



*Saved*  
BY THE  
**GOLDEN BOY**

ANNE T. THYSSEN

*Saved by The Golden Boy*

**Anne T. Thyssen**



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## *Chapter 1*

***-Emma-***

I shouldn't be doing this... I really shouldn't, but I had to, and when there was something I had to do, well... I did it. I shouldn't be here, though. They banned me from the school grounds. There were too many fights. Too many troubles. Too... much... work. Yeah, it was funny how schools and the education system wanted tons of kids to get smart and get to work. But those who truly struggled... Well, there wasn't much room for them. What did it matter if someone disappeared over the years or was cast out? Those weren't the ones making the wheel go around, right?

I couldn't say they were completely wrong. After the school had me thrown out, and my parents struggled to get me into any other, even if they were richer than the average person, I just stopped caring. I started to live exactly as I wanted and as everyone expected. Yes, I was that girl. That girl everyone knew would be nothing, but a trailer girl stuck with some kind of addiction and maybe a kid or two. The thing was, I had too



rich of parents for that to ever happen. But the addiction thing and kids thing probably in their minds, of course, could still happen. I had tried different drugs but now stuck to some weed once in a while. Just to take the anxiety away, and the constant feeling of being a failure. There were a lot of things I wasn't good at. Being severely dyslexic and having the concentration ability of a four-year-old made things like school hard for me. Nearly impossible, but there were some things I was very good at.

Kicking ass!

Yeah, I know you shouldn't be proud of it, but in my defense, this time, it actually came in handy. Three nights ago. Friday night, my sister, Elena, came home, bawling her eyes out. I tried figuring out what had gone wrong because, since then, she had locked herself up in her room, refusing to talk to anyone. Thank God for social media and the fact I knew all of her friends or... I at least knew *of* her friends. And it didn't take a genius to find out what had happened. One of the high school star athletes had taken my sister out, the one she had a huge crush on, like so many other girls from her school. He banged her and then dropped her like she was dirt. I didn't accept it. No one hurt my twin sister. We might be day and night. Her, the perfect good little girl and me, the disappointment with no potential to do anything but damage anything she got close to. That was fine. I didn't need to be the good girl right now. I needed to be the one to deal out some justice, justice, because I knew no one would really care. His family were important people. My family were important

people, at least in this town, and they all got money. So, this would just be pushed away. Just a little high school drama.

Nope!

I was taking the fucker down. In one way or another, he would learn not to ever use my sister again, or any other girl. I was going to show what happened to manipulative assholes. So, Monday came. My sister didn't want to leave her room, just perfect. I took some of her clothes, hid some tattoos I had gotten, and then pulled my hair into a ponytail. I liked to keep my hair a little shorter than my sister. So, I hoped this way, no one would put too much attention to it. But, of course, as the popular girl my sister was, her friends immediately saw me as I arrived at the school, coming over to me, and chatted away about the latest party. I acted like I listened to her two best friends, Gabriella and Jennifer, but I wasn't listening to a word. Instead, I was scouting for the one person I was truly there for. I found him quickly, standing with a group of friends, tossing a football around and waiting for the bell to ring.

“Show time,” I whispered.

“What?” Gabriella asked.

I gave her a little smile and then put on my Elena act. I was quite good at it because, despite being a failure in my parents' eyes, Elena was always on my side. She always had my back and was always there when I needed her. So, I knew how to be her.

“Nothing. I am just going to talk to Trevor for a moment,” I said in that voice that was a bit too light when she talked with her friends.

It had always made me wonder if they were truly friends, but I said nothing.

“Is that a good idea?” Gabriella asked. “After what... happened.”

“It’s fine. All is good,” I told her.

She looked at me, surprised, probably confused about why I wasn’t trying to avoid Trevor with everything I had, but I had a little show planned for everyone. So, why would I? I lifted my chin, going directly over to where Trevor was. He had his back to me, so he didn’t see I was coming. But the friend tossing him the ball saw me, and soon I heard him say, *oh trouble coming*. It probably wasn’t the first time Trevor had done something like this and had had a girl come up to him, demanding an explanation of how he could do this to her. No, he was that kind of guy, and I bet he had a whole *Idon’tgiveafuckIneverpromisedyouanything* speech prepared. I wasn’t there to cry over some tall, dark blond guy who had been blessed with good looks, but a rotten heart. I was there to hurt him, and I meant that literally.

Every one of his friends and Trevor turned to me, laughing and joking a little, as they saw me walking over to them in my little yellow sundress, the small white sandals, and that cute little white backpack my sister loved so much. Oh, yes, I was Elena through and through. And since I had gotten tattoos in

places that were always covered by the clothes unless I wore ultra-small shorts and only a bra, I didn't have to worry.

"Didn't have enough last Friday, sweetheart?" Trevor asked, just as I was almost standing in front of him.

I gave him one of those sweet smiles Elena gave to everyone.

"Not at all," I said, trying to sound happy, even if I was boiling on the inside.

I stopped in front of him, and the guy, of course, towered over me. What was he 6'1? 6'2? Intimidating when you were only 5'8, but that was fine. I just needed him a little closer.

"Sorry, I don't do seconds," he said, making his friends laugh, even if they acted like they tried keeping it in.

I glanced around me, knowing they were all waiting for the pleading or the crying or the "crazy girl" act, as I was sure they saw it as. But who was really crazy? The girl who had been led on and was now confused about why things weren't going as she thought they would? Or the guy who had led her on promising horse carriage rides and fireworks in the skies?

"Oh, that is too bad. I had something for you, though," I said.

I saw his light green eyes spark up with interest. Trevor walked closer to me, so we were almost standing chest to... almost chest.

"You do?" he asked.

I blinked fast twice, doing the whole sweet girl act, and nodded, biting my lower lip while eyeing his, and then bringing my eyes back to his green ones. He definitely got the message. Trevor leaned a little forward, thinking he probably could kiss me in front of his friends, make a big show of it, and then turn me down, making me seem like the desperate chick. But I had other plans. I ran my hand up his chest and saw his eyes get a little heated. Elena wasn't this daring, but I guess he hoped he had fucked her into being that, or maybe this often happened too, after he turned a girl down. Maybe he knew they would get bold in order to try to get him back. Of course, it didn't work, but it benefited me now. I moved my hand to his jacket, grabbing it, and acting like I was going to pull him down to my lips. Instead, I smiled a cruel smile that confused him. I then pulled back my arm, turning my hand into a fist, and then hammered it straight into his perfect nose, hoping I hit so hard that he would need a nose job afterwards. The guy let out a wail of pain, falling to his knees and clutching his bleeding nose.

This wasn't the first nose I had broken, so I knew where to hit. I let him go quickly, and as he stared up at me, I said,

“that's for my sister.”

He looked confused for a moment, but then his eyes grew big, and he seemed to realize who I was.

“Emma?” he asked, his voice a bit masked behind the hand that was trying to stop the bleeding.

“Next time I even hear you talk about her or I figure out you are trying to use her again, I will come back, and I will do more than break your nose. I will end you!” I snarled deeply, so only he could hear me.

Then I turned around, seeing the shocked look on everyone’s faces because I still looked like Elena, and I had just punched the most handsome guy, Trevor, in the face. Really, he wasn’t that handsome. Not when you saw what hid behind it all. He was just... ugly, and I was done with him now. I made sure that everyone knew now not to fuck with my sister if some of Trevor’s friends got a good idea. I knew she had never slept with anyone before. Elena shared everything with me, and I also knew how guys viewed girls, and to give yourself up on the first date? Yeah, then you were a whore. At least in their eyes. So, this was for the future as well. I would come back if I had to, but I didn’t believe I had to. They got the message. I had a smile on my lips as I walked away from the beautiful scene of Trevor Hudson on his knees and with a bleeding nose.

Oh, yes, the sweet taste of victory.

## *Chapter 2*

### ***-Brendon-***

I watched as the exact copy of Elena Scott punched Trevor right in the face. My best friend Aaron stood beside me, looking just as shocked. Everyone knew who Elena was. She was the sweetest and kindest person you would ever meet, and everyone knew who Trevor was. Bad news. I knew it better than anyone. We had gone to school together our whole lives. Our families were close friends, and we were both on the football team. Sadly, he and I hated each other. He hated me even more when I became the team's quarterback instead of him. I didn't think it was possible, but I knew it had certainly not made him like me more.

Trevor fell to the ground as everyone in front of the school just stared at Elena, shocked. At first, no one could figure out how she had done this. I mean, it wasn't hard to figure out *why*. Word spread fast, but Elena was too good. She would hit no one, despite what they had done to her. So, it really was *how*? How did she do it? But I stood close enough to Trevor's

little group to hear what she said, and then suddenly it all made sense.

“That’s for my sister.”

Elena had a twin sister, Emma. She dropped out of school three years back, and no one really heard from her anymore. We knew she was still living at home. She had, after all, just turned eighteen. I knew because Elena had just turned eighteen, but no one saw her around. I heard she hung out with other troubled kids, going to parties together and such, but they never came to *ours*, of course. So, no one saw her anymore. That was the first time since then I had really seen her, and even if she and Elena were almost exact copies, they were so different. I knew Emma had struggled like crazy in school, and she had gotten into more fights than I could count. But it seemed like it had come in handy now. She certainly showed Trevor that girls weren’t weak little things to play with. One of them would hit back, and that had become literal this time.

While people stormed to Trevor’s side, wanting to help him, and such, I watched Emma. I watched her walk towards her car parked further away. It was the one Elena always drove in, so how could any of us have suspected a thing? I couldn’t stop watching her, though. Elena had always seemed pretty to me, but nothing spiked my interest. I knew she had liked me like a lot of other girls, but I wasn’t Trevor, and I wouldn’t just sleep with them because I could. I had also been in a relationship for most of my time in high school, but we had broken up a few



months ago. Still, when the girls couldn't get my attention, they often turned to Trevor.

“I am sending this to EVERYONE!” Aaron said as I watched him film what was going on.

He was smiling from ear to ear. He had never been a fan of Trevor either, so he was just happy about that. I would never think violence was the solution, but I had to say I was a little impressed here. Emma had walked up to Trevor, fooling everyone. I had thought she would try to seduce him like some girls tried after he fucked them and then shot them down. It made some come running back with new tricks, but nothing worked. I thought it was just the same drill, but then she had grabbed his jacket and punched him so hard right in the nose, I was certain it was broken. It had to be. That girl had not held back.

“Damn, I wish I had gotten the whole thing,” Aaron said as he viewed the video.

Yeah, that would have been gold. I would have loved to see that on replay, but no one had been prepared for this. And I couldn't help but wonder if maybe Emma had more tricks up her sleeve for us. Trevor had certainly learned his lesson, but I knew a lot of other guys in this school who needed to be taught one as well.

“Here, look at this. This is going to make us famous,” Aaron said as he showed me he had put the video up on TikTok.

“What do you mean ‘us’?” I asked and smiled. “I had nothing to do with it.”

“Oh, right,” he said, just as the bell rang and we walked inside the school. “We couldn’t have your perfect reputation ruined, could we?”

I rolled my eyes as we walked down the long hallways to get to our English class.

“No, I’m just not a jerk for filming others’ ruin.”

“But filming people’s ruin is the best thing there is!” Aaron said as I opened the door to the class and held it for him. “Thank you, kind sir.”

I pushed him forward, so he almost tripped, but he just laughed as we walked into the class. We took our seats as other students slowly came inside.

“I was certain it was Elena for a moment,” I said and turned to Aaron.

“It would have been even better if it had been.”

“It was Emma, though,” I said.

Aaron nodded.

“That it was. I knew the girl could punch, but phew, I’m glad I’m not Trevor.”

“Don’t mess with the sister,” I said.

“Which one?”

I chuckled a little.

“Both, I guess. Either way, you get Emma after you.”

“She looked good, though,” Aaron said, and smiled. “Not really what she usually dresses in.”

“How can you know?”

“Come on, she didn’t use to dress like that when she went to school with us. You don’t think she now dresses like her cute sister, do you?”

I leaned back in my seat too, thinking it all over. I had actually not put that much notice on her clothes. At first, I had thought it was Elena coming over to either cry and scream at Trevor or to try to win him over. But then she had punched him, and I had seen that it wasn’t Elena at all. It was Emma, and I... wasn’t sure what happened then. I had looked at her completely mesmerized, but that was the first time I had seen a girl teach Trevor a lesson, one he would at least remember. He didn’t listen to them when they told him he had been a jerk and that using them was wrong. They all received the same speech from him. He had promised them nothing... In a way, I guessed he was right. He never promised them anything, but action spoke louder than words and with the way he pursued them, how could they not get the impression he wanted more? Maybe the broken nose would teach him not to play with girls’ hearts.

“Probably not,” I said and smiled a little, remembering watching Emma walk away with her head held high and like she had not just assaulted someone. I didn’t know what it was, but the thought of her made me smile. I had seen no one do

what she did, nor walk away like they were proud of it. I could understand why she would be proud, though. She had one hell of a right hook.

“Why are you smiling?” Aaron suddenly asked.

“Huh?”

“You’re smiling.”

“Can’t I smile?” I asked.

“Not when you’re staring into the air like that. Tell me it wouldn’t have anything to do with the mysterious boxer sister who showed up?” he asked me a little teasingly as he slapped my arm.

I threw my pencil at him, and he chuckled.

“Shut up,” I said.

“I knew it! You’re intrigued. Does the badass sister make your dick stand again?” he asked.

That time, I slapped the back of his head.

“Funny,” I said dryly.

“What? We know your last relationship turned dry,” he chuckled.

I rolled my eyes and shook my head. My relationship with Simone had simply lost its spark. We grew apart, but we had also dated since we were fifteen. We had simply grown into two different people, and we didn’t fit together anymore. She was the captain of the cheerleader squad, and I was on the football team. Of course, we ended up together, but it also

meant it would be hard to stay clear of her from now on. I knew she still had feelings for me, and she had not been that happy about the breakup. She still wanted us to be together, but I simply didn't feel the same for her anymore. I still cared about her, and I made sure to be honest about what I was thinking and feeling. But we simply didn't match each other anymore.

"We just grew apart," I said.

"Sure, Simone definitely felt the same," he said sarcastically. "It's why she keeps staring at you when you walk by."

"Stop that."

"What?" Aaron said and smiled. "It's true."

"Doesn't mean you have to mention it."

"You broke that girl's poor heart," Aaron said and put his hand over his own, acting like he was the one I had hurt. "Maybe she has a crazy sister too who will come and punch you in the nose."

Aaron punched the air in front of him, but I just shook my head and rolled my eyes.

"Do you know how ridiculous you are?" I asked him.

"Hurtful," he said.

I chuckled a little and shook my head.

"So, will it be all over your Instagram now? *Dating The Troublemaker*," Aaron said, acting like he wrote the damn title

in the air.

“I don’t know what you mean. I just got out of my relationship,” I said.

“Yeah, four months ago,” he said.

“And maybe I need more time.”

“You sound like a fucking girl.”

I rolled my eyes.

“And you sound like an idiot,” I said, but I smiled.

Aaron was about to get back at me when our English teacher, Mr. Erikson, entered. He closed the door behind him and went to his desk.

“Morning, everyone,” he said.

“Morning,” we all said.

Mr. Erikson looked up from the books he had put on his desk, noticing an empty seat in the middle of the class.

“Who are we missing?”

He took some time to look us all over and then realized we were missing Trevor.

“Where is Mr. Hudson?” he asked.

That made the whole class giggle and whisper since they had all witnessed the fight or seen the videos posted about it. Our teacher looked around, confused, not understanding what was going on with everyone.

“What am I missing here?” he asked, smiling a little.

Mr. Erikson was one of the most loved teachers, always funny and joking around, but he could also get serious when needed to.

“You might want to go by the nurse’s office,” Aaron said, and it made the whole class laugh again.

“Why? Did a fight happen?” he asked.

The class couldn’t stop laughing, which only confused our teacher even more. Soon, one of the girls sitting in the front took out her phone and showed him the video of what had happened. It was clear Mr. Erikson did his best not to smile. Since he was the teacher, he could not be happy about what happened. But I was certain he thought Trevor needed to be knocked down from his high horse as well.

“I see,” he said.

Everyone could see he was truly trying his best to act professionally about this.

“Let’s hope Mr. Hudson will get better soon,” he said, and more giggles filled the room. “Because we do not condone violence, do we?”

He made his voice harder towards the end and the class shook their heads, but even Mr. Erikson found this funny. It was clear a smile was trying to spread on his lips, but as our teacher it was important, he instead taught us a lesson about this.

“No, we do not,” he said. “And I’m sure this is a good example of why you come to teachers or parents, and we talk

about the issue instead.”

We all nodded, having to since we couldn't admit we were all happy that Emma had shown up and punched Trevor... or not everyone. Trevor's friends were all sulking.

“She is crazy,” I heard one of them whisper.

“What was that?” Mr. Erikson asked.

He had the hearing of a damn bat. He heard everything, even whispers, and his eyes were locked right on one of Trevor's friends.

“I just said she is crazy,” Dean said.

“Crazy?” Mr. Erikson asked, not sounding happy about that word. “Why would you think that?”

“Well, who just walks up to someone and punches them for no reason?”

“I'm sure Miss Scott had a reason,” Mr. Erikson said and smiled a little. “Not that she should have punched him, but while I know she has a reputation for making trouble, I also know she often has her reasons for it. Some are just not built for the world as we have made it. But that doesn't mean they are crazy because they don't fit into society's rules. Does it?”

That time he was asking the entire class, and we all shook our heads. I smiled a little. I liked how Mr. Erikson was defending Emma. He had never taught her, but it was clear he still knew of her situation. Pretty much everyone did. Nothing stayed a secret for long among high school students, but many here had known Emma most of their lives, and we all went to



school with her sister. So, it was easy to figure out why she was no longer in school anymore.

“Good, now shall we get back to the class or shall we continue to discuss who is crazy and who is not?”

Everyone stayed quiet, so Mr. Erikson knew he could continue the class.

## *Chapter 3*

***-Emma-***

I hurried back to my room to get changed before I went to see my sister. Our parents were both successful lawyers. So they often worked late, which was why I knew it would take some time before they found out what I had done today. My hand hurt a little. Trevor had a thick face, but I didn't take some time to get some ice. No, I went directly to my sister's room. It was right in front of mine. I sighed as I stood in front of the white door, and then I lifted my hand that I had not used to punch Trevor and knocked on her door. It was silent...

"Elena?" I called softly.

I heard a small snuffle, and I looked down at the ground in front of me. She had locked herself inside the entire weekend, and I knew there was a good chance she would not leave her room for the rest of the week. The heart was a fragile thing. Especially for young teenagers. It was easy to break it. Others might think my sister was overreacting, but I didn't think so. I could see how much this had hurt her. It would have hurt me

too if I had been head-over-heels for someone. It was not fun getting played.

“Elena, please open the door,” I said and knocked again.

“Go away!”

“Come on, I just want to talk to you!”

“Well, I don’t want to talk. So go!” she said.

I could hear from the sound of her voice that she had been crying a lot and still was.

“Trevor is an idiot,” I said.

“I told you I don’t want to talk!” she yelled.

Just hearing his name was a trigger, and I shouldn’t have said it.

“Let’s... Let’s go eat some ice cream. It’s a warm day.”

“We have ice cream in the freezer...”

“Then let’s go down and eat it!” I said.

“No.”

“Well... how about we go shopping for some candy?”

“No.”

“Clothes?”

“No.”

“Makeup?” I asked.

“No! What isn’t it you don’t understand? No! No! No!”

I heard something break inside her room. I was unsure if she might have thrown her pillow at the wall and hit something else, or if she had tried to throw an object against the door to scare me away. I sighed again. It was clear there was no helping my sister at the moment. She needed time for herself, and I could understand that.

“Okay, I will go,” I said. “But if you need me, call me. I will come right home.”

“Just go hang out with your drug buddies.”

I sighed again, knowing she was only aiming low right now because she was hurting. I didn't take it to heart. So, I finally left the house and took my car, driving to this old, abandoned skater park where I often hung out most of the day. My parents didn't force me to get a job. I had a horrible attitude, and no one wanted to work with me. So, after I had lost my third job, they simply gave up on me and left me alone, and I was fine with that. So fine with it...

“Well, look who it is!” Danny said.

He was sitting on a bench, smoking a joint, surrounded by his usual gang. I often hung out with them. They were seen as the trash of society anyway, so I fit right in. He held out the joint, and I took it, inhaling the sharp smoke that relaxed me instantly. I took a few more hits before I handed it back to him. Just then, Carry, one of the few girls who hung out there as well, took out her phone and showed it to me.

