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# TROUBLE

EMILY SOMMERS

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Emily Sommers thanks you deeply for your support and understanding.

# DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this book to all those people out there who have gone through or are going through any form of anxiety or depression. The main protagonist in this book very closely resembles my life and I wrote this book as a way of healing myself.

I also want to dedicate this book to my mum and husband. I love you and I can never express in words how grateful I am for your love, support and understanding.

## Chapter 1

I look in the mirror applying my favourite red lipstick and I can't help but have a flashback to the girl I used be...

As a kid I grew up in a small town and was taunted with looking 'ugly' almost every day. Life wasn't pretty when you don't have the typical 'American look'; you know the blond hair and blue eyes, well I guess not necessarily blond hair and blue eyes, but as long as you had 'fair skin'.

I came from a very cultural background; part Spanish, German, Indian, and African. My parents split up when I was five so it was left for my mum to raise me. She worked two jobs just to support me and although we weren't 'poor', we were in no way considered rich by any means. And the kids at school would make sure I never forgot that.

I remember the first day it started when I was only six years old. I was changing into my P.E clothes when a couple of girls came over and asked me why my skin colour wasn't 'normal like theirs' or even worse, why my skin colour 'looked dirty'.

I didn't know what they meant and before I could say anything they started whispering into each other's ears and giggling at me. Feeling humiliated and confused I ran into the toilets crying while hearing them laughing in the background. Things got progressively worse after that. I refused to go to P.E, pretending to be sick all the time so no one would make anymore comments about me.

As I got older, especially through my teens, the teasing went from being just words, to being spat at, to being kicked and eventually beaten up. It was traumatizing. During class one time, we were asked what we would like to be when we got older. When it came to me, everyone yelled at things like 'janitor', or 'garbage collector'. Tears started streaming down my face and I ran out of class. I was bullied so much that I dreaded school every day and I became really depressed.

My mum worked so hard to pay the bills, and some days there was never enough food for both of us so she would go without food just to ensure I could eat. Knowing just how hard my mum worked, I never wanted to tell her any of the bad things that were happening. I just bottled everything in, kept my head down and studied, while I bottled everything inside.

When I hit sixteen, I began to drink and take drugs just to ease the pain and I guess, fit in with the cool kids. I remember being invited Ryan's house party – the most popular kid in high school. Everyone loved Ryan and majority of the girls just wanted to get laid by him, if they hadn't already, even he had a girlfriend named Stacey. He always had a wondering eye. So I thought it was weird when I got there that Ryan and his mates became really nice to me and said they would get me some 'lemonade'. Instead they had been secretly filling my cup

with Vodka and getting me drunk. Even though I knew somewhere back in my fuzzy brain that what they were doing was wrong, I liked that they were not at least spitting or throwing things at me so I guess I just continued to drink. To avoid being the butt of jokes, I started to become somewhat of a bully myself just so people would leave me alone. I would make fun of teachers and swear at them just to make the other kids laugh. At least they weren't laughing at me. Never mind how much I was suspended, but mum was never home much so she didn't realise I wasn't at school.

I finally got accepted by some of the 'cool group'; a bunch of girls who were as nasty as they could come. But better to be on their good side I guess. Stacey, Ryan's Girlfriend, was one of the girls who 'primed me up' and would have my eyebrows waxed, ensure my nails were always done, and ensure my makeup was always flawless. She even gave me weight loss pills and had me exercise every day with her. I dropped from being a size six to size two in less than a month. She always told me that to be part of 'them', I had to be skinny and look less 'ethnic'. That meant dying my long brown hair to blond and even using bleaching cream to ensure my skin didn't look so dark.

So I did it, for two years. I got up every day, exercised, took my weight loss pills, bleached my skin, ate hardly anything, drank excessively and took drugs and let guys take complete advantage of me so that I could be accepted.

Shit hit the fan on Graduation night. I was in the bathroom totally wasted and on the verge of puking my guts out when Ryan barged in on me and forced himself on me. He told me I was lucky to even be part of his group and that I was a little ugly bitch and would never be attractive because my cultural background was disgusting and that I would only end up being someone's servant. He then forced himself upon me while I kicked and screamed for him to get away. He backhanded me on the face over and over until he had my arms pinned and was about to unzip his pants and rape me, but Stacey walked in on us. She took in the scene and screamed at me for trying to steal her boyfriend. Of course Ryan played along with it too.

