

Excerpt from *Slow But Steady*
Written by Rachel Ruttenberg

Once filming day had arrived, she tried to act as natural as possible. But honestly, she was a nervous wreck. The only times she had acted before was on stage in front of an audience. But never in a small room right in front of people. Especially people she had hoped would become her friends. It was so intimidating. But once she met Chase, Ashley, and Jordan in person, she started to cool down slightly. But there was definitely still some nerves throughout the entire day. Someone caught her eye though. Chase. He was cool, quite funny, and he seemed like a really nice guy. He even held her props for her during one of the scenes. She thought it could be something more than friends but didn't want to get involved with something quite yet. She thought it best to just remain friends till she was ready for more of a commitment.

The next short film she got to shoot in Chase's apartment. It was a nice place. Some of the other group members though, not so nice. In fact, Chase and Camille began to bond over the oddness of someone in particular. Camille even ended up covered in fake blood at one point. But Chase, with his producer authority, made sure she was comfortable and okay with it. Once the shoot was over Chase turned on the television and on came a Michigan Football game. He ran into his room, and then later came out wearing a Michigan Football jersey. Camille is Michigan's biggest fan.

"Wait, you're a Michigan fan?" She questioned.

"Oh yea, everyone back home hates it, so naturally I have to love it," he replied.

"I never would've thought I'd meet an Ohioan who loves Michigan football."

Chase invited Camille to stay and watch the game with him. Honestly, she was just invested in the outcome of the game and couldn't risk missing an important play, just so she could drive back to her dorm. Plus, it was alone time with Chase, what more could she want.

As the semester went on, Camille's life started to get more and more busy. The pandemic kept cooling down, allowing more and more athletic events to take place, taking up more of her time. More practice means more traveling, which means less free weekends. She didn't get to see Chase as much as she liked. And she wasn't able to continue doing the short films. But she didn't let him go though, the two kept in touch with Snapchat and texting. They bonded over sports, and he made sure to tell her she was missed at all the meetings. The semester went on and everything remained pretty stable between them.

Soon December came and the semester was almost over. Camille had some free time with her classes ending and Chase was still in town because he had a job he had to work over the break. So Chase invited Camille over for the new episode of Greys Anatomy. He knew she loved the show and thought this could be a fun date. A way to move things along if you will. She made her way over to the apartment and he opened the door excitedly. His roommates were in the living room, so they had to watch in his bedroom. Coincidence? Maybe so, or maybe not. The two sat next to one another on his bed, but not too close. No touching whatsoever. They were both way too nervous to make a move. Camille eventually casually snuggled her way into his arm as the show went on. The show eventually ended, and Camille didn't like to be out late. Sadly, she knew she had to get back home before she got too tired. The two got up from the cozy bed and he walked her to the door. She put on her shoes, and he opened the door for her. The two shared a warm embrace, and then she headed home for the night.

After the winter break and over the course of the next few months, Camille's schedule got more and more busy. She rarely had time to see Chase or really do anything for pure leisure at all. The most time she got to herself was the hour she has before bed to shower and do her skincare. She felt trapped in her own life again. Wishing her days were filled with exciting things. She hated waking up every day dreading the daily schedule. Lift, class, lunch, more class, practice, shower,

dinner, homework. A draining cycle on repeat. But one day she got a text Chase that caught her eye. Too bad she completely forgot to answer his last message. By the time she realized she left him on read, it was too late to reply without being weird. But luckily, he decided to double text and this was her opportunity to catch up.

“Hey, I know you’re super busy, but if you are ever free to grab coffee or something between your classes, I would love to see you and catch up,” the message read.

She knew this was her chance to see him. She quickly replied before she forgot.

“I would love to! I have class Wednesday at 11, we could do 10:15? Right after my 9am. Sound good?”

“Sounds great! See you then!” he replied.

On Wednesday she was so excited, but also nervous at the same time. She hadn’t seen Chase in a few months, and she didn’t want things to be weird. But luckily, they weren’t. She really enjoyed chatting with him, and she realized she missed seeing him. He made her smile and laugh. He even gave her butterflies in her stomach. She knew once the semester started to slow down after finals, she had to see him again.

After their coffee date, Chase and Camille started texting and snapchatting again. This stayed constant for a while and once the semester began to die down she knew she wanted to hangout again. There was one Friday night before finals week, Camille’s older friend was having a party and she really wanted to invite Chase. But the pandemic was still going on and she wanted to be cautious and courteous of the other people who would be there, so she made sure it was alright with everyone who was going so she could invite him.

Once the night of the party came around Camille was a nervous wreck. This was going to be their first real social interaction with one another in a public place with other people. She wanted her friends to like him, and she hadn’t really thought about dating again since she got dumped by her ex a few years ago. It was a short relationship, but she fell hard. That heartbreak took a long time to

heal. But she felt ready to move on. She wanted to see him; she really enjoyed her time with him. And she knew that this relationship wouldn't go anywhere if she didn't give it a chance. So they shared a pack of Truly Lemonades and bonded over their usual things. Sports, movies. But they got to be social. Her friends really liked him. They played games, they danced. They even encouraged Chase to kiss her by the end of the night.

Eventually the evening started to die down and people started to chill out more. Some were watching a movie in the living room; some were outside by the fire. And Chase and Camille found themselves alone on the front porch. They were just chatting about life, the semester, and finals. And then there was an awkward silence and Camille knew she had to break it.