

Ana is a clumsy and average girl who is looking forward to the future. She doesn't know she'll have to uncover her past and venture into a new part of the world she knows to discover magic actually exists.

Everything Works in Theory

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4093.html?s=pdf>

Everything Works in Theory

Robin Sussman

Copyright © 2009 Robin Sussman

ISBN 978-1-60145-510-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

Booklocker.com, Inc.
2009

Chapter One: Endings

The tiles in the bathroom were cold as I stepped out of the shower, the light hairs on my arms rose in protest to the chill air. I walked through the door that led to my room and changed into jeans and a t-shirt sporting the eyes of my favorite artist, Amy Lee from Evanescence. While I ran a brush through my chin-length black hair I aimed a blow dryer at my head for about three minutes; I had it down to a science. “Juliana, are you done already?” my mother’s voice called up the stairs.

“Yeah Mom, you can put on the washer now!” My mom was always so shocked at how short my showers were. But the truth was that I hated water. It’s the reason my showers were *always* short. Get in. Get clean. Get out. And do it all as fast as possible. I didn’t know *why* I hated water, I just did. I never liked baths as a baby and my mom said I’d always splashed and cried.

I parted my hair on the side and clipped it in place so it wouldn’t get in my eyes as I grabbed a dark red messenger bag, almost sprinting out the door. Somehow, despite my quick shower, I was going to be late for the first day of school. The problem, of course, was that I *knew* I took quick showers and slept later because of it. My mom stuffed a piece of toast in my mouth as I passed through the kitchen with her well-meaning words of “you need breakfast!” But I never ate breakfast. My whole family (with the exception of myself) were breakfast people. They weren’t all *morning* people, but they were breakfast people.

The honk of a car greeted me along with the still warm September air and, as I slid into the shiny red Honda Accord, I offered

the toast to the driver. My car was in the shop for a service check. My best friend and cousin, Lisa Hawkins, wore shoulder length blonde hair and warm blue eyes that reminded anyone looking of a summer sky. She was tall, leggy and from California. She was also perfect.

Lisa and I were total opposites when it came to appearance. We both had blue eyes, but compared to hers mine were so light they were like ice. I've seen people shiver when looking at them a few times. And where my hair was jet black, hers was the color of sunshine, if that *had* a color associated with it. There was a good six inches between our heights in her favor. With her being five feet and six inches tall you can guess where that left me. She always seemed to have a tan while the minute I tried I turned into a lobster no matter which SPF I wore...or how much of it. So I tended to stay in the shade or re-apply the sun block every hour so I didn't get crispy. Getting burns sucked. I'd found out too many times just how much they hurt. Aloe and pain were often my friends in the summer. Another reason I hated going to the beach.

The building did not look the same as when we'd left it three months before. Apparently us being seniors wouldn't be the only thing to get used to at school this year. For one thing the school was bigger. It had always had a population problem, too many students in the area and only one high school. Lisa and I had always agreed this was stupid. There were four public elementary schools and only one middle school and high school. The math was clearly wrong and did *not* add up. Then factor in the private schools that went from pre-k to eighth grade and you're in a world of trouble. Granted, many of the kids that went to private school generally continued in that venue, but others, like me, went to public High School after eighth grade.

As I made my way up the steps I cursed global warming since the sweatshirt I'd brought with me 'just in case' (due to my mother's nagging) was superfluous in the heat. "Ooh...who's she?" Lisa's voice sounded from behind me and, naturally, I turned to look. And due to not looking where I was going walked into a new column that held up the new balcony above the front entrance.

I could hear people snickering from around me but didn't really care. Besides, popular Lisa Hawkins was giving them all death glares and asking if I was okay. They shut up but despite what I was hearing

my attention couldn't focus on anyone but the girl who was walking up the steps. With waist long brown hair with wheat-blond highlights that swayed freely behind her as she walked, the minute her steel gray eyes met mine I knew my life would be changed forever by this stranger. She was completely stunning and vaguely familiar; although I was pretty sure she had never set foot on this campus that I knew about. But still...she looked very familiar.

An arm around my shoulders *did* do the trick and snap me out of it. Shaking my head and wondering about the trancelike position I'd been in a moment before, I tilted my head to see Seth Weatherford, Captain of the basketball team and my boyfriend, grinning down at me. Tall, tan-skinned, brown hair and hazel eyes; he was every girl's dream. And he was dating me. His lips brushed my cheek in greeting before lacing his fingers with mine. I still felt embarrassed whenever he kissed me in public since we'd only been going out for a month, after all. But I knew if I said anything to anyone I'd be made fun of. Lisa was the only one I'd told and she'd laughed at me. It had also reminded me that most freshmen these days had done more than I had in my seventeen years of living. I was also a senior, which apparently meant I was supposed to be more experienced. But I was also supposed to be a junior; I'd skipped the fourth grade when I was younger due to my 'intelligence.' And there I was in all my intelligent glory wondering why a kiss on the cheek was such a big deal to me.

