

1. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 5:15:25 PM
What feels different? Singing casually? Or pursuing it more seriously (writing lyrics for her musical)? Are there no more car ride singalongs for Macy and Milo?

2. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:06:05 AM
Establishing character: our protagonist feels inferior when it comes to music/performing.

3. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:02:58 AM
Including a snippet of the lyrics she's written can add some immediate character development here. What is she writing about? Can it be tied to the theme of the story to begin setting readers' expectations for what we're about to read?

4. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:53:27 AM
Macy and Lucas's story? Or how she'd hoped it would be?

5. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 5:13:37 PM
Still not positive who Milo is — brother? Best friend? Just roommate? They obviously have high school history.

6. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:47:31 AM
There's a lot behind this contact name. Related to the tour guides she's writing songs about, I'm guessing. Since we learn at the end of this text exchange his last name is actually Kincade, have Macy reflect on why he's in her phone that way instead.

7. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:17:12 AM
This text exchange is taking up a lot of real estate in your first chapter (which is only 3 pages total). It's establishing a banter between Macy and Lucas, but consider trimming it or making it work harder to establish Lucas as a character/establish Macy and Lucas's history. Is one of his top 5 fry orders from a restaurant in their college town? (See in-line edits for example)

I ~~will~~ only sit down at the piano bench when I'm home alone.

If Milo is in his room, I won't go near the keys. I know the second he hears me play a note, his head will pop out of his doorway, eyes wide. "Ooh, singing something?" he'll ask.

He means well. We used to perform a two-person rendition of RENT in his car on the way to high school every morning—"Take Me Or Leave Me" was our piece de resistance; he was Maureen, I was Joanne—not taking anything too seriously. But now he's graduated college with a musical theatre degree while I studied Media and Communications, and ~~it~~ just feels different.

1
2

Like one of us is **qualified** to belt show tunes and the other isn't.

So I wait until he's off to rehearsal for the community theatre's production of Legally Blonde—he's **playing** the UPS guy—before sitting down at Milo's Yamaha and flicking on the power. I lean my small spiral notebook against the **keyboard's** sheet music stand ~~attached to the keyboard~~ and flip to the lyrics I wrote this morning.

3

It's the first time I've tried putting music to the words in my head, and it takes a few times to find the right chords. I took piano all through grade school but never really had the natural talent for it. I mostly did it to enable myself to write and perform songs.

4

And today my passable piano skills get the job done, allowing me to compose most of the opening song to the musical that has been living in my head all summer. **Set on a college campus, the show follows two campus tour guides as they find themselves and fall in love.**

Life doesn't exactly imitate art, but the similarities are there.

5

I noodle around for another half an hour, then close my notebook and turn off the keyboard. **Milo should be home from rehearsal soon.** And at least for now, I want to keep this nugget of an idea to myself.

My phone buzzes as I return the notebook to my bedroom.

6

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Chipotle or Five Guys? Can't decide

I pick up my phone and tap out a response.

7

Macy Miller: Chipotle. Five Guys is overpriced.

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): But the FRIES!!! Arguably top 5 best out there.

Macy Miller: Top five ever????

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Arby's curly fries, Chik-Fil-A's waffle fries, Five Guys classic cut **crispy shoestring from the diner next to campus.**

Macy Miller: I have dreams about that dipping sauce to this day.

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): ~~I stand corrected. Top 3—~~

8. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 5:22:28 PM

Instead of Macy talking about anything just for the sake of keeping the conversation going, have her reflect on a memory of her time with Lucas. Did they eat those fries at the college diner together (for the sake of this example)?

It doesn't need to be the French fry example I suggested, but use this opportunity to give the reader a hint to their backstory and dynamic.

Macy Miller: Do tots count?

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Not sure I can get that philosophical on a Wednesday night. At least not until I've eaten dinner.