That night was the biggest wake up call of my life. After that night I never saw my so called friends again. I cried for weeks, never leaving the house. I stopped all the drugs and drinking and my bullshit ways. I finally told my mum everything. I was a mess. I started having panic attacks just being around other people. Normal places like the supermarket became a nightmare as I was paranoid I was about to be ridiculed. I constantly felt paranoid, like everyone was judging me. I realised that I would never be happy here, that I'd grow up and rot in this small town with these small minded people. There was nothing and no-one for me here.

Mum told me to pack my bags and that we would move to LA and live with her sister and start a new life there. From that day, I never looked back. By some miracle I had done enough to be accepted into UCLA so I guess it was time to go.

While I was at uni, I started to feel like I wasn't living in my past anymore. I finally had some semblance of confidence that I so ached to have. I was going places, I was studying hard, and I was surrounded by good people. And then I met Steve.

Steve destroyed all the good that was in me.

He was lawyer who I met while I was at uni. At first he was charming, smart, and fun. He was 30 and I was 21. He was my first boyfriend, and the first man I gave my virginity too. After only a month, he begged me to move in with him. Our love was fast and knew no boundaries. I thought he was the most intelligent person on the planet. I worshipped him. I breathed him. I lived him. I lost myself to him. And I didn't realise it at the time, but he was controlling every part of me.

He would always tell me that I should have pretend interviews with him before I went for a job interview. I remember every time he asked me a question that I answered; he would belittle me for my answers. Telling me how stupid I was for saying that. That only 'a nobody' would say that. He would then tell me how stupid my friends were. That I was hanging out with 'losers'. Of course I believed him. I loved him. And he loved me. And someone who loves you knows best, right?

After a year of being with him, I noticed he started hanging out with girls he once slept with and would stay in touch with a couple of his ex-girlfriends who he was 'still friends with'. Even when I told him I wasn't comfortable with him being around them, he told me I was being insecure. That I had no reason to feel that way because he wasn't with them – he was with me. I believed him, of course. He loved me, so I could trust someone who loves me, right?

On the night of our one year anniversary I came home to find him in our bed with his ex. Everything from that night onwards remains a blur, but I did move out and went through some serious depression. Steve told me he still loved me but just felt like our relationship wasn't right. That he wasn't feeling the love. He said he needed space. You would think that after seeing my boyfriend in bed having sex with another woman would make me never want to see him again right? Wrong.

I loved him, I was so deluded, I was convinced in his lies that he loved me and space would fix his 'mistake'. After all, I felt like I couldn't live without him. I needed him. My world revolved around him. He was my oxygen. It was sickening. It wasn't healthy. But I guess our whole relationship was never healthy. For three agonizing months I waited for him – for his space. I knew he was sleeping around with other girls. But he would call me and tell me he loved me and that he just needed to figure out 'which girl he wanted'. It makes me sick to think I stuck around even after he told me that. But I did. And every day, for three months, I would wake up and throw up bile and cry myself to sleep. I was in a constant state of anxiety. A state of anxiety and depression I never thought could exist. My mind became a

prison. I lost so much weight. I couldn't eat because I constantly felt anxious. I didn't sleep. I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't leave my house. I couldn't face work. I felt like my life was over. All because this person, who I thought loved me, completely used me and betrayed me and I believed everything he said. I felt like the biggest fool on the planet. I was convinced everyone was judging me, and everyone was laughing at me. The joke was on me. I became a recluse. The events that happened to me in high school left me feeling like a broken girl. The breakup with Steve was a trigger that set off my anxiety to a whole new level. I was constantly in fear of other people, having panic attacks on the regular. I was brainwashed with negative thoughts.

Now I'm 25. And the person staring back at me is a far cry to the girl I used to be. After completing my Bachelor's degree in Journalism and going through that hellish breakup with Steve, I spent a year in therapy. I stayed with my mum and just learnt how to be my own person again. Being an individual in my own shoes. Trying to regain my confidence and strength.

I began to eat again. I had some serious therapy in that year; everything from Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or CBT as Psych's like to call it, to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, to Exposure. You name it and I did it. I mediated, I went for walks, and I found my love of going to the beach and swimming on my own. I slowly started to leave the house again. I reached out to my friends who I stopped talking to while I was with Steve again. I slowly and steadily was trying to love myself again.