~*~*~

The day passed fairly quickly until the period before lunch. Fourth period was when I saw *her* again. By then, though, I knew who she was. The grapevine had collected news and it had, unsurprisingly, reached my ears through Lisa. Lisa had always made it her business to know everyone *else's* business. So all through third I'd been informed of news deemed by Lisa much more important than the reason we were in the classroom: *math*. The latter of which, of course, I thought was important. The news was that the new girl was a senior...and a model. And that was when I remembered where I'd seen her before. She'd been in the most recent Revlon ad. But, where most models weren't as pretty without the makeup and right lighting, she was more beautiful in person. I was shocked to see her in my AP English class fourth period.

I had learned more about Briyanna Winters in the last hour than I had ever thought I'd know...and I'd never even spoken to the girl.

I knew she was from Maryland. Well, she was from Washington, D.C., which was technically *in* Maryland. That whole set-up had always confused me. Was D.C. its own state or part of Maryland...I mean, there were only *fifty* states. And D.C., to my knowledge, was not one of them. I took my normal seat by the window and Briyanna had taken the seat diagonally in front of me and to my right. It was very strange having a celebrity in the school. I seemed hyper-aware of the fact that I'd half-tripped into my seat as she gracefully maneuvered into hers. I rolled my eyes and paid attention to the teacher for the rest of the class and ignored the flash of brown and gold hair out of the corner of my eye.

It was no surprise that she'd become instantly popular. I hadn't even been on the radar of the popular before Lisa had moved to town in my sophomore year. Lisa had become instantly popular which had put me from not being known by anybody to being 'Lisa Hawkins' cousin.' Now that I was seeing Seth (again thanks to Lisa) I was known a bit more...but I was still smart and odd to most of the student body. As if someone like *her* would ever speak to someone like *me*.

~*~*~

"Hey."

I turned from my seat on a bench outside of Kliner High to see who was speaking to me. It was officially lunchtime and was still warm enough to eat outside. I was seated with Christine Milano and Kyle Werner, my two best friends other than Lisa, and two people who were also not known for their popularity. Christine was African American and very tall. She made my five feet of height seem tiny in comparison to her, especially tall for a woman. Kyle, though, was fair-skinned and very Irish. Red hair curled above his freckled face and green eyes seemed to see everything. Why wasn't I sitting with Seth? Because I didn't like his friends. They weren't real. And part of me didn't think Seth was quite real, either. More real than the buffoons he hung out with, but still not quite what I had been hoping for. I was planning on breaking it off, actually. Or I would when I found the guts.

But Briyanna was standing behind me and looking at me as if she actually wanted to speak to me. “Hello” I heard from my right, glad that Christine seemed to be able to make our entire table not seem like mimes. Kyle had a sort of stunned, mouth- hanging- open look on his face and I refrained from wincing at how dumb it looked.

Somehow I managed words; probably to prove for myself we weren’t all salivating like Kyle. “Um...hi.” Ok, so maybe they were more like inarticulate sounds, but sounds they had been.

“You’re Juliana, right?” she asked and her voice was like music. I wondered vaguely if I were being hypnotized somehow. I nodded and she continued, “Well...I’m Briyanna and I’m new around here. But I heard you were the one to talk to about catching up. My mother wants me to get a tutor and I heard you do some tutoring outside of school. I’m hoping to take the Regents exams so I won’t have to re-do senior year.”

I let out the breath I hadn’t realized I’d been holding. She wanted me to *tutor* her. Why was New York still the *only* state forcing its students to take the Regents exams anyway? I managed a weak smile and said, “Well...I really tutor some of the younger students and a few still in middle and elementary schools. I’ve never tutored anyone in my own grade before.” There, honesty. How I wished I could have uttered the lie easily and told her how much experience I’d had, but I hadn’t the experience nor the ability to lie. When I lied my face got all red and my hands got all sweaty.

“I see” was all she said but her voice held a myriad of emotions, disappointment not the least among them. “But I only need to catch up so you’d be tutoring me in things you already know, in theory.” She bit her lower lip in a sign of nerves and added, “I really, really need to get caught up. I’d pay you, of course.”

I was about to reply that it wasn’t really about the money when I felt a kick in the shin from Kyle’s side of the table. Apparently he’d come back to his self and decided I was making this decision too quickly. And then I realized that I *could* use the extra money. The life of a seventeen- year- old girl is rarely inexpensive and, though my parents gave me a generous allowance, I was saving up to get myself a laptop. I had my own desktop computer, but a laptop was really so

much easier to manage. Besides...I loved computers and having another one would be fun. "When would you like to start?"