“This you?” she asked.

I looked at the video playing and then sighed and shook my head.

“Where did you get that?”

“It’s all over the place. Even on TikTok,” she told me and smiled. “You look good in yellow and what a cute little backpack.”

I rolled my eyes. I had dressed in my usual black and grey clothes again and looked nothing like the girl in the video, but it was definitely me. I knew with the video out there, there was no way my parents wouldn’t find out. Of course, I was certain Trevor’s parents would call mine, but with the video, there would also be evidence, which was where I had made a major screw-up. I could try to deny it, but then again, there had been witnesses as well.

“Is that your new look?” Danny asked.

“No fucking way.”

That made the whole group chuckle.

“Why did he deserve to get punched?” Carry asked. “Oh, wait, no, I think I already have a million reasons.”

Everyone laughed again, and I rolled my eyes.

“He broke my sister’s heart,” I said.

They all just looked at me a little blankly.

“And no one breaks my sister’s heart.”

I looked at all of them individually, and some of them held up their hands as if to tell me without words I did not have to

worry about them.

“Easy tiger, as if your cute little sister would ever let us get close,” Danny said.

“It’s me you should be worried about,” I said and pointed to myself. “You wouldn’t get close because *I* wouldn’t allow it.”

“Well, what if it isn’t your sister we want to get close to?” he asked and winked at me.

“Not in a million years,” I told him.

Danny smiled and stood up, pulling up his pants a little, which were way too big for him. He was a tall and skinny guy with no skin routine at all. You could clearly see he had been using for too long and not just weed. I knew I could easily end up looking like that, but the drugs gave me an escape, and so did the alcohol. When Danny stood up, he took a beer with him from his bag and handed me one. I took it as he leaned closer and smiled.

“I already have been there,” he whispered.

I looked away, trying not to remember. But he grabbed my chin and turned my head. It was clear he was going to try to kiss me, but I placed a hand on his chest.

“Don’t. I punch people.”

Danny chuckled.

“Right.”

He pulled back, and it was clear he found it funny, but just him touching me made goosebumps appear all over my body. I

just wanted to forget he had ever gotten close to me.

“Well tiger, what do you want to do now?” he asked.

“Relax and forget the hell that is waiting for me at home,” I said and opened the beer before downing it one go.

“Yes!” they all cheered before they joined in as well.

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It was very late when I got home. I could barely see the numbers on my screen when I stumbled closer to my house. It was a very nice house, though. I stopped and leaned my head back and looked up at it, smiling a little. I was so far gone from the weed and alcohol that had mixed in my blood. I could barely feel my feet.

“It’s a nice house,” I slurred.

I chuckled a little, unable to help myself, and then walked closer to the door leading inside. I grabbed it and then saw it was locked. I tried moving my hands over my body, trying to find my keys, but I couldn’t remember if I had even brought them with me. *Do we usually lock the door?* I wondered. I looked around, trying to remember if there was a spare key outside. I knew we had one hidden... but where? I moved to one of the plants standing beside the door, trying to move it, but my limbs weren’t working, and I couldn’t lift the plant.

“Come on, you stupid... stupid... come on you stupid... come on you stupid...”

I went into a loop as I tried lifting the plant, and then I suddenly heard the lock turn and light streamed out from

inside the house. I turned my head, still in my weird bent position, and saw my dad at the door, his arms crossed over his chest, and he looked damn displeased.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“I was... I was... the plant,” I said.

“What about the plant?”

I stood up.

“It’s eh... hiding a key.”

“That’s not where we keep the spare key,” he said.

“It isn’t?”

My dad pressed two of his fingers to his eyes, taking a moment to calm himself.

“What are you on?” he asked.

“A little of that and a lot of something else,” I joked, cracking up from my joke.

At that moment, I thought I was the most hilarious person on the planet. But my dad didn’t see the same thing, and I couldn’t understand how bad the situation truly was.

“Get inside, Emma,” he said hard.

I saluted him.

“Yes, sir.”

He shook his head, and I stumbled inside. My dad had to catch me as the front of my left foot hit the small step leading inside.



“My god,” he said, annoyed.

“Is that Emma?” I heard my mother ask, as my dad got me stabilized on my feet and closed the door.

“I’m hungry,” I said.

I had eaten no food really, and I was having the munchies so badly. I stormed into the kitchen.

“Emma!” my dad called.

I heard him following me, but I couldn’t care. I roamed through all the cabinets and the fridge, pulling food out and stuffing it down. The bag of chips turned empty fast. Had I really eaten all of that so fast?

“What is she on?” I heard my mother ask, and I saw my mother had entered the kitchen now as well.

She looked at me with a mix of worry and disappointment. Somehow, I hated that look more than just the disappointed look.

“I’m not sure,” my dad said.

“Emma, how about slowing down and we can talk?” my mother asked.

She had always been better at keeping her temper in control, but you didn’t want to get on her bad side. She could be scary.

“I’m good,” I said and ate the chicken that was left over from dinner.

“Emma. Talk!” my mother said harshly.

“I’m hungry!” I complained.

“Well, then you could have been home for dinner.”

“I’m home now.”

“And we should talk. *Now!*” she said.

“Honey, maybe it isn’t the best idea. Look at her,” my dad said.

I could see my mother first looking at my father, then glancing at me before turning back to him. They talked very low between them. And since I was so fucked up, I couldn’t hear a word, even though I was only standing on the other side of the kitchen island. I just let them talk. At the moment, I did not have a care in the world.

“Very well,” my mother finally said.

I looked away from my food and saw my mother leave the kitchen.

“Where is she going?” I asked.

“To bed,” my father told me. “Just like me.”

“All right.”

“And what you should do as well.”

“Yeah, in a moment,” I told him.

“No. *Now.*”

Suddenly, my dad switched off the lights in the kitchen, so it turned pitch black, and then he just left. I yelled after him.

“Hey! The lights!”

“Bed, Emma!”

I knew I was once again being a huge disappointment, but it was hard to try to be something else when that was all they really expected, anyway. Even when I tried, it felt like it could never be good enough because I wasn't my sister. I wasn't the smart one. I would never get into any good colleges because I had never finished high school and probably never would. I was nothing in their eyes, and so why should I try to be more? It was a waste of energy when you had tried for so long. Now I just wanted to live as I wanted, so even if it was dark in the kitchen, I just kept eating. I left a mess behind when I was done. And it was damn hard to find my way back to my room because my dad had turned off all the lights in the house. I knew he had done that on purpose, knowing I would trip over myself, and I did. A small vase broke when I fell into the wall. I wasn't silent when I ascended the stairs, either. I stumbled down the hallway to my room. My parents' room was at the end of the hallway, but they weren't very quiet as they talked. I wasn't sure if it was on purpose that they had left the door a little open... probably. I couldn't hear exactly what they were talking about, but I didn't have to. I was often the late-night topic, so when I stood in front of my door, I just... stood there, listening to their voices. I knew I should open my door and go in and sleep it all off, but I still tried to listen to what was being said. It was very hard, but I caught a few things like *what to do with her?* and *this is getting out of hand*. I sighed deeply, knowing they would never talk to me about positively in this house. Even before I caused a lot of trouble and was kicked out of my school, I was never a positive conversation either. Back then, the question, *what to do with her?* was being

asked a lot as well. My parents did not know how to help me through my struggles. So, I acted out. Eventually, my parents gave up. What could be done about me, anyway? I was a lost cause in many eyes, and so I saw myself as one.

“Just go to bed,” I whispered to myself, the only person I really would listen to.

After opening my bedroom door, I entered my room. I closed it behind me and then walked over to my bed, falling down on it and trying my best not to make the room spin so much. I did not know how I could even fall asleep when it kept turning and turning, even when I closed my eyes, but somehow sleep came and I slept.

## *Chapter 4*

***-Emma-***

The next morning was as expected... my parents had taken a day off to have time to catch me before I ran off again. I never spent much time at home. Sometimes I was out all day and came home the next day. They never cared much, though. I realized that the first time I had been out all night. I got maybe one text from my mom asking if I would be home for dinner. It was then I saw everything was better when I wasn't around. My parents and sister just had it better when I wasn't there and so I decided to spend my time elsewhere. Freedom, right? I was free to do what I wanted. Many couldn't say the same. This time, though, my parents weren't going to let this go so easily. I had assaulted someone. Not that it was the first time, but this time it was an important person with parents who had a lot of influence in our town. It wasn't that big, located in the more northern parts of California. But when you had money, you had power, and I had broken their precious boy's nose... At least I believed I had broken it.

So, when I had gotten dressed and gotten myself ready in the bathroom, I had thought I could sneak out. I tiptoed down the stairs, but as soon as I stood in front of the door, I heard my mother's voice,

“Emma!”

I froze with my hand slightly lifted into the air.

“Come in here for a moment.”

I could hear she was calling from the kitchen and took a deep breath before I turned around and walked into the kitchen. My mom and dad sat by the dining table, with some breakfast in front of them and coffee. Clearly, they had been waiting for me to get up. I could barely call it morning. 11 am.

“Yes?” I asked as I stood in the kitchen.

“Take a seat,” my mother said and gestured to the one at the end of the table.

It was clear I was going to be in the hot seat today. I swallowed hard and walked over there. The chair was extra loud as I pulled it out and sat down. I looked at the empty plate in front of me, unsure if the plate was even for me or if they hoped Elena would come down. From the closed door, I gathered she was still hiding away.

“Hungry?” my mother asked.

“Well... eh... not that much.”

“Maybe because you emptied the fridge last night?”

I looked down, feeling my cheeks heat. I remembered little. When I drank or smoked, I rarely did. It was a problem. I knew that, but it took away a little of the loneliness and I would be the outcast among the outcasts if I didn't do the same as them.

“I...”

“Pancakes?” my mother asked and shoved the plate in front of my face.

I slowly grabbed it and took a few before I reached for the syrup. My dad was alarmingly quiet, not that he spoke that much, but it was the surrounding energy that made me so uncomfortable, and my mother was overly caring. It all felt very wrong.

“So, a video is going around lately,” my mother said.

I had only taken a bite of the pancakes when she mentioned the elephant in the room. I swallowed slowly because it was so hard to get the food down.

“Interesting,” I said.

“A video where this young teenage girl walks up to another young teenage boy, one of the star athletes in Elena's school, and punches him in the face, clearly unprovoked,” my mother continued.

“Maybe she had a reason,” I said and poured myself some apple juice, I downed it fast because I felt I might have to escape quickly, and I wanted to fill my stomach. I might get nothing to eat before I come home. That often happened.

“The girl looked like Elena. It was unbelievable, but we know it couldn’t have been her since she was locked up in her room all day.”

“Was she? I mean, were you home to see she was? She could have climbed out of the window,” I said.

“Don’t pin this on your sister, Emma. Elena could never punch someone.”

“I think everyone has the strength and will to punch someone. You just need to be provoked enough.”

“But we are not talking about being provoked!” my father cut in.

I turned to him, seeing his eyes almost flaming, as he looked at me. It made me feel so small when he looked at me like that.

“Because you weren’t!” he said.

“How do you know?” I asked.

“Then tell us,” my mother said, and I looked at her. “How did he provoke you?”

I looked down, not sure if I should say anything. It was, after all, not really about me. It was about Elena. And while I knew she loved sharing a lot of things with our parents, I wasn’t sure if she wanted to share how her first time had been. I certainly didn’t want to share mine.

“Trevor is a jerk,” I said.



“You don’t punch people because they are jerks,” my dad said.

“Why not?”

“Because it is assault! You broke the poor boy’s nose!”

“Poor boy? Have you truly met the guy?”

“I know Trevor. We all might have our flaws, but he is a young man with a bright future!”

“Sure, not like we haven’t heard that sentence before being used to defend rapists in this fucking society!” I snarled.

“But are you accusing Trevor of being a rapist?” my dad asked.

I crossed my arms and slid further down my seat.

“No...”

“So, why did you punch him?” he asked.

I was quiet, looking down and not sure what to say.

“We are just trying to understand, Emma,” my mother said.

“Are you?” I asked and glanced at her.

“Of course! You understand his parents contacted us, possibly threatening to sue!”

“Possibly? Meaning they haven’t?”

“We are good friends with them, which is probably the only thing stopping them from suing,” my mother said. “But they want a restraining order against you.”

I shrugged, not minding that at all.

“Okay,” I said.

“Emma, do you not understand the seriousness of this? It’s going on your record! You’re eighteen now. You are being judged as an adult!” my dad said.

“I don’t mind being forced by law to stay away from Trevor. I want nothing to do with him,” I said and held up my hands, smiling a little.

“Then why punch him?” my dad yelled.

“Because he is a jerk!”

“It’s not a reason!”

“Enough!” my mother cut in. “Let’s not shout in this house.”

Both my dad and I easily got fired up. I had his temper while my mother and Elena always played the peacemaker in the house. So, my dad and I both fell back in our seats and just looked away from each other, barely able to stand the sight of the other.

“Emma, we are just trying to understand,” my mother said.

“Talk to Elena.”

“What?” she asked.

“Talk to Elena.”

“Why? What does this have to do with Elena?”

“Just... talk to her, okay? I don’t want to say anything if she doesn’t want me to.”

My dad now seemed to be interested in the conversation and turned his head.

“Did he hurt her?” he asked.

“Talk to Elena!”

“No, I’m asking you,” he said.

“I already said I don’t want to say anything if she doesn’t want to.”

“But you did this because of your sister?” my mother asked.

I nodded.

My mother sighed a little and rubbed her eyes.

“All right. That helps us understand a little,” she said. “I will go talk to Elena and see if she will give me the rest of the explanation. But Emma, they also banned you from the school grounds and you trespassed.”

I looked down, knowing I wasn’t going to get out of this so easily.

“Which is why, to compensate for that, we have agreed with the school that you will take over the janitor’s job for an entire month.”

“WHAT?”

My mother smiled.

“You heard me. You will clean the school grounds for a month.”

“But I am not allowed on the school grounds!”

“In this month, you are allowed.”

“You can’t be serious,” I said.

“But we are,” my dad cut in.

“How can I stay away from Trevor, then?” I asked.

“The restraining order won’t be valid until you have served your time cleaning,” my mother said. “We have talked to his parents and this way you can go apologize to him, too.”

“Apologize?” I yelled.

My mother nodded, looking very satisfied.

“Yes, apologize to him.”

“But!”

“But what?” she asked. “Want to tell the full story now?”

“I can’t believe this,” I sighed.

“We have also decided you have a curfew now,” my dad said.

“No!”

“Yes!”

“You will be home no later than eight.”

“Eight? Am I a kid again?” I asked.

“Eight.”

“So, I am a kid again?”

“And we have decided it is time you see a therapist too,” he said.

“Yes, because it worked so well the last time.”

“You stopped going. That’s why it went badly.”

“I hated him!” I said. “He was a creep, and I was fourteen!”

“We have found a new one,” my dad said. “A woman.”

“No.”

“You don’t have a choice.”

“It’s not fair,” I mumbled.

“Life isn’t fair,” my dad said.

I glared at him, and he looked right back at me, not standing down. I held his eyes for a little while longer, then turned to my mom.

“No,” I said.

“We have decided it,” my mother said and gestured between her and my dad.

“Where was I in that decision?” I asked.

“When you punched Trevor.”

I slid further down on my chair. It was clear, no matter what I said or did, it would change nothing. They had decided for me, and I could do nothing but accept what they had decided.

“It’s not fair,” I mumbled again.

“Maybe next time you will think twice before punching someone,” my dad said.

I looked at him, wanting to shout at him that I did it because he was a jerk who deserved it and took advantage of the

daughter that he actually liked... but I didn't. I wasn't sure it would even help. It seemed like my parents had decided I was the bad one in the whole messed up situation I had gotten myself into. I wasn't saying that violence was the solution, but it felt damn good knocking down Trevor. Playing with people's feelings definitely shouldn't go unpunished, and I showed him it didn't. Now I was forced to pay him back for it all, and that didn't sit well with me.

"I'm not apologizing," I said. "I can agree with the therapy, but I am not apologizing to him."

"You will," my dad said.

"Not in this life."

"Yes, in this life, and you will do it when you see him at school. You're starting tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow?"

"Better start early on repaying the school for all the damage you have done," he said.

"I got into fights. It's not like I burned down the school!"

"Which was also damaging to the school's reputation. They couldn't keep their students in line, or *student*."

I knew my dad blamed it all on me. It didn't matter that I told him the reasons behind why I was getting into those fights. I never did it unprovoked. Either they were picking on me or someone else. I never enjoyed watching someone get picked on. I always stood up for those who couldn't because I knew what it was like being the underdog, the outcast, the one

who didn't fit in. My dad didn't care. He told me to turn the other cheek, but that never seemed to work. It stopped no one from picking on the fact I couldn't read or couldn't keep up in class. It stopped no one from treating me like there was something wrong with me and I was not someone to treat as a human. It was simply not fair.

"Now eat some breakfast and then you are not allowed to leave the house today," my dad said and emptied what was left in his coffee mug before standing up.

"Am I now on lockdown?" I asked.

"For today you are. Maybe it will give you some time to think about what you have done."

"Dad!"

My dad left the kitchen, not even listening to me, and went to where his office was. I turned to my mother, who was pouring herself another cup of coffee.

"You know sometimes you have to serve your own justice," I told her.

My mother looked at me tiredly.

"If we all thought that way, it would be a chaotic world we would live in," she said.

"As if it is not already chaotic."

My mother sighed and sipped her coffee.

"Eat a little."

“As if that would solve my problems,” I said and shoved away my plate.

My mother brought it back to me.

“You need to remember to eat some food and not just when you’re high.”

“Oh, so now you care...” I mumbled.

“Emma...”

My mother used that perfectly trained disappointed voice, and it made me feel bad. I hated it when she did it because it made me do exactly what she wanted, and I ate the food in front of me.

“What about Elena?” I asked.

“What about her?”

“Is she not going to eat anything?” I asked.

“I will bring her a plate.”

“Is she just never going to leave the room again?”

“She needs some time,” my mother said.

“So, I get punished, but she doesn’t?” I asked.

“What would we punish her for?”

“She is skipping school! You never liked it when I did that,” I said.

“Elena is having a hard time...”

“Yeah, yeah...” I interrupted, knowing that line too well. It was always used to excuse Elena, but never me. Don’t get me



wrong. I loved my sister. I would do anything for her, as I had already proven. But I hated how my parents clearly prefer her, and would excuse even her unacceptable behavior, while I was always the one who had to face punishment. How was that fair?

## *Chapter 5*

### ***-Brendon-***

Aaron and I were standing outside in front of the school, throwing a ball between us and just waiting for the bell to ring. Suddenly, after throwing the ball to Aaron, I saw him freeze.

“Hey, are you going to throw it or not?” I asked.

Aaron didn't listen to me. He was looking at something behind me. I had to see what he was looking at and turned around, only to see Emma coming out of her mother's car. It surprised me to see her back there, two days after she had punched Trevor. He had not showed up at school the day after getting his nose broken. And I was not sure he was going to show up today either. He might just use the nose as a good excuse to lie around at home. His house was quite nice, after all. His parents certainly didn't lack any money, which also meant he was the one throwing the parties. We all knew how well he lived.

“What is she doing here?” Aaron asked as he came up to me.

We watched as the principal suddenly came walking towards Emma, and I simply couldn't understand what was going on. I would think the principal wanted Emma as far away from the school grounds as possible. But now she was walking with her inside, clearly talking to her about some things. I watched her the whole time until she disappeared, and then Aaron japed me in the side with his elbow. He had a goofy smile on his lips as I turned to him.

“What?” I asked.

“Well, now you have your chance.”

“My chance?” I asked.

“Your chance to get your little troublemaker,” he joked.

I rolled my eyes and pushed him a little.

“Stop that,” I said.

“What? You couldn't even stop looking at her just now.”

“Doesn't mean I am going to ask her out.”

“Why not?” he asked.

“Well, I told you! I just got out of a relationship.”

“And now you need something new and exciting. Why not choose the one with a record? How could it be more exciting?” he teased me.

I looked at him tiredly.

“What?” he asked.

“Come on, that’s just mean.”

“Mean?”

“You’re talking about her like I’m going to use her as the rebound girl,” I said.

“Aren’t you?”

“No! Why would you think that?” I asked.

“I’m sure she is wild!” he said and chuckled.

