

A man in a New York State Police uniform, wearing a black cap with 'NY PD' and a badge that reads 'CAPTAIN VITTAO POLICE 1011', stands in the background. In the foreground, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a purple top, is shown in profile. She has a small gold fairy earring and a pink fairy tattoo on her shoulder. The background is a scenic view of a road winding through colorful autumn trees under a blue sky.

*Catching  
A Pixie*

*Alleigh Burrows*

# Catching A Pixie

Alleigh Burrows

## CATCHING A PIXIE

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## Chapter 1

I was having a perfectly marvelous day until I looked in my rearview mirror and saw the flashing red and blue lights of a police car zooming up behind me.

On my way to Lake George to meet my friends for a weekend getaway, I had been happily cruising up the New York Thruway in my little Ford Fiesta. There were only a few cars here and there and I darted around them, eager to get to the cottage before dark. I didn't have a care in the world.

It was a beautiful afternoon in early September. The temperature was warm but not too hot. The trees, illuminated by the sun, glowed a fiery mix of crimson and gold, vivid against an azure blue sky. My favorite song has been playing and I was singing away like I was auditioning for American Idol. I felt like the queen of the road.

Until I saw the lights flashing in my rearview mirror.

*Crap.* Was that for me? Glancing down, I was amazed to see the speedometer just above eighty.

*Double crap. I never speed.*

Okay, that wasn't true. I do occasionally speed, but not because I like to go fast and show off how badass I am, or I think I'm so important that rules don't apply to me. I carefully go five, sometimes ten miles over the speed limit when I'm feeling particularly daring, but quickly lose my nerve and duck back into the right lane.

Not today. Queen of the road was about to get her crown handed to her.

I located a spot by the side of the road with a wide shoulder and pulled over. Despite my desperate hope the cop car would fly past me chasing some true evildoer, it pulled up behind me.

My pulse kicked up to about a hundred. I'd seen people pulled over on TV, so I sort of knew what to expect, but since it had never happened to me before, I was shaking. I gave a quick check of my front seat. Seatbelt on. Phone in my bag. No underwear sticking out of my luggage. I turned down my music and took a deep breath. *Okay, I can do this.*

The trooper got out of his car and slowly approached my passenger side. I pressed the window button, panicked when the rear window opened, and fumbled around to press the front button. He had stopped back near the door jamb, so I couldn't see his face, but I hoped he smiled at that—obviously no hardened criminal here. Finally, he leaned forward and peered into my car.

"Ma'am, do you realize you were speeding?"

My brain shut down. "Was I?"

"Yes, ma'am. Eighty-one in a sixty-five."

What was I supposed to say? *Sorry? Shit, really? Is there anything I can do to make this go away...and run my hand up my leg to show off some thigh?*

None of those seemed viable options, so I just shrugged and flashed him a hesitant smile. His straight-brimmed hat obscured his face, which made me even more nervous. I'd hoped to get a sense of how much trouble I was in.

"This your car?"

I nodded. When he didn't say anything, I realized he was waiting for me to speak. *Gah!*

"Um, yes, sir. This is my car."

"Can I see your registration?"

"Of course," I leaned over and pawed through my glove compartment until I found a crumpled up official-looking paper. "Is this it?"

He stared at me like I was a bit simple.

"Sorry," I pressed my hand over my racing heart. "I've been driving for eight years and never been pulled over before."

"So, no other violations?"

"God, no. Never. Not even a parking ticket." I leaned toward the passenger window, my voice cracking with distress. "I'm really sorry about this. I don't even know how it happened. I was following the flow of traffic and when the other cars turned off, I guess...I wasn't...I didn't pay attention. It was an accident. I swear I don't make a habit of speeding."

"Mm-hmm. License, please?"

Apologizing had no effect whatsoever. Bummer. Because it truly had been an accident. How could I have been this stupid?

I dug through my bag, pulling out my wallet. Still anxious, I had trouble getting my license out of the plastic covering.

As I handed it to the officer, I was finally able to see his face. Hmm, younger than I had expected, dark eyes, firm mouth, but with a hint of a smile. That was reassuring.

Then he glanced down at the license and his hat obscured his face again. "Your name is Lindsay Andrews and you live in Roselle, Delaware?"

"Yes," I said with a smile. He was looking at the license, after all.

He must have heard something in my voice because he gave me a piercing look. "I just need to verify."

*Ouch.* Properly chastised, I nodded.

"I'm going back to my car to run a check. Stay here."