In the end we set up to meet on Thursdays and before she'd left my senses had returned to normal, thankfully. Talking about school tended to do that. Today, though, was Wednesday and that meant my first tutoring session with Briyanna was tomorrow. This was big for two reasons. One: she was a celebrity. Two: it was my first time tutoring someone in my own grade. Apparently they were going to pay me one hundred dollars an hour. I normally charged fifty, but when I'd brought that up Briyanna had just winked and said her mother didn't have to know that.

~*~*~

The next day I printed out directions to Briyanna's house in the computer lab before leaving school. I was supposed to get there around six and it was about a fifteen-minute drive from my house. On the way there I got lost three times despite the directions and reminded myself not to use mapquest again as I finally pulled into the large circular driveway. My car was not as nice as Lisa's shiny new Accord but it would do. It was an Audi A4 and it was about five years old. It was navy blue and I'd named her Jezebel because she was always giving me problems and never seemed loyal to me. I had my junior's license, thankfully, and when I'd gotten Jez my dad had gotten himself a spiffy new car and I'd been landed with this lot. I loved my car and wouldn't have traded her for anything. Not even a shiny new Accord.

The house was a beautiful Victorian that blended into the neighborhood nicely while still keeping its own unique look about it. I took a deep breath before going to the door and giving a firm couple of knocks. I was waiting barely a few minutes before the door flung open and I was face to face with Briyanna.

"Hey Ana, thanks so much for agreeing to this." A small smile curled my lips at hearing the familiar nickname slip from her so casually.

"No problem, really...but like I said, I've only ever tutored people in lower grades...so you've been warned." She laughed, thinking that my semi-serious warning had been a joke. Well, at least she thought I was funny. *Wait*, I said to myself. *Why do I care if she*

thinks I'm funny? I sighed, realizing I cared because she was most likely to become the newest most popular girl in school, if she stopped hanging out with me that was. I cared because she was a gorgeous model and everyone seemed to like her. And, I realized with a sudden jolt, I cared because I seemed to actually want her friendship and approval. I wanted to know Briyanna and I wanted her to get to know me. It was an utterly new and bizarre concept, but I knew it was true. I remembered hearing something about past lives once...maybe my sense of connection came because I'd known her in a past life?

"My mom's in the basement," she said, answering the question before I could ask. "Her coven meets on Thursdays so we'll probably be left to fend for ourselves for a while. Want pizza?"

I blinked and thought I must have looked at her in a funny way but she didn't notice because her back was to me. I wondered vaguely what a coven was but decided that silence would probably serve me better than obvious ignorance. I'd Google the subject later. As for pizza...it was in the realm of possibilities. "Pizza would be more than welcome," I finally agreed. "My dad's been on this healthy diet weight watchers kind of thing and is all wonky and thinks the *entire* household should do it too." I rolled my eyes to emphasize my point as she turned and raised an elegant eyebrow in my direction. I smiled as her laughter pierced the room despite the look of sympathy she'd given me.

"It's my mom's fault, really," I continued. "She'd told him he needed to lose weight and somehow the only way he'd agreed to the diet was if everyone else did it with him." I shrugged, my shoulders moving up and down dramatically with an equally dramatic sigh. I was fairly certain that if I'd done those two things while auditioning for a soap opera I'd probably get a part.

She laughed again but not in a bad way. In fact I found I liked her laugh and her company. There was something about her that just put me at ease. I'd never really been comfortable around new people before, but I was opening up to Briyanna...a complete stranger. And I was not the open- up- to- complete- stranger- type.

We'd gone up two flights of stairs and as we entered one of the rooms I realized that Briyanna seemed to have the *entire floor* to herself. She began showing me around. She had her own bedroom,

obviously; her own bathroom and living room. She had a separate room for her exercise (she really liked Yoga) and a separate room for watching TV and lounging which included a good-sized library. Apparently she liked to read. There was a guest room with *its* own bathroom after that and my mouth nearly dropped open at the last room, which held a pool and a Jacuzzi. Actually, the two were connected and the Jacuzzi rose slightly above the pool's level and the water cascaded out of the former and into the latter in a beautiful waterfall. This meant the pool itself was probably heated.

As splendid and awe-worthy as the room was it would be the one I avoided the most. Even standing fifteen feet from the edge of the water caused me to shift uncomfortably from one foot to the other, leaning my weight on my left foot then the right. Thankfully, my hostess didn't seem to notice but led me back into the room with all the books and I noticed there was a large desk with two chairs set up in one of the corners facing away from the TV. She took one of them and I noticed the computer was off, which was a plus considering I was here to help her with math and science.