“You’re not funny.”

Aaron shrugged, not seeing much wrong in what he was saying.

“Really,” I said. “Not funny.”

“Oh, come on! You need something new!”

“You’re talking about the next girl I’m going to hook up with as a thing,” I said.

“Sometimes you just need something physical,” he said.

“And I agree, but I don’t.”

“Why not? Still pining for your ex?” he asked.

“Of course not! I broke up with her.”

“But you’re acting like she dumped your ass.”

I rolled my eyes and took the ball from him.

“You’re sometimes just an idiot,” I told him.

“No, I’m your friend trying to get you out there again.”

“Is it bad if I want a little time for myself?” I asked.

“I am not saying dating. I’m saying you need new pussy.”

I sighed and shook my head.

“Sure,” I said tiredly, because I didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

“I hear rumors that Trevor might throw a party to celebrate,” Aaron told me.

“To celebrate getting punched?”

“To celebrate, he is in recovery.”

“Makes him sound like an addict,” I laughed.

“Hey, it doesn’t matter. He gives us booze.”

“He is an idiot who messed with the wrong sister.”

“Oh, I agree, but... booze and chicks,” Aaron said.

I rolled my eyes and shook my head. Aaron kept pushing me a little, though, and a smile spread on my lips.

“See? I know what you need.”

“You barely know what you need yourself,” I joked.

“I know my best friend, and he needs to find a new girl to get over the last one.”

“You’re a pain in the ass.”

“So, is that a no?” he asked.

“To?”

“To the party? It’s like I’m speaking to a wall,” he said.  
“Still thinking about the troublemaker?”

“No.”

I was lying, though. I was thinking about her. I didn’t know exactly what it was about Emma. I guessed I just enjoyed seeing her punch Trevor. He had deserved that punch for a long time. Or maybe I just liked how she stood up for her sister. Even though Elena should probably have known how it would end considering Trevor’s reputation, I didn’t blame her for falling for his tricks, and thinking she might be the one who could change him. Many girls had fallen for it.

“You’re lying,” Aaron said.

“No, I’m not.”

“Yeah, I know you.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said and waved at him, telling him to back away a few steps. He did, and I threw him the ball. He caught it and smiled smugly at me.

“I still think you should go for it,” he said.

“Go for it?”

“Fuck the troublemaker and get over her.”

“You make it sound like I’m in love with her,” I said.

“Close to.”

He threw me the ball, and the next time I threw it back to him, I did it a little harder. It hit him in the chest before he

could get a proper grip on it, making him bend forward a little and wheeze.

“Oh sorry, weren’t you ready?” I asked him.

“Dick!” he coughed.

I chuckled, smiling a little smugly. Aaron could be so full of it sometimes, but he was also my best friend, and I knew he was mostly just words. He might advise me to go fuck some new girl and move past my ex or fuck Emma to “move past” her as well, but we both knew he often found it hard to talk to girls. And I knew even if he tried coming off as a player, he would love to find a girl he would actually want to date and get into a relationship with. He really was mostly all talk.

“Okay, maybe I deserved that a little,” Aaron said.

“You think?”

He shook his head as he stood up and threw me the ball.

***-Emma-***

I walked into the school with my old principal. She gave me a long speech on our way, telling me how this was a great opportunity for me to rectify things and to show everyone I could do more than just make trouble for people. She then introduced me to the janitor, Mr. Carlsen, but we already knew each other well. I had been locked in the janitor’s closet a few times or in classrooms, and he had had to free me often. Yeah... we knew each other, but I still needed a breakdown of it all. So, after being introduced to the janitor, the principal left, leaving me with the message not to mess up the school

more than I already had. I nodded and when she turned her back to me; I saluted her mockingly. Mr. Carlsen noticed and when I turned to him, I saw him smiling. I smiled back, glad he was not angry at me for acting a bit arrogantly. He didn't praise me or anything. Actually, he said nothing, but I could see from the smile on his lips that he did not blame me for having a little attitude.

“Let's go around the school so you can see what you will be taken care of for the next month,” he said.

“Will you be here?”

“Only supervising you for the first few days. The principal wants to make sure you set nothing on fire.”

I smiled, chuckling a little, as Mr. Carlsen pulled out a wagon filled with cleaning materials from a door beside him, that read *janitor's closet*.

“I'd never set anything on fire. Not my style,” I told him.

Mr. Carlson tried hard not to smile, but it was clear I was amusing him. He went over everything with me, and what would be my new job and what responsibilities I would have. He even joked a little that if I did a good job, I might have a future as the school's next janitor. I cringed hard at this. I might not be good in school, and there was nothing wrong with being the janitor, but I couldn't see myself doing that. I didn't *want* to do that. I said nothing, though. As he explained everything, I nodded and stayed quiet. Many of the students gathered in the classes, and it turned rather quiet in the hallways. I could feel many eyes on me as I walked around on



the school grounds beside Mr. Carlsen. There was a lot to take care of. The school was big and there was only Mr. Carlsen. I wasn't surprised after taking the entire tour that this took him all day and he wouldn't be home until late. It was also his job to lock up everything. He would still do that since they could not leave me with such a responsibility.

“So to your first job,” he said as he slowed down in front of the girls' bathroom.

“You can't be serious,” I sighed.

He smiled and handed me a pair of yellow rubber gloves.

“Remember the corners. Oh, and if you think the girls' bathroom is bad... just wait for the boys'.”

“Am I even allowed in there?”

“Just put this small sign on the door,” he said and took a sign hidden among the cleaning supplies.

I took the sign and read it.

“Cleaning. Opposite gender in the room.”

I looked at Mr. Carlsen, who smiled at me, looking like he was almost enjoying my torture.

“Why me?” I whispered.

“You will be fine. Girls like you don't get knocked over by a little pee on the floor.”

“It isn't just pee in there. I know ...”

The older man chuckled before he quickly went over what the cleaning supplies were for. Then he said he would wait

right outside the door for me. I could just call if I had questions.

“And if I want you to takeover?” I asked hopefully.

Mr. Carlson looked at me, a little tired.

“Go on,” he said.

I sighed. After putting on the gloves, I took the supplies I was going to use. I walked into the girls’ bathroom, took a deep breath, and then got started.

I hated it...

It truly was a punishment. I was only fearing the boys’ bathroom more and more as I slowly got the girls’ cleaned up, scrubbing all the toilets and taking out the trash and whatever that was lying on the floor. And no... it was not just tissue paper I found on the floor. Tampons, pads, leftover food and, yes, also a condom. I shivered as I threw the used condom out, and then when I was about to take the last trash out, a flock of girls came out. They stopped for a moment as they saw me before walking over to the mirrors, a few of them going into the stalls. I tried ignoring them, but I could feel their eyes on me.

“Always knew this was where you would end up,” Simone said.

We had grown up together, and she had never been very nice to me. She was good friends with Elena, but me... me, she hated. Maybe because I had gotten into a fight with one of her good friends when we were younger. Or maybe because

she thought I stole her boyfriend back when we were eight... We were eight! It was not even a relationship. Just kids playing around.

“Don’t get used to it,” I told her. “It’s only for a month.”

I turned to the mirror, that she stood in front so we could look at each other. She smiled evilly.

“Oh, but I think *you* should get used to it. If you aren’t cleaning here, you will definitely be picking up trash somewhere else.”

“You really think so?”

“Emma...”

Simone turned, and we locked eyes.

“What else could you have in your future? Do you have some hidden talent we don’t know about? Like taking drugs in a new and funny way?”

I shouldn’t let it get to me. I was often good at not letting it get to me, but Simone always found a way to drive the knife deeper and deeper. So deep there was nothing left but an open and deep hole in my chest.

“You never know,” I said.

Simone shook her head a little as she smiled. Her friends around her were clearly enjoying this. Why wouldn’t they? They thought the same as her. That I was trash.

“You know, I always knew you were nothing but a loser,” she said and stepped closer. “But now you also have a whore

for a sister.”

That was the last drop...

I dropped the trash bag I had in my hand and then took off the yellow gloves before I threw myself at Simone, pressing her back into the sink behind her.

“WHAT DID YOU CALL MY SISTER, HUH?” I screamed into her face, wrapping my hands into her hair and pulling hard.

She screamed and tried scratching me, but I held on tightly and used my body to hold down her arms. Her friends were screaming at me to get off her, but they wouldn't join in, more afraid of getting hurt themselves.

“SAY THAT ONE MORE TIME! I FUCKING DARE YOU!” I screamed, before I lifted my hand, ready to slap her, but before I could, the door burst open and Mr. Carlsen came inside, pulling me off of Simone.

Her friends surrounded her and checked if she was all right.

“She is a fucking psycho!” Simone yelled. “She shouldn't even be allowed to be here!”

“You call my sister a whore again and I will fuck you up!” I yelled.

“That is enough!” Mr. Carlsen yelled.

I didn't know what it was. Maybe I respected the man more because I bet he had had mean girls whispering things behind his back. *Nothing but a janitor*, they would say, but whatever it

was about the tone in his voice, it made me instantly stop fighting, and I just stood there, looking down.

“You made a promise to this school!” he said.

“She...”

“I don’t care,” he said.

He turned to Simone then.

“Are you all right, miss?”

“She should not even be here!”

“Did she hurt you?” he asked.

“She assaulted me!”

“She punched you too?”

“No.”

“Did she do any physical harm?”

Simone looked a little to the side.

“She pulled my hair.”

Mr. Carlsen didn’t look overly worried about that.

“Since you aren’t hurt, I suggest you all go back to your classes and let this go by. I will have a talk with her.”

Simone didn’t seem very satisfied with this, but then again, she had no bruises or cuts on her, so she couldn’t prove I had done anything. So, when she left the bathroom, so did the rest of the girls. Soon it was just me and Mr. Carlsen.

“You need to learn to control your temper,” he said.

“She called my sister a whore. She is supposed to be her friend!”

“I am sure you know how fake people can be,” he said.

I nodded a little as I looked at the ground.

“But you can’t let that get to you.”

“I couldn’t just stand there—”

“Yes, you could have,” he said. “That is what you are supposed to do.”

“That’s not fair...” I whispered.

“No, it isn’t. It would be nice if we could knock down every mean girl and boy, but that is not our world. Maybe in some magical one it will be like that, but until we get there, we are stuck with how this world is,” he said.

“I just...”

“Need to learn to control yourself,” he said.

I sighed deeply, knowing there was no reason to argue about this.

“Now it doesn’t seem like those girls will go to the principal, but if you had hurt her, I know that woman would have kicked you right out and then maybe you would get sued.”

“I see everyone knows my case.”

“Word spread fast. Now let’s move on.”

I had no other choice but to continue the day. Not that it was that much fun.

## *Chapter 6*

### ***-Brendon-***

I had overheard Simone today talking to her friends in the canteen about how she had been attacked by Crazy Emma, which she was now being referred to. She explained how she had been attacked in the bathroom unprovoked, just like Trevor, but we all knew that she hadn't punched Trevor unprovoked. She had done that as a payback for him using her sister. I hated how Simone spoke about her. She had always had quite the mean girl side to her. I had always known that, but she had also been an incredibly sweet person. At least most of the time she was, and to me, she had been a wonderful and caring girlfriend. But seeing this side of her, and hearing the way she spoke of Emma... I just couldn't take it. I walked over to where she was sitting, which was almost right behind me, and leaned in front of her.

“Oh, hey,” she said, and her entire face lit up.

Aaron was not wrong. I knew Simone still wanted us to be together, and that she was watching me whenever I walked



down the hallways. But I simply had no interest in her anymore. I had even less now that I had heard her speak like that about Emma.

“I thought you were just mean to people who deserved it,” I said. “Now I see you’re just mean.”

Simone looked at me, shocked, her entire face just changing. I didn’t say more. I pushed away, making sure she heard from my words and saw from the look on my face how disappointed I was in her. I walked away, feeling her eyes on me, and quickly grabbed my tray before leaving the canteen. Aaron hurried after me.

“Worth it?” he asked.

“What do you mean?”

We put away our things and then left the canteen, walking down the hallways to our next class.

“Was it worth breaking her heart even more by taking the troublemaker’s side? I mean, it’s not like Emma saw that little show,” he said and smiled.

“You think I did it for her?”

“Why else?”

“Maybe because Simone has changed so much after we broke up. I am seeing a new side to her. I want her to know that I fucking hate that side,” I said.

“Come on, she has always been a little bitchy. No news,” he said.

“No, but she didn’t use to be a bitch,” I said.

Aaron shrugged.

“If you say so.”

I stopped and placed my hand on his chest. He looked at me, confused.

“What is that supposed to mean?” I asked.

He smiled a little and looked at me funny.

“Are you really asking?” he asked.

I nodded.

“Of course.”

“Did you really not notice?”

“Notice?” I asked.

“Simone has always been a mean girl,” he said.

“Not always.”

“Yes, always. Remember it surprised me when you started dating her?”

I nodded a little. I remembered that. Aaron had truly asked me, as a serious question, *why her?* I had laughed it off and thought he was joking a little, but now I wasn’t so sure anymore.

“I remember,” I said.

“Now you know why.”

“She was always like that?”

“How whipped were you?” he asked. “Her deflowering you really made you blind, huh?”

I just looked at him for a long time. I did not know what he was talking about, but maybe he was right. We had been each other’s first, Simone and I, but maybe it really had blinded me. Maybe the sex had made me overlook a lot of things. I had, of course, also been in love with her, but the sex definitely overshadowed some things.

“Huh...” I finally said.

“You never realized?”

I shook my head.

“Never did.”

Aaron smiled and then wrapped his arm around my neck.

“Welcome to the real world. It sucks,” he joked, as we continued to walk.

“You’re such an ass.”

“But you love me,” he said and shook me a little. “At least you see the truth now.”

“I just can’t believe I never saw it before.”

“What does it matter? You’re a free man now.”

“You make it sound like I was in prison.”

“You were, man,” he said and walked into our classroom.  
“You were.”

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After school had ended, I quickly said goodbye to Aaron and was on my way to my car when I saw the backdoor to the school opening. The one often used when delivery came to the school. I saw Emma coming out, dragging a very heavy black bag after her, and clearly struggling. It had to be all that leftover food from the canteen today. She really looked tired. I was about to get in my car when I changed my mind. I told myself I was not doing this because she had caught my interest a little, but because it was clear that she was struggling. I knew I was lying to myself, but it didn't stop me from walking over there. Just as I was on my way, though, Emma had already reached the big dumpster. But as she was about to throw the bag in there, it ripped, and everything fell out.

“Argh! Great!”

I smiled a little. She truly looked like someone who had just reached their limit, and while I, of course, felt bad for her about the bag ripping, I just couldn't help but smile. The sight was a little amusing. I hurried over to her, though. She had already reached down to pick up everything. I kneeled down beside her and helped her. She lifted her head, confused about why I was suddenly there. I gave her a small smile.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Helping.”

“Why?”

I chuckled a little.

“Do you want to do it yourself?” I asked.

“No, but... why?” she asked again.

“You looked like you needed a hand.”

Emma turned quiet, and we quickly got everything picked up and thrown into the dumpster. When we were done, she turned to me, still looking at me a little suspiciously. I could understand why. Few would have come to help her. Most would probably just have laughed at her or picked on her.

“Thank you,” she said, looking at the ground for a moment.

I believed she wasn't used to thanking people, probably because she never received much help.

“No problem, Emma.”

She looked at me, shocked.

“You know my name?”

“Of course. You're Elena's sister, and we went to school together when we were younger.”

“That's years ago,” she said.

“Well, I still remember,” I said and smiled.

“Why?”

I chuckled.

“Why not?”

“Most just want to forget I even exist.”

“I don't believe that is true,” I told her, feeling sad hearing her say this.

“It's true...”

She shrugged a little, and I got a glimpse of the person behind the hard façade. It was really all just a façade, wasn't it? She had never had many people on her side, and I remembered how she often got into trouble, ending up in fights and the nurse's office a lot. I couldn't describe how many times her parents had to come pick her up because the school couldn't allow her to be there for a minute longer.

"Thank you for your help again, Brendon."

"Wait, you know who I am too?" I asked.

I wasn't sure if she would remember me or even know who I was. We never hung out together or even had mutual friends. I knew of her because she got into so much trouble, but I stayed out of trouble.

"Yeah, I mean my sister practically had pictures of you hanging around in her room," she said.

"What?"

Emma smiled, and I realized she was teasing me.

"Funny," I said dryly.

"This was, of course, before she decided you would never be available and went for Trevor instead," she said.

"Ha... ha... ha," I said, and we smiled at each other.

"No, I remember you from school, always the perfect student, perfect boyfriend, and friend," she said.

"No one is perfect."

"Says the one who is," she teased me.

I smiled a little nervously. I knew I was good at most things I did. It never took me long to learn anything. I only needed it repeated a few times, and then it felt like I had always done it. It made school easy for me and sport. The friends and girlfriend, though, that I had to work harder for. Being a decent person was not something you just had a talent for.

“I repeat, no one is perfect,” I said.

“If you say so.”

Emma walked back towards where the door was, and I followed her.

“What are you doing?” she asked me when she reached the door.

“Maybe you need more help.”

“Why would I need more help?”

“You have an entire school to clean.”

“And I can do that by myself.”

I held up my hands and took a step back. Her defensive tone told me to be careful about overstepping.

“I am only trying to be nice,” I said.

“Why?”

“Why do you keep asking that question?” I asked and smiled a little.

“Because no one wants to help me. Is it odd I find it suspicious?”

“It’s concerning,” I said. “You know, some people just want to be nice to you.”

“I have a very short list of people who want to be nice to me. You aren’t on it.”

“Maybe I should be.”

Emma just looked at me, her eyes going up and down on my body, as if she was looking for hidden answers on me. I gave her a charming smile, but it didn’t seem to work on her like it did with other girls. She just continued to look at me suspiciously.

“Go hang out with your girlfriend, golden boy, or any of your friends and don’t worry about me,” she said.

She walked over to the door leading inside and then opened it, but I called after her.

“I don’t have a girlfriend, troublemaker!” I yelled after her.

Emma looked over her shoulder and I smiled at her, but she shook her head and walked inside. I stood there for a little while before I turned away, going back to my car.



## *Chapter 7*

***-Emma-***

I had thought I might get some time for myself after cleaning the school and watching Mr. Carlsen locked it all up, but no. My mother was waiting for me outside school. She was going to drive me to my first therapy session.

“I’m not going,” I told her, as I walked around her.

She had driven me to school too, so I had no car to escape in. But I would rather walk home than get in the car with her if she was just going to drive me to therapy.

“You promised,” she told me.

“I promised nothing!” I yelled and turned back to her.

My mother had her arms crossed over her chest.

“It’s a condition so Trevor’s family won’t sue, and neither will the school.”

“But I never agreed!”

“Do you want to go to jail? Or bankrupt your family?” she asked me.

“That’s so unfair.”

“No, it’s reality.”

“I hate reality!” I snapped.

“Trust me, it isn’t fun for the rest of us, either. The car, Emma. *Now!*”

I knew there was no use arguing with her. She would gladly pick me up and throw me inside the damn car if she had to. I walked over to it and got into the passenger seat.

“Seatbelt,” my mother said.

I looked at her, annoyed.

“Seatbelt!” she repeated.

“My God!”

I pulled on the seatbelt roughly, making a big show of it. My mother rolled her eyes as she started the car and drove towards town.

“How was your first day back?” she asked.

“It’s not like I got to take part in any of the classes, if that was what you hoped for,” I said.

“Emma...”

“It was fine... Mr. Carlsen praised my hard work,” I told her.

“That’s good,” she said, sounding happy.

“Sure, future career!”

“Maybe,” she said.

I turned to her, looking at her like I couldn't believe she actually wanted me to go that way.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because I don't want to clean schools. I don't want to get bullied while I do!”

“Wait, what?” she asked me and glanced at me.

“Nothing...”

“No, Emma, did something happen?” she asked.

“Forget it...”

“Emma!”

“I said forget it!” I said and turned to look out of the window.

“If someone was after you...”

“It doesn't matter... It's not like it hasn't happened before.”

“But you aren't there as a student right now. You are there to help clean the school. No one should interrupt your work,” she said.

“Because it was all right that they bullied me as a student?” I asked.

“I didn't mean that. I was only saying...”

“Can we leave the topic alone?” I asked.

“Emma, I want you to know that—”

“Mom!”

I turned to her, and she glanced at me shortly, looking so sad. But I didn't want to talk about it. It was not like it was something new. Why did she care so much now? I had always been the perfect target for getting picked on. Nothing had changed.