Until he'd issued that command, it had not occurred to me to leave. Was it even an option? He had my license, after all. Did people drive off? Wasn't it obvious they'd get caught since he had their address?

He disappeared into his car and I sat there fidgeting in my seat as I waited for him. I checked my rearview mirror a few dozen times, tapping my fingers on the steering wheel, waiting. I chipped at my nail polish, waited, tapped some more.

After the twenty-seventh time I checked the mirror, I actually *looked* at my reflection. Yikes! What had happened to my hair? It was a mess, like usual. I really should get it cut, since it was always falling into my food or getting caught in the straps of my backpack. I just hadn't worked up the

nerve to chop it off. I ran my hand through it, trying to smooth out the snarls before pulling it into a raggedy ponytail.

A second glance in the mirror didn't show much improvement. Jesus, was I really that pale? I was tempted to brush on some mascara but figured if he caught me, I'd look pretty frivolous. So, I went back to waiting, tapping, and chipping my nails.

He was taking forever and I started to get paranoid. What exactly was he learning about me? Did he know I got in trouble for petting a police dog during a mock emergency drill? Because, seriously, that had been my only brush with the law.

Finally, his car door opened. He strolled back to my window and leaned in. Handing me my license, he gave me an intense once-over.

"I should write you a speeding ticket," he said, "but your record's clean." He paused, rapped a pen on his notepad twice, and continued, "Your Delaware tag is partially obstructed by your Red Sox license plate frame. This is a violation in New York, so I'm going to write you a ticket for that, instead."

"Having a Red Sox plate is a violation? What, are you a Yankees fan?"

*Ugh, don't be a babbling idiot!*

He gave me that look again like I was simple. "Uhhh. No. It's a minor traffic violation, like a warning, so you won't be assessed points on your license."

I dropped my face into my hands and groaned with embarrassment. Peeking out from between my fingers, I mumbled, "Sorry, I'm epically nervous."

This time the smile reached his eyes. "Yes, ma'am. I can see that. Don't be. You just check the box on this form and pay a small penalty. No points. You'll be fine."

Taking a breath, I managed to regain my senses. "Thank you. That sounds much better...and cheaper."

And out of nowhere, he announced, "I went to Roselle University." He flashed me a sweet smile and I realized he was cute. Really cute.

Which made me all nervous and goofy again, so I blurted out, "Hey, I live in Roselle." Then giggled like a moron, because of course, he knew that. He'd seen my license. That's why he'd said it.

Trying to pull myself together, I said, "Oh yeah? Cool. When did you graduate?"

When he didn't answer right away, I thought maybe I'd gotten too personal. But he'd brought it up, right?

Finally, he responded, "Six years ago."

"Really? I got my undergrad there four years ago. Now I'm back, getting my master's in nutrition."

"That's great. Good for you." A charged silence settled between us and I waited, eager and still, for him to say something more. He looked like he wanted to. But instead, he tipped his finger to his hat in salute and stepped away from the window.

I guessed we were done. Too bad, because I felt like there was a strange spark between us. Which was silly, because he'd just pulled me over for breaking the law, but still...

Before I had a chance to raise my window, he leaned in again. “Drive carefully, ma’am. If you set your cruise control under eighty, you should avoid any future problems.” Cute little crinkles formed around his warm, brown eyes and a dimple appeared in his right cheek.

*Yowza.* His dimple held a major heat factor and made me go all melty inside. I wanted to say something sexy or flirty but was unable to do more than mouth the words, “Thank you.”

He seemed to have felt it too, frozen in place for a few heartbeats. Then he cleared his throat, tipped his hat a final time, and strode back to his car. I watched him go in the rearview mirror, his uniform accenting a very firm asset.

He climbed in his cruiser and waited for me to edge out into traffic. Then, with the lights still flashing, he followed me onto the Thruway. I glanced over when he passed by and I could have sworn he gave me a little wave.

## Chapter 2

Roselle University's homecoming game was in early October, yet when I got up Saturday morning, there was frost on the window. I had to dig out my coat and mittens before loading up the cooler and heading to my best friend Gabby's place.

I knocked on the door and let myself in. Gabby was buzzing around the kitchen trying to do seven things at once. Always excitable, she threw her arms around me as soon as I walked through the doorway, almost knocking me down. I couldn't help laughing. She was a tiny little thing, but always a constant blur of brown curls and enthusiasm.

I barely got in a hello before she launched into her mile-a-minute conversation. "Hey, Lindsay, where have you been? I just got a text from Ashley. She and Kirsten are at the stadium already. She's saving us a parking spot near the field house. She said it's pretty chilly out, and we should wear layers."

