

*Seattle – 1961*

*It was raining the day I fell in love with Jude Kingsley, and whenever it rains I can't help but think about that February day in 1961, my junior year of high school.*

*My best friend Ruby dashed across the parking lot as a light drizzle escalated to a downpour. I scrambled to keep up but found running impossible in the high heels I'd bought for the Valentine's dance. I despised my freakishly large feet, so I was willing to sacrifice comfort for shoes that made me feel pretty and sophisticated.*

*Ruby and I joined the other girls in the bathroom and crowded around a single foggy mirror, where we attempted to fix our hair and makeup before venturing out to the stuffy gymnasium. On the stage, a local band played an old Frank Sinatra song, but nobody danced. Rock 'n' roll had been outlawed at our little private school after the archbishop of Chicago had publicly condemned it. My parents, especially my ultraconservative father, agreed with the decision, insisting school dances should be kept innocent and pure.*

*Ruby scanned the gym. She'd been distracted all week, and while I suspected it had to do with my seventeenth birthday, I didn't know for sure.*

*I tugged on her sleeve. "Why are you acting so strange?"*

*She twirled around and gave me an innocent look. "I'm not."*

*One of our teachers passed by and wished me happy birthday. I thanked him, then placed a hand on my hip and grinned at Ruby. "And how did he know it was my birthday?"*

*A sly smile played on her lips. "I don't know. School records?"*

*"Oh, school records," I repeated, with a smile of my own that called her bluff. Ruby and I were close like that. We always knew what the other person was thinking, and we never kept secrets.*

*All that changed after the accident, of course, but I'm getting ahead of myself.*

*Ruby had befriended me in the second grade when I'd moved to Seattle from Texas. All the kids had made fun of my southern accent, especially pesky Tim O'Connor who always tried to imitate me. Ruby, however, had brought me into her fold, insisting she'd have her father arrest anyone who bothered me.*

*"Okay," Ruby said, threading her elbow through mine. "If you wouldn't mind closing your eyes for a moment—"*

*"Closing my eyes? What's going on?"*

*Ignoring my question, she covered my eyes with her hand. "Come on. You'll find out soon enough."*

*She guided me across the gym where voices erupted with shouts of "Happy Birthday, Nadine!" I opened my eyes to see all our friends gathered around a table that held a small pink and white cake with seventeen candles.*

*"For me?" I said, feigning surprise.*

*Ruby hugged me. "You knew, didn't you?"*

*"No, of course not. This was completely unexpected."*

*We laughed at the absurdity that either one of us could keep a secret from the other. "Attached at the hip" was what people used to say about us.*

*Annoying Tim O'Connor sidled up beside me. "How about a birthday kiss, sweetheart?" He wagged his thick brow and puckered his lips.*

*I smacked him on the arm. "In your dreams."*

*Everyone laughed except Tim, who rubbed his arm, offended. Over the years, I'd grown fond of him. He was funny, although many people didn't like him because he often went too far with his teasing. Nevertheless, he had a good heart and had become somewhat of a friend. Part of me even thought he was kind of cute with his curly red hair, bushy eyebrows, and ruddy Irish complexion.*

*Ruby lit the birthday candles and led everyone in singing Happy Birthday. Before blowing out the candles, I looked around the room, taking it all in. Nobody had ever given me a surprise party before, and I was overwhelmed. Smiling, I blew out the candles, making a wish that every birthday would be just as memorable.*

*When I looked up to thank Ruby, I found her talking to Jude Kingsley, an absolutely divine boy with intense green eyes and thick black hair that swept across his forehead. Jude sat next to Ruby in art class and behind me in world history. He'd just moved here from Boston, and both Ruby and I thought he was gorgeous, although until now neither one of us had worked up the courage to talk to him.*

*Tim grabbed my arm. "Come on, Nadine. Dance with me."*

*I pulled away, my eyes glued to Ruby and Jude. Something odd settled in my throat. Jealousy? A premonition that everything was about to change? Or maybe just a desire to reach up and brush Jude's hair off his brow.*

*My stomach clenched as Ruby took Jude's hand and led him toward me.*

*"Nadine," Tim said.*

*"Not now. I'll save you a dance when they play Elvis."*

*"Elvis! That's never going to happen. Elvis is a horrible dancer, and according to Sister Hildegard, the devil incarnate."*

*I scowled at Tim. "Elvis is the greatest musician in the world, and he served in the Army, which is more than you can say, Tim O'Connor."*

*He batted the air and shook his head. "That's it, Nadine Greene. I'm crossing you off my list." Although he was joking, he turned abruptly and headed toward another girl.*

*Ruby nudged my shoulder. "He's such a dweeb."*

*I shrugged. "He's okay."*

*Jude stared at me with his beautiful green eyes, and I felt a thrill skitter up my spine.*

*"You like Elvis, Nadine?" he asked.*

*My stomach did a little flip flop. Jude Kingsley knew my name?*

*Ruby answered for both of us. "We love Elvis." Although she was no longer holding Jude's hand, she continued standing close to him.*

*Jude nodded approvingly. "I'm going to sing Jailhouse Rock at the talent show next month."*

*I laughed, convinced he was joking. "Sister Hildegard has outlawed rock 'n' roll. I'm certain she won't allow you to perform a song by Elvis."*

*Jude's gaze didn't waver from mine. His lips tugged upward in a conspiratorial smile. "True, but I have a plan, and if you'll help me—"*