After a year focusing just on me, I applied for a job for the LA times as a part-time reporter. But fate had other ideas I guess. I had another part time job working in the jewellery industry as a buyer. In fact I began this role as soon as I came to LA and loved what I did. Steve always used to tell me I would go nowhere working in jewellery and that I should focus on being a reporter. I thought he was right since I was a curious person and was forever reading and writing. But in the year that I spent time 'healing' myself, I began to make jewellery and would sell them to family who encouraged me to pursue it as a business. One of my work colleagues, Emmanuel, who also worked in the jewellery biz with me, saw my designs and thought I was nuts not to start my own jewellery line.

He was so supportive and believed in me to such an extent that he invested in me and helped me start my own jewellery line. It just so happened that Emmanuel had his own multi-million dollar real estate company on the side and saw something in me that I didn't. Now, in my mid 20's I have my designs stocked throughout LA and next month I will be flying to New York to meet with some buyers to stock my line in some of the largest name department stores. I honestly never thought my life would take such a turn around.

But even though my career has taken off, and I'm definitely in a much better place than I was, I suffer from social anxiety and panic attacks as a result of my years in high school and



my relationship with Steve. Sure I've seen a therapist to deal with all my shit and it has really helped. But some things have scarred me so bad that even therapy and medication can't fix.

I constantly live in fear that someone is about to call me 'ugly', or find out that I'm stupid because of my cultural background. And I can't put my trust in anyone because I keep looking back at how naive and foolish and trusting I was with Steve as well as those kids from high school. The logical part of my brain knows this is stupid, and that I can't pool everyone in the same circle, because by doing so I'm just as bad as the kids from high school and Steve. But I always live in fear that in any social situation, I'm one step away from being ridiculed and betrayed.

The funny thing about it all is that if you never knew my past, you'd never know I'd have this issue. To others I seem confident and strong... I eat healthy; I practise yoga at least five times a week combined with a couple days of kickboxing and running. It helps to get the anger and fear out that I've been holding back after all these years from my past. Although some days it feels like I am still running from my past.

Maybe I put up a good front because if anyone really knew how messed up I was inside, they would run a mile.

\*\*\*\*\*

The doorbell rings breaking me out of my reverie. I run to the door almost tripping over my signature Louboutin black pumps.

As I open the door I am greeted my best friend Mel. Mel is one of my closest friends. She's more like a sister. She has shoulder length blond hair with legs that go on for days. She has the most amazing body I have ever seen. But she thinks I'm deluded.

Mel is like me in the sense that looks can be deceiving. She may wear some of the shortest skirts and dresses I've ever seen, in fact sometimes I have to double check she isn't wearing a belt, but in reality she is a total tomboy. She grew up with five older brothers and has a pretty tough attitude. I met her at uni and we have been inseparable ever since.

"Well look at you Sophie Jacobs! I love those shoes and Oh look at that dress, it is fucking stunning," she says rather enthusiastically.

I look back at her and have to bite my tongue when I see how short her dress is.

"Hey babe, thanks," I say giving her a kiss on the cheek and inviting her in. "Although Mel, is that a belt your wearing 'caz babe, I hate to break it to you but if you bend in the slightest I'm pretty sure the whole of LA will see your breakfast."

She rolls her eyes at me.

“Really? I actually thought it was too long. Was thinking of going for something shorter,” she replies with sass.

“Babe, any shorter and you might as well walk around naked,” I laugh back

“Bitch.”

“Slut.”

And we both crack up laughing. That’s thing with Mel, I can say anything to her and her to me, and we just get each other. Not once have we ever offended each other.

She starts rummaging through my cupboards, clearly looking for some liquid courage.

“Where is the champers at babe, I need some drinks before we hit this club,” she says excitedly

“Oh on the cupboard to your left, help yourself. I’m just going fix up my hair and I’ll be right back to join you.”

Truthfully, I’m feeling anxious again. I usually avoid bars and public places like the plague, but through therapy I’ve realised the more I avoid, the worse it will be. And over the years things have gotten better, but the hardest thing is letting anyone in. Mel won me over with her boldness and non-judgemental nature, and she knows about my past and my anxiety issues. She has been a wonderful and patient friend in getting me to face my fears and do more social things. I guess partly to her I would never have had the courage to start my own business.

I head back to my bedroom and I look in the mirror taking a couple of deep breaths.

*Breathe in*

*Breathe out.*

*C’mon Sophie you got this. Just like before.*

Ever so slowly, with each breath, my nerves start to dissipate. My anxious thoughts are still there, the ones that tell me that as soon as I step outside my door people are going to laugh at me and judge me, but at least my breathing has slowed.