An hour later we headed downstairs together and I was impressed that she was actually smart. I'd heard she wasn't, but apparently it was a load of rubbish. I stopped short as I almost bumped into two people rounding the same corner we were; only they were heading in the opposite direction, which had put them in a crash course with us. Thankfully, I'd managed to side step somehow. I had good reflexes; it was one of my strong points. I usually managed to avoid people I was about to run into. Also, apparently the two times I'd ever fainted I'd managed to weave in between the people that were around me and had my arms out so I wouldn't land flat on my face. I didn't remember any of it and it kind of creeped me out, but it was also sort of useful.

I took a step back and felt as though tiny electric currents were dancing along the hairs on my arms, my legs and my head. I met Mrs. Winters' eyes briefly and rubbed my arms self-consciously and her grey eyes blinked in surprise and the feeling stopped. Mrs. Winters' eyes, I'd noticed, were slightly darker than Briyanna's and felt somewhat colder. Her hair was a dark auburn and she was shorter than

her daughter. Her friend was short and grandmotherly looking but didn't look *old*. She was short and plump with kind features and I wondered who she was.

When Mrs. Winters spoke her voice was warm yet surprised. Her smile, though, was a pleasant one. "Briyanna, you hadn't told me your new friend was a witch."

Witch? My mind was nearly screaming the word inside my own skull. I could hear it echoing and reverberating, bouncing back and forth between brain cells as if the word was too hard for any of them to comprehend. "I – I'm not a witch" I said finally, stepping even further away from Briyanna's mom. But even as the words left my lips I knew they were somehow wrong...somehow a lie. Something in me had changed, had reacted to *that word*. My eyes met Mrs. Winters' once more and I ran for it. It wasn't elegant or graceful, but a desperate attempt to get away from their house. I was somehow different coming out of the house than I had been going in, and I had to figure out just what was different. My world was crashing down around me like glass shattering. But the glass, this time, was inside of me.

It suddenly occurred to me where I'd heard the word coven before. It had been in a movie about witches.

~**~**~

Everything here is new to me, and the one person I find I actually want to be friends with ran from me today. Fled as if I had a contagious disease or something. She ran because of something I had no control over. But I managed to talk to her a little before she left, yet still she seems wary of me. I hope she comes around. – B

Chapter Two: Wake Up

I had just gotten into my car when I heard Briyanna's voice saying my name and I turned; she was coming out of the house after me. I'd left the front door open. She said my name again but her lips never moved and I realized I'd heard the sound *in my head*. It was uncomfortable to say the least.

I locked the door and turned the key, glad to hear the familiar sounds of my car coming to life, of the engine purring. Sometimes she didn't start right away, but this time Jez seemed to sense my mood. **Ana wait.**

I turned and looked at Briyanna again. The sun was beginning to set and one of the lights along her driveway had lit her features and I could tell she was upset about this, too, but probably for entirely different reasons. I was resolved to get the hell out of there and fast, but my iron will crumbled as she came nearer the car and I was still no closer to leaving. I could see her mother standing in the doorway and she, too, looked concerned. *Great*, I thought to myself, rolling my eyes. *I have people talking to me in my head and the person who'd wrongfully called me something I'm not is concerned. Right. This is just what I need.*

But I wanted this to be cleared up. I managed to convince myself that was why I turned the key back towards myself. That was why I was opening the door, because I wanted answers. Ri-ight. If I just kept telling myself that, maybe someday I'd believe it.

I climbed warily out of Jez and shut the door behind me and could see the relief on Briyanna's face clear as day. We stood in the dying sunlight awkwardly and eventually she said, "Thanks for not

taking off...I'm sorry about my mom. Really, I had no idea you were a witch." She seemed very upset with that latest sentence and I wondered if she was truly upset with her mom or if it ran deeper. Was she upset with herself for not recognizing it in me? I tried to step back and bumped into my car as a wave of pure emotion from Briyanna hit me and I realized I knew *exactly* what Briyanna was feeling. I didn't know how or why, but I did know that she'd truly had no idea and that she was embarrassed by what her mom had said; embarrassed that her mom had scared off yet another potential friend.

The fact that she wanted to be my friend blew me away. She was this famous model and no one wanted to be my friend unless it was because I was Lisa's cousin and Seth's girlfriend. But Briyanna seemed to want to be my friend without any of those motivators.

And I realized I wanted to be her friend, too, and not because she was popular or a famous model. I liked the person I'd hung out with for the last hour and a half. That person was real and nerdy and fun to talk to. "I – I'm not a witch" I repeated from earlier, wishing I could have thought of something cooler to say. Briyanna's cheeks turned a bright shade of red that could have matched Kyle's hair and I turned away, not sure if I should say anything else.

