

# Control

Peyton Kline stares at the nearly unintelligible note, barely deciphering the scribbled letters that her sister Aaliyah left on her bed. She can see her sister's tears that soaked through the yellow-ish paper and smudged the blue ink. She left that note after a fight they had. It lasted 2 hours and ended in Aaliyah screaming words she didn't know that she was capable of using.

All over some dumb boy.

Peyton picks up the letter and clenches her fist. Her bare feet press against the cold checkered tiles on her bathroom floor. She leans into the mirror and sinks her teeth deep into her tongue. Her shaky hands pick at her scarred face until it bleeds. It's the only form of stress-relief Peyton knows.

She slumps back into the wall and drops down to the chipped floor. Her knees curl up beneath her chin and her steady breathing slowly turns choppy and suddenly her head spins to the beat of her heart pounding. A tear forms in the corner of her eye but she won't let it fall. Her watery eyes remain for quite some time, as she sits there, completely still. She tilts her head slightly and stares at the door. This filthy feeling sticks in the back of her throat and she can't swallow it as she bites the string of her hoodie. The room spins and spins around her in a whirlpool of emotion. She mumbles things about him through her sweaty palms and chokes on each breath.

She reads the letter from her sister again. *I'm sorry, Peyton I should've listened to you. But what Oliver did was out of my control.*

**Control.** The word replays in her mind over and over until it doesn't sound like a word anymore. It's called 'Semantic Satiation': *the psychological phenomenon in which repetition causes a word or phrase to temporarily lose meaning for the listener, who then perceives the speech as repeated meaningless sounds.*

She remembers that definition, the same way she remembers every other thing she learns. Her doctors call her 'Eidetic'. She's just the daughter with the photographic memory. People envy Peyton for her 'gift': though what most people don't know is that it's what causes her the most pain. Remembering every single little thing anybody says to her. The things that hurt the most stick forever. She remembers how her sister's boyfriend cheated on her outside of the woods near their house. The pain it caused Aaliyah. The fights it caused between them. All the pain she wanted to get rid of.

But there is one thing that helps get her mind off things. One thing she has **control** over.

She lifts herself off the bathroom floor, and swings open the rickety old porch door. Her backyard is about 1000 square feet of grass that fades into a desolate forest. She wipes the snot and tears off her face with her sleeve and darts into the woods. She whips her phone out of her pocket and texts two words capable of captivating one particular young man completely.

"Come over." She sends the message and waits impatiently on a rotting tree stump. Just a few minutes later, his car rolls into the driveway. She yells for him.

"Oliver! I'm back here!" He jumps over the fence and paces over to her at the edge of the trees.

"Look, Peyton, I just want to say I'm sorry. I never meant to hurt your sister, we just weren't meant to be together. Besides, she's not really my type. I hope we can put this behind us. I really am so sor -- "

“ -- No need to apologize” She cuts him off. Oliver looks around puzzledly.

“B-b-but-- ” He stutters. “-- I thought that’s why you wanted me to come here?”

“Actually, I had something else in mind.” She says, with this look in her eyes Oliver can only describe as the look a snake has before it devours its prey. Peyton sits on her tree stump with a warm smile. Oliver grins.

“Y’know what? I just had this funny little sense of deja vu.” The grin on Peyton’s face climbs up her cheeks. “I’ve done this before.” She chuckles.

“What?” His smirk turns just seconds before his body falls to the cold, damp, forest floor.

“I always remember.” She laughs and stabs her knife into the tree behind her. She kicks a few dry leaves over his body and walks back to the patio. She wipes the blood off her cheek, and calls her sister. Her phone rings for a few seconds until Aaliyah picks up.

Peyton clears her throat.

“Remember how I told you that you’ve got to let go of that boy? He hurt you. Well, I let go of him for you. He can’t hurt you anymore. We have **control** now.”