

WALLFLOWER by Cookie O’Gorman

EXCERPT

This had to be a dream, I thought. Either that or a hallucination.

Standing in our driveway, leaning back against my little Honda, hands in his pockets like he was Jake Ryan from *Sixteen Candles* or something, was a guy who knew he looked good even in sweats and a hoodie.

Dare Frost.

His six-foot-three frame dwarfed my car. Dare was the last person I expected to see waiting outside my house on my last first day of high school. I was so surprised it took me a second to find my voice.

But Dare just cocked his head.

"Morning flower," he said. "Better hurry or we'll be late."

I shook myself out of it. "Are you lost?"

"Nope, I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be."

"What are you even doing here?" I asked.

"Isn't it obvious?" He held his hands out, a small smile playing on his lips. "I'm here to bum a ride to school. Speaking of, could you pop the locks?" Dare rubbed his hands together. "It's a little chilly out here."

I laughed, couldn't help it. "Are you crazy? Dare, I'm not taking you to school."

"Yes, you are."

"No. I'm not."

Dare shrugged. "Coach said you would."

My jaw dropped. "He did what? When? Why?"

"That's a lot of questions," he said. "But yeah, your dad and I talked the other day after practice. He said you'd give me a ride because we live so close to each other. Said it would be no problem. I run by your house every morning anyway. Plus, my car's in the shop for repairs."

"Didn't you just get that car?" I asked.

The question made Dare smile for some reason. "You keeping tabs on me, Vi?"

I choked. "What? No!"

"Hey, no worries," he said. "I'm not mad about it. A lot of girls do it. Just wasn't aware you were one of them."