice and waited with one hand in the pocket of my hoodie and chocolates in the other.

For about a minute and a half, I waited on the stoop, rocking back and forth on my feet. It was freezing. There was no answer at the door as my breath rose in clouds around my mouth. I knew she was home alone. Sienna didn't have any siblings; her father had moved out years ago, and her mother was very committed to her job as a lawyer. More often than not, Sienna was the only one at her house.

Finally, the door swung open to reveal my best friend. She was wearing a little black bell dress with velvet trim. On her feet were simple black flats. Her mascara had run and was slightly smeared underneath her eyes, but it was dry now, as though she had cried hours ago.

However, upon seeing me standing on her doorstep with a bag of Chocolate Kisses in my hand, her eyes began to water again. She threw her arms around me for the second time that day, but this time she pressed her face into my shoulder and stayed there. I hesitantly brought my hand up to smooth her hair.

"Go ahead, say it," she murmured into my hoodie. Her body trembled a bit in my arms.

"Say what, Sienna?" I whispered.

"Say I told you so."

I shook my head and pulled her closer to me. "Never," I told her. "I wanted to be wrong about him. The last thing I wanted was to see you hurt like this; I told you that."

Sienna took a step back, heaved a breath, and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. She then looked at me and let out a weak laugh. "What're you doing here, anyway, Ally?"

I smiled and raised my hand to her face, wiping the make-up from her cheek. "I'm here to take you out to the movies."

Through her tears, my stunning best friend grinned at me. She grabbed her jacket off the armchair by the door, and we stepped out, heading in the direction of the mall.

While we strolled down the street, she asked me something. "How'd you know he wasn't going to show, Ally?"

I shrugged, pushing my hands into the pockets of my hoodie. Peering through the windswept bangs of my hair, I noticed that grey clouds were starting to roll in over the black sky. I turned to face her.

"I didn't," I said. "Whether he was going to show or not, I would've come by here and made sure either way."



Sienna's laughter reverberated in the empty house as she pushed the door open. I couldn't help but grin for two reasons—one being that her laugh was crazy and contagious, and I loved the sound of it—and the other being that I was thrilled to see her happy. She seemed to have forgotten about Chris Perkins for the time being.

"Ally, thank you so much for tonight... The movie and the chocolates and everything. It was incredible."

"Don't mention it, Sienna. I told you. That's what best friends are for."

The smile reached her green eyes as she looked up at me. "Hey, you wanna stick around for a while? Watch some TV? You don't have to be back just yet, do you?"

I pulled my sleeve up and took a glance at my watch. It was nearly 9:30 p.m. I shrugged my shoulders and nodded. "I'll just call my Mom to let her know I'm with you," I said. The longer I stayed here by her side, the longer I could distract Sienna from the thoughts that told her she wasn't good enough for some loser boyfriend.

After I made the phone call, the two of us collapsed on the couch. Sienna picked up the remote and turned on the television. She flipped through the channels for a bit, but soon her eyes began to glaze over with sleep. She stopped on something random that neither of us really cared about, and the TV became the background noise to our conversation.

Sienna ended up with her head on my lap. Still wearing her pretty black dress, her knees were bent, and she had her legs pulled under her. Her shoes lay on the floor by the foot of the couch. It was only a matter of minutes before the conversation lagged and she drifted off.

As I watched the shadows play on her sleeping face, I could feel my heart skipping a beat. I also knew what I felt for her was wrong. She was my best friend and nothing more. There could never be anything else between us, and it made me feel lonelier than ever before. Now I knew why the worst way to miss someone is to be sitting right beside them, knowing you can't have them.

I waited for her breathing to even out and become deeper so I wouldn't disturb her when I stood up. Then, quickly replacing my leg with a pillow, I rose from the couch and made my way through the dark

living room. Before I left, though, I grabbed a fleece blanket off the back of the recliner and covered Sienna with it.

When I opened the front door, I saw that it had just begun to snow. The small flakes were barely visible against the night sky, but Sienna's porch lights illuminated them and turned them into little pearls. I braced myself for the cold, stepped out, and went to close the door.

"Ally," Sienna said, putting her hand on the door right before it was able to shut.

Startled, I whirled around. She smiled sleepily and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. The blanket I had put over her was now draped around her shoulders. She held it to her with clenched fists while standing barefoot at the doorway. "Trying to sneak out without saying goodbye?" she said, but a yawn stifled her words.

I half-smiled and looked down at her bare feet. "No, I just didn't want to wake you up."

"I know. I'm just kidding with you," Sienna told me. The snow then caught her attention, and she stared at it, seemingly deep in thought, as she twirled a strand of hair around her finger.