“All right,” she said. “I will leave it alone.”

“Thank you!”

I turned to the window again and sighed as I leaned my head against it. What a fucking day...

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My mother was going to wait in the waiting room, as I walked into another room with my new therapist. She was quite young for a therapist, and she smiled sweetly at me as we sat down.

“Do you want some water?” she asked.

She gestured to the small table in front of us where both water and tea were standing.

“I'm good,” I told her.

“All right,” she said and leaned back in her chair. “I have been told a little from your parents what has been going on, but I would love to hear your side to all of it.”

“My side?” I asked, surprised.

“Of course.”

“Aren’t you just here to try to fix me?” I asked.

She looked like she was about to laugh a little, but held it in.

“Emma, I can’t just “fix” you,” she said.

“I said try.”

“Even that. We are here to figure out what is going on with you, and how we can help you move forward.”

“Forward?”

“Learn to control your temper, and leave behind those things that bother you,” she explained.

“Such as?”

“That’s what you need to tell me.”

“I am not sure I have anything to say,” I said.

“Well, you assaulted a guy in school. Want to tell me about that?”

I crossed my arms and shook my head.

“I can’t.”

“Why?”

“Because it was not about me,” I said.

“Emma, nothing said in here leaves this room,” she told me.

“Nothing?”

“Only if you should tell me you’re a danger to others or yourself,” she said.

I nodded a little, realizing I had an opportunity here to truly explain the entire thing. Maybe then I wouldn't be looked at as the villain by just one person.

"All right. I did it for my sister," I said.

"For your sister?"

"She was in love with him."

"Did you like him too?"

I shook my head like crazy.

"God no!" I said. "He is a jackass!"

"Why do you think that?"

"He plays the girls in his school, making them think he likes them. Then he dates them, fucks them and throws them out," I said.

"And this happened to your sister?"

"Last week," I said. "She came home crying. This was actually an evening I was home. My parents weren't. They were eating dinner at a friend's house. She ran inside, crying, slamming her bedroom door. I knew she had a date with Trevor. My parents had told me. I had told her I didn't think she should go earlier that day. But she told me Trevor had admitted to truly liking her and wanting to get serious about her. I hoped she was right, I guess... She wasn't, though."

"So, they slept together on this date?"

I nodded.

“I tried to talk to her, but she barely said anything. The way she was crying though and how I knew Trevor was, it was easy to figure out everything.”

“So, your first solution to this was not to comfort your sister, but to commit assault?” she asked.

“I tried comforting her! She wouldn’t even let me into the room!”

“But how will your sister be helped by hitting the guy she slept with?” my therapist asked.

“He deserved it.”

“Can you tell me why?”

“Because this isn’t even the first time that he has done something like that!”

“So, it is normal for him to trick girls?”

I nodded crazily.

“And how does that make you feel?”

“Like he needed to get punched.”

“But we can’t just go punching people that we feel like deserve it.”

“Why not?” I asked. “No one else will punish them.”

“Even though this guy clearly seems to feel like some kind of power rush by using these girls for his own games and he probably could have some traces of narcissism, punching him won’t fix him. It won’t stop him.”

“But it taught him a lesson,” I said and smiled. “And it brought my sister some justice.”

“What he did is sadly not a crime,” she told me. “It is an awful thing he did, but not a crime. So, it cannot be called justice.”

“I think we define justice as different things.”

“Perhaps,” she said and smiled a little. “But did it get your sister out of her room?”

I looked at my therapist for a little while, then shook my head.

“No.”

“Has she thanked you?”

“No...”

“Has it actually done any good other than making you feel better?” she asked me.

“This isn’t about me!”

“But I think it is, Emma. I think you got a lot of pent-up feelings, and I can completely understand if you felt like you had to stand up for your sister. But that could have been done with words,” she said.

“He wouldn’t have listened. He never does! I literally had to punch the message into him,” I told her.

“But you didn’t.”

“I did!”



“Emma, this only made you feel better. You could have gone to jail for this, and what wouldn’t that have done to your parents? To your sister, who I am sure cares so deeply for you.”

“Elena? She does,” I said. “My parents? Not so much.”

“Why would you say that?”

“Because it is the truth,” I said and looked down at the ground in front of me.

“Tell me why you think that?”

“If I never got into any trouble, if I never even made some kind of sound, they wouldn’t even know I existed...”

I had never spoken those kinds of feelings out loud, but I knew it was true. My parents did not know what to do with me. So, if I never got into any trouble or did anything that might put a spotlight on me, they wouldn’t even care. They would just... ignore me. They wouldn’t even notice me.

“So, you do all of this to get your parents’ attention?” she asked.

“No!”

“Are you sure? Did you not hear what you just said?”

“I don’t care about them!” I defended.

My therapist gave me a small sympathetic smile.

“I think you care. I think you care a great deal.”

“I do not!”

“I think all this anger and all this need to deal out justice might come from the fact you have never felt those people who are closest to you were there for *you*.”

“No.”

“No, what?” she asked.

“I don’t care. I don’t need them to be there for me.”

“But that is not true. The support from family and friends is one of the most important things to us humans.”

I shook my head. I hated how close she was getting. She just saw through me. I had kept all those feelings away, so I wouldn’t feel so hurt when people turned away from me. I knew deep down why I was truly doing it all, but that didn’t mean I was ready to admit it. It didn’t mean I was ready to stand by my own feelings and speak up about it. That took time...

“I’m fine,” I lied.

“No, I don’t think you are, and admitting you are not, is the first step forward,” she told me.

It was, wasn’t it? But could I take that step?

## *Chapter 8*

### ***-Brendon-***

I was eating dinner with my family, still thinking about the brief conversation I had with Emma. Why did she take up so much space in my mind? I did not know, really. Every time I tried telling myself I had to just push her out of my mind, she kept coming back. There was just something about her. Maybe it was her indifferent attitude that made me want to look beneath the surface. Or maybe it was when I saw her punching Trevor that she just impressed me so much. I had seen no one act like her. I wasn't saying that violation was the solution, but I guessed it had just left an impression on me.

“How was school?” my mother asked, as she looked between me and my younger brother.

He was a good few years younger than me and was more obsessed with video games than reality. Even at the table, he was having his phone out, playing with one hand and eating with the other.

“Hey,” I said, and pushed his head to the side.

“What?” Sam asked, annoyed.

“Mom, is asking us a question?”

“What?” he asked and looked at my mother, who rolled her eyes and chuckled a little.

Our dad was no better. He was on his phone, too. He was always working, but it also meant he could support all of us. Our mother had been the stay-at-home parent, and she was still not back full-time at work.

“I asked how school was,” she said.

“Fine.”

My brother turned to his phone again, and this time I rolled my eyes before turning to our mother.

“School was much the same, except Emma is back,” I said.

“In school?” my mother asked, surprised, knowing they had banned her from the grounds.

“No, not *in* school. She is cleaning the place to make up for causing a disturbance and trespassing.”

“Cleaning it?”

“Yeah, I guess her parents and the school must have made some kind of agreement,” I said. “I am not sure how long she will be there.”

“Oh, that poor girl,” my mother said.

“She assaulted someone. It’s a good thing she isn’t behind bars,” my dad commented.

My mother and I both turned to him, having the same annoyed look, but my dad saw nothing. He was exactly like my little brother, phone in one hand, fork in the other and not even focusing on what he was putting in his mouth. Clearly, though, he was listening a little to us.

“She is a young girl who never got the help she needed,” my mother defended.

I was a little surprised my mother defended her. I thought she would have the same opinion as most others did, which was that Emma should be punished and she had no excuse for punching Trevor.

“Why did she never get any help?” I asked. “I mean, one day she came to school like the rest of us and the next she didn’t.”

My mother looked sad and seemed to know more than me.

“Sometimes people just get lost,” she told me.

“What does that mean?”

“Meaning both family and the system fail you.”

“Her family failed her?”

“They really struggled with helping her. Emma turned troubled, rather fast. She was good at reacting, never listening. But I also believed that her parents never truly took the time to listen either, and see what she needed,” my mother said.

“Which was?”

“Perhaps home schooling,” she said. “A private tutor, one who specializes in someone who has severe dyslexia, or a private school with that kind of help, too.”

“Why did they never do that?” I asked.

My mother shrugged a little.

“No parent is perfect,” she said.

“I know that, but Emma is their daughter.”

My mother nodded.

“And some parents forget. Sometimes they have a hard time understanding the kid who is struggling if they have another who is doing great,” my mother told me.

“It overshadows?”

My mother nodded.

“It does, because the child who is easy to raise can take up the focus, or maybe make the parents ask *why can't you be more like your sister?* And I am sure you know that question is of no help,” my mother said.

I could only agree and nodded.

“Yeah, I can imagine it would make the child feel like they were even more wrong for being who they are.”

My mother smiled a little, glad I understood what she was telling me.

“Why not still try to get her some help now?”

“Maybe her parents think it is too late.”

“I don’t think it is,” I said.

“Well, you are not her private tutor, are you?” my mother teased.

No, I was not, but when my mother asked me that, it gave me an idea. I smiled a little as I continued to eat. Maybe Emma needed one. Maybe I could... I shook my head at my own stupid thought. No, she would probably not even accept my help. She found it suspicious I would even help her pick up the trash, but still... what if she agreed? What if she accepted my help? I couldn’t say I was the best tutor there was for her, but I was willing to try. Was she?

*-Emma-*

My therapy session had gone remarkably better than I had thought it would. My therapist had made me realize some things I had never thought about before. It scared me though, and I was nervous about the next session, but also a little excited. Maybe it wouldn’t be as bad as I thought it would be. My mother and I didn’t speak when we got home. She just walked into the kitchen and started dinner. My dad had still not come home. I walked up the stairs, but froze when I stood between my sister’s bedroom door and my own. I looked between them before I turned to hers. I knocked on her door, but there was no answer.

“Elena?” I called.

It was quiet on the other side.

“Elena, are you awake?” I asked.

I heard someone moving around on the other side and knew she was.

“Can I come in?”

There was a long pause, when suddenly she spoke.

“All right.”

I smiled a little, and then opened the door, finding my sister sitting at her desk, doing homework. I closed the door behind me and then went to sit on a small stool close to her desk.

“Hey,” I said, but she wasn’t looking at me.

“Hey,” she said coldly.

“Who is coming with your homework?” I asked.

“Gabriella,” she told me.

“Oh, that’s good. Then you won’t fall behind.”

My sister nodded.

“How... How are you feeling?” I asked.

“Fine.”

“Elena... come on,” I said.

Elena lifted her head and turned to me, looking at me like she had never done before. She had never treated me so coldly.

“I’m fine,” she repeated.

“I know that is not true.”

“Oh, how?”



“Well, you have been locked up for days now,” I said.

“I’m just taking my time,” she said.

“To?”

She didn’t answer that and just stared at me.

“Was there something you wanted?” she asked.

“I hoped we could talk.

“About?”

I looked at my sister, surprised. Was she really just going to pretend we both didn’t know what I was referring to?

“I think you know,” I said.

Elena continued to stare at me, and I was so shocked to see the defensive look in her eyes.

“No, I do not,” she said.

“Are we really going to play that game with each other?”

“What game?” she asked.

“The “I don’t know what you’re talking about” game,” I said.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she said.

“Elena!”

“What?” she asked.

“I’m trying to be there for you.”

“I’m fine.”

“Listen, I just spent an hour in therapy today listening to how it is good to open up and be honest about our feelings. And that is something we are actually good at with each other. So....”

“So what?”

“So, let’s talk!” I said and smiled at her.

“Fine. What do you want to talk about?”

“Elena!”

“What?” she asked, completely shutting off.

“You know what.”

“No, I don’t.”

“Why are you ignoring this?” I asked. “I’m not mom and dad!”

“No, you’re worse.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” I asked.

“You assaulted Trevor.”

“And?” I asked.

“I didn’t ask you to do that.”

“No, because you never had to. That bastard used you,” I said.

“How do you know that?”

“Know what?” I asked.

“How do you know he used me?”

“Come on, you were locked up the entire weekend and some of the week too, and I don’t think you’re coming back to school tomorrow, are you?” I asked.

My sister tapped her pencil against the paper in front of her, making a small *thud, thud, thud*, sound as the eraser hit the paper.

“He is a jerk,” I said.

“He is,” she agreed. “But I don’t need you to go punching people for me.”

“Would you have done it?” I asked.

“Of course not, because it is a crime, and I don’t want you to do it again.”

“Elena, I was just trying to help.”

“Well, you didn’t!” she yelled.

I looked at her, shocked, and she sighed a little, closing her eyes for a moment before she looked at me.

“You made it worse.”

“How?”

“Because you brought attention to it,” she said.

“I didn’t!”

“Yes, you did. Emma, do you ever think about anyone but yourself?”

“What?”

“Yes, do you?” she asked.

“I don’t just think about myself!”

“But you do, or you wouldn’t have punched Trevor.”

“He deserved that punch!” I retorted.

“Maybe, but you could have chosen any other time to be a vigilante, as you love to be. It didn’t have to be the weekend after our date because it brought attention to the fact we had slept together.”

“He used you,” I said.

“You’re right, I got played,” she said. “Do you need to rub salt in the wound?”

“I was trying to help!”

“No, you were trying to be a fucking martyr, and look what that brought me,” she said.

She suddenly pulled her phone out and then tapped into a messenger chat before handing me the phone. I saw it was a chat for a lot of the popular girls in school. Simone was in it too, and I saw a lot of messages going after Elena, but mainly me. They weren’t directly insulting to Elena, but they definitely painted her in a poor light as they trash-talked me.

“I see...” I said and scrolled through the chat.

“Now everyone thinks I’m like you. They think I sent you after Trevor like I would a guard dog,” she said and grabbed the phone.

“I didn’t think...”

“No, you *didn’t* think,” she snapped at me.

“I only wanted to teach him a lesson.”

“But you weren’t doing it for *me!*”

“I was and all the other girls!”

“No, you were doing it for you!” she shouted. “You always do these things for you! And look where it gets you! Look at the position you put us all in!”

“Well, I’m sorry if I am such a burden. I just can’t take it when people are being used,” I said.

“People are being used all the time! Look at the world we live in!” she said. “We use each other all the time, and you can’t save everyone!”

“I can try to make the world a little better.”

“But you aren’t! Because if you keep punching people, if you keep acting like the rebel, you want everyone to see you as you end up behind bars. And I won’t be able to defend you anymore. Neither will dad nor mom!”

“I am not asking you to,” I said.

“But you are! Because family has your back, but we are tired of it! I am tired of having to defend you all the time!” she yelled.

I looked at my sister, shocked. I had never thought that was how she felt. I had never thought I was actually bringing her more trouble. I often tried to stay out of her way, at least when it came to school and friends. Whenever she had anyone over, I was out of the house. I didn’t come to her school, mainly

because I wasn't allowed on the school grounds. I never joined the parties she was at or anything. I only ever did something with her when we were home or if it was just the two of us going out to shop or get something to eat. I never realized she felt like she had to defend me all the time.

“Girls!” I suddenly heard my mother yell. “What is all that noise?”

Elena and I looked at each other for a little while. I felt damn hurt. My sister meant everything to me and now she was telling me I was just ruining everything for her by trying to stand up for her.

“Nothing mom!” Elena yelled. “We’re fine!”

“We are eating soon!” my mother yelled back.

“Okay, I will come help set the table.”

Elena turned to me and I looked at her, not knowing what to say to her.

“If you actually want to do something for us, for *me*, then stay out of trouble for once,” she told me.

Elena got up from her chair and then left the room. I just sat there. I did not know what to think or do. Was I just ruining everything for everyone? Was I just making things worse?

## *Chapter 9*

***-Emma-***

I was cleaning one of the empty classrooms the next day, when the door suddenly opened and in came a flock of Trevor's friends. I sighed, getting down from the chair I had used to so I could reach the top shelves and dust those off as well.

"Can I help you?" I asked sarcastically, as I stood there, folding the little cloth together, and taking my time doing it.

"Oh, we just came to see how cleaning the school was going," Holden said, before he grabbed a small glass vial. He let it drop to the floor, so it smashed. "You missed something."

"Dick," I mumbled.

"What was that?" he asked, as they all cornered me.

I backed away. It was three against one. Very unfair. I tried my best not to seem afraid. But I wasn't sure if anyone would react if I shouted for help.

“I said dick,” I said louder.

“Oh, Emma, you were always bad at controlling that mouth of yours.”

“I bet it could be used for something better,” Gary said, the smallest in the little group but built like a fucking tree.

If anyone could knock someone right out with one punch, my money would be on him. His little comment made them all laugh, while my heart was going crazy inside my chest.

“Three against one. Doesn’t that seem a little unfair?” I asked, as they all stood around me in a half-circle.

“We don’t really play fair,” Holden said, and placed a hand on the wall behind me as he leaned closer.

“You don’t say.”

“You broke Trevor’s nose.”

“I’m aware my hand took a hit too,” I said.

“You really think you’re so funny, don’t you?” he asked me.

“I would say I’m above average when it comes to being funny.”

“No, you are far below,” he told me.

“Come on, can’t we all just be friends?” I asked. “Trevor went after my sister; I went after Trevor. I think we all got what we wanted. Shouldn’t we just let it all be in the past?”

Holden looked at me, almost a little bored.



“Emma, that’s not how we do things here,” he said, and reached out, brushing a little of my dark hair behind my ear.

“Oh, and how do you do things?”

***-Brendon-***

I was walking to my next class when I came by a small supply room. I heard a lot of banging from inside it and then saw a chair blocked the door. The door burst open as I removed the chair, and Emma almost tripped as she fell outside.

“Assholes!” she yelled down the hallway, even though there was nothing but a few unaware students standing around. They all turned to her, wondering if she was talking to them.

Emma turned around and then noticed me.

“What?” she asked angrily.

I looked between her and the now open closet.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

“Do I look okay?”

I wasn’t sure how to answer that. While she didn’t look like they had hurt physically her, it seemed like there were people out to get her.

“Not really,” I said.

She pushed her hair back, looking frustrated and maybe on the verge of crying. She held it together though and just collected some things to do some more cleaning.

“How did you end up in there?” I asked.

“Take a guess.”

“Simone?”

Emma looked at me, shocked.

“A good guess, but no, this time it was Trevor’s friends. Payback.”

“Shit, I’m sorry,” I said.

“Don’t be. It’s not like it didn’t happen in the past.”

“Still, it shouldn’t happen at all.”

“Oh, and do you have a cure against bullies?” she asked me.

I smiled a little.

“I wish.”

“Just leave me alone,” she said and took a broom from the closet before she walked away.

I followed her, and I heard her sigh deeply.

“Didn’t you understand me just now?” she asked and turned to look at me.

“Thought you might want a little company, and my class is that way.”

“Do you not understand English?” she asked.

“I do.”

“What do you think I meant when I said “leave me alone”?”

“Listen, you look like you’re about to cry. I can imagine it was scary being locked up, and clearly there were people in

the hallway that could have helped you, but didn't. That makes it even scarier," I said.

"I'm fine," she lied.

"No, you're not."

"Oh, are you a mind reader?"

"No," I said and smiled a little.

Emma was so different from her sister. Elena truly was one of the sweetest people out there and was always nice to everyone, even people she had never met before. Emma though... Oh, she met everyone head-on and with a lot of attitude. She showed no mercy. I wasn't so easily scared away, though.

"Then how do you know I am not fine?"

"I'm good at reading people," I said.

She looked at me, annoyed, before she stepped in front of me, so I had to stop.

"I have looked out for myself for a long time, Brendon. I don't need you to come in knight in shining armor and help me," she told me.

"Oh, you see me as a knight?" I asked teasingly.

"Just leave me alone."

"I'm just trying to help."

"I didn't ask you to!" she told me.

"We could all need some help once in a while."

“Oh, you want to take over my chores? I am sure it would thrill the principal I made the star of the school scrub the school’s dirty floors,” she said a little angrily. “I wouldn’t just get punished more for that.”

“All right, I see your point, but maybe we should go talk to her about you being locked up?” I suggested.

“Yeah, and what would she do?”

“Punish them.”

Emma smiled a little, and it confused me.

“What?”

“Star quarterback. Outcast.”

She pointed first at me, then at herself.

“And?”

“Star football players,” she said, and pointed down the hallway.

I looked down the hallway, but couldn’t see what she was pointing at. I turned to her again and realized she wasn’t really pointing anyone out. We both knew who she was talking about.