8 | It's a stupid conversation, but my blood is singing in my veins. Lucas Kincade started texting me out of nowhere last month, and I will do anything to keep the conversation going. ~~Including an in-depth discussion about whether or not tater tots are considered french fries.~~

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): But since you insisted, I'll get Chipotle

Macy Miller: Don't suffer on my account. I'm not the one eating it.

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): I'll bring you a burrito bowl

Macy Miller: ha

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): since you're so passionate about them

Macy Miller: YOU ASKED MY OPINION

Macy Miller: I PICKED BETWEEN THE TWO OPTIONS

Macy Miller: GOD

Macy Miller: But yes I would like a burrito bowl

Never mind that Lucas ~~Kincade~~ lives two and a half hours away just outside of DC and will decidedly not be bringing me a burrito bowl.

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Car's a little low on gas, put it on my tab okay? I'll owe you one

Macy Miller: And when exactly will I be cashing in on this burrito bowl you owe me?

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Doing anything labor day weekend?

I almost drop my phone, stomach ricocheting into my throat. Is he asking what I think he's asking?

Macy Miller: not sure, why?

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): Just got Bellamy's wedding invite and she gave me a plus one.

This time I do drop my phone. It flops on the carpet, and I realize I never left my bedroom after putting away my songwriting notebook.

9. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:41:28 AM
This is the third time she's thought of him by his full name. This gives him almost a "celebrity" feel...but it feels like they are closer than that.

10. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:51:18 AM
This is a chance to establish Lucas's character more specifically. He is/was a tour coordinator—how does that relate to Macy (without info-dumping)? Instead of just saying "guy", give us something to explain his tour guide role. Was he a leader of the organization?

11. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:57:03 AM
One of the only pieces of world-building we get in this opening.

12. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:57:32 AM
She doesn't seem happy about still being in Cornelia.

13. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 5:27:18 PM
He said this already

14. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:58:49 AM
History with Bellamy too — mutual friend?

15. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 5:10:07 PM
It seems like we need one more text from Macy here to lead Lucas more naturally into his "I'm serious, M&M" response. Or maybe reference a few minutes passing without Macy returning his text, to show that he might be sitting on the other end of the exchange panicking that he spooked her.

16. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 1, 2026 at 6:45:46 AM
A nickname? This shows they have history

17. Kaitlin Bartlett

March 3, 2026 at 7:02:48 AM
I feel like we need one more beat here, where Macy has a "what on earth am I going to decide?" moment. Then BOOM, chapter ends.

9 10 Lucas is asking me out. Lucas Kincade, the guy I spent my first two years of college obsessing over. The one who insisted he was Not A Relationship Guy and that he Didn't Want To Hurt Me because he thought I was Such A Nice Girl. I haven't seen him since he graduated at the end of my sophomore year. And he's asking me out. To a WEDDING.

Excuse me, what?

I stare at his message, heart thudding, completely at a loss. How am I supposed to respond? Eventually I settle on: *are you serious?*

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): I know, who thought those crazy kids would actually make it?

Macy Miller: Not what I meant.

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): yes, I'm serious

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): I could pick you on my way up from Alexandria

Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): you're still in Cornelia right?

11 I moved back to southeastern PA after graduation in May, got the apartment with Milo in the adorable small town where we both grew up, and go to my family's house for dinner every Sunday night. So much for wanting to fly far after college.

12 Macy Miller: yup

13 Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): cool the highway takes me right by on my way up to Portland. I could pick you up

Portland? Bellamy's wedding is in Maine?

When I ask this, he replies:

yeah, that's where she's from

14 I know this. It's also where Lucas is from. He may work in the D.C. suburbs, but he was born and raised in Maine, driving the ten hours back there from Atherton University in central

15 Pennsylvania during school breaks.

Is he, Lucas Kincade, a guy who—up until a month ~~or so~~ ago—I hadn't spoken to in two years, asking me to be his date to a wedding in his hometown ten hours away?

16 Lucas Kenobi (Tour Coordinator): i'm serious. M&M

17 It appears he is.