"I'm really sorry about my mom. Most born witches already know." My head whipped back toward her at the words. *Born witches? What the hell was that supposed to mean?* As if she read my mind, and I found myself suddenly wondering if she could, she added "Born witches are those born into families that know they are witches and are usually raised in the ways of The Craft."

My nose scrunched up in an obvious show of confusion. "The Craft...wasn't that a movie?" *A really creepy movie*, I added silently not wanting to offend her or upset her again. I saw the corners of her lips curling up into a smile then she was laughing. As much as I loved the sound of her laughter, this wasn't the reaction I would have preferred. Being ignorant of a subject should not have gotten me laughed at. I turned back to my car and she shut up, her hand on my shoulder made me flinch slightly.

"I'm sorry...it's just, yes that's a movie. But it's also very real and not reflected in the movie. I – I didn't mean to laugh at you." She

seemed sincere enough but I didn't really feel like doing this right now. All I wanted at that moment was to go home, get into my pj's and curl into bed. I only had one more question to ask before I did.

"Why did you say I was a born witch?"

It seemed like ages before she answered and when she did I could hear the hesitation in her voice. She didn't want to scare me away. "Well, my mom's rarely wrong about those things. And then, after she'd said it, I *felt* it. She scanned you and you reacted to it in the hallway. She thought you knew."

I nodded once and said, "I have to go. I'll see you in school tomorrow."

As I turned to go she asked, "Would you come over on Saturday? My mom's coven is holding an open circle. Bring a friend, if it would make you feel more comfortable. I mean it's Wicca, not," she paused and I thought she might have been holding back tears. "Not devil worship or anything like that."

It took a long time to fall asleep that night.

~*~*~

The next day felt sort of hazy, as if I were viewing everything through a fog. I'd woken up and showered as normal, done my hair; given Lisa the muffin my mom had given to me that morning and had gone to school. My classes had gone smoothly except for the fact that I'd hardly caught any of the words the teachers had said. My classes with Briyanna had been torture and only a sharp reminder of the events that had happened the night before. She'd tried to catch my eye every once in a while but I'd so far avoided her.

At lunch I sat with Kyle and Christine again and reached the decision not to ask either of them to go to the circle with me. I wouldn't ask Lisa, either, because as close as we were, her parents were devoutly catholic and she might tell them where we were going then we'd *both* be in trouble. And I also wanted to keep this whole thing kind of hushed, at least until I was able to sort it out.

That night found me at the diner with Seth, Lisa and Lisa's boyfriend, Leon. Leon was tall with straight, shoulder-length dirty-blond hair and a smile that could melt icebergs. And the only person his hazel eyes fell on was Lisa. They'd been dating for almost two

years and whenever the two were in the same room it was obvious she was all he saw.

“So,” Seth’s voice cut into the awkward silence that had somehow settled around us as his arm settled around my shoulders. I felt my back stiffen almost automatically and forcibly tried to let myself relax. I almost laughed as I realized the irony of having to force myself to relax and put an arm around his waist. We were seated in one of the booths and the red leather seats were comfortable yet not comfortable enough. “What movie do you ladies want to see tonight?”

I smiled at the familiar words. Every Friday the four of us went out to the diner, or some other restaurant, and then to a movie. It had been decided that first night that Lisa and I could choose the movie and that it would be valiant and chivalrous of the guys to let us do so. I shrugged and looked at my cousin and gave her a look that said, ‘well? I picked last time, your turn.’ She got the hint and said, “There’s a theater a town over that shows an older movie every week; and this week it’s *The Princess Bride*.” We all agreed to the movie and fifteen minutes later were on our way to the theater.

~*~*~

“Hello, my name is Seth Weatherford. You killed my father, prepare to die.” Lisa and I watched from our bench in the park as Seth and Leon sparred with sticks, attempting to mimic the sword-fight from the movie the night before. It was a brilliant Saturday and, as of that moment, Thursday night felt like a dream and I was rethinking my decision about going to the circle that night. It had seemed like a good idea the day before and when I’d gotten back from the movie I’d called Briyanna to let her know. But now, sitting in the brightly lit park, it all seemed rather silly.

As if on cue I turned around, sensing Briyanna near me and she was just walking up to the park herself with a boy I didn’t recognize. He was tall and good-looking in an old fashioned kind of way. He had dark brown curly hair that settled just past his shoulders. The hair fell in natural coils, not the tight ringlets of Shirley Temple, but loose and free. I couldn’t see his eyes from the distance, but I could tell he wasn’t that much taller than she was. He was wearing black jeans and a plain navy blue t-shirt. I didn’t like him. I didn’t know why I didn’t like him,

I just didn't. It was like he set every nerve I had into overdrive and I felt like getting as far away from him as I could. I wondered how Briyanna could stand being in his presence when I could barely handle it from over here.

