

@2014 Janice Rojas

And Then You

Janice Rojas

A Novel

Chapter One

Helena

I waited for Elliot across the red building I knew as the Stern Business School. I loved the way the violet NYU banners hung on the building and blew against the late autumn winds. College students sprinted out of the building in a hurry. I couldn't complain. This was the New York life.

"Hey beautiful," Elliot said as he appeared behind me and planted a kiss on my cheek. My heart jumped. "You ready?"

He grabbed my hand and led us to Dojo, our favorite restaurant along Washington Square Street. Dojo had been the restaurant that Elliot had taken me to for our first date. I remembered the exact table we sat in right by the window. We would turn our heads to look at the city outside; it was inevitable given how beautiful this city was. Elliot had reached for my hand across the table that night, looked into my eyes and said "You're my magic." Elliot and I had become best friends over the course of our college years and it wasn't till our third year of college that he'd told me he'd fallen for me. I fell for those aqua eyes of his, but especially because he showed me what it really meant to love and feel loved.

"I got some good news," he said as the waitress walked us to our table. The music in the restaurant was a smooth jazz and I could hear the clinking of glass.

"What is it?" I was curious, given that Elliot had been moving up in his company and my magazine was making some moves. The waitress stopped in front of our empty table. She had a nose piercing and a feather tattoo on the back of her ear, which was nearly covered by her red locks of hair.

"It looks like my firm will be working with your magazine," he said as he sat down.

I had heard my magazine's editor-in-chief, otherwise known as my boss; mention our new cover with the Yankees baseball players and Elliot's firm. Elliot's firm was a public relations firm that specialized in promoting baseball year-round and

worked with various baseball leagues all around the world. If you walked into the firm, they had a baseball as a chair.

"I can't wait!" I said before the waitress dropped two menus on the table.

"Can I get you anything to drink?" the waitress asked politely as she drew out her notepad and pen.

"Water would be good," I said. "Thanks."

"Water for me too," Elliot said. "Oh and we'll need another menu. We got someone else coming."

When she stepped away, I turned to Elliot. "Who else is coming that I don't know about?"

"My coworker's joining us. I wanted him to meet you because he's the one who's going to be working closely with your magazine," he smiled flashing his big blue eyes at me. "He's also the new Creative Director."

"That's great babe," I said. I was excited about this new step for GLAM, the magazine I worked for, and because this new project could possibly get me promoted, or so I hoped.

When his co-worker arrived, Elliot stood up to greet him. I did the same. I could see this guy wore a dark blue suit.

When my eyes made it to his face, I had to force a smile to prevent my jaw from dropping. My hands started to shake as I stared at the figure of Parker in front of me. The shock sent shivers down my spine and I lost my breath.

"Hi," I said. I couldn't believe it. His big brown eyes looked back at me. The smile on his face was impeccable. *Why would he be smiling?* His hair was tousled like it always had been.

Then all the memories of that night six years ago flashed inside my mind. The memories that I had so much wanted to forget.

I watched as my classmates huddled against each other and danced to the rhythm of the music. The wildest guys in our class hung out by the bar area, got drinks served until there was nothing left.

Parker's house was a mansion that had been made of cement. Parker's mother, an interior designer and architect, had designed the house as if it was a piece of a perfect utopia, a paradise. The backyard was like a dream as it was covered in all kinds of flowers. At the end of the backyard, there was a greenhouse where she kept more of her plants. But most importantly, there was a miniature bridge that had been built on top of a stream of water that ran across the entire yard. Lilacs and roses bloomed around this bridge's railing and it made it all more of a fantasy. Sometimes it felt as if you were in a movie.

I remembered when we were kids; Parker and I would run across the yard, sword-fight and play hide and seek. He'd count to ten and I would hide. Parker always found me.

It didn't surprise me when I saw him standing by the bridge alone as he leaned against the railing and stared at the horizon in front of him. His backyard was like a park and he was the center of it all.

"You're missing your own party," I said jokingly bumping my shoulder against his.

"At least everyone else is having fun," he said. His eyes were big and brown, his skin a perfect tan. His hair had a tousled look; it was a dusty brown and usually hid under his baseball hats. He also wore a black Rooney shirt he had gotten at the concert we had gone to a few months ago. We had a weird taste in music, which was one of the reasons why we were best friends.

"I got you something," I said, giving him the box I had been holding onto for months now.

"Uh oh, what could this be?" he smiled as he slowly released the bow and lifted the lid on the box.

"No you didn't," he said, slowly raising the baseball hat I had gotten him signed by Pedro Alvarez, his favorite baseball player. "How in the world did you get this? This cannot be real."

"Turns out my cousin got a chance to meet him when he went to train at the beginning of the summer. And of course I asked him to do me a favor," I said proudly, knowing that this gift made him happy.

"You're the greatest!" he said pulling me to him and giving me a warm embrace.

I watched as he took off the hat he had been wearing and replaced it with the new one.

"Oh yeah!" he smiled while pointing at it. "I look super cool, don't I?"

"I knew you'd like it."

"What would I do without you? Please tell me you've changed your mind about NYU," he said as he looked into my eyes. I had given it a lot of thought over the entirety of the summer. Our parents always said our college years were supposed to be the best time of our lives. How could it be the best time without Parker by my side?

"I actually decided to stay," I said looking into the water under the bridge. It had taken a while to decide but night and day I knew that staying would be the best option. I couldn't leave everything behind, especially not Parker.

"Lena, even though I don't want to see you leave, you know you've got to go to NYU. You wouldn't wanna miss out on that opportunity, would you?" he seemed concerned.

"Parker," I hesitated, "I really need to tell you something." This was the perfect moment for me to tell him how much I loved him. I needed to get it off my chest.

"I need to tell you something too," he said looking into my eyes, "I don't know where to start, but it's been going on for a while and—" I stepped closer to him, to see those brown eyes of his. I loved him and I needed to tell him. I needed to show him. But before I could get so close so that his lips met mine, he continued talking.

"Lena, I—" Parker stopped. The expression on his face told me something different.

"I knew it!" I heard Vanessa's sharp and angry voice from behind us. Her hands were on her hips and her long black hair bounced as she walked.

"It's really not what you think," Parker said to Vanessa.

"Aww poor Lena," Vanessa chuckled. "You tryina get a piece of my man? In your dreams."

"What?" Parker looked at me now. "Lena, what's going on?"

"She wuvssss youuu," Vanessa laughed even louder now.

As Parker and I looked into each other's eyes, I felt I didn't know him anymore. Parker stood next to Vanessa and as far away from me as possible. The knot in my throat grew larger and I could barely get anything out. I swallowed down the tears, but they still seemed to escape from my eyes.

"Sorry loser, but Parker and I are together now. Obviously he couldn't tell you before you tried to throw yourself at him," Vanessa laughed so loudly it hurt my ears.

I could feel my heart beating slowly. It was all too painful. I had nothing to say but I turned around and stepped away, part of me hoping that Parker ran after me.

Before I knew it, I had packed my bags and landed in New York City as a girl in search of her dreams, but with a broken and silenced heart.