“Outcast,” she said again, and pointed to herself. “Who do you think she would listen to? She might love to come help you if anyone tried locking you up in a supply room, but me, she couldn’t care less about.”

“Wouldn’t it help if I went with you, then?” I asked and smiled.

“Star football players,” she repeated. “She wouldn’t lift a finger.”

“It isn’t okay,” I said. “You’re just trying to do your chores, and they are ruining that for you.”

“Life isn’t fair,” she said.

“Then let’s try to make it a little fairer.”

“Brendon, people don’t care I get locked up or that people call me a loser or my sister a whore,” she said.

“They called Elena ... what?” I asked.

“It doesn’t matter. They will never see me as more than the outcast and the troublemaker, and I am fine with that.”

“Are you really?”

She sighed.

“Just leave me alone. Before you know it, I will drag your name through the mud with me.”

“Oh, so you care about my reputation?” I asked and smiled a little.

She just looked at me, then turned around.

“Have fun with your next class, golden boy, and leave me alone,” she said.

“My class is that way,” I said and caught up with her.

“What is your next class?” she stopped and asked me.

“Biology.”

She smiled and then pointed the other way.

“That’s that way, golden boy.”

I smiled and knew I had been too slow to realize that, of course, Emma knew her way around the school.

“Are you sure you will be fine?” I asked.

“I appreciate the concern, if it was actually real.”

“It is real!”

“Come on...”

“I am serious, Emma. I don’t want you to be treated like that,” I told her.

She looked at me a little suspiciously, then shrugged.

“I will be fine.”

“I could accompany...”

“No,” she quickly cut in.

“Fine,” I said and smiled a little. “I guess I will see you around.”

“I hope not,” she said.

As I walked away, I chuckled and shook my head. She was hard to get close to, but I did not give up so easily.

When I arrived at my next class, Trevor’s friends had already taken their seats. I threw my bag down beside Aaron, who looked like he was going to sleep through the class or something. He jumped from his seat, though, as he heard my bag land on mine.

“Hey, where are you going?” he asked.

He sat in the middle of the class, and Trevor's friends sat in the back. I was unsure how many had been part of locking Emma up, but I was going to make some things clear to them.

"What's up, Brendon?" one of them said as I neared them.

We weren't close, but we weren't enemies either. We spoke a little to each other, and we all trained together and had the same classes, so there wasn't any bad blood between us. I was most likely about to ruin things between us, but I could not care less. No one should be locked up in some supply room.

"You all need to stay away from Emma," I told them.

They glanced at each other.

"Why?"

"Because she is trying to make up for the trouble she caused, and she can't do that locked up in a supply room."

That made Holden chuckle, and the others seemed like they tried not to laugh, but they weren't succeeding.

"You found her?" Holden asked.

"I did."

"What did she do when you opened the door?"

"Called you all assholes," I said.

That made them all laugh.

"I mean it," I told them, and placed my hands on Holden's table.

“You mean what, Brendon?” he asked and leaned closer to me.

“Leave her alone.”

“No, she went after Trevor and she is so fun to play with. It has been too boring lately. We all need to use our time on something.”

“Then use it on something else, but tormenting Emma, she has enough on her plate.”

“You fancy her, golden boy?” Holden asked.

“Yes, because we live in 1850 and I am courting her,” I told him sarcastically.

He did not appreciate how I spoke to him. But I was not scared of them, and if they kept messing with Emma, I would not stop from going to the principal. Emma was not wrong; the old crow did actually listen to me. I knew I could send her after them if I needed to.

“Trevor told us to make her life hell, so that is what we are going to do,” Holden said.

“Are you his bitches?”

They all glared at me, but I smiled.

“Give the girl a break. She has been through enough.”

“Sounds like you like her.”

“I would have done this for anyone I had found locked up in the supply room. Leave her the fuck alone.”

“Or what?” Holden asked.



“Do you really want to find out?”

Holden certainly didn't look so certain, and I smiled.

“I didn't think so.”

I looked at each and one of them. They certainly weren't happy with me, but I was not trying to make friends with them. Really, they all just annoyed me. I turned around and went back to my seat. Aaron leaned closer to me, looking at me like I had gone insane.

“Tell me, do you have a death wish?” he asked.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” I chuckled.

“You don't want Trevor's dog hunting you now.”

“It's fine.”

“No, it is not, and I don't want them after me, either.”

“Afraid?” I teased him.

“No, but if it was because they were after you, it would be different. Then I would be ready to have your back, but this is about that troublemaker you can't seem to get out of your head.”

“That's not true.”

“Of course it is, or you wouldn't have gone all psycho on Trevor's friends,” he told me.

“As I told them, I would have done it for anyone I had found locked up in that supply room.”

Aaron shook his head.

“I don’t believe that.”

“Well, believe what you want to,” I said.

“You have lost your mind. Will you fuck her already, so we can move on?”

“Listen, she is trying to make up for what she has done, and they are making her life hell,” I said. “I was just trying to make her job a little easier.”

“And do you think threatening helped?” he asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Are you sure they won’t just go even more after her now because they know it will piss you off too?” he asked.

I looked at him, surprised. I had clearly not thought about that possibility and looked over my shoulder, seeing all of Trevor’s friends watching me with angry looks in their eyes. Shit, had I made it worse for Emma?

## *Chapter 10*

***-Emma-***

“I will see you tomorrow, Emma,” Mr. Carlsen said.

“Have a nice evening,” I said as I walked away and Mr. Carlsen walked to his car.

I stood close by the road, looking around for my mother. She was supposed to pick me up again. My parents had decided it was best that one of them drove me to school from now on to make sure I would actually go there and do my duty. Then they would pick me up later, so I wouldn't go meet my addict friends. Today, though, my mother was nowhere in sight. The school was closed, and it was pretty much all just a wasteland. Where on earth was she? Suddenly, my phone dinged, and I took it from my pocket, opening it, seeing a message from my mother.

*Can't come pick you up, call an uber. I sent you money.*

I sighed, leaning my head back and looking up into the blue sky. The good thing was we were still in the late summer, so

the sun stayed up for long. I looked around again. I didn't want to wait for an uber, so I decided to walk. It would take me a good 45 minutes to walk home, but I didn't mind. I enjoyed walking around. So, I just walked across the parking lot and left the school grounds. Soon, I was walking along the road, my headphones in and enjoying the warm weather. As I enjoyed the late summer weather, I had a smile on my lips, but suddenly I heard a car horn. I pulled out my headphones, only to see a car come driving right towards me. I was walking on the road's side, but it definitely was coming towards me. It sped up, and I barely had time to jump to the side, landing hard on my stomach and scraping my hands and knees. I looked over my shoulder to see the car had stopped a little further away. And out of the window hung one of Trevor's friends, Brian, one of the three guys who had been after me today.

“Sending your little knight after us. You think that is going to save you, troublemaker?” he yelled, before he banged his hand against the jeep's door and then it drove off.

As I pushed myself to my feet, I glared at them. I had landed half-way into a small mud puddle, and it had soaked my clothes in dirty water. I looked down at myself, cringing at the sight of myself and feeling a lot of pain. I tried cleaning my hands, but it made it no better trying to wipe them off in my clothes. I could see I was bleeding, though. I sighed and leaned my head back.

“Why me?” I whispered.

No one had an answer for me, and I knew God, if he existed, wasn't going to ever tell me why I had been granted this life. It was what it was. I didn't stay there for long, though. I continued to walk, limping my way back home. It meant it took at least 20 minutes longer than it should have.

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“My God, Emma!”

My mother jumped from the couch she was sitting on. She could see me enter from the living room and she rushed to me. My dad was in the living room too and, to my surprise, so was Elena. They were all sitting on the couch. I didn't get why mother had texted me that she couldn't pick me up if they were all just sitting there having a cozy time. It actually made me angrier than I had ever been before.

“What happened?” she asked.

“Oh, you know. Life,” I said, putting extra pressure on “life”.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means if you know you aren't going to pick me up, tell me in the morning so I can drive and not almost get run down.”

“Didn't you call an uber? I sent you money,” she said.

“No, I decided to walk. Get some fresh air.”

“And?”

“And I have decided I hate fresh air. I hate my life, and I hate stupid football players who think they are better than everyone else.”

“Are you saying this was done intentionally?” she asked.

“No, mom, I just decided I wanted to go swim in the mud,” I said sarcastically.

“Emma, now is not the time for sarcasm!” my dad said.

I looked at him, annoyed, not quite believing he could use such a tone on me. I was the one covered in bruises and dirt, and they were all getting cozy on the couch.

“Unbelievable,” I mumbled.

“Did Trevor’s friends do this to you?” Elena asked me, as she looked me up and down.

It surprised me to see her out of her room. It was probably the only good thing about today.

“Did they?” my mother asked and gently grabbed my arm.

“Does it matter?” I asked.

“Of course it does!” she said. “Look at you!”

“I know I look like a fucking star, don’t I?”

“Emma!” my dad said seriously.

“What?” I yelled at him.

I was just done. I was just... done. I couldn’t even have a normal conversation because I was so angry right now.

“Don’t snap at your dad,” my mother said.

“He started!”

“Emma, calm down!”

“Calm down?” I yelled. “I have been bullied, locked in a supply room, almost run over by a car, and it has only been two days since I got back!”

“Wait, locked in a supply room?” my mother asked. “When was this?”

“Oh, just about...”

I held up my arm like I was looking at a watch and just saw my torn sleeve.

“Half past... I don’t fucking know I was locked in a supply room!” I yelled.

“Okay, this we need to take up with the principal. Emma, this is not okay.”

“Because all of it was okay when I was a student?” I asked.

“Of course not,” my mother said and softened her voice. “We always took these matters seriously.”

“Did you?” I asked.

“What made you think we didn’t?” my dad asked and got up from the couch, walking over to me.

“Because it never stopped...”

“You never told us this,” my mom said.

“Oh, I did, but I think you were a bit too busy celebrating Elena’s A’s,” I said.

“Emma...” my mother said sadly.

“Forget it...”

“No, let’s solve this,” my dad said. “You are doing some important work there, and no one should bother you while you do it.”

“Listen, I just want to shower and get changed before I go to bed. I’m tired.”

“Just give us the names,” my mother said.

“It won’t matter.”

“Why?” she asked.

“Because they are part of the star football team. You think the principal would care?” I asked.

“Why wouldn’t she?” my dad asked.

“I repeat... star football team.”

“But this is serious, Emma. You were almost run over.”

“It’s fine. I just have a... month left,” I whispered the last part.

“This is not fine. We will have this handled,” my dad told me.

“Don’t,” I said.

“Why?” my mother asked.

“Because someone else today tried to “handle” it and it only got worse,” I said.



I knew who Trevor's friends were talking about when they told them I had sent my knight after them. It could only be one person, and sure enough... it had made it all worse.

"Emma, we can't let this slide."

"Why not? It's not like that's not what you did in the past."

"But you never talked to us!" my mother said, frustrated.

"I talked. You just didn't listen."

"Well, we are listening now," my dad said, trying to solve the tension between us.

"Yay!" I said dryly. "Can I go shower now?"

"How about you shower and then come down and join us for a movie?" my mother asked.

I could see she was desperate to help me. She truly wanted to fix all of this, but she couldn't fix it. I knew it would only make it worse if my parents got involved.

"I... I just want to go to sleep."

"Are you hungry?" she asked me.

"Just tired..."

I looked at the ground in front of me. It was strange they cared that much. I had gotten so used to them not caring and letting me do what I wanted; I did not know how to react to that. It made me feel strange, and I just wanted to sleep, so I could forget it all.

"All right. You call us if you need something," my mom said.

“Yeah...”

I turned away and went upstairs so I could shower. The shower was very nice, and I had all my scrapes cleaned before I got dressed in my sleeping wear. Then I just fell right down on my bed. I closed my eyes, so happy I could finally get some rest, but then someone knocked on my door. I sighed deeply and only opened one eye so I could look at the door.

“Yes?” I mumbled into my pillow.

The door opened slightly, and I saw Elena standing there.

“Hey,” she said.

I closed my eye.

“Hey,” I mumbled. “Did mom send you up here?”

“No, I just wanted to check up on you.”

“Oh, you care?”

“I do care!” she said harshly.

“I’m fine, Elena.”

I placed my hands under my pillow and buried my head into it.

“I think you should let mom and dad talk to the principal. It might give you some peace.”

“Yeah, and the moment the principal looks away, my head will be in the toilet,” I said sarcastically.

“Emma, this is over the top, almost getting you run over, and just for breaking Trevor’s nose,” she said.

“I think they have locked people up in supply rooms for less.”

“Doesn’t mean I want it done to my sister.”

“Can I get some sleep now?”

It was quiet for a little while and I thought she might have left. But when I turned my head and opened my eyes, I saw her still standing there.

“Yes?” I asked.

“We are watching Back To The Future. You love that movie,” she said.

“One, two, or three?”

“We are going through them all. We are at one right now.”

“My least favorite,” I mumbled before turning my head and looking the other way, as I laid on my stomach.

“We have popcorn too.”

“For dinner?”

“We ate early.”

I turned my head again and looked at my sister.

“What?” she asked, when she saw the weird look in my eyes.

“Have mom and dad been home the whole day?”

Elena nodded, looking a little confused.

“Yes.”

“So, instead of picking me up, mom decided to cuddle with you and dad on the couch while I almost died,” I said.

“Emma... she told you to get an uber.”

“I decided I liked fresh air,” I said. “Now I don’t like it anymore.”

“Do you want to come down? Yes or no?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Why are you pestering me about this?” I asked. “I said no!”

“I just don’t want you to sit up here all on your own when you can come down and have fun with us.”

“Isn’t that exactly what you did the entire weekend? Why is it when I want to be alone, in my room, that I can’t do that?”

“Because when I take some time for myself, it is only for a few days or a few hours. When you take time for yourself, you freeze everyone out, hang out with the wrong people, and get high.”

“I do that normally,” I said.

“My point exactly.”

I sighed and shook my head.

“I just want to sleep.”

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“I am a hundred percent sure that I want to sleep.”

“Okay... then text me if you change your mind or if you get hungry.”

“Mom already said I could call her if I needed anything. Can I sleep now?”

Elena looked hesitant, but eventually, she closed the door, and I let my head get buried in the pillow again, before I breathed out deeply. It didn't take long before the tears came, but I was so exhausted I didn't get to cry for long before I was fast asleep.

## *Chapter 11*

***-Emma-***

“Shall we?” I asked, as I stood in the kitchen the next morning.

Both my mom and Elena were there, and once again I was surprised to see my sister not in her room. I wasn’t sure what had changed, but it seemed like she was slowly coming back to the real world.

“Sit,” my mother said and pointed to a chair beside her.

“I’m not hungry.”

“Emma, you didn’t eat dinner either.”

“Was a little busy getting run over.”

“Which is why,” my mother said. “You’re going to sit down and have some breakfast.”

“Here.”

Elena quickly took a plate and added a few pancakes before she took the whipped cream and made a smiley.

“Look how happy he is about getting eaten.”

She handed me the plate and smiled at me. I couldn't help but smile back and took the plate, only because my sister had been so sweet.

“Fine.”

I sat down and ate the pancakes.

“I still think that we should go and talk—”

“Mom, don't ruin breakfast,” I said.

“Emma, this is serious. You almost got run over.”

“They weren't really trying to hit me, just scare me.”

“That doesn't make it better,” she said.

“No, but at least they weren't actually trying to kill me. I think it makes it a little better.”

My mother didn't appreciate the sarcasm.

“Mom, I'm the one stuck in school with them,” I said.

“I know, and therefore it is important we do something about it.”

I shook my head.

“You do something and it just makes it worse,” I told her.

“No, we need to handle this.”

“Mom, kids aren't going to change. Some are just assholes.”

“Language,” she warned me.

“It's the truth, though.”

My mother sighed and then looked at Elena, who shrugged a little.

“I kind of agree. Some are just assholes.”

“Elena!”

My sister and I looked at each other, smiling a little. I had missed her being like that with me. I could see I had screwed up some things. But if I could go back and change it all, I am not so sure I would. Trevor deserved that punch, and I was happy to dish out some justice.

“If Emma says she doesn’t want us to meddle, then let’s not meddle. Sometimes we need to stay out of each other’s *business*.”

My sister put extra pressure on the end and I turned to her, seeing her look at me with a warning in her eyes. I had my mouth full of pancakes, as I just looked at her.

“Oh, was that meant for me?”

“Ew, swallow your food first!” she laughed and pushed me a little.

I swallowed and then chuckled a little.

“All right, I get it. No punching more guys for you. Happy?”

“Very,” she said. “I can take care of myself.”

“I know,” I said and smiled at her. “I know that.”

She smiled back, and when I looked at our mother, she was looking at us with a smile.



“If you change your mind, though,” she said, and focused on me.

“I will let you know.”

“Good.”

We continued to eat breakfast before my mother finished her coffee, and then she stood up.

“Let’s go girls.”

Elena suddenly stood up and grabbed a bag she had placed against a wall behind her. I had not seen it and it surprised me when I saw her pick it up.

“Wait, are you coming too?” I asked.

“Can’t stay here all the time,” she told me and smiled as she swung the bag over her shoulder.

“No, but I thought...”

“Listen, the longer I hide, the worse it will get. I know how high school teenagers are,” she said. “I am one of them.”

“Neutralize the rumors,” I said.

“You got it.”

She winked at me and then followed our mother, who had already gone outside to start the car. I swallowed the last bite of my pancakes and then quickly left my seat as well before I joined them in the car.

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When we were at school, Elena took her time saying goodbye to our mother as I waited on the sidewalk. I wasn't sure if she wanted me to or if she would rather be seen without me. But I still waited for her. Our mother wished her good luck, before calling out to me too and telling me to have a good day. I waved as she drove off.

“Aren't we a little old for this?” I asked.

“I asked her to drive us,” she said. “But she is leaving me in charge of you from now on.”

“Wait... what?” I asked.

Elena smiled.

“Yes, from now on I am driving us.”

“They have made you my babysitter?” I asked, rather offended.

“Well, who do you want to drive you, mom or me?”

“Why can't I drive myself?”

“Do I really need to answer that?” she asked.

“Well... no...”

“So?”

“You...” I finally said.

“That was what we thought,” she told me.

“So, did you plan all of this last night?”

“Maybe. You could have joined us and found out.”

“Very manipulative,” I told her, and she smiled smugly.

“I know.”

I turned and looked at the school in front of us. Kids were streaming into the building; some were still outside either waiting for friends or enjoying the warm weather until the bell rang.

“So, do you want us to...”

I gestured towards the school, and my sister looked at the building before she looked at me.

“Well, I mean I have just come back...”

“No, sure, yeah, I get it,” I said.

“It’s not that I don’t want to go with you, but...”

“No, no, I told you, I get it,” I interrupted. “So, we will just meet here afterwards?”

“Yeah, text me when you are ready to go home.”

“Sure.”

“Elena!”

Just then, Elena’s friends called her name, and she turned her head, a big smile spreading on her lips before she hurried towards them. They all let out happy screams as I stood there watching them. It wasn’t long before they walked inside, and I was completely forgotten... once again.

***-Brendon-***

“So, the sister returns,” Aaron said as he stood beside me.

Many had noticed Emma hadn't come alone today. Though, I didn't believe the sisters really noticed all the eyes on them.

"Seems that way," I said.

We watched as they chatted for a while, then Elena took off, and I saw Emma standing there, looking almost longingly after her sister. I could see she felt left behind. I was not that surprised by that. Elena never mixed her friends and sister. You only saw Elena with her sister when it was just those two together. I had never seen Emma together with Elena *and* her friends, and it was clear that was just the way it was. Elena had a different life that Emma couldn't be a part of, and it was clear she felt it strongly as she stood there on the sidewalk.

"Seems like not even the sister wants to recognize Emma's existence," Aaron said.

"That's just cruel," I said and turned to him.

"It's true."

He was not wrong. That it was. It was clear Elena kept it all separated, and now that she was back, it was probably best to come back with a strong front. I knew she probably saw her sister as someone who would only make it harder for her to come back. So, Emma was left behind.

"I know it is true, but you don't have to point it out."

"Well, why don't you go and make her feel better? Now is your chance, lover boy," he said and pushed me forward.

"You're such a dick," I told him with a smile.

“And yet you’re walking towards her.”

Aaron began waving at me as he laughed, and I shook my head, laughing too, as I walked over to Emma. She began to walk inside and I hurried up, reaching her side before she got too close to the school.