I shook my head and tried to pay attention to Lisa, remembering I was supposed to be *listening* to my best friend, but my gaze kept flicking back to Briyanna and her friend. They looked like they were having fun and I wondered why I seemed to be struggling with that very concept. It was her mother's fault, really, that I felt so restless; that I felt so out of sorts in a setting I usually felt at ease in.

Briyanna and her friend were obviously flirting with each other and I turned away again, not wanting to think about this. Lisa, however, was looking in the direction I just had and said, "I see why you keep getting distracted, and he is rather cute." I had opened my mouth to protest that I didn't like the guy but shut it again. How to explain I *didn't* like him because he made me feel like spiders were crawling all over my skin? "Too bad he seems to be taken, though." I looked over again and sure enough, they were kissing. It was an innocent enough kiss but something in me felt hurt at the sight. Something in me felt torn, betrayed. There was no good reason for it that I could think of and I fought off the feeling that I wanted to cry.

Briyanna looked up a moment later and her eyes met mine. She was obviously surprised to see me there and looked rather uncomfortable at the moment. **I'm sorry**, she said silently, and almost like that moment had never happened she was smiling again and saying something to the guy she was with.

I stood too quickly and felt suddenly dizzy as I headed toward the small, wooded area the park had to one side. I knew, the same way I knew Briyanna had come to the park, that Lisa was following me and signaling Seth to stay behind. When I felt I was sufficiently distanced enough and could no longer see the park I stopped walking.

"Ana, what's wrong?" Lisa's voice affected me like a ton of bricks and I felt frozen, like I couldn't move. I felt my breathing becoming shallower and told myself to breathe. Breathing was good; it helped me to live. Why did I even care about a stupid kiss?

Lisa had come around to face me but I couldn't really see her past my whirling thoughts. Why did I get mad when I saw Briyanna with that boy? Did I like that boy, like Lisa had suggested? No. That couldn't be. He gave me the feeling like I was being watched. He definitely creeped me out. Then why had I gotten so jealous when they'd kissed? "Look...Seth is really worried. You should go tell him you're okay. Is this about that other guy? Do you know him?"

I shook my head slowly and felt as if I were gradually emerging from a deep river; my movements were slow and hindered. *I like Briyanna*, I thought, and I knew suddenly it was true. The thought wouldn't leave me alone now that it had lodged itself in my mind. But this was preposterous. I was dating Seth. Maybe I wasn't happy with Seth, but I was dating him. I mean I'd had crushes on guys before, but they'd never really meant anything. And I realized I'd had crushes on girls before, too. *I like Briyanna. Briyanna. I like. Briyanna. I. Like Briyanna. I. Like. Briyanna.* My eyes met Lisa's and I blinked once, twice. Then I fainted.

~**~**~

I saw her again today at the park. I wish she hadn't seen me investigating Julien. I got to go, Mom wants me to help set up for tonight's circle. - B

Chapter Three: Willpower

I blinked slowly to awareness and saw Lisa's face above me, and beyond her everything was green. *Green?* Why was everything in shades of green? I looked around some more and noticed that there were several shades of brown, as well, and very far away a blue that matched Lisa's eyes. Lisa's eyes were the color of the sky on a clear day. I tried to sit up, when had I fallen? I felt slightly dizzy and Lisa's voice floated into my consciousness. "Careful, Ana...are you OK?"

I remembered where I was. I was in the park, and then everything else came back to me. I was in the park...and so was Briyanna. Briyanna: whom I liked. Suddenly everything my brain had been keeping from me returned to me and I *remembered* fainting. Well, this would make the total number of times I'd fainted up to three. The first had been when I was eleven and that was how I'd found out I was allergic to Bees. The second had been when I'd hit my head last year on the low ceiling of the attic. And now, when I realized I had a crush on Briyanna Winters, the well-known model who'd just transferred to my High School. Yeah, me and all the guys that went there, too...except the ones who were gay, of course.

"Can you stand? I'm going to call an ambulance." Lisa stood and reached into her pocket for the phone I knew was there. I *so* did not want to go to the hospital.

"I'm fine," I said, though feeling far from it, and I stood up stupidly trying to prove my point. I leaned against one of the trees, an Oak, I realized vaguely, then added, "Really. I just want to go home."

“Ana, the last two times you fainted were after something physically affected you,” Lisa argued. It appeared she was concerned enough that she really meant to call the ambulance.

Realizing I had to do something quickly to convince her I was fine I added, “I’m sure I’m fine. I feel fine now.” I didn’t want to tell her why I’d fainted. Her family consisted of Republicans. They’d voted for Bush...both elections. Lisa looked like she wanted to argue further then her eyes widened and I turned to look. Groaning inwardly I hid my discomfort as Seth came around the bend of the woods.

