Under the Stadium Lights

Gillian S. (7th Grade)

Brooke

We didn't work well together. We just weren't compatible—especially for two people expected to lead a high school marching band together for the rest of the year.

At least that was what I thought.

There was Leo Woods, the laid back (and ridiculously charismatic) field conductor, and then there was me- Brooke Grace, the perfectionistic, disciplined head drum major. I had my heart set on one thing: getting the opportunity to lead the Crimson Rose Drum Corps. Our upcoming competition was my *one* chance. The Crimson Rose's recruiting agents were coming to watch our next band competition, and we *had* to catch their eye if I wanted a chance to get chosen. But we had to get to work if I even wanted to be considered.

It was 2:30 a.m. I was surrounded by crumpled cans + scrapped music, and Leo and I had just been given the responsibility of writing the closing tag for our show—just before the biggest band competition of the year, which was sneaking up on us faster than we expected.

What a great way to spend my Friday night.

I was struggling to keep my eyes open, but Leo was on full alert, considering he wasn't the one that had to be in bed by 9pm every night. Still, I had been doing most of the work; Leo handled the drumset part, and I had finished every other instrument featured in the closer. We just needed to finish off the bass synthesizer part, then we'd be done.

"*Yes*!" Leo suddenly shouted, as I jolted up to face him, "I've got it!"

He played a simple melody for me on the keyboard, and right as I was about to critique it, I paused.

"That's actually brilliant, Leo." I stared at him in awe. "Who could've thought we should have the bass synth play the motif as the closer?"

After putting the final touches on the part, we both sighed in relief, our tired minds buzzing with silent exhilaration. *We were done*. I went to pack up, but I froze as Leo threw his arms around me. I considered pulling away, but now, I felt as if I was falling apart and the only thing holding me together was his warmth. I tried not to admit it to myself, but I actually… liked it. And I might have liked him too.

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Leo

We didn't work well, just weren't compatible—especially for two people expected to lead a marching band… together… *all year*…

Well, that's what I thought..

I mean, she was just too serious. I auditioned for drum major just to have fun, and I was having anything *but* fun.

That was until we had to pull that all nighter. When I suddenly caught feelings for her.

Now it's the day of our long awaited competition, and I'm putting on my uniform in our way-too-crowded charter bus. Deafening music plays in the distance, and the scent of valve oil and hairspray lingers. My mind is full of a hundred thoughts, but I can only think of her. No matter how much there was to think about, she was all I could think of. Her stormy blue eyes, her silky cascade of black hair, her captivating grin, her strong sense of determination… Absentmindly, I tap a polyrhythm on my lap, the fabric already scuffed from the mindless fidgeting I do when I'm not on my podium—

I'm snapped out of my thoughts when a voice booms from the speakers.

"*Call time is 15 minutes. I repeat, you need to be prepared with your instrument, flags, whatever you need, outside the field by 15 minutes.*"

Shoot. That means I had to be waiting for the band 5 minutes earlier.

I bolted out of the bus, taking a shortcut through the pit entrance toward the stadium. There, I was met by none other than Brooke, waiting impatiently.

"Well, you could've come a bit earlier," She teased, gesturing to the crowd of wind players starting to form.

"Can't rush me," I chuckled, still out of breath, "I have things I have to get done."

"Priorities, huh?"

We talk for what feels like only a second, but soon enough, the fifth school finishes their show and a volunteer is urgently signaling for us to hustle onto the endzone.

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"5, 4, 3, 2, 1…!" We count the time until we can take the field, and I run to help a freshman from the front ensemble move their vibraphone onto the turf before nervously climbing up

my podium. I put on my gloves as I took in the goodness of it all- not all things were certain, but I knew one thing for sure, and that's that I was destined to be here. Suddenly, a microphone flickers to life.

"*Drum majors Brooke Grace, Evelyn Whitaker, Tyler Smith, and Leo Woods,*"

As my name's called, I turn to the audience and execute a perfect drum major salute.

"*Is your band ready?*"

I watch as Brooke gives a small nod, signaling for the announcer to continue.

"*You may now begin.*"

I gave one last wave to Brooke from across the field, as she gave the first counts, indicating the start of the show.

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Brooke

I stood on the field with the three other drum majors, anxiously awaiting prelims results.

"And in 2nd place for group 4A, the Starlake High School Marching Band!"

This was it. We made it to finals. For the first time in our school's history.

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Before I know it, I'm under the stands with Leo, thrilled to tell him my news.

"Someone from Crimson Rose offered me a position as drum major!" I eagerly exclaimed, hugging him tight. His face flushed a deep shade of burgundy and without hesitation, he leaned in and *kissed me*.

In that perfect moment, under the dimly lit stadium lights, the roar of the world dissolved into nothing but the warmth of his lips on mine, holding my broken pieces whole.