

## I Love

“Skylar, I love you,” Dylan says, while longingly staring into my eyes. My heart is beating out of my chest. I can feel my whole body turning blotchy. My hands begin to shake. *What should I say? Do I love him? I love him. No, I don't. I don't know. Why did he have to do this right now?* Dylan's once vibrant, bright, green eyes, go gloomy in an instant, as I stand there, saying nothing.

*Why did he have to do this right now? We were having such a great night... why? UGH!!! Why? Why? Why? I can't get mad at him for how he feels... but what if he doesn't really love me? He wouldn't lie, would he? This is not at all how I thought tonight would be.*

His muscular body stands close to mine. His caramel brown hair sways a little in the wind as he looks away from me. I can feel my heart breaking. *I shouldn't feel this way. He just told me he loves me. What's wrong with me?* Tears begin to well up in my eyes. *Why can't I say it back?* “Please say something...” Dylan says, hopefully, as he squeezes my hand. I can see the hurt in his eyes. *Why can't I just say it?* I slide away from him on the cold, park bench. The wind is getting colder. I shudder a little, and it begins to snow.

*This would be the perfect moment for a cute winter picture of Dylan and me... if only I wasn't so torn.* I do not look at Dylan as he says, “I better head home,” he snuffles, “my mom will worry if I don't.” *He sounds so hurt and it's all my fault.* He walks away from me and heads toward his car. *I should go after him. No. I shouldn't. I should. No. I shouldn't...* I stay on the bench, watching all of the people walk by. The perfect moment is gone.

I stay on the bench, freezing, while watching all of the couples – old and young – go by. My heart aches. I can feel it breaking in my chest. I sit there for what feels like hours, until my phone rings. *Dylan! Ugh...no. Mom.* “Hey mom!” I answer the phone, breathing in sharply.

“Where are you, Skylar? It is getting late and the roads are getting bad. Are you with Dylan? Are you okay?” Mom asks, worriedly. Another piece of my heart breaks as I hear his name.

“I’m not with Dylan... well I was, but... well he had to go home. I am going to head home right now. Is everything okay?” I reply.

“Yes. Everything is fine. I was just getting worried about you, honey. Be careful on your way home. I love you. Bye.” Mom says, and then I hang up quickly. I rise up from the bench and slip my phone in my Vera Bradley purse. The air is getting colder and colder by the second. I can feel the chill throughout my whole body. *Dylan probably thinks my heart is as cold as my body feels right now,* I think to myself. I head on to my car and head home.

*Should I call Dylan? Go by and see him? No. Skylar...No. He doesn't want to talk to you. But maybe he does? Should I have said it back? Ugh! Do I love Dylan? Does he actually love me? ME?*

I arrive home, and I go straight to my room. I face plant onto my bed. I have no idea if I want to scream... or cry. *Dylan and I have been together for 10 months. I have never met someone that makes me feel like he does. He gives me butterflies every time he looks at me. Every time we kiss, I feel a strike of lightning go up my spine. He helped me get through my Dad's "mid-life crisis," and my parents' divorce. And... I can't even say I love him? Can I be anymore terrible?*

*I'm forgetful, I still watch cartoons, I'm pushy, and I over think everything. Somehow, though... he has managed to see past all of my STUPID flaws and I'm... an idiot.* “Skylar! Jacob! Kent! Dinner’s ready!” Mom yells from the dining room. I can hear Jacob and Kent galloping down the stairs, loudly, ready for dinner. As I get up from my bed, I try to get the sad, gloomy look off of my face. I don’t think I did a good job. I sit down at the table, at my usual spot, next to my thirteen year old brother, Kent. Jacob is seven years old and is overly excited since it was pizza night.

Kent pinches my elbow and I look up at him, as he says, “What’s wrong?” I wave my head and ignore his question. I continue to pick at my pizza.

After a few small bites, my mom looks up at me, “Skylar, is everything okay? You’ve barely ate any of your pizza.”

“I’m just not hungry tonight. Dylan I went out to eat, earlier,” I kind of lied. We had gone out to eat, it was just before the big *I love you* debacle. She has enough on her plate already. The bills are piling up and we have been struggling more than usual lately, so there is no need of me telling her about my problems. Christmas is coming up soon and I told her I didn’t even need a gift.

*Maybe that is why I didn't tell Dylan I love him? A selfless act like telling mom I didn't need a gift? A selfless act... Yeah. Am I worthy of his love? No, I am not. How could such a great guy, like him, love a girl, like me?*

When dinner is over, I head on upstairs and take a shower. Once I finish showering, I put on a pair of Dylan’s basketball shorts and one of his old sweatshirts. I look in the mirror and I

hate what I see. My face is all puffy and I look miserable. Wearing Dylan's clothes, doesn't help much either. *My heart aches even more.*

I go on back to my room and plop on my bed, face first. I scream into my pillow. Then, I raise up and hug my knees to my chest, looking at my blue, stuffed dolphin, "Ke-Ke," remembering when Dylan won her for me at the Richlands' carnival, last year. It reminds me of the time Dylan was too scared to ride the Hammer and freaked out when I begged him to ride with me. I know every little detail about Dylan. *I know how he has a weird freckle on his left elbow, he hates watching Nickelodeon, and how he loves to just talk on the phone for hours. Stop it, Skylar. Stop it.*

My thoughts are interrupted as Kent opens my door. "What do you think you're doing? I could have been changing!" I yell at him. He doesn't usually walk into my room without knocking.

"Obviously you aren't, dummy. So what's wrong? I know something is up. I could tell something was wrong at dinner," Kent replies, snarky, as he plops down on the bed, beside of me.