“Hey,” his cool voice punctured the soft air around us. “We were getting worried, are you two alright?” I looked down and realized I was covered in leaves from when I’d fallen and almost laughed when he asked, “you two get in a fight or something?”

Lisa gave me a pointed look and said, “No...just talking.” She left, probably to go and find Leon, and I was left alone with Seth. Seth: he who was my boyfriend. Right. He came closer and I resisted the urge to move away, standing my ground.

“You two have a fight or something?” he asked again, and I hated that his voice was actually laced with concern. I hated feeling like I was betraying him.

“Or something,” I answered, looking away and let him think whatever he wanted to think that meant. He wrapped his arm around my shoulders and I let him lead me back to my friends. Glancing toward the spot Briyanna had been in I noticed that it was now empty. Apparently she and her friend had left. I felt both annoyance and relief at this and rolled my eyes.

I claimed I wasn’t feeling well and that I wanted to go home. Lisa looked at me oddly and Seth obviously just thought it was because I’d had a ‘fight’ with Lisa. If only he knew. He had to drive me home since Lisa and Leon wanted to stay and I hadn’t brought my car. When I got home I made a quick call to Briyanna’s house and got the machine. I left a message telling them something had come up and I wouldn’t be able to make it after all then hung up. *And the Lamest Message Ever Award goes to...* I thought as I headed up the stairs and to my bed, prepared to get all of my homework done that night.

My room was just that, *my* room. My parents had pretty much let me do whatever I wanted, as long as I kept it clean. And because of that the walls were multi-colored streaks of paint everywhere. Mostly pastels with hints of darker colors and I absolutely loved it. The bedspread had Hello Kitty all over it and I sat on it, holding a pillow sporting a matching sham, and I let myself fall backwards onto the bed wondering if I should have gone after all. But in light of my more than friendly feelings toward Briyanna I thought it wiser not to be in the same vicinity, at least until I could get a grip on myself, on my feelings.

~*~*~

The rest of the weekend passed relatively smoothly. On Sunday I went to the Museum of Modern Art with Lisa, Leon and Seth. The museum was in Manhattan. I lived in a smallish town called Kliner (pronounced like the word cleaner) in Nassau County, which is on Long Island. Long Island is part of New York, and my part of the island was a 50-minute train ride from Manhattan. We were in zone four, whatever that meant, and the city was in zone one. Six dollars and fifty cents later we were in The City. People who lived close to Manhattan often just called it The City.

We were studying one of the pieces and I was sketching it when I felt a familiar prickly feeling and turned to see that guy from the day before in the room. The one who'd been kissing Briyanna. My eyes narrowed and I turned back to my sketch, not wanting to draw attention to myself. The back of my mind yelled that if he was here then so was Briyanna. And then, for the first time, I flung out that sense that had told me he'd arrived and searched for her. Disappointment flooded me as I realized she wasn't there. I knew by now how she felt to what I was beginning to refer to as my sensory web, and she wasn't in the museum. I felt as if someone were staring at me and knew who it would be before I looked. The guy from the park was looking at me oddly, as if he were a scientist and I an alien he wanted to study.

Everything in me was screaming to stay away from him. I was broken into parts; one knew this was a public place and neither of us should have to leave it, but another was angry with Briyanna, then yet another was curious. I stood up from the spot where I'd been sitting cross-legged and met his gaze. I felt like a thousand needles were

drilling themselves into each tiny part of my body. It felt very similar to what Briyanna's mom had done, but that had tickled and this was painful. I bit my lip to avoid whimpering and when the feeling stopped I realized I was shaking slightly.

I watched as the stranger left and I headed over to where the other three were studying another sculpture. I felt exposed and somehow less energetic than I had before. I took a seat on a marble bench and closed my eyes, rubbing my temples slowly to get rid of the headache that I hadn't had a few moments ago. Through my peripheral vision I noticed someone sit down to my right and felt an arm around my shoulders. Glancing sideways, Seth's smile warmed me somewhat and I realized I was *hungry*. I let my head fall onto his shoulder as he said, "Wanna get out of here?"

I nodded and stood, glad that he seemed to notice my mood somewhat correctly for once, and we told Lisa and Leon we were heading out and that we'd meet up with them later for dinner, which left us seven hours to be by ourselves. Seth laced his fingers with mine and began talking about the Knicks game last night. I wasn't a big basketball fan, but I wasn't in the mood to talk, so I let him go on. I didn't really care who'd scored how many baskets but I pretended I did. I let my mind wander, instead, to why I wasn't perfectly happy with Seth like I should have been. He was good looking and his personality wasn't so bad once you got to know him. He came from a good family and there were no social problems that I knew of. They had money, but it had never been about that for me.