I take one last look in the mirror and apply the final touches of my mascara. If someone were to describe me in detail I guess that would say I have full lips that are framed by my strong jawline. I have hazel cat like eyes, with long brown wavy hair that falls just past my rather ample size breasts. I also have a tiny waist with long lithe legs that seem to be the envy of many girls and seem to be a homing beacon for guys.

Tonight I’ve decided to wear a black tight fitting LBD with a seriously low back, hair up in a loose bun with some tendrils framing my face and to show off my back.

Satisfied with my outfit and makeup, I head back out to the kitchen where I see Mel texting on her cell whilst sipping some champagne.

"Is that Nate?" I ask her.

Nate and Mel met at the beach a couple of weeks ago and he seemed like a nice guy who was cute enough. Things were new with these two and he asked Mel to catch up with him tonight at the new bar that had opened up.

"Yeah he said he's just arrived at Illusion and I'm just letting him know we will be on our way soon. Is Em going to be there?"

"Yes, I said I would just meet him down there. I'll find him," I say pouring myself a glass of champagne.

Mel watches me pour my drink, eyeing me wearily. "Babe, are you sure you're okay? I know how anxious you get."

"Mel, I'm fine," I reply back. "I've gotten heaps better and the more I expose myself to this stuff, the better I'll be able to handle things"

She continues to look at me with scepticism in her eyes. "Okay hun just checking. But take it easy on the drinks okay. You don't want to numb yourself from the feeling."

I roll my eyes. She gives me this pep talk every time we head out to a bar. I was not the girl I used to be. If anything I was a lightweight. After two drinks I was tipsy and I'd always stop there. I would never go back to the girl I used to be.

"You know Soph, Nate said he's bringing some friends along. About time you got some action babe. When was the last time you had a good fuck?" she asks like it's something she asks just anyone.

"Well let me see Mel. I had an orgy last night. Does that count," I reply with attitude.

It was always the same convo with Mel:

*When are you going to start dating again Soph?*

*He was cute Soph and totally checking you out, why don't you go over and talk to him?*

*Soph why'd you dump him after seeing him for a month, I thought things were cool?*

And it wasn't that I had any issues with getting involved with a guy; I just never wanted to get close enough where I would get hurt again. I had major trust issues after that incident with Steve. It would take me a really long time to even begin to see someone, and as it was, I was already dealing with a busy work schedule and my anxiety issues didn't help. I figured that as soon as a guy knew I had these 'issues', he'd bolt. And I never wanted to be ridiculed

and left out and betrayed. So I always broke it off before they even have the chance. It was a defence mechanism but I knew one day, I would have to eventually stop running away.

“Argh lighten up Soph. I was only saying!” Mel says light-heartedly giving me a slight laugh.

I smile back at her. I can never be mad at Mel, she always means well. “Sorry Hun. Just a bit edgy.”

“In that case, drink the whole damn bottle. You’re more fun that way!” she says laughing

I laugh back at her. “Cheers,” I say as I clink my glass with hers and down the entire glass.

“Let’s go.”

## Chapter 2

We arrive at Illusion and I can already feel eyes on me as soon I walk through the door. It's like this every time, I see the guys looking at me giving me smiles and winks and all I can do is think of is my past. Of Steve. Of Ryan. That's when the anxiety kicks in and panic starts to bubble.

Mel grabs my hand and gives me a slight squeeze and I'm immediately pulled out of past and back to the present. "I'm here babe, it's alright. You're not in school anymore. Remember that they are just looking at you because you are stunning," she whispers into my ear.

I smile and nod back at her, but stunning is far from anything I feel or have ever felt. No matter how much makeup I wear, or the designer outfits I drape on my body, the expensive shoes on feet- I always feel ugly on the inside. And that's where the true beauty lies doesn't it? It's funny how many compliments I receive these days and how all I do is twist these compliments, shape and shift them so that eventually, they sound negative to me. Totally twisted. Yep that's me. Hot girl on your six. But an absolute mental shit storm on the inside. Very attractive to the opposite sex I'm sure.

Mel spots Nate sitting in one of the VIP lounges and he gestures her over. She keeps a strong hold of my hand as we walk over. I look around and see the flashing lights and feel the bass of music vibrating through my body. I'm already feeling tipsy from my drink with Mel and I begin to relax a little, even swaying my hips to the music playing in the background.

"Ladies! You both look stunning!" Nate says while giving Mel a kiss on the lips and me a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey Nate," I say politely.