She returned to the kitchen table and grabbed an oversized knife, gesturing toward a mound of vegetables on the cutting board.

I slid the ragged carrots onto the veggie tray and handed her a head of broccoli to annihilate. "Yeah, I noticed. I wore a coat, but now that I cut my hair, my neck got cold." I'd worked up the nerve to cut it über short. I thought it looked much more mature than my long, black ponytail, but it was taking some getting used to.

"I'll grab you a scarf. You can start slicing the mushrooms." She handed me the knife and darted over to the closet. "It should warm up by noon, but no point in suffering if you don't have to."

She threw the scarf at me and turned to stuff the vegetables, subs, and assorted snacks into a blue cooler. "I like your hair, by the way. The change is a bit shocking, but it really suits you. Makes your eyes look—I don't know—dramatic."

Gabby had always been jealous of my long, totally straight hair, so, I was pleasantly surprised she approved. She hated her curly brown hair, which she called frizzy, but I considered bouncy, just like her. I was going to say thanks, but she had already headed into the dining room.

"One more thing and I'll be ready," she sang out and reappeared with a bottle of Jägermeister. "This will keep us warm." She smiled and tucked it into the bag.

*Girlfriend thinks of everything.*

We loaded the food into my car and headed for the stadium. Ashley, always the master of efficiency, had saved us a spot next to her SUV. She'd already set up chairs, covered the table with homecoming decorations, and started the grill. Kirsten was stretched out on an inflatable chair, enjoying a beer and staying out of her way.

“Hey, bitches!” Ashley hollered as we got out of the car. She wrapped me in a hug and then did a doubletake. “Oh, Linds, I love your hair!”

“Thanks.” I tugged at the strands at my neck, self-consciously. “You don’t think it’s too short?”

“Oh, no. It suits you. Makes you look like a little pixie.”

“Uhh, thanks.” I knew she meant it as a compliment, but still. I’d hoped to portray a capable professional, not a fairyland creature.

Kirsten was more subdued in her greeting. “Hey, chickie. How you doing?” She waved a hand in my direction while remaining in her chair. The contrasting personalities between the two best friends was remarkable—especially since they looked so alike, they could have been sisters. Tall, blond, and athletic, they’d intimidated me to no end when I’d met them sophomore year. But after a get-to-know-you social in the residence hall, we went out and got hammered, and the rest was history. Best friends for life.

We finished pulling everything out of the car and huddled our chairs together, stamping our feet and sipping Jäger, trying to maintain feeling in our fingers and toes. Ashley, in her usual fashion, waited until I had tipped a glass to my lips before blurting out, “So, Linds, how’s your sex life?”

*Shouda seen that one coming.* But instead, I half-swallowed, half-spit the mouthful of Jager. Barking out a cough, I wiped my face and grimaced. “Non-existent, as usual. Thanks for asking.”

She grinned, a wicked glint in her eye. “C’mon, girl! You gotta get out there, Find a man...or a couple of them.”

I snorted. “Seriously, Ash. I’m shy and awkward and have no game. You know that. Unlike you, I don’t have men falling all over themselves to be with me.”

“True. It’s a curse I have to bear.” She tossed her hair over her shoulder with a smirk. Then like a lioness going in for the kill, she verbally pounced. “If you would get out a little, socialize, I’m sure you could find someone.”

“Fat chance,” I sighed. “Between school and work, I barely have time to sleep, let alone date.”

Ashley leaned her chair back on two legs, waving her hand airily. “Then don’t work so hard. Cut back on your work hours and just finish your classes.

As if it were that easy. “I can’t do that. I’ve got bills to pay ya’ know. Not all of us have a rich daddy to support us.”

She snorted, not the least bit offended. “Whatever. I’m sure your mom makes enough to support you for a few months. You *know* she must be giving Sean money.”

I groaned. “I do not want to be like my brother.”

She choked out a laugh. “I didn’t mean it like that. You could never be like Sean. He’s a slug of major proportion.”

“Hey! He’s not so bad,” Gabby protested. When we stared at her, she flushed. “He’s just a late bloomer, that’s all. He’ll find his way, eventually.”

Gabby was a second grade teacher and couldn’t help pointing out the best in people. But Ashley was right. Sean was a year younger than me and one of the most unmotivated people I’d ever known.

“Linds, all I’m saying is you should scale back a little. Have some fun. Enjoy your last few months of school.”