I pulled my hand away and ran it through my hair, pushing some of it out of my face and re-adjusting the snap-clips that were supposed to be holding it in place. My thoughts returned to their earlier pattern of why I wasn't happy with Seth. He treated me well and was generally nice, but I saw him more as a friend than a boyfriend. How did I tell him that when I'd only just figured that out for myself? Was there some unwritten law that I had to tell him right when I found out? A sense of duty told me I should while another part of my brain was still trying to convince me that this was all a phase and that I was delusional. I crossed my arms and managed to shift out from beneath his arm as it descended upon my shoulder.

“Sorry,” he said quietly and I turned to look at him. I must have looked confused for the same emotion played on his features along with embarrassment as he said, “Forgot you didn’t like PDA’s.” He’d said it so casually and like he didn’t have a problem with it that all my hard won resolve that I’d built up in the last few minutes to break up with him fell to pieces. And they wouldn’t be easy to put back together.

“No,” I said before I could help it. “I should be sorry.” I bit my lip as I realized just how true that was. I had a crush on someone that wasn’t Seth, and for that alone I should be sorry. I was about to tell him but instead I said, “I mean, this is really my first *real* relationship, unless you count Eric Mitman in fourth grade, which I don’t since it was only one date. And I know it probably seems silly to you that I have this issue when you’ve probably dated other girls who are more than willing to hang all over you. I just don’t feel comfortable and I sort of wonder why you’re even bothering with me.” I bit my tongue to keep myself from saying anything else that was stupid. Yes, these were thoughts that I had been wondering about since he asked me out. Had it been because Lisa had set us up? Had it simply been because he wanted to? Or maybe I was trying to bring this all up because I was trying to get him to break up with me. I immediately felt bad about this and knew it was wrong.

“No, it’s cool,” his voice interrupted my inner monologue. “I mean, I respect you for it. It sets you apart from the normal sheep I go out with at school. They go with whatever I want to do, and after a while that gets kind of boring. Like, I would find myself wondering if they had any interests of their very own. You set yourself apart...and that’s cool.”

I froze and looked at him like I was suddenly seeing him in a different light. He’d turned what I was trying to make into a flaw a compliment. Shit. Not only had he made it a compliment he’d compared me to other girls and had deemed me better than them. Double shit. Suddenly any willpower I had left to break up with him melted away and I just couldn’t do it, not after everything he’d just said. I suddenly saw a new layer of him and it was nice. Still, sadly, not what I wanted right now. But I knew he was something special and that he deserved better than what he described as sheep. I just didn’t feel

connected to him. I didn't feel that classic jolt; that feeling deep down that this was right. Briyanna somehow triggered that in me, but not Seth. He'd fallen into the friend zone and I didn't think it had anything to do with his preferences. My body just never reacted to his. His touch never set me on fire while the lightest glance from Briyanna had the potential to do all that and more.

We wound up walking the Brooklyn Bridge for fun then went to Chinatown for a while and I got a pretty red clip with a floral design. Little Italy was next for lunch and then we made our slow way to Times Square, where we would eventually have dinner with the others. The restaurant was across from the Hershey store and was called Ruby Foo's. It was part of the B. R. Guest chain of restaurants and was simply superb. It focused on Asian cuisine but didn't have any of the 'famous' dishes. It had Chinese food, but not General Tsao's. It had Sushi, but not California Rolls. Lisa's uncle on the other side of her family was one of the owners in the chain and we often got some free stuff when we went there. I was a vegetarian and they had this one *amazing* dish with Tofu in it, served in an actual Bento Box.

When we got to Times Square we stopped in the Toys 'R' us and went on the Ferris Wheel, sitting in one of the small cars. Looking around I noticed the crowd was broken up equally enough, some with all kids in it, some cars with both kids and adults, and some with just adults. Adults were classified as anyone near my age and up, of course. We talked a lot more that day than I felt we had for the whole month we'd been dating and the more we talked the more I knew he was just a friend to me. I hoped we'd be able to remain friends after this, if I ever got the nerve to break it off that was. For now, I had to spend the rest of the day with him and I didn't want it to be uncomfortable. I'd do it tomorrow after school or something.

~**~**~

She didn't come to the circle last night. I had wanted a chance to talk to her, especially after I'd seen her at the park. But while Mom and I had been setting up she'd called. Somehow I'd missed her call. She'd said something had come up, but she probably just didn't want to see me after Thursday. Hades, I wouldn't have wanted to see me, either. - B

Ana is a clumsy and average girl who is looking forward to the future. She doesn't know she'll have to uncover her past and venture into a new part of the world she knows to discover magic actually exists.

Everything Works in Theory

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4093.html?s=pdf>