"Sienna, you'll freeze to death. I'm gonna get going, okay?" I said.

"Hey..." Her gaze returned to me. "Be careful where you step; it's slippery. Alright? And, listen, thanks again..."

I laughed. "You've thanked me a million times already."

"I know, but..." She shrugged. "You do everything for me, Ally. You bring me school work when I stay home not feeling well, and you've watched an endless amount of my favourite movies even though I know you're not the least bit interested in them. You tutored me all of last year in math because I sucked so much at it..." Sienna took a slight pause and looked down, scanning the snow-dusted sidewalk with her eyes.

"You show up with Chocolate Kisses when my date bails..." My best friend looked up at me and forced a smile. "You even got punched in the face for me." Her hand went up to the bruise right below my eye. "Still really sorry about that, by the way," she added.

I let out a small laugh. "Don't worry about it," I said, covering her hand lightly with mine, hoping it would hide my blushing cheeks. Her green eyes locked with my brown ones, and all traces of her smile disappeared.

I sensed that Sienna was leaning towards me, but I was in such a daze that I couldn't process anything. My breath caught in my throat, and before I could prepare for it, the blanket that was clenched so closely around her fell to her feet, and her lips brushed against mine.

My mind was completely blank for those three perfect seconds. However, as soon as she pulled away, all my doubts and worries came flooding back to me.

Sienna averted her gaze from mine and furrowed her brows. Her expression revealed that she was as taken aback as I was. The terrified expression on her face indicated that she had made a major mistake, and it only deepened my own self-doubt.

Sienna was my best friend. She was perfect, and breathtaking, and stunning. But I was not Chris Perkins. I was a dorky schoolgirl with awkward manners and a stammering voice, and I would never be anything more than that. Therefore, in Sienna's eyes, I'd never be more than her best friend.

I opened my mouth to say something, but Sienna spun back into life before I could respond. "Good night, Ally," she murmured quickly as she picked up the now-snow-dusted blanket from the porch and shut the door.



When I woke up on Saturday morning, my mind wouldn't stop replaying the events of the night before. Sienna's kiss still lingered on my lips, but it also confused me. Nothing like that happened between us in the past, and it made me worried. What if she wanted to distance herself now because it made her embarrassed, or what if she pretended like it never happened?

I tried to shake off the thoughts of self-doubt and regret from my head as I reached for my phone. I almost expected a missed call from her. She was an early riser, sometimes getting up at the crack of dawn even when we didn't have school.

The main reason I expected the call, though, was because Sienna never left something untouched. If there was something that needed to be cleared up, she did it as soon as possible. She didn't like the whole prospect of confusion and uncertainty.

I had expected a voice mail on my cell phone, informing me that she was sorry about last night; she had been tired and out of it and hadn't meant to do what she had done.

However, when I checked for any missed calls, I found none from her.

The afternoon dragged by, bringing more snow. Finally, the clouded sky got darker and darker until night fell. Still, though, Sienna hadn't called. I tried to think of the last time I'd gone a day without talking to her. I couldn't remember, but maybe that was just because I never put so much contemplation into it.

I knew I was thinking too deeply about things, but I couldn't help it. I just wanted to hear from her to make sure that everything was still alright between us.

It took me about three hours of tossing and turning that night before I drifted off to an uncomfortable sleep.



My alarm clock was set for eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, but the monotonous beeping sound wasn't what woke me up. Instead of reaching for the snooze button, I painstakingly opened one squinted eye and grabbed my phone off the side-table. It buzzed in my hand until I finally opened it and brought it to my ear.

"Hello?" I said, trying to keep my voice from sounding groggy.

"Ally?" came a voice from the other end of the phone.

"Sienna?"

"Yeah... Look, I'm really sorry to wake you, but we need to talk. Right away, because this whole thing is driving me insane."

I sat up in my bed but didn't say anything. I waited instead.

"Can you meet me in the park? The one across the street from the strip mall on Bedford?"

"Yeah, of course," I replied. I tossed the blankets off of me and climbed out of bed. "I'll be there as soon as I can."

After hanging up the phone, I got ready as quickly as I was able to. My heart was pounding. I threw on a sweater and a pair of jeans, brushed my teeth, and washed my face.

As I dried my face with a towel, I glanced up at the mirror. I tried to shake the haze from my mind. Despite my exhaustion and anxiety, I made an effort to pull myself together. After all, I would've done anything for her.



From the swings to the bare-leaved trees, everything in the park was dusted in white. However, it had stopped snowing in the early hours of the morning. The sky was cloudless, and the sun was just barely over the treetops when I arrived.

The park was dead silent and bereft of all people; only a few sets of footprints lined the covered walkway. I glanced around, searching for Sienna. The park was small; I was bound to find her soon.