“Hey,” I said.

Emma only glanced at me and then shook her head, annoyed.

“What’s wrong?”

“I think it would be best if we stayed clear of each other,” she told me.

“Why?”

“Because I wouldn’t want my knight in shining armor getting me into more problems.”

“What are you talking about?”

I held the door for her and she looked at me like I had grown an extra head or something. She shook her head again as she walked in.

“Seriously, you went after Trevor’s friends?” she asked me, yet it didn’t sound much like a question.

“Yes,” I said.

“What the hell were you thinking?” she asked as we walked down the hallways to where the janitor’s closet was.

“I was trying to help.”

“And did you honestly think it would?”

“Why? What happened?”

I grabbed her arm, turning her to me.

“Don’t touch me,” she said.

“Sorry, I was just...”

“If people see us talking together, you will only make my time here harder. You put a big fat target on me yesterday.”

“I was trying to get them off your back!” I said.

“And you only made it so much more fun to go after me! They think I am now using you as my shield!”

“And what is wrong with that?”

“I don’t need you as my shield! I have survived worse!” she told me before she continued to walk.

I followed her, not done with this conversation.

“What did they do to you?”

“Well, besides almost killing me? Not much.”

“What?” I asked, scared.

“They came after me in their damn car.”

“Emma... shit! We need to report this,” I said.

“No! We do not!”

She stopped and turned to me before looking around. I did too and saw the students watching us and whispering. If there was one thing students loved, it was rumors. The golden boy

and the troublemaker together? Could it be true? Could they be doing it? I could already hear everything they were saying, but I just shook my head and turned to Emma.

“How badly did you get hurt?” I asked.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“It does! Did you tell your parents?”

“It was a bit hard to hide what had happened when I took a swim in the mud.”

“My God,” I said. “We need to do something about this.”

“No, I told you, we do not. You just need to stay out of my business and keep a clear distance between us. It’s for your sake too, golden boy.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m going to drag you down if you continue to talk to me. Trust me, I am bad news.”

“What if I don’t believe that?” I asked.

Emma looked at me, surprised. For a moment there, it seemed like she wasn’t sure what to say. I had really surprised her with my words, and I smiled a little as I took a step closer to her. She took a small one back, clearly not wanting me too close. She was so suspicious of everyone.

“What if I think you have a lot of potential?” I asked.

“As a cleaning lady?”

“As anything you want to be. I think you could do more.”

“More what?”

“More of anything you want to be,” I told her.

“Trust me, the ship sailed a long time ago.”

“What if I helped you?”

“With?”

“With school.”

“I don’t go to school,” she said.

“Maybe you could start over. How about homeschooling?”

“You want to home school me?” she asked.

“Why not?”

“Because I am a lost cause, and you spending your time on me would be a waste.”

“I don’t believe that,” I said. “I think no one took their time to properly teach you.”

Emma smiled a little, and it confused me.

“What?”

“I think you think too highly of yourself, golden boy, if you think you can teach me anything,” she said.

I sighed. Emma was so difficult to get just a little close to. Even when I was offering her my help, she thought it had something to do with *me* and not her. Maybe it had a little to do with me. Maybe Aaron was right. I wanted to get close to her. I couldn’t say why, but she intrigued me, and I wanted to get to know who Emma was. I had never really talked to her,



and now every time I did, I wanted to continue to talk. I wanted to get to know her.

“I’m trying to make up for the trouble I caused,” I told her, trying to show her I truly was just being nice.

“I don’t need you to.”

“But I want to.”

“I don’t care if you do,” she said. “The best thing you can do is stay away from me.”

“I was just trying to help, just like I am now.”

“Sometimes we think we are helping when we are just making things worse,” she said. Yet the way she said it sounded almost like she was telling herself that and not me.

“Then let me make it up to you differently,” I said.

“By staying away from me?”

She smiled at me teasingly, and I sighed.

“Come with me to a party.”

“A party?” she asked, confused.

“Yeah, I bet your sister is going too.”

“Then I probably shouldn’t go.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because we keep those things separate. She has her life and I have mine, and they don’t mix.”

“Why?”

She didn't answer that and shook her head, telling me I shouldn't ask.

"You will be going with me, though," I said.

"Who is throwing it?"

"Trevor."

"Then fuck no!"

Emma turned to walk away, and I grabbed her arm.

"Come on, we won't actually have to talk to him. Many people will be there."

"It's *his* party, so I am pretty sure I wouldn't even be let inside," she said.

"If you're with me, it's going to be fine."

"Don't tell me you're doing it because you want to play my hero again and show his friends that they shouldn't mess with me."

I shook my head and smiled a little. Honestly, the only reason I suggested this party was because I had no other way to get her to spend time with me. I just wanted to show her she truly could rely on me. I was not like the rest, wanting to pick on her or looking down on her. I wanted us to get to know each other. Perhaps the party wasn't the best idea, but I was surprised by myself how much I wanted a chance to be around Emma and preferably outside school.

"No," I said. "I won't do that anymore."

"Good, but it is still a no."

“Why?”

“Because I told you, it’s *his* party. I can’t imagine my sister would ever go,” she said.

“I’m pretty sure she will.”

“Why?” she asked.

“Because all her friends are and not going is kind of...”

“A way to socially destroy yourself?” she finished for me.

“Something like that.”

I smiled a little, but Emma didn’t look like she was very excited about hearing that her sister was most likely going. She didn’t say more, though, and just turned away.

“So, is that a yes?” I called after her.

“It’s a big fat no, golden boy!”

## *Chapter 12*

***-Emma-***

My sister was on her phone. We were home, sitting on the couch. Today had been very peaceful, and I was happy about that. Perhaps after almost running me over, Trevor's friends had been satisfied a little for more than one day. It meant I could easily get everything cleaned and the principal even came by today and nodded, satisfied at my work. She said nothing. But I had learned to read the older lady already. She was happy. She could also just be happy I had set nothing on fire, but as I had already said, fire was not my thing. Our mother had picked us up again, and I had thought Elena would go straight to her room. Instead, she had suggested we watch a movie before dinner. She was just staring at her phone, though, smiling. I wondered if she was trying to keep me distracted, so I wouldn't be going out and meeting up with my addict friends. Had my parents truly made her my babysitter?

"What's so funny?" I asked when I heard my sister giggle.

Elena looked up from her phone and smiled.

“Oh nothing, just something Simone wrote.”

“Are you really friends with her?” I asked.

“Of course. Why?”

I didn't want to mention what she had said. While I knew Elena and Simone weren't best friends, and they didn't hang out all the time, I still didn't like Elena even talking to her. Simone had made it quite clear to me she did not consider Elena her friend. Simone was just a bully.

“No reason...”

Elena went back to her phone, and I found it a little suspicious of how caught up she was in it. Eventually, I put the movie on pause and turned to my sister.

“Are you really going to Trevor's party?” I asked.

She looked away from her phone again and seemed surprised I was asking.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because the jerk used you.”

She waved her hand in the air.

“It's in the past.”

“It's only days ago it happened,” I said.

“And I have moved on.”

“Just like that?”

“Just like that,” she confirmed.

She smiled at me and took a bite of the apple she held in her other hand. She truly looked like she was doing fine, but I found it so strange because she had done a one eighty and turned into a different person. Or it felt like a different person, at least. Really, she had just turned into her old self. But after witnessing how destroyed she was after what Trevor did to her, I just couldn't believe she could move past it so fast.

“Are you sure you're okay?” I asked.

“Emma, I told you I am fine!”

I wasn't sure I believed that. I kept looking at my sister, who shrugged a little.

“What?”

“I just... I mean, you were pretty much in love with him and he broke your heart. You have really moved on?” I asked.

She nodded.

“It's a waste of time to cry about it,” she said.

“And you're just going to go to this party and...”

“Have fun? You know what you do at parties, right?”

“I have been to parties!” I said.

Emma smiled a little.

“Right,” she said.

“Okay, maybe not as big parties as yours!” I said. “But I have been to parties.”

“With your addict friends?”

“And what if it was with them?” I asked.

“Why are you friends with them?”

“Why are you friends with Simone?” I countered.

Emma looked at me, a little shocked.

“Because Simone is a good person, with an actual future ahead of her. She is smart and funny, and she doesn’t have a drug addiction.”

“So, is this how you view me?” I asked.

“What?”

Elena seemed taken aback by my question.

“I hang out with these drug addicts,” I said. “So, is that how you view me?”

“Of course not,” she said. “You might have some stuff you need to work through, but you are nothing like them.”

“How do you know?”

“What?”

“That I am nothing like them? You have never spoken to any of *my* friends. How do you know I am nothing like them?”

Elena turned quiet, and we just sat there looking at each other. It was clear she didn’t know what to answer. I had cornered her with my question, and now she was probably trying to figure out the best way to answer without risking hurting my feelings. I didn’t see a way out for her though, and I knew neither did she.

“Hello girls!”

My dad entered, and the damn bell saved Elena. He closed the door and came into the living room, kissing us both on top of our heads, before sensing the tension and looking between us.

“What’s going on here?” he asked.

I kept looking at Elena, but she was now looking down. She knew she had spoken too fast, and now couldn’t save herself.

“Ask Elena,” I said and stood up before I left the room.

I walked upstairs where I threw myself down on my bed. When I grabbed my phone, I was about to scroll through meaningless posts on TikTok, but I remembered something. I hesitated a bit before I clicked into Facebook, then I found the person I was looking for, typing the golden boy a message.

*Still want me to come to the party?*

It didn’t take long for him to answer me.

*Definitely.*



## Chapter 13

### **-Brendon-**

I was so surprised when Emma texted me, asking me if I still wanted her to come to the party. I was quick to reply and told her I would very much like her to go with me. She told me she would come to my house around eight before we could go there together. I had offered to pick her up, but she had refused, and I didn't mind her coming here. As I waited for the clock to strike eight, I was very excited. I didn't think she would be on time, but even a few minutes before, I heard the doorbell ring.

"I got it!" I yelled, as I went to the front door, opening it.

When I did, I found Emma standing there. She did not look very different from her everyday appearance, but somehow, I saw her differently. Somehow, seeing her *outside* of school made me view her differently. She looked very good, but she always did. Her dark hair, which was usually pulled up into a ponytail, was now hanging just below her shoulders. She

smiled at me as she saw me. Even if the smile was just a small polite one, it made me want to smile back, and so I did.

“Shall we?” she asked.

“And hello to you too,” I said.

She chuckled a little.

“Hey,” she said.

“See? That is how normal interactions usually go.”

“Oh, so now you don’t just want to teach me to read, you also want to teach me how to be a “normal” person?” she asked.

I shook my head and grabbed my jacket before I closed the door.

“No, I like you as you are.”

“Someone who makes trouble?” she asked.

“That’s the fun side of you.”

“Oh, I see. So you like I go around punching people?” she asked a little teasingly before she stepped down from the little step that led up to my front door.

I followed her and then nodded.

“He deserved it.”

Emma stopped and looked at me, shocked.

“You mean that...”

She did not say it as a question, but I nodded anyway.

“Yeah?”

“I think you’re the first one.”

“To?”

“To say he deserved that,” she said. “Besides me.”

“I mean it. Someone needed to knock him down from his high pedestal. Not that I am saying you should do it again,” I told her and winked.

She smiled again, and this time it was not a polite little smile. It was a genuine one, and it made me smile too.

“Nice house, by the way,” she said, and turned to look at my house.

I did too. It was nothing glorious like Trevor, but we definitely had more than most.

“It is nice. Maybe one day, if you are really sweet to me, I will invite you inside.”

Emma turned to me and chuckled a little.

“What makes you think I will say yes to that?”

“Because I am *that* charming.”

She shook her head and began to walk again.

“You’re full of it! All you football players are.”

“Well, we need to be confident.”

“It’s called having a big ego,” she corrected me.

“No, confidence.”

“Ego!”

“Confidence!” I argued.

We were both smiling, though, as we walked along the road. Trevor didn't live that far from me, so we could walk there in 15 minutes. It was nice just walking beside her. I sensed, though, as we got closer to the party, Emma was slowing down.

“You okay?” I asked.

“Of course, why wouldn't I be?” she asked.

“Because you're walking slowly.”

“Just... a little nervous.”

“You?” I asked, shocked.

She looked at me, annoyed, and then rolled her eyes as I laughed a little.

“Funny,” she said dryly.

“Why are you nervous?” I asked.

“Because Trevor hates me, and I hate him, and my sister will be at this party...”

“And Elena is still hurting?”

Emma shook her head.

“That's the thing... she isn't.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“She was crying the whole weekend and some of the week, not even allowing me into her room, and now she is just...”

fine!” she said.

“And that is bad?”

“It’s strange!”

“How?” I asked.

“Think about it. You know how crazy Elena was about Trevor. Like any other girl, she had her heart broken. A few days crying in her room and suddenly she is back to normal,” Emma said.

“Maybe she just realized she wasn’t that into him.”

“What do you mean?”

“Sometimes we have this idea of a person. We think we love them, but really, it’s the idea,” I said.

“You speak like you understand the feeling.”

“Maybe a little,” I said and shrugged.

We walked a little in silence, then Emma leaned closer to me.

“Simone?”

“What?”

“Were you talking about Simone?” she asked me.

I smiled a little, and so did Emma, who nodded.

“I’m not answering that.”

“Sure, golden boy,” she said.

We continued to walk, but then Emma got even more curious.

“Why exactly did you break up? Was it because, as you said, you realized you were in love with the idea you had of her?” she asked.

I shrugged again as I put my hands into my jacket. It was just a thin hoodie, since the weather was still so warm in the evening. I hadn't dressed that specially either. It was a party at Trevor's house, so I knew it was all about getting trashed, and not about how we dressed. Maybe it was to some, but I was not there to hook up with anyone, which many people did at his parties. I had always been in a relationship, but now I was single. It was almost weird coming to this party without Simone and now Emma, and I wasn't even dating Emma.

“We grew apart,” I said.

“You grew apart? You were joined at the hip,” she said.

“No, we weren't!”

I looked at her, and she just gave me a funny look.

“We were?”

“It seemed that way.”

“Wow...” I said.

“Surprised?”

“Well, Aaron already pointed out I had been quite blind when it came to who Simone truly is, so yeah, maybe I am a

bit surprised. I am still learning who I am outside the relationship.”

“You did love her, though?” Emma asked.

I nodded.

“I did.”

“How?” she suddenly asked, almost yelling the word.

I chuckled, and so did she. I could understand why she was asking. She and Simone were not friends, so, of course, she couldn’t understand it.

“She was a great girlfriend.”

“Really?”

“I know you might not see that side of her, but I did.”

“What side?” she asked. “The mean girl one? Because I experienced it.”

I shook my head.

“No, the sweet one. The one who, when I got sick, would stay with me, make me some soup or leave cute notes in my bag. Who was making me smile and would go out of her way to make me happy.”

“Maybe she did that so you wouldn’t notice the other side of her?”

I shook my head again, not agreeing with this.

“No, I know that side of her was real. I just turned blind towards the other one.”

“That you did,” she said.

“I’m sorry about how she treated you.”

Emma shook her head and held up her hand.

“Don’t apologize for her.”

“Because my words mean nothing.”

“Because she isn’t the only one,” she said. “Besides, I’m used to it.”

“You shouldn’t be.”

“No, but sometimes that is just the way it is ...”

“Emma ...”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” she told me.

“Are you sure?”

She nodded as she looked ahead. We were nearing the party, and we didn’t speak the rest of the way. When we got close enough, we could hear music blasting from the house. When we came to the front lawn, there were already people outside, kissing and drinking and some laid passed out. Trevor had invited people to come at seven, so the party was already going as we arrived. I opened the door and held it for Emma. She rolled her eyes and walked inside.

“I don’t need you to hold the door for me,” she yelled over the music.

“Well, that’s my choice to do so.”

“I am not looking for a gentleman.”



“No? What are you looking for, then?” I asked.

She looked at me, a little annoyed, but I just smiled at her.

“Do you see my sister?” she asked.

I looked around, then shook my head.

“No, but there are many people. I’m sure we will run into her. Come, let’s get something to drink.”

Emma nodded, and I led her outside to where a keg stood. We got something to drink before I found some of my friends and brought her over to them.

“Brendon!” they yelled, as they saw me.

Shane handed me a shot, and I took it, before he looked shocked at Emma, who was standing beside me.

“Well, well, if it isn’t the bad sister,” he said, clearly already a bit intoxicated.

Emma just stared blankly at him as I rolled my eyes. I turned to Aaron, who was smiling at me, probably thinking tonight was the night I was going to have sex with her and then move on. But that was not why I had invited her. I wanted to spend time with her.

“Have you seen the good one?” Emma asked.

Shane looked around, then shook his head.

“A little while ago,” he said.

“Where?” Emma asked.

He shrugged.

“With her friends.”

“I didn’t ask with *who* but *where*,” she said.

“Oh!” Shane said.

“Inside, I think they were playing beer pong.”

Emma sighed, then handed me her drink before she walked inside.

“Wait! Emma!”

I followed her, a bit confused. Why was she so hung up on finding her sister? She walked inside, and I placed our drinks away as I caught up with her. I grabbed her arm.

“Why are you so determined to find your sister?” I asked.

“Because I’m worried.”

“Why?”

“Well, look who it is!”

Emma didn’t get to answer me, before Trevor suddenly got up from a couch, shouting loudly as he saw Emma. His friends and a few girls surrounded him from school. Most I recognized as Simone’s friends. Trevor walked closer, smiling his stupid smile. His nose was all bandaged up still. I bet he wasn’t feeling much pain though, otherwise he wouldn’t be having this party. But he definitely rode on the *I’m wounded* card to get a break from school.

“Shit...” I heard Emma mumble.

“What are you doing here, troublemaker?” he asked her as he bent forward a little, smiling at Emma.

“Partying,” she said with clear sarcasm.

“I see that,” Trevor said.

I didn’t like it. The way he was acting, it was just... it gave me the creeps.

“I thought you might be here to apologize.”

“Apologize?” Emma asked, shocked.

“That was the deal.”

“Deal?”

“Yeah, cleaning the school and apologizing for assaulting me,” he said, sounding so damn confident.

Emma just crossed her arms.

“I’m not fucking apologizing to you,” she said.

“Oh, but you have to,” he said.

Emma shook her head.

“In your fucking dreams.”

“Emma, in my dreams, you’re naked.”

I was the one who was close to throwing some punches around, but I held myself back.

“Come on, Trevor, leave her alone,” I said.

Trevor finally turned to me, now seeing me standing there.

“I heard you had become her protector,” he said. “Got the hots for the little troublemaker?”

I didn't answer that, and Trevor just smiled, turning to his friends a little who were all smiling too, watching the entire scene unfold. They weren't the only ones. We were gathering a crowd, all interested in seeing what was going to happen.

"I think you do," he said.

"Just leave her alone," I said.

"I don't need you to protect me," Emma said and turned to me.

"You hear that, Brendon? She doesn't need you to protect her," Trevor said before turning to Emma. "Besides, he can't protect you from this."

"Go fuck yourself," Emma said.

"No, no Emma, this was the deal between our parents. That, or mine sue."

"For me not apologizing?"

"Exactly!" Trevor said before he whistled loudly. "Turn down the fucking music."

Someone turned it down, and then Trevor grabbed Emma.

"Let me the fuck go!"

He placed her on a table not far behind her where people were playing beer pong.

"Now go on," he said. "Apologize."

Shit, he was making a fucking show of it.

## *Chapter 14*

***-Emma-***

Trevor was a bigger dick that I had ever expected. He had so easily picked me up after asking the music to be turned down. Then he had placed me on a table, making this a public humiliation. It was fucking torture, and as I stood there with all eyes turned to me, I finally found my sister. She was standing not far away, surrounded by Simone and other girls from school, just looking at me, and not interfering. I could see in her eyes, though, that she wasn't liking this. I just wasn't sure if it was because I was the one being humiliated or if it was because she felt like I was humiliating her.

“Go on, Emma!” Trevor said.

“Come on, cut it out,” Brendon said lowly, as he grabbed Trevor's arm.

“No, she has to apologize. It's what our parents agreed on. Relax, Brendon. Enjoy the show,” he said.

Trevor turned to me, a big fat smile on his lips. Everyone else, maybe except for Elena and Brendon, were smiling, enjoying my torture too. People really could be assholes, couldn't they?

“Very well, Trevor. You want an apology?” I asked.

The guy wanted a show. I would give him a show.

“Make it a good one,” he told me.