“But I enjoy working hard. And my work is allowing me to create the perfect job at Nutra-Health. They are helping to fund my master’s degree so I can oversee their new pediatric program when I graduate. It’s an amazing honor and I want to do it right. Besides, I’m twenty-four—too old to sponge off my parents.”

“I *like* sponging off my parents,” Kirsten announced with a grin. Her unexpected proclamation broke the tension and we laughed. She had a great job and only lived at home because she traveled all the time.

I patted her cheek and she winked at me.

“Look I’d love to have a social life. But even if I did find someone fabulous, the odds of being able to catch his eye, *and* hold his interest while studying for my master’s are depressingly minuscule. Which means, for now, it’s nose to the grindstone time.”

“Too bad you didn’t get that state trooper’s number. He sounded like a hottie.” Kirsten grinned.

I bobbed my head in agreement. “He was pretty impressive.”

I’d told them about the cute cop who’d pulled me over. Rolling my glass between my hands, I thought back, picturing the way he looked. The way he acted. And got that melty feeling again. “I don’t think he meant to flirt with me, but he did. I could tell it embarrassed him. Which was sweet.” With a grin, I added, “And boy, did he fill out a pair of pants.”

“*Lindsay!*” Gabby gasped. “That is definitely not like you.”

“Well, I usually don’t notice, but the way he sauntered back to his car, with his holster slung low on his hips...mmm. If I’d thought I’d meet him again, I might have considered speeding all the way home.” I raised my glass in the air. They hooted and clinked my glass.

Kirsten leaned down to pick up the bottle of Jager and gave me a refill. “Well, I hope you can find someone as fabulous in Delaware. You deserve it.”

“Thanks, hon.”

I had to admit I was a bit jealous of the well-balanced lives they’d established after graduation. Gabby had the perfect teaching job and was now dating a “nice Jewish boy” that her mother strongly approved of. Ashley worked in New York City and spent her free time and sizable paycheck enjoying a whirlwind of activities. Kirsten’s job required her to travel a lot, but she still managed to have fun. Meanwhile, I rotated through a never-ending cycle of going to class, the library, work, and home to study.

But today was different. I was tailgating with my besties and determined to enjoy the time.

Tired of everyone dissecting my personal life, Gabby grabbed the sub tray and passed it around while Kirsten heated up her famous gumbo on the grill. Ashley set up a table of red cups for us—and channeling our college days—displayed some mad beer pong skills. Attracted by the noise, a few other Roselle grads came over to join in and things started to get pretty raucous. Ashley always attracted a crowd.

That's not really my thing, so I grabbed Gabby. "You want to wander around? I think Sean's got a tailgate around here somewhere."

She ran both hands through her hair, relief clearly evident on her face. "Sure. Let's go before things get out of hand."

I called out to Kirsten, "We'll be back in an hour or so." When she waved us goodbye, I grabbed two beers from the cooler, and Gabby and I set out across the field.

A few rows over, I spotted one of my brother's friends playing cornhole. "Hey Nick, where's Sean? He's coming today, right?"

He paused in mid toss; his mouth twisted like he'd swallowed a bug. "Yeah, he's parked over by the north end, hanging with his lacrosse buddies. I guess we're not good enough for him." He threw the beanbag and it sailed right over the wooden target.

I smirked, enjoying his irritation. "Well, you're not. Learn to deal with it. Maybe if you'd picked a cool sport instead of wrestling, he'd want to spend more time with you." Nick had been friends with Sean since third grade, so he was like another brother to me. It was always fun to yank his chain.

"Yeah, yeah." He swirled his hand around as though holding a fairy wand. "Like skipping around a field waving a stick at people is cool." His next throw banged the bottom edge of the cornhole board, making his teammate groan. He flipped him the finger.

I giggled. "Well, it's better than wearing onesies and rolling around with other dudes."

When he turned his finger in my direction, I couldn't resist getting in one final dig. "C'mon Gabs, this tailgate is lame. Let's find us some hot lacrosse players." We linked arms and headed for the other side of the stadium, laughing as Nick recommended we engage in an inappropriate sex act.

The north end was packed with cars, but I managed to spot Sean gathered around a grill with his former teammates. Typical guys, they were all in T-shirts and jeans, not a sweatshirt in the bunch. Meanwhile, I was still bundled up in a coat and mittens—thankfully, since the cold beer I was holding would have turned my fingers numb.

We waved at him before settling into a pair of vacant folding chairs they'd set up across the way. We had just started a heated debate over which local bar served the best guacamole when Gabby grabbed my arm. "That guy is checking you out."

I whipped around. "Where?"

