

Penguin



Readers

THE KISSING BOTH

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CHAPTER ONE

My best friend, Lee

“Do you want a drink, Elle?” Lee called from the kitchen as I shut the front door of his house. It was Friday after school.

“No, thanks,” I called back. “I’ll see you up in your room.”

Lee’s house was huge and it had everything, even a swimming pool outside. I was there a lot – it was my second home – but the only place I felt really, really comfortable was Lee’s room. Like any other sixteen-year-old boy’s room, it was a **mess**. There were clothes all over the floor, empty drinks cans everywhere and a half-eaten sandwich on the desk.

Lee and I were best friends. We were born on the same day and we **grew up** together. Our moms were best friends at college. My mom died when I was very young and our two families became even closer after that.

Lee soon came in with two cans of **soda**.

“I know you’ll want some of mine later, so I brought you one,” he said, passing me a can.

“Thanks, Lee,” I said with a **grin**. He knew me so well. “Now, what about our **booth** for the school **carnival**? Have you thought of anything yet?”

Lee looked at the can in his hand. “How about that thing where you throw a ball and hit the cans?”

“I was thinking of that!” I said. “But someone’s already doing it.”

We thought of lots of ideas for the carnival, but none of them was any good.

"It's too hot to think in here!" I said. The spring sun was coming through the window. I started to take my sweater off, but I couldn't get it over my head. At that moment, the door opened and I heard someone come in. I pulled my sweater off at last, leaving my hair a mess. Lee's older brother, Noah, was standing by the door, **staring** at me.

"*Bad luck, Elle!*" I thought to myself. "*Could you look any more stupid in front of the most good-looking **guy** in the world?*"

Noah had dark hair that fell into his deep blue eyes. He was tall and strong. His nose wasn't quite straight because he broke it in a fight once, but that just made him more handsome. Noah often got into fights, but he was clever and always studied hard. He was the top football player in the school, too.

"Hey, Rochelle," Noah said.

"Hi, *Noah*," I answered, with my sweetest smile. He knew that I hated people using my full name. And I knew he hated people using his first name – only his family called him Noah. At school everyone called him Flynn – his family name. He stared back at me, but I just kept smiling. He was Flynn, the most good-looking boy in school, and I was just his younger brother's friend.

"Lee," Noah said, "Mom and Dad are out tonight, so we're having a party at eight."

"**Cool!**" Lee picked up his phone to invite our friends to the party. Noah walked off slowly, and I watched him go.

“Hey! Take your eyes off my brother!” Lee said, **grinning**. “I thought you didn’t have a **crush** on him any more.”

“Shut up! That was when I was twelve!” I said, pushing Lee away and laughing. “Come on, we need an idea for our carnival booth. Let’s look on the internet.”

I sat down at the computer and looked for “school carnival booth ideas”. We read the **list** of things that appeared, but either everything was boring or we couldn’t do it.



“Wait!” Lee said, just as I noticed something on the list. I jumped up from the chair and turned around to Lee. We had the same smiles on our faces.

“A kissing booth!” we said together, grinning.

“This is going to be great!” Lee said.

“We just need to find people to work the booth,” I said.

“Right,” Lee said. “I’m not going to be a kisser and neither are you!”

“No way! I don’t want my first kiss to be in front of everyone at the carnival!” I agreed.

“So, we need four guys and four girls to be the kissers,” Lee said, and he picked up his phone again to start asking people.

Nobody was home when I got back from Lee’s, but I wasn’t surprised. My ten-year-old brother, Brad, was playing soccer and Dad was taking him out for a burger after the game. I went up to my room and chose a dress for Lee and Noah’s party. Then I put on some loud music and stood in the shower. When I looked at the dress again after my shower, I started to feel worried. I sat down in front of the mirror to do my hair, and then I put on the dress. I looked in the mirror again. My hair was OK, falling down my back, but was the dress all right?

While I was trying to decide, Lee sent me a message on my phone. “Where are you?” he asked. I had no time to change now.

I walked round to Lee’s house, feeling uncomfortable

in my high shoes. There were already people outside and the front door was open. I went to the kitchen to get a drink.

“Hey, Elle!” I turned and saw four girls waving at me. I went over to them.

“Olivia says you and Lee are doing a kissing booth for the carnival,” Georgia said. “That’s so cool.”

“I’m coming to your booth, for sure,” Candice said. “I heard Jon Fletcher’s doing it.”

“Do you know who you should ask to do it?” Olivia said. “Flynn!”

I laughed. “He won’t.”

“You have to ask him! If Flynn does it, every girl in the school will come to the carnival,” Olivia said. “And you’ll be so famous.”

“Look, he’s over there. Go and get us some drinks and ask him while you’re there. Please try,” Faith said.

“Fine,” I said. I went over to Noah, who was standing near the fridge. I opened the fridge door to get some cans of beer.

“Will you do our kissing booth for us? Please? We can’t find a fourth guy.”

“You want me to be a kisser? At your kissing booth?”

I picked up two cans and put them under my arm. I had another three cans in my hands. “Please, Noah! It’s for **charity**. And every girl in the school wants you to do it.”

“That’s why I’m going to say no. Sorry.” He looked over at Olivia, Georgia, Candice and Faith. “You don’t *need* me to do it, do you? They just want me to, right?”

I nodded. “Oh, forget it,” I said, and turned away quickly.

“Wait a minute, Rochelle,” Noah said and caught my arm. “What are you doing with those beers? You’re too young to drink those.”