“Oh, it will make people cry.”

That made him and his friends laugh. I looked around, then grabbed someone's drink, holding the red cup in my hand as I lifted it. It looked like I was about to give a damn toast.

“Emma, you don't have to do this,” Brendon placed himself closer by the table and said.

He was trying to be nice, but I didn't need his help. I had always looked out for myself, and I always would. I didn't need someone to come save me when I could protect myself.

“Trevor, I will apologize,” I said.

He looked so damn smug, that idiot.

“I will apologize for not hitting you harder.”

Trevor's smile disappeared so fast, and everyone else seemed not so sure anymore what to think of it all. They had thought that I would cave. That I would bow to that idiot, but I was not going to. If I could go back and do it all again, I would. I would have kneed him in the nuts too.

“I apologize that someone didn’t deliver some justice sooner. I apologize for not knocking more sense into your skull. But apparently it seems to be impossible. I apologize for not hitting your friends too, breaking their noses. I apologize to all these people, coming here to see this show you wanted to give them, and then I do not deliver. You are just one of the worst people I have met, and if I could hit you again without getting into trouble, I would. Enjoy the fucking party, you dick!”

I downed whoever’s drink I had in my hand and then threw the cup into the crowd. I jumped down from the table, placing myself in front of Trevor. He was glaring at me, and even though he was towering over me, I did not bow down. I just stared right back at him.

“There is your apology,” I said low.

I turned away from him and then pushed myself through the crowd. I had come to the party to find my sister and make sure she was all right. It seemed like she didn’t really need me...

“Emma! Emma, wait!”

Brendon followed me outside. I had barely stepped down from the big porch when he caught up to me. He grabbed my arm and stopped me.

“Leave me alone!” I yelled.

Brendon looked at me, shocked.

“Listen, I just wanted to make sure you were all right.”

“All right?” I asked.

He nodded a little.

“I am clearly not all right! Trevor tried to humiliate me, and now I have probably made everything worse because I’m the type of person who can’t keep my mouth shut.”

“He deserved that,” Brendon said. “It was not okay doing it like that.”

“It doesn’t matter. You need to stay away from me.”

“Why?”

“Because I will drag you down too...”

“Emma...”

“You see it yourself, Brendon. Just look at those people at the party. No one tried to interfere, did they?”

Brendon stayed quiet. He knew, too, that no one was going to come to my aid. They wanted to see the humiliation happen. They wanted to have fun at my expense.

“I told you this before. Stay clear of me because I will drag you down too.”

“What if I don’t care?” he said.

“What is it about me that apparently makes you want to be around me? Am I just a fun little interesting thing? Something you might grow bored with later?”

“What makes you think that?”

“Because I can’t possibly come up with a reason for you wanting to spend your time with me! We have nothing in



common! We don't know each other! So, what do you want from me?"

"I want to be your friend."

"WHY?"

"Because it looks like you need one," he said.

I looked at him, shocked, not expecting that at all. I had no real friends. Even those I hung out with, I didn't consider friends. They were people who didn't judge me, and that was nice to be around. But I would never go to the end of the world for them or even sacrifice myself a little. They were people that tolerated me and I tolerated them.

"Stay away from me, golden boy, before I ruin everything you have built for yourself."

"Emma ..."

After shaking my head, I turned away from him.

"Emma!"

I didn't listen to him, and just let the tears fall down, ignoring them as I returned home.

***-Brendon-***

As Emma walked away, I watched her. I wanted to go after her, but now did not seem like the time to talk to her. She had been through enough, and after such an episode, she needed to be by herself. I would check on her later, though. Instead, I walked inside again, looking for Trevor. Simone found me first.

“Brendon,” she said happily.

She placed herself in front of me.

“Have you seen Trevor?”

She shook her head.

“No, but forget about him. Come, we are playing Never Have I Ever. We love that game.”

“No, *you* love that game,” I said.

Simone looked at me, shocked.

“Now, I need to go find Trevor.”

I walked away from her, going into the enormous living room and seeing Trevor back on the couch, surrounded by his friends. I walked over to him, and he noticed me on my way.

“That was fucking low, even for you,” I told him.

Trevor just smiled.

“It was part of the deal.”

“No, the deal demanded an apology, not public fucking humiliation,” I said.

“I didn’t read that,” he said smugly.

“You are a fucking asshole, you know that?”

“And so fucking what, golden boy? We can’t all be perfect like you!”

“You could at least try to be a little decent!”

“What is it about her that suddenly makes you so hung up on her?” Trevor asked. “She is a worthless person!”

“She is a much better person than you. She actually knows how to treat people right.”

“She assaulted *me*.”

“As if you didn’t deserve it.”

Trevor stood up, done with listening to me, and got into my space.

“Why do you want to impress her? You have something perfect right over there,” he said and pointed to Simone, who was watching us with her friends, clearly interested in what was going on. “Why sink so low? Why want the outcast?”

“Because at least she isn’t like any of you,” I said.

“And what is so wrong with us?”

“Trevor, the fact you need to ask just tells me you can’t see how fucked up it was for you to do that to her. Emma might not be as smart as the rest of us, but she is a good person. She just hasn’t had the chance to prove herself yet.”

“Oh, and you know her so well?”

“No, but I know *you*,” I said. “And I would much rather hang out with her.”

I turned away before Trevor could say anything, walking by Simone and her friends. She called out to me, but I didn’t listen.

## *Chapter 15*

***-Emma-***

When I opened my eyes the next morning, I just stayed in bed. Luckily, it was Saturday, so there was no school. The school was closed, and I was happy about it. I couldn't take being put on another show like that. I just wanted to hide from the world, but of course, that wasn't so easy. Soon someone knocked on my door. I buried my head in my pillow.

“Go away!” I shouted.

“Emma, we need to talk!” I heard my mother say.

“Go away! It's my day off!”

“Now, Emma!”

I groaned loudly, knowing I couldn't get out of this. After getting up from my bed, I walked over to my bedroom door. I opened the door and looked at my mother.

“Have you not even gotten ready? It's 2 pm,” she said.

“I'm staying in bed today.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Oh?”

“You’re going over to Trevor’s house to properly apologize!”

“I am... what?” I asked.

“His parents called today, saying you had been acting insulting towards their son and refusing to give him a proper apology, and it all happened at his *own* party. A party you weren’t even allowed to go to because you had a curfew. I mean, did you forget our agreement?”

“No.”

“Then why on earth would you make it all worse for yourself?”

“I was not trying to make it worse; I was trying to survive the public humiliation he was trying to put me through.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means he was being the same asshole as always,” I said.

“Emma, you just made this so much worse for yourself!” my mother said angrily and pointed at me. “You are grounded!”

“WHAT?”

“You heard me! You snuck out to that party, breaking the deal you had with me and your father. And then you insulted Trevor, breaking the deal we had with his parents, which makes sure they don’t sue!”

“You can’t be serious?” I said.

“Oh, but I am. Now get dressed, and then I am driving you over there so you can apologize, and then we are going home and you are not fucking leaving it again!”

If my mother cursed, then I knew it was bad... Very fucking bad. I knew I would be in trouble for sneaking out, but I had not expected it to go so badly. I had really made it all so much worse than I thought.

“Do you hear me, Emma?” she asked.

I nodded, like a good little soldier because I knew fighting back would make hell break loose.

“Good. Now move it!”

I quickly got dressed and brushed my teeth before putting up my hair. When I was ready, I left my room only just a moment before Elena came out of hers. We looked at each other. I thought she might say something, but my twin sister just looked back at me. No words leaving her. I looked away, then ran down the stairs and went to go meet my mother. She was tapping her foot against the floor, arms crossed, and not even looking at me.

“Let’s go.”

It was a very awkward car ride, but at last we weren’t stuck together for long before we arrived at Trevor’s house. My mother turned off the car, then turned to me.

“You listen to me well now, Emma,” she said.

I looked at her, feeling my heart pounding.

“This is your *last* chance. Do not mess it up!”

“Mom...”

“I don’t want to hear excuses. His parents are so close to breaking this deal and suing. So, now you need to go in there and *fix* it. Do you hear me?”

“I hear you...”

“Then go! Do not come back until you have given him a proper apology. Am I understood?”

I nodded.

“You’re understood.”

“Now. Go.”

I left the car and walked up to the gate, ringing the bell. Then the big iron gate opened. I walked up to the front door. I had barely knocked once before it opened and there Trevor stood. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, and just pants. I knew for certain he had done that on purpose, because he knew it would make me uncomfortable. I didn’t let it show that it bothered me and just took a deep breath, preparing to offer my neck to the wolf like a good little sheep.

“Well, hello,” Trevor said.

There was a big smile on his lips.

“I have come...”

I couldn’t even speak. My voice was so low. I swallowed hard, telling myself the quicker I got it over with, the faster I

could get out of there.

“Yes?” he asked, clearly pushing me.

“I have come to... to... apologize.”

The word “apologize” felt like it was stuck in my throat, and I swallowed hard again, trying to get rid of the nauseating feeling inside of me.

“Go on,” he said.

I took a deep breath, preparing myself to put on the best act of my life, then I looked right into his eyes as I straightened my back.

“I apologize for breaking your nose. What I did was uncalled for, and I deeply regret my actions. I should have known better than to think violence was the answer. What happened between you and my sister does not concern me and I should not have acted so recklessly. I apologize for not thinking twice and I hope in the future we can simply stay clear of each other.”

Trevor crossed his arms and looked like he was enjoying this more than anything he had ever enjoyed in life. His smile had only grown, and it looked like he had somehow become taller, while I felt so small. I hated it. I hated it so much, but at least now I had done it. Even I would buy the load of crap that had come out of my mouth. It was just that good.

“Well, thank you, Emma,” he said. “I accept your apology.”

I couldn't help but let out an enormous sigh of relief, letting all that stress out. I was not sure what I would have done if he



had not accepted it. My mother would probably have killed me.

“I’m happy to hear it,” I said and was about to turn away.

“But we both know you don’t mean it.”

I looked back at Trevor, who was smiling his evil smug smile.

“I do,” I lied.

“No, you don’t. I know you, Emma.”

“I don’t think you do,” I said.

“But I do. I know you enjoyed what you did because you *are* a violent person.”

“That’s not true...”

“Well, I have known you for a long time, so... I would say it is.”

“Trevor...”

“I will let it slide this once time,” he said and held up a finger. “Only because you actually did me a favor. I have somehow never been more popular, and you more hated. I get all the attention and a few days off from school. I don’t mind that at all, and my parents can afford to have my nose fixed should it come out all funky.”

“That’s... good,” I said, trying to hold back my anger because I didn’t want to make things easier for him. I wanted him punished.

Trevor stepped outside, coming closer to me, and I took a small step back, not wanting him in my space.

“But you know if you really wanted to prove you meant it, just to make sure I wouldn’t tell my parents that you again insulted me, I know what you could do.”

“I didn’t insult you today.”

“But how would they know?” he asked.

“What the fuck do you want?”

He smiled evilly.

“How about a kiss?”

I looked at him, shocked.

“You have got to be fucking kidding me.”

“Hey, I could have asked for you to go down on your knees and suck me off.”

I tightened my hands into fists, and Trevor saw.

“Going to hit me again?” he asked.

“No...” I said between gritted teeth.

“So? Aren’t you going to prove you’re really sorry?”

“You said you would let it slide.”

“If you kiss me, I will.”

“Why do you want me to?” I asked.

“So, I can say I got both sisters.”

I stared at him, not sure what to say.

“No, killer, because I want to make sure you mean it. The kiss will stay a secret.”

“I punched you,” I said.

“I know. I felt it.”

“Why would you even want me close?” I asked.

“I don’t know. Maybe you just threw your magic on me like you threw it on golden boy.”

“Brendon?”

“Come now, killer, you must have noticed he can’t leave you alone,” Trevor said.

I had noticed Brendon wouldn’t leave me alone, but I had told no one. I actually didn’t mind that much. I wanted him to stay away so he wouldn’t get sucked down into my pitch-black hole, but I was starting to like spending time with him. I was not sure when it happened, but slowly I was.

“Are you asking me to kiss you to torment him?” I asked.

“Why would you think I would do that?” he asked with that evil smile.

I knew people like Trevor always had some kind of agenda, and I couldn’t imagine he would keep the kiss a secret. He wanted me to do it so he could annoy Brendon.

“You’re unbelievable,” I whispered.

“I guess I will just tell my parents that...”

I reached out, placing my hand on his neck and pulling him down to me before I kissed him, crashing my lips to his, and

shivering in disgust as they met. The kiss wasn't anything special. Lips against lips, but I hoped that was payment enough. I pulled back after a few seconds, then let my hand fall.

“We good?” I asked.

Trevor smiled, licking his lips to make me feel disgusted, then nodded.

“Even if that kiss wasn't something special, I still think you're better than your sister. Tell me, Emma, how much experience do you have with guys?”

“Stop it.”

“Are you as untouched as your sister was or...”

“Trevor, are we good?” I yelled.

He chuckled, then nodded, clearly done playing with me.

“We're good, Emma. You can go home. I will tell my parents you really laid it on thick, giving me a proper apology this time.”

“Good, then this never happened.”

“Sure, it didn't, killer.”

Slowly, I turned away. I didn't trust he would not try something else, but when he didn't touch me, I walked away and back to the car where my mother was waiting. I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand on the way to the car.

“So?” my mother asked as I got inside.

“He accepted my apology...”

I wasn't looking at my mother as I said it, and I heard her let out an enormous sigh of relief. She had really been worried I would fuck it up again, but I had done something I never thought I would do. I sold my soul to the devil...

## *Chapter 16*

### ***-Brendon-***

It was Monday again. I was back in school, searching for a certain troublemaker, as I had a small break between my classes. She was in the chemistry lab, cleaning up. I smiled as I quietly opened the door. She had her back to me, and music in her ears, as she was dusting off some shelves. I closed the door, and then walked closer, coming up behind her. I pulled out one of her air pods, but she jumped back, shocked, and I realized me sneaking up on her was not a good thing. She was clearly scared.

“Sorry,” I said and handed her the AirPods.

She took it, looking at me a little guilty.

“No, it’s fine,” she said.

“I just wanted to talk to you.”

She nodded a little and jumped down from the chair she stood on.

“All right... What’s going on?”

“I wanted to ask you that,” I said. “I wrote to you...”

“Right...”

“How are you feeling?” I asked.

“Okay.”

Emma wasn’t even really looking at me, and she quickly went to one of the tables, cleaning it with a cloth.

“Trevor is an asshole. Some people just don’t change,” I said.

Emma nodded.

“I know...”

“You shouldn’t let it get to you.”

“I’m not.”

It turned quiet, and I did not know what to say. Emma wasn’t giving me much, and it felt like she wanted me gone.

“Listen, I know the party was a complete... disaster, so maybe... well, maybe you and I could do something else?” I suggested.

Emma suddenly froze, then turned around and looked at me.

“Why?” she asked.

“I told you; it looks like you need a friend.”

“So, this would just be as friends?” she asked.

I nodded.

“Why? Do you want more? Romance perhaps?” I teased and came closer.

It brought a small smile to her lips.

“No, thank you. I just don’t know why you want to be my friend.”

“Because I think you’re a good person.”

“Me?” she asked. “You must be the only one thinking that.”

I shook my head.

“No, I think people just choose to look down on you, not even giving you a chance to prove yourself.”

Emma looked at me, surprised, as she began to slowly wipe the table again.

“So, what do you say?”

“I told you that getting involved with me would be very bad,” she said.

“Why don’t you let it be my choice?” I asked her. “Unless you, of course, don’t want us to be friends.”

Emma thought it over for a little while.

“It’s not that I don’t... it’s just—”

“Perfect! Then how about we go to the fair?”

“The fair?”

“Why not?” I asked. “You don’t like to have fun.”

“I think our definitions of fun are very different.”



I chuckled, nodding a little.

“I think you might be right. It doesn’t mean we can’t find some common ground. What ideas do you have in mind?”

Emma smiled a little and then shook her head. It confused me.

“As I tried to tell you before you suggested this, I’m sort of... grounded.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Well, I... insulted Trevor.”

“And?” I asked.

“And his parents called mine.”

“But he deserved it,” I said.

Emma nodded.

“I agree, but it doesn’t change that since I live under my parents’ roof, then I abide by their rules, and... and I fucked up.”

“God!”

I hoped we could finally do something together, but once again, Trevor just fucked things up. I shook my head a little.

“Thank you though,” she said.

I looked at her and saw a small and a little nervous smile on her lips. She looked so sweet like that. A little insecure. I had not seen Emma like that before.

“For?” I asked.

“For asking me. It’s nice just being asked,” she said.

“Anytime troublemaker.”

I smiled at her, then walked away, not wanting to interrupt her work.

***-Emma-***

I had wanted to say yes. I was surprised by myself that I wanted to say yes, but when Brendon asked me, I had felt it. When he left the chemistry room, I smiled a little because I found myself wanting to spend time with him. I shook my head, catching myself doing it. Golden boy really didn’t give up. I had to give him that, but unfortunately, it just couldn’t happen. I had to pay for the way I had treated Trevor. Even if I felt like what I had done was fair, others didn’t agree, and Trevor sadly had power behind him. His parents could make anything happen because of money. Sometimes the world really was unfair.

Not much happened for the rest of the day. I wasn’t sure if Trevor and his friends had backed off, or maybe he had told them to now since I had kissed him. I still shivered at the thought of it. Even despite rinsing my mouth and brushing my teeth like crazy, it hadn’t changed the bad feeling he had given me. At home, things were going back to normal, except for the fact I now could not leave the damn house. Usually, I would be out with my friends, drinking, doing drugs, and just hanging out. No more of that...

“Emma, come help with dinner.”

Oh, yes, and now I was helping with dinner.

“Can’t Elena help?” I shouted from my room.

My door was wide open. A new rule as well. My parents wouldn’t allow me to have the door closed anymore. I wasn’t sure how much damage I could do from inside my room, but I was sure they had lots of ideas. They didn’t even allow me my phone anymore or computer. It had all been confiscated, so now all I could do was throw a small tennis ball against the wall, or count every line in the ceiling.

“She is doing homework! Now come help!”

I groaned and grabbed the tennis ball just as it hit the wall and bounced back. I stood up from the floor and went downstairs to help my mother make dinner. My dad was still taking care of some work and was sitting in the living room.

“Can you peel the potatoes?” my mother asked.

“Yes, ma’am.”

My mother did not look amused, and I just peeled the potatoes. We were both quiet. Since she drove me to Trevor’s home, we had said little to each other. Neither of us knew what to say. We only really spoke when it had something to do with chores like now, and even then, it was just talk about what I needed to do. I wondered if it would ever be normal between us again. I knew other people’s idea of normal differed completely from mine. My normal was me being able to go where I wanted and my family not caring and not interfering. I had lost that privileged now and was stuck in the very house I

didn't want to be in. It was awkward. I had no other ways to describe it. It was just...

*Ding! Dong!*

Suddenly, someone rang the doorbell. My mother and I turned instinctively to each other, as if we thought the other had the answer as to who rang the doorbell.

"Don't look at me," I told her.

"Honey! Can you get that?" my mother shouted.

I heard my father groan from inside the living room, but he still went to the front door. I continued to peel the potatoes, but soon got a little curious about what was happening since I could hear voices from down the hallway.

"Can I go look?" I asked my mother and looked at her.

She looked at the work I had in front of me and saw that I was already halfway done. She leaned backwards from where she was cooking and looked down the hallway. I couldn't see since I was further inside the kitchen. She seemed confused.

"What?" I asked

She turned to me.

"A friend of yours?"

I looked at her, confused.

"I don't know. You still haven't told me I can go look."

"Did you invite him?"

"Him?" I asked.

“Or maybe Elena did...”

“Who are we talking about?” I asked.

“Emma!”

My dad suddenly called me. I looked at my mother, who shrugged a little, then nodded. I left my place by the sink and went down the hallway, but froze not far away from the door.

“Brendon?” I asked, shocked.

Brendon was standing in the doorway, smiling at me. My dad looked at me too, looking at me as if I had asked Brendon to come here. I did not know why he was there, though.

“Hey, troublemaker,” he said.

My dad narrowed his eyes, but he was looking right at me. Yeah, it was probably not such a good idea to call me that in front of my parents.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Came to talk to your parents.”

“Why?”

“Because, as you said, you were grounded, so I wanted to ask your parents if I could take you to the fair tomorrow,” he explained.

“You... what?”

He turned to my father, ignoring my question.