Keeping her hand near her lap, she pointed across the way. "Down there. See Sean by the grill? There's a tall guy to his left, sitting on the bed of a green pickup truck."

I glanced over. Hmm, cute. Well built, nice smile, not bad. But also, not looking at me.

"No, he's not."

She shrugged. "Well, he was."

A minute later, she nudged me again. "Linds, he is definitely checking you out."

I rolled my eyes. "Get real. My face is red and chapped from the cold. My hair's sticking up everywhere—" I yanked off my fuzzy red mittens and ran my hand through to smooth it back into place. "No one could find this attractive."

She gave me the once-over only a close friend could give and declared, "You look amazing."

Grateful for the support, it gave me the confidence to peek over again and this time he was looking. Our eyes met and he flashed me a smile before turning his attention back to his friend.

I giggled like a five-year-old. “Ooow. He was! Now, what should I do?”

“Why don’t you grab a fresh beer, run on over there and tell him he should get to know you better?”

I gawked at her. “You know *that’s* not going to happen.”

Gabby patted my arm. “I know. You’re totally pathetic and will simply sit here, wasting a perfect opportunity and he will never learn how fabulous you are. But whatever—your choice.”

*Ouch.* The truth hurt. I sat there thinking maybe I *should* make a move when, the next thing I knew, Sean was walking over with a couple of his buddies. And he had that guy with him.

## Chapter 3

“Hey, Linds. How are you?” Sean called out.

I got up and gave him a hug. “Good, how about you?”

“Not bad. A little cold.”

Duh. He was wearing a t-shirt. The only one with any sense was his cute friend, who seemed all warm and toasty in a cream-colored cable knit sweater, jeans, and work boots. Yum.

Sean motioned to the guys next to him. “You know Charlie and Mike, right? And this here’s Matt. He’s down from New York.” Then he waved an arm in my direction. “This is my sister Lindsay and her friend Gabby.”

Matt was a tall one, over six feet. I had to tip my head up to look at his face. His warm brown eyes locked with mine, and a smile crept over his face. It was then I noticed the hint of a dimple in his cheek. And it hit me.

Unable to keep the grin from my face, I held out my hand. “Hello, officer.”

His smile grew wider. “Hello, ma’am.”

He shook my hand, and a tingle shot up my arm. His grip was firm and confident and when I glanced at his hands, they were so...manly. I have a thing for hands. And these? Well, these were hands I could fantasize about.

I returned my gaze to his face and my heart did a funny little loop-de-loop. He had a strong jaw, some seriously sexy cheekbones, and a smile that made my knees go weak. His hair was short, but not too short, and brown with kind of golden highlights. I’d thought his eyes were brown too, but they appeared amber in the sunlight. And they were focused on me—as though I were the only person in the world.

He dipped his head. “I thought I recognized you, but couldn’t be sure. Your hair is different...shorter.”

I couldn’t believe he’d noticed. I reached up and ran my hand through what was left of it. “I got it cut last week.”

Sean’s head swiveled between us before turning to his friends. When they shrugged, he turned back to me. “Do you two know each other?”

I tried to be casual about it. “Well, sort of. This is the guy who pulled me over last month on the Thruway.”

“No way!” Gabby waggled her eyebrows as she nudged me with her elbow. “This is *The Guy*?”

I rolled my eyes at her. “Yes. This is the guy.”

Matt grinned at our exchange. “So, I’m ‘The Guy’? What does that mean?”

I nudged Gabby back, trying to shut her up. “Nothing. It means nothing. Gabby, this is Matt, the *officer* who pulled me over, and nothing else.”

Sean stared at us as though we were talking in a foreign tongue. Subtlety was never his strong suit. He shrugged and said, “Great, he’s the guy. Whatever. We’re going to take a leak. Feel free to hang out until we get back. There’s beer and shots in the cooler and dogs on the grill. Help yourselves.”

With a wave, he headed over toward the port-a-potties.

“Hang on. I’ll go with you,” Gabby called out. She flashed me a smirk and took off running. Her mother would be proud of that little *yenta* maneuver. About as subtle as a sledgehammer.

I stood there alone with officer hottie; my heart started beating like a snare drum. I desperately fought to form a coherent thought but came up empty.

He did not appear to suffer from the same affliction. “Would you like a hot dog? They’re getting a little crispy over there and I’d hate to see them go to waste.” Matt motioned across the way.

“Sure.” I trailed after him like an adoring puppy. How could I not? He walked as though he could conquer the world, all ramrod straight and in control. And boy, could he fill out a pair of jeans. He was simply gorgeous, front and back.