"Nothing is wrong." I reply, trying to convince, not only him, but myself, too. *OWWW.* He pinches me. "Ouch!! What was that for? You idiot!" Kent grins.

"You are a terrible liar, Sky. Do you not remember how you used to pinch me every time I would lie to mom? Well that's payback. Now tell me the truth before I pinch you again," Kent says, concerned. I look at Kent and he is crossing his eyes, attempting to make me laugh. *I wish I could do that. I've never been able to cross my eyes and I think it would just be the coolest thing to be able to do. What? Skylar? What are you talking about? Seriously? You are supposed to be*

*trying to figuring out this whole Dylan thing and you're thinking about crossing your eyes?* I am brought out of my thoughts as Kent smacks me in the face with a pillow. *Ouch.* I decide to tell him, because I know Kent, and he won't leave me alone until he knows everything.

I sigh and then mumble, "Dylantoldmehelovedme."

Kent smiles and then says, "What? I couldn't understand you."

I sigh again, and mumble, "Dylantoldmehelovedme," one more time. Kent begins to laugh. *He's seriously laughing right now? That little jerk.*

I yell at him, hatefully, "It's not funny at all, Kent!" As I smack him across the back.

"Oh, Sky. I thought you were joking. Why is Dylan telling you he loves you a bad thing?" Kent asks, confused. *Face Palm.*

"I did not know what to say back! That's why it's a bad thing!" I say, tearing up.

"I thought you guys had already said it. The way you guys look at each other, you can tell that... uh... you both mean a lot to each other," Kent replies, "...well this is getting a little bit too sappy for me, so I'm going to go play some NBA 2k. Love ya, sis." Before I can ask Kent what he was about to say, he is already out the door.

*What was he about to say? What did he mean by the way we 'look' at each other? Did I look at Dylan in some special way or something? Besides the occasional drool while looking at him, I didn't think so. Was he about to say that we looked like we loved each other? Ugh. Kent!*

I turn off my bedroom light and get under my warm, electric blanket. I toss and turn all night, trying to fall to sleep. *Mission impossible.* All I could think about was *Dylan... Dylan...*

*Dylan. What should I say to him tomorrow at Drake's party? Will he even be there? He doesn't like Drake that much anyway... Remember that time he got mad at you for Drake calling you over his break-up? Or that time he got mad at you for getting Drake to bring you home when you missed the bus? What? Skylar, think. Dylan. Will he even go? Even if he is there... he probably wouldn't want to talk to me. Would he? I fall asleep around three o'clock in the morning.*

The screeching of my alarm makes my heart beat out of my chest. *THUD.* I fall into the floor, as I am trying to get up. It is already 2:00 in the afternoon! Drake's party is at five and I am supposed to go early to bring chips and drinks. I have to rush and get ready, go to the store and make it to Drake's party early. I can already tell it is going to be a bad day. *Just my luck. I just want to see Dylan.*

Two hours later, I am dressed and walking to the door to Drake's house. *I feel numb.* Drake and Chloe, my best friends, come running out and hug me. "Sky!! Yay! We thought you'd never get here," they both say, enthusiastically. I try to smile, but I'm not sure if I done a very good job. We all head into the house.

Keeping up a happy act was not my specialty. All I could think about was Dylan. Chloe walks out of the room, to go speak with her mom on the phone. That's when Drake asks, "What's up? I know something's wrong. Do you want to talk about it?" *I can't lie to him. We tell each other everything. He's been my best friend since kindergarten. He won't laugh at me, like Kent did.* I explain everything to Drake, as I bawl my eyes out. I don't cry because I don't want to tell Drake, I cry because I am scared that Dylan will never speak to me again.

"Sky, you love Dylan, even if you don't realize it. Everyone knows you do, we can all see it. I can't tell you what to do. All I can do is be here for you. Whatever you decide to do, I

will support you 100%,” Drake replies, sweetly. After I tell Drake everything, I feel the best I had all day.

I spend the rest of the afternoon until the party starts, thinking. *It wasn't the fact that Drake told me, 'you love Dylan.' But it was the fact that my heart was breaking so bad at the thought of losing him. I can't live without Dylan. I need him. That's love right?*

People begin to show up around 5:30 for the party. Soon enough, the floor is filled with empty red cups and the floor is shaking from the speakers being so loud. I make my way through the crowd to go out on the balcony to get some air. I shut the door and just breathe.

A few minutes later, I hear the door to the balcony open and shut; I turn to see who it is. It's Dylan. *Dylan!* I lose my breath as I see him, and I become speechless. He looks just as handsome as usual, except he looks about as tired as I feel.

“Why didn't you say something? Why did you just ignore me?” Dylan says, as tears begin to roll down his cheeks. *He really does love me.*

“I don't know, Dylan. I'm so sorry. How could you love a girl like me? You're perfect... and well... I'm not.” I reply, as tears take over my sight. He looks at me, agitated.

“What do you mean? How could I love you? I have been in love with you for the past ten freaking months, Sky! I love how you're forgetful. I love how you still watch cartoons and I even love how you over think everything. I love everything about you, Sky. I love you for you. I wish I could let you see you how I see you... which is perfect. No flaws. Just perfect,” he says, as he comes closer to me.

Dylan hugs me tightly, and kisses my cheek. “I don’t care if you don’t say it. I know you love me, too.” He says, confidently. After our long hug, I look into his eyes, and in that moment, I know I love him.

“Now tell me you love me,” he says, stifling a laugh. *I love that smile.* He knows me better than I know myself. My heart begins to beat out of my chest.

“I love you, Dylan.” I say, as I kiss him. He kisses me back. *This is right where I want to be... With Dylan. I love Drake. Wait, what? No.*