As I wandered towards the playground, I noticed someone sitting on the edge of the metal merry-go-round.

Underneath a red overcoat, she wore jeans and a green plaid scarf. Her charcoal hair was pulled back and tucked under a woollen cap, but the shorter strands had escaped and were hanging about her face.

She hid her hands in her pockets, and the toes of her shoes nudged at the snow beneath her feet. Despite her worried and pensive expression, she looked beautiful, as always.

"Sienna?" My voice was barely audible, but she raised her eyes anyway.

She stood up from the merry-go-round, wrung her hands, and tried to find the correct words. I'd never seen my best friend so unsure of herself. "I'm sorry I didn't call sooner," she murmured. "I wanted to. I really wanted to clear this up. But I didn't know what to say, and I've spent the last twenty-four hours trying to sort out what happened."

"Sienna, it's okay," I began. "You don't have to—"

But she shook her head and held up her hand, indicating that I shouldn't say anything else. "I do have to. I should've said this years ago, but I was so oblivious, clueless, and stupid..." Her eyes had been scanning the snow beneath us, but she finally brought her gaze up to me. "I didn't trust my own feelings, Ally."

Sienna bit her lip. Her facial expression was hard, as though she'd willed herself not to lose it, but I could see through it. She was scared.

"I've wasted all this time running after people who never even mattered in the first place. And you've just patiently followed along, making sure I would end up okay."

My eyebrows furrowed as I tried to understand.

Her voice suddenly had a hint of bitterness to it, as if she were angry, but the manner in which she spoke suggested that her anger was meant for no other but herself. "And not once had I turned around and looked at you and realised that you mean the world to me." My best friend brought her hand up and swept the light hair off of my forehead. Then her hand fell to rest on my neck, just below my jaw line.

I became aware of the look on my face, however, when her arm dropped and her frustration was replaced with regret.

"Ally, I..." she began. Sienna took a step back from me, and as she did, the warmth that I felt on my skin disappeared with her. "I'm sorry," she murmured. "I've been so anxious about spilling everything out to you that—" she stuttered before continuing. "I'm so selfish... I didn't even realise the position I'd just put you in."

She swallowed the tears in her throat, and, for the first time since I'd arrived, she looked me straight in the eye. "I've embarrassed you enough already, Ally. I can't imagine why you'd feel anything for someone like me." Sienna's voice was no more than a whisper. Even though her words were vague, I knew what she meant: her and me together, and more than just best friends.

Of course, I wanted it. It had been all I wanted since fourth grade, when we'd met in the nurse's office because I'd hit my head and she'd spilled apple juice all over her dress. I remember thinking, even through my throbbing headaches and blurred vision, that she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen, covered in sticky mess and all.

I'd stayed by her side all of these years in order to see her happy. And when I couldn't make her happy, I stayed by her side to ease the blow of things around her. But, although the thoughts of our close friendship becoming even closer were always numbed with doubt, they'd always been at the forefront of my hopes.

The more I thought about how long I'd been looking for a confession like this, the less my muscles would respond. I couldn't say anything; the words were caught in my throat, and I was unable to force them out and reassure her that I felt the same.

Sienna finally interpreted my silence as a sign that she had been right; in the end, I simply didn't love her the same way.

She nodded and looked down at her feet. Sienna tried to swallow the tears in her throat again, but this time it didn't work. They reached her eyes anyhow, and despite her efforts to appear rigid, one left a streak on the side of her face. It drove me over the edge.

I'd seen Sienna cry countless times, but not once had I ever been the one to cause it. To see her like this, especially as the one who was always there to protect her, was terrible. Of course, I loved her, and I would've done *anything* to make her happy.

Sienna tried to turn and walk away, but I reached for her hand and pulled her towards me. In one single motion, her lips collided with mine, and with that kiss, I tried to tell her everything the words that failed me couldn't.

My hand on her cheek told her that I cared about her more than anything on the face of this earth; my arm around her waist told her that I'd protect her from anything I could; and the intensity I kissed her with told her that she'd been wrong all this time—of course I had wanted this. Wanted it more than anything in the world.

When we broke apart, we were both blushing, and there was nothing left to say to one another. Everything had already been made clear, and we left with the silent understanding that, after years of pointless doubt and hesitation, we were finally more than just best friends.

I walked back home through the fallen snow. Making my way across the park, I found myself unable to think of anything but her. I found myself unable to wait until the next morning, when I'd pick her up for school and get to see the smile reach her eyes.

Maybe I was spellbound by Sienna. Hell, there wasn't a better word to describe who I was. But I never cared about that or what the entire school thought about us. After all, I would have done anything to make her happy.

The End