Mel and Nate have been dating for a couple of weeks now, which surprises me because Mel is not one for relationships. She's a love 'em and leave 'em kinda girl. Cue Samantha from Sex and the City.

"What's going on Soph, where is the lucky man tonight?" Nate says breaking me out of my trance.

"I'm riding solo Nate. Just here to enjoy the night with you guys."

"Aw well you're in luck Soph. I have some friends I'd like you to meet," he responds.

Before I can object, Nate has a tall guy with short brown hair who is fairly cute standing next to him.

“Micah, this is Sophie, Mel’s friend. Sophie this is my mate Micah,” Nate says cheekily.

I give Nate a death stare before I put my hand out and shake Micah’s hand, “nice to meet you.”

“Likewise,” he says with a cute smile before eyeing me up and down.

A lady comes round with drinks before we can say anymore and I grab a glass of champagne and sip it slowly while trying to make small talk with Micah. I swear I could slap Nate. I am not a charity case.

“Nate mentioned you were beautiful but I have to say, that’s an understatement,” Micah says with a shy smile.

“Oh you’re too kind Micah,” I say sarcastically

He laughs at my brush off. “So what do you do?” he asks

I begin to tell him about my work and he lets me know he works as a civil engineer and that he knows Nate through work.

We continue to make small talk and out of the corner of my eye I see Mel run off with Nate to the dance floor.

*Great now I’m stuck here.*

Feeling tipsier and a little bored of Micah, I excuse myself to the bathroom. Walking towards the girl’s cubicle, I can’t help but notice three guys standing off to the right chatting away. But one guy catches my eye in particular. He’s the only one who stands there confidently, not talking to anyone. Girls walk by him, openly gawking at him, but he just ignores them. My eyes travel from his face down to his feet and I instantly like what I see.

He has wavy brown hair and he’s attire consists of a white shirt that has a few buttons open exposing his very muscular chest. His sleeves are rolled up, exposing the tattoos that snake up both his arms. When he swigs his beer I can see the muscles in his biceps, and his shirt is hiding what I can tell is a washboard stomach that makes me want run my hands down those abs. My eyes travel down further and I see he is wearing jeans that are hung low revealing his Armani underwear. He’s at least six foot tall; with the most gorgeous olive skin I have ever seen. And he’s built like a Greek god. He works out alright. He is the epitome of gorgeous. But it’s not so much his body, or his tattoos, or clothes that catch my eye. It’s his eyes.

He has the most intense emerald green eyes. Eyes that you could get lost in if you’re not careful. Most of all, he looks like a whole lot of trouble. A heartbreaker for sure. With looks and a body like that, you would be done for. And he’s also so out of my league. A guy like

him could have any girl and I would be lucky to even have the chance to have him look my way.

But before I can continue staring any further, he slowly turns his head scanning the place and his eyes land on mine. His eyes are more gorgeous than I thought and his stare is so intense it's like I'm caught in some weird hypnotic state. Feeling embarrassed that he caught me looking I quickly look avert my eyes and hightail it to the girls bathroom.

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As I head back from the girls bathroom, I spot Mel and Nate near the bar talking to some of his friends. I begin to walk over but am grabbed by the arm by my business partner, Emmanuel.

"Sophie! Look at you, you sexy minx! You look to die for darling," Emmanuel yells excitedly over the music before giving me a kiss on each cheek and big bear hug.

"Hey Em! So good to see you! Are you here with Frederick?"

Emmanuel, or Em as Mel and I affectionately call him, is the most gorgeous gay guy we have ever seen. He met his partner Frederick a couple of years ago I have never see Em so happy in all the time I've known him. Em is also the hottest looking gay guy I have ever met and is one of the nicest guys too. He had a similar upbringing to me. He was beaten up and picked on during his school years and life was not pleasant for him in any way. When his parents found out about his sexuality, his father flipped and ended up disowning him. He suffered severe depression throughout his teens and early adult life. But ever since he found Frederick, and removed himself from people that brought him down, he grew into the man he was always meant to be. I guess that's why Em and I have a friendship like glue. We just get what each other has gone or is going through.

"Oh we had a fight, he's being a child because we went looking for places today so we could move in together and we fought about everything from the location, to the house not being big enough, to not having a big enough closet to fit all his shoes in. Who knew moving in with someone could be such a pain in the ass!"

