

DELETED SCENES: AWAKEN THE DAWN

**Scene:** Kat and Maks Texting (at La Madălină)



My phone chimed. I grabbed it off the bedside table and entered my PIN. The darkness in front of my eyes gave way to a harsh glow.

I turned down the screen brightness and opened the text.

**Do you like coffee?**

The message was from Maksim. We'd just parted ways ten minutes ago—he'd gone to his room, I'd come to mine. Hadn't expected him to text me.

I swiped a response. **I love coffee.**

My phone chimed again.

Maksim: **How do you take yours?**

"That's random," I said. But then I figured the *coffee press* clue—and all our talk of coffee the last two days—must've been the reason he was asking.

Me: **Strong, not too sweet, with half-n-half or heavy cream. You?**

Maksim: **Same. I don't particularly care for sweet coffee.**

I stared at the screen. Should I say anything else?

Me: **Listen I've been wondering... what's up with the glasses?**

Maksim: **Why? Do you like them?**

Me: **They're great. I feel like I can solve thermodynamic combustion equations every time I see them.**

He sent a laugh emoji. Then...

Maksim: **Speaking of which, I was wondering if you might wear color-enhancing contacts. By chance?**

Me: **No. Why?**

Maksim: **Your eyes are extraordinarily blue, unnaturally so.**

Me: **UNNATURAL?! I inserted an emoji with red cheeks and smoke shooting out of its nose. I'll have you know my eyes are NATURAL blue. Because they're... natural.**

Ten seconds ticked by. Twenty. The next message pinged.

Maksim: **They're beautiful. They remind me of sapphires.**

I melted into my pillow. Had he seriously just said my eyes were beautiful? I couldn't believe he'd even been paying attention.

Compliments, no matter who they came from, had always made me uncomfortable. His was no exception, and I did the only thing I could think to do. I cracked a joke.

Me: **Your eyes are nice too... like dead leaves in the fall.** I inserted a fall-leaves emoji plus the smiley with heart eyes. That was the most I could muster, otherwise I was bound to embarrass myself with descriptions of desert sunsets and chocolate diamonds.

A laugh emoji pinged my phone, then...

Maksim: **Yes, well, my eyes may be drab brown, but at least I don't make a habit of saying 'y'all'.**

Me: **I don't say y'all.**

Maksim: **You do. It's cute, but I tend to envision horses and peculiar hats, and I have to resist calling you 'cowgirl'.**

Me: **Lol, fine. So what do \*you\* say when you're talking to more than one person?**

Maksim: **Not 'y'all'.**

I sent the emoji with a zipper for its mouth.

A winky emoji came through in response. I replied with an eye-roll and then...

Me: **I'm from Atlanta. Saying y'all isn't weird to us. In fact, it's so normal I don't even realize I'm saying it (apparently).**

Maksim: **I gathered that when I was there.**

I blinked. "Wait, what?"

Me: You've been to Atlanta?

Maksim: Once. On business for Ștefan.

Me: That's cool. I mean, I don't know what you were doing there. If you were, like, waterboarding members of a rival crime ring, that's probably not so cool. But if you were visiting museums... cool.

Maksim: No waterboarding. Just research.

Me: I guess research isn't so bad :) So what'd you think of Atlanta?

Maksim: Crowded. I sat in traffic for hours after one of the freeways collapsed.

Me: YOU WERE IN ATLANTA WHEN THAT HAPPENED?

Maksim: I was, yes. I may be traumatized for life because of it. A goofy-face appended the message.

Wow. That freeway had collapsed... When? Last December? I couldn't believe he'd been in my hometown, and... come to think of it, I'd actually been stuck in that very same traffic jam.

Maksim: Apart from that, the trip was relatively uneventful. I will say the cityscape is stunning, most especially at night.

Me: Yeah. I've always loved Atlanta's skyline. I rolled onto my side, tucking my left arm under me, and debated if I should keep the conversation going. I wanted to, but I figured I better quit while I was ahead. Well... sweet dreams.

Maksim: Noapte bună, dragă mea.

Confusion broke across my thoughts. I copied the text and pasted it into my translation app: Good night, my dear.

Me: Glad to see "dragă" is a false cognate. For a second I thought you were calling me a dragon. Anyway, goodnight.

Maksim: Nu fără un sărut de noapte-bună. Translation: Not without a good-night kiss.

My heart drummed out a chaotic rhythm. Was he asking if he could kiss me? It sure sounded like he was, but I couldn't tell if he was kidding. I also wasn't sure what to say.

I did a quick internet search for Romanian colloquialisms. I found one that worked in this context and copy-pasted it. As I did, I hoped really hard I wasn't about to embarrass myself.

Me: **Nu te sărută nimeni de noapte-bună, nu?**

Translation: **You haven't got anyone to kiss you good night or anything, have you?**

Maksim: **And all this time I thought you didn't speak Romanian ;) La Paștele cailor?**

I plugged the last phrase into my translation app: **At horses's Easter?**

Me: **The heck is horses's Easter?**

About twenty sideways-laugh emojis tumbled across my screen.

Me: **What? That's how the app translated it!**

Maksim: **'La Paștele cailor' means that something won't happen for a very long time, if ever. In America, I believe you would say 'when pigs fly' :) I was asking if that was the case for me.**

I bit my lip. So he *was* being serious.

I searched for a response—something flirty, but not too flirty. More clever than flirty.

A minute passed. Two minutes. Finally, I stumbled across something. The phrase wasn't all that clever, and it wasn't at all flirty, but... it was perfect.

Me: **Își ia inima-n dinți.**

Translation: **His heart is in his teeth.**

Romanians use the phrase to commend someone for showing courage or being daring. I thought Maksim was being pretty daring tonight, so... it seemed fitting.

I added a heart and pressed Send. The curvy symbol mocked me from the screen, a little red reminder that I couldn't take it back now.

Suddenly, I came down with a major case of what Brandy called RAS—regret after sending. She always said stuff like “Uh-oh, your RAS is grass” or “Your RAS is showing.”

A minute later—longest minute of my life—a smiley face in geeky reading glasses appeared. Three hearts spilled onto my screen, each in a different color—blue, yellow, and red.

The colors of the Romanian flag.

I breathed a sigh and snuggled into the covers. “Don’t get too excited,” I whispered. “He probably does this with a lot of girls.”

And it was probably true. But my heart had taken an unexpected detour, and I wasn't sure I was willing to stop it.



### **Why was this scene cut?**

This scene was cut after I implemented the last set of revisions.

The scene right before this one is where Kat and Maks are returning from the park (after Kat’s late-night jog – in Braşov). The chapter unfolded a bit differently in that old version, with a more upbeat/less serious mood.

The more serious mood works better with the revisions, though, so I axed this scene and placed some of the flirting/playfulness in the Mt. Tâmpa scene instead.

There was also a slight plot change with Maksim’s visit to Atlanta. In the old version, he’d been to Atlanta and was, in fact, more involved in spying on Kat. In the new version, he is less involved in Stefan's scheme.

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