I laugh at him. Em and Jase are always at it. "Aw you guys will work it out! Come on, let's go to the bar and grab a drink" I say linking arms with him.

Em was the only person who helped me through the panic attacks I suffered and he in turn opened up to me about his the depression he faced growing up. I was there for him as a friend, forever telling him I loved him and just how much of a beautiful person he was. We formed a strong bond. One day while he was over at my place, he noticed the jewellery items I was designing on the side, and that's how he invested in me. It just so happened that he was also building his own business-a real estate company that was earning him a

lucrative amount of money. Before long, his company hit the multimillion dollar mark and he now sells to the elite in Hollywood.

Em and Mel are my best friends. They know about my past and they know about my anxieties and fears. If it wasn't for Emmanuel believing in my designs, and Mel's nurturing spirit, I don't think I would be where I am today. I owe them my world. That's how close my bond is with them.

Because of our pasts, Em and I both want to help people who suffer with anxiety and depression, especially since we experienced these feelings first hand and we never want anyone to feel that way. Together we started our own charity called the 'Star Foundation'. Since its inception a year ago, we have raised over a million dollars.

"So what's going on with you Soph? I saw that guy checking you out," he says pointing over to Micah.

"Oh Micah. Yeah he's Nate's friend and as cute as he is, he's a bit of a bore."

"Well he can't take his eyes off you."

"So who are you here with?" I ask changing the subject.

"Actually a few guys from work and a couple of clients."

"Mixing business with pleasure I see. Trying to get your clients drunk so they can say yes to the ridiculously expensive properties you show them?" I tease

He just laughs. "Speaking of business, you mentioned the other day Barney's would be stocking your range in New York! That is awesome Soph!" he says excitedly

I was lucky enough to have my jewellery line stocked in Barney's in their LA stores, but I really want my range in their flag ship store in New York so they have agreed to meet me in a couple of weeks to decide the outcome.

"Ah I wouldn't be celebrating just yet. I haven't signed any contracts. Their LA office told me verbally it would be happening but I still have to meet with the buyers in New York next month to sign a contract. And until I have that I don't want to get my hopes up. Besides, it's *our* business, not mine," I say seriously.

"Honey, the business is all you. You've put in the hard work. I merely gave you some dosh," he says with a wink. "And don't think so negatively about what the buyers will say. You will be fine darling. It's all going to work out, you will see Bella. C'mon let me introduce you to my friends."

I wave over at Mel letting her know I'm heading over with Em and she winks at me.



Em introduces me to about seven different guys and I'm already feeling anxious at the idea of holding a conversation with people I don't even know. My hands begin to sweat and my breathing starts to become shallow. Noticing my unease, Em squeezes my shoulder. "Breathe Soph. I' right here. Just breathe. You can just stay and talk to me if you feel uncomfortable."

"Thanks Em I should be okay. You know I get like this around people I don't know," I say shakily.

As I sit down on the couch next to Em, Daniel- one of his work colleagues- starts telling us about his mates bucks night and how he was arrested for his nudey run down the freeway while having a burning cigar lodged between his arse cheeks topped with a Santa hat. The image alone is enough to set me into a fit of laughter. The hilarious buck's stories continue with the other guys and I am in tears at the antics these guys have gotten up to.

I turn up to scan the crowd for Mel, but I freeze as I see the same guy I was checking out before standing in Em's circle of friends with his eyes glued to mine. His stare is so intense it leaves a scorching trail of fire from wherever his eyes travel. I'm caught somewhere between anxiety and lust and I begin to break out in a sweat almost immediately. I look away hoping he has too, but when I look back he is still staring at me. I can see a busty blond talking animatedly to him and even though he nods his head at her, his body language tells me he's not interested.

*Please don't tell me he's a friend of Emmanuel's.*

Before I can say or do anything, Em tells me he's getting up for a drink. Now I'm left sitting alone looking a little out of place as I'm surrounded by people but not talking to a single one of them.

So I do what any person would do in this situation. I pull the phone out of my clutch and pretend to look busy. In reality I'm just re-reading text messages and hoping Em comes back soon so I can get out of this awkward situation.

At the same moment I pretend to read messages that I've already read, I feel the couch next to me dip. I turn thinking I would be seeing Em. Instead I am greeted with that gorgeous guy I couldn't take my eyes off earlier.

*Holy shit he is so damn gorgeous.*

He looks at me with a killer smile.

"Hey," he says with a nod.

"Hey," I say completely dumbfounded.

*What is he doing here?*

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