“We wouldn’t be out late. She would be back by eight,” he said. “I will even text you, letting you know how it goes

throughout the day, and send proof of where we are.”

“Just the two of you?” my dad asked.

Brendon nodded.

“Just the two of us.”

“Like a... date?” he asked and crossed his arms.

Brendon chuckled, and I hurried forward.

“No!” I said. “We are just...”

I turned to Brendon, hoping he could finish that sentence for me. Actually, I was quite touched that he had come here. I wasn't sure what my father was thinking or if he would even say yes. He could easily tell Brendon to get right off his property and not come back, keeping me locked up. He had no reason to give me permission to go with him to the fair. So, I needed to give him a reason because honestly I wanted out of the house. I wanted some freedom again.

“Friends,” I finally said because Brendon had just been looking at me with a little smile on his lips, not answering for me.

“Friends?” my dad asked and looked at me.

“Yeah.”

“You and... Brendon, are friends?” he asked again because he simply couldn't wrap his head around it.

“We are,” I said.

“It's a school night,” he said and turned to Brendon.

“Why, we would be home no later than eight. I wouldn’t want to lose too much valuable sleep.”

God, Brendon was good at this. I had to admit. He knew how to talk to parents or something because my dad didn’t look at all as suspicious as he would have if some of my other “friends” shown up and asked if they could take me out. But this was Brendon... People knew him, and they trusted him, or at least his character. They knew he wasn’t a dishonest person, and he was hardworking and smart.

“And it would just be the two of you.”

Brendon nodded.

“It would, Sir.”

“Only going to the fair?”

“Only going to the fair,” Brendon confirmed.

“You will text me?”

“Yes.”

“Send me pictures, and the embarrassing kind. Emma hates pictures,” he told him.

Brendon chuckled, and I rolled my eyes. But I was willing to suffer a little if I could get out of the house tomorrow.

“I will send only embarrassing ones,” he promised.

“Well, I would have to talk to Emma’s mother about it, but...”

My dad suddenly froze, and I looked at him, confused. So did Brendon.

“Are you hungry?” he asked.

“What?”

“Dad, what are you doing?” I mumbled.

My dad smiled, almost a little evil.

“Yes, are you hungry?” he asked. “We are about to have dinner, and then we can all discuss it together.”

“He isn’t...”

“I’m starving,” Brendon interrupted.

I looked at him, shocked, but he just winked at me.

“Wonderful. Come in,” my dad said.

“What?”

I didn’t get to stop what happened. Soon Brendon entered the house, smiling at me, like he had won some kind of competition or something. He quickly got rid of his jacket and shoes, and my dad and he walked into the kitchen where he casually talked to my mother, too. I stood there stunned for a good while before I forced my feet to get moving and I hurried into the kitchen. I did not know how he did it, but now there was a smile on my mother’s lips.

“The fair, you say?” she asked him.

“Yes, it would only be for most of the afternoon and evening. Just a few hours.”

My mother stirred the pot while she thought it over, and then looked at my dad, who shrugged a little.



“What do you think?”

“Well, we know Brendon, and he will keep us updated. Despite the little outing she had last Friday, she has been doing a good job cleaning the school. The principal has kept us updated.”

“She has?” I asked.

No one was looking at me. They were focusing on each other. Those three. Did I even need to be there? I turned to look at Brendon, but he was still smiling at my parents. Okay, he needed to teach me his magic. He somehow just knew how to convince parents they could trust him, even with their troublemaker daughter.

“Well, since she has been doing a good job... and you would accompany her the whole day?”

Brendon nodded.

“I will.”

“Then I see no harm,” my mother said.

“Wait!”

I jumped in and they all turned to me.

“You agree to let me go?” I asked.

My mother shrugged a little.

“We know Brendon.”

“I know, but... I mean...”

“Don’t you want to go?” my mother asked.

I glanced at Brendon. He was watching me, waiting for me to answer.

“I... do.”

My mother smiled when I turned to her.

“All right then. Just avoid assault and insults.”

“Ha, hilarious,” I said dryly.

She then turned to Brendon again.

“Well, sit down,” she told him and pointed to the seat beside my father at the dining table.

Brendon smiled and thanked her as he took a seat. I kept staring at him, still unsure how he had done it. He had practically helped me do a prison escape, and he was just sitting there, smiling like it had taken no work at all to break me out.

“Emma!”

I turned to my mother.

“Yeah?”

“The food will not make itself!”

She pointed to the potatoes, and I went over to my place by the sink and continued to peel the potatoes. My dad and Brendon began to talk and, of course, got into how it was going for the high school football team, and how Brendon was feeling. It would be his last year. So, he had to really give it all he had before he went to college.

Magic... it was all I could think. He used magic.

## *Chapter 17*

***-Emma-***

When dinner was about to be ready, my mother asked me to fetch Elena. I only walked to the staircase and called out to her.

“Elena!”

“What?” she shouted back.

“Dinner is ready!”

“Coming!”

It didn't take long then I could hear her coming down the stairs, but I was already in the kitchen with the others, sitting down in front of Brendon. He was still smiling that charming smile of his. It had worked so well on my parents, but I only found it a little suspicious. Why put in so much work? No one put in so much work to spend time with me. I was distracted, though, when I heard a funny little scream. We all turned our heads and saw Elena standing there in the middle of the

kitchen, staring at Brendon like she had seen a ghost. Yeah... It surprised me too when he showed up.

“Hey, Elena!”

Brendon was as cool and charming as ever, greeting Elena and smiling at her. She looked at him for a few seconds more, then turned to our parents.

“We have a guest?” she asked, and yet it wasn’t really a question.

“Brendon stopped by, yes. It would be rude not to offer him so food,” my dad said.

“Oh? And why did he stop by? Something about school?” Elena asked as she took the seat on our mother’s other side.

“No, to ask out Emma.”

Elena had only taken a sip of her water when my mother told her why Brendon had come. And it made her choke on it and spit it out again.

“Elena! Are you okay?” my mother asked and patted her back.

I looked at her, worried too, and it took her a few seconds before she could speak.

“What?” she asked.

She looked first at Brendon, then looked around at our mother and at me.

“You’re going out?”

“As friends,” I quickly clarified.

“I thought she was grounded,” Elena said and looked at our mother.

“She was, and she still is.”

“But she is allowed out?”

“With Brendon,” our mother said.

Elena glanced between us again, and I just looked at her, asking her with my eyes, what was up with her? She was acting very weird about this. I knew she had once liked Brendon, but really, she had moved on from that, right? Or was it because she could never imagine him and me spending time together?

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“The fair,” I told her.

“When?”

“Tomorrow.”

“We would just be spending a few hours together,” Brendon told her.

“I see...”

It was weird my sister’s reaction. I mean, I knew it was shocking that Brendon had come. I was shocked too, but the way she was acting made no sense. Was she not happy I was allowed out? I looked at her, hoping to catch her eyes, but she was looking away from me, not even glancing at me. I turned to Brendon, thinking he might see the same thing, but he was looking at me, smiling, which surprised me. He seemed so

thrilled and, honestly; I felt a little excited too. It had been a long time since I went out with a friend, not to drink or do drugs, but to have... fun?

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After dinner, I saw Brendon out. He was smiling and chatting with me even though I said little back. I guessed I was still stunned that he had come here to ask my parents if we could go out together. He had also seemed so charming throughout the whole dinner. My parents loved him.

“See you tomorrow then, troublemaker...”

He leaned closer when he said the last part and winked at me.

“Just never say that in front of my parents again.”

Brendon chuckled, and I placed a hand on his back when he turned around, pushing him outside.

“Okay, okay, I’m going!” he said.

He turned around, smiling at me, and I smiled back, unable to help myself.

“Bye!” I quickly said and closed the door.

I was still smiling when I turned around and saw Elena standing there.

“What?” I asked her.

“You and... Brendon?”

“Just as friends,” I said, making sure she understood there was nothing between us.

“Just as friends?”

She said it in such a weird way. It sounded like she didn't believe me, but I was telling her the truth.

“Why are you acting so weird?” I asked her.

“I am not!”

“You are!”

“I am not!”

“You are!”

“Girls!” I heard my mother shouted from the kitchen.  
“Whatever you arguing about... Stop!”

We looked at each other, and then Elena lowered her arms and walked around the railing of the staircase before she hurried up to her room. She didn't still like Brendon, right? It had to be because she just found it weird that he had come here. We weren't people you would think would love to hang out together.

“Emma! Come help clean up!”

“Coming!” I shouted.

## *Chapter 18*

### ***-Brendon-***

I quickly met up with Emma after she had been allowed out of school. She got off later, since there were still things to do even after the students had left the school. I picked her up in my car, as I had agreed with her parents the day before, and then we drove off. Emma was quiet, though, and I wondered why she was suddenly not coming with any smart remarks.

“How’s cleaning going?” I asked teasingly.

She turned her head, looking at me, surprised. I smiled at her, and finally I saw a normal reaction from her.

“It’s disgusting.”

I chuckled, and she smiled.

“Any troubles?”

“I wouldn’t tell you even if there were.”

“Why not?” I asked, shocked.

“Because remember what happened the last time?”



“I didn’t want them to do that,” I told her.

“No, but it happened because you interfered.”

“Was I supposed to stay quiet about it?” I asked.

“Yes, because I can handle my own problems. Have I not proven that yet?” she asked.

I sighed and nodded a little as I tightened my hands around the steering wheel.

“You have...”

“So, do I need you to be my hero?” she asked.

“No...”

“Do I need you to be my knight in shining armor?” she asked.

“No.”

“Good, then that settles it.”

“I just think it was wrong of them,” I said.

“They are jerks. What more is there to say? You saw them all, hoping I would bow to Trevor at the party, but I didn’t.”

“No, that you didn’t,” I said and smiled.

“I might have had to go over there the next day and apologize, but at least then I didn’t have an audience.”

“You were forced to go back?” I asked.

Suddenly, Emma changed completely. She lost her smile, and it confused me.

“What?”

“I... eh, yes.”

“Oh shit, did he make you do something?” I asked, knowing Trevor.

He would not have made it easy for Emma, and the look on her face told me he definitely hadn't.

“He made me lay it on thick,” she told me.

“How thick?”

“Really sickening thick,” she told me.

“Shit...”

She gave me a small smile. It was almost cute how she tried cheering me up after hearing about it, instead of wanting to be cheered up. I knew Emma wasn't used to someone wanting to take care of it. But this just proved she was also so used to making others happy, at least those people she liked, instead of letting them try to make her happy. It was rather sad, actually.

“Hey, I'm sorry,” I told her.

I reached out and grabbed her hand, squeezing it. I was just trying to be nice, but Emma quickly withdrew her hand.

“It's fine,” she said. “It's over now.”

“I don't think it is fine,” I told her, and she looked at me, surprised. “You shouldn't have to apologize to someone like him.”

“No, but at least I get to stay clear of him from now on. My parents and the school were right. I made the choice to go after

him. I could just have left it alone.”

“Why are you suddenly saying that?” I asked her. “I wouldn’t think you regretted it.”

“No, I don’t really regret it, but maybe it just ended up making everything worse.”

“Why do you think that? I mean, although you’re now cleaning the toilets in our school.”

Emma smiled a little, and I smiled back before focusing on the road again.

“You saw Elena last night,” she said. “And at the party.”

“Yes?”

“And did she look heartbroken or destroyed?” she asked.

“Well, no,” I said.

“So, maybe it was just for nothing. Elena is probably just a person who falls fast and then moves past it. You said it yourself. It’s not that surprising she has gotten over him so fast.”

“No, but Trevor isn’t worth crying over, either. Maybe Elena realized that.”

“Yeah, you might be right,” she said.

“Wait, did you just admit I was right?”

I glanced at her and she just looked at me, annoyed, but with a smile on her lips.

“I will cherish this moment forever,” I said and put a hand over my heart.

“Oh, shut up, golden boy, and focus on driving.”

Just to tease her and because there was no one else on the road I swerved a little, and Emma reached out, grabbing the oh-shit handle.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“What? Am I not an excellent driver? Am I not that perfect?” I asked her.

She looked at me, shocked, then laughed.

“Oh, I see, you’re actually not the golden boy, but the bad boy!”

“Exactly!” I told her.

We both laughed, and the sound of her laughter just... oh, it made my stomach do a flip. It sounded so good. It was a long time since I had felt like that.

“So, tell me again why you think it was all for nothing?” I said after the laughter died down.

“Well, Elena is fine.”

“Yes?”

“And since she got over it all so fast, bowing to Trevor and scrubbing toilets might not have been worth it.”

“You weren’t just standing up for your sister, though,” I said.

Emma looked at me, a little confused.

“You were doing it for other girls as well.”

She smiled a little.

“Yeah, I told myself that too, but... aren't they fine too?”

“They might have moved on, but there will be others,” I said. “Think about that. You were doing it for future girls as well.”

“Well... I hadn't really thought about that,” she whispered.

I smiled a little as I focused on the road.

“As I have already said, I don't condone violence, but I can't say I didn't smile when I saw you hitting him.”

Emma chuckled, and I glanced at her and winked.

“Thank you.”

“For liking that you assaulted someone?”

“For this,” she said.

I looked at her, a little confused.

“You didn't just ask for me to go out with you, but you also went to see my parents.”

“I thought you might find it a little too pushy,” I said.

Emma smiled and then held up two fingers closer to each other.

“Just a tiny bit.”

We both laughed, and the vibe in the car was so nice. It had been long since I had been like this with anyone. While I, of course, felt relaxed around my friends, there was something refreshing about Emma. You could just be totally free with her.

“But I was more flattered,” she told me.

“You were?” I asked, shocked.

She nodded.

“No one has ever done that for me.”

“So, I’m your first?” I teased her.

“Hilarious!”

“I knew you would love my humor, too.”

“I’m thrilled about it,” she said dryly.

We both laughed a little again.

“Well, I would do it again, troublemaker. Just say when and where.”

“No, don’t do it for me again,” she said.

“Why not?”

“Haven’t I already explained that?” she asked.

“No, you haven’t.”

“I told you not to get dragged down with me.”

I sighed and shook my head a little. *Not this again*, I thought.

“Hey, Emma, I’m a big boy. I can make my own decisions.”

“Doesn’t mean those decisions are right though,” she told me.

I looked at Emma, a little shocked, and she smiled teasingly at me.

“Well, sometimes we have to make mistakes.”

“What kind of logic is that?” she asked.

“Mistakes teach us something. Isn’t that why you now doubt if you should have punched Trevor or not?”

She looked at me, surprised.

“So, I am a mistake?” she asked me.

I shook my head.

“I actually think you are not a mistake. I know you fear dragging me down, but I don’t think you will.”

“You have seen how I handle things.”

“Maybe that could change.”

“Trying to fix me?” Emma asked teasingly.

I shook my head, and she seemed surprised.

“No, if we changed you completely, you wouldn’t be you, would you now, troublemaker?” I asked her.

“So, what are you telling me then?”

“I just want to help make things a little easier.”

“Why?”

“Isn’t that what friends do? Don’t they help each other?”

I glanced at Emma, but saw her shrug. She turned and looked out of the window, and her sudden change confused me.

“Emma?”

“I don’t know,” she mumbled lowly. “I never had many.”

I looked at her, surprised.

“What about when we were younger?”

She turned to look at me, now with a sad expression on her face.

“Did you see me with a lot of friends?”

I opened my mouth to answer, only to realize when we were kids, I never saw Emma around many people. She was the loner, or she was with her sister. She always seemed to be isolated, and no one wanted to be around the funny kid who couldn’t even read out an easy text like the rest of us. It made me sad to think about, and I hadn’t even really realized.

“Exactly,” she whispered.

“Then let me show you what friends do for each other,” I told her.

Emma looked at me, surprised, but she didn’t tell me not to. So, I took it as a yes.



## *Chapter 19*

***-Emma-***

When we got to the fair, many people were already there. It was in the late afternoon. So, people were off work and school, and it made a lot of families with kids come. They would probably leave around the same time as us, since, as my dad said, it was a school night. I smiled though, as I took it all in. I couldn't remember the last time I had been to the fair. It was probably when I was a kid.

“Smile!”

Suddenly, Brendon wrapped his arm around my shoulders and held up his phone as he took a picture of us. I had not been ready for it at all and stared shocked into the camera. Brendon smiled in it, looking happy, and his smile only grew as he looked at the picture.

“A masterpiece,” he joked.

“Brendon!”

I tried reaching for the phone, but he held it above my head.

“Delete that!”

“No, I can’t. I told your father I would text him and send pictures as proof, and I had to send the embarrassing kind.”

“No! Brendon!”

I tried jumping for the phone, but it didn’t work, he was too high.

“Delete it!”

“No! I have to do this, troublemaker, you know it. Otherwise, you will never be allowed out of the house again, and I will probably never be allowed to visit again.”

I crossed my arms but knew he was right.

“I might start preferring it if you are going to take pictures like that all day.”

“I am,” he confirmed, and smiled smugly.

“You’re unbelievable,” I mumbled.

Brendon chuckled and typed away on his phone before he put it on mute and then turned to me.

“Now, what do you want to try first?”

I just stared at him, and he looked at me, confused.

“What?”

“Why did you put it on mute?” she asked.

I didn’t have my phone with me. My parents had confiscated it, along with my other electronics. But I wasn’t

shocked Brendon had one with him. It shocked me he would put it on mute.

“Why wouldn’t I? I am spending the day with you,” he said.

“Yeah, but eh... what if some of your friends want to talk?”

“They would have to wait.”

I looked at him even more shocked, and Brendon chuckled.

“It’s not like they will never speak to me if I don’t reply right away,” he said.

“No, but...”

“But what?”

“It’s because of... me, it’s on mute,” I said.

“And?”

“Who would mute their phone for me?”

Brendon stepped closer, and I looked up at him, confused.

“A friend would.”

“A friend would?”

“A friend knows when their other friend needs their sole attention,” he said. “They won’t let themselves get distracted by texts and updates on Instagram.”

“I... didn’t know that,” I said.

“Well, first lesson on being a friend, then.”

I smiled, unable to help myself.

“So, where to first?” Brendon asked and clasped his hands together in front of him.

I looked around, then saw the wildest roller-coaster there was.

“Scared of roller-coasters?” I asked.

Brendon smiled happily and then shook his head.

“Not at all.”

Emma smiled back and then they walked to one of the rides, trying it a few times before they ran to another one where they were being spun around. I had not laughed or had so much fun in a long time. I screamed and let go. Was this what it meant having a friend? I wondered.

***-Brendon-***

I saw Emma in a whole new light as we tried ride after ride, before going to the stalls, throwing tennis balls at big baskets that just made them slid right out or shot balloons with fake guns. She was laughing and truly enjoying herself. We went to eat a little as well. She seemed like a kid who had gotten the best gift in the world, as she devoured the hot dog and then the candy floss afterwards. I tried getting a bite of it, but she held it away.

“No, this is mine!” she told me teasingly.

“Aw, come on! Share!”

Emma shook her head and laughed. We went to get ice cream next. I tried teasing her again and wanted to try her

chocolate ice cream.

“Get your own!” she said and placed her hand on my chest.

“You can try mine too.”

“No, thank you! I got this one for a reason.”

She tried holding me back by giving me her back, holding me back like a football player would. I grabbed her waist and spun her around. But she had not been prepared for that and she ended up smacking the ice cream into the side of my face. She gasped, and I froze for a moment. Then I looked at her and saw a big smile spreading on her lips.

“You did that on purpose,” I said, realizing the ice should have hit my shirt and not my face because of the height difference.

“You said you wanted to taste it,” she said.

I sighed and shook my head, but then we laughed.

“Wait here,” she chuckled and went to get some tissues.

She came back and, probably without thinking about it; she cleaned me up. I didn’t know what it was, but for a small second, it was like the world froze between us, and we just looked at each other. Emma quickly pulled back, smiling a little nervously.

“Well, what do you want to do next?” I asked, as we got rid of the ice cream.

“Well, I think we have tried most and won the prizes we could,” she said, and held up a small blue bear that had a key

chain attached to its head.

“How about that? We haven’t tried that,” I said.

She looked at where I was pointing, then frowned before she turned to me.

“The Ferris wheel?”

“Why not?” I asked.

“It’s... slow.”

“And?”

The Ferris wheel wasn’t huge. It was a small one since the fair was too, and so it was easier to pack down and move, but we might as well try it all, I thought.

“I guess we can,” she said and shrugged.

I smiled and then we walked to the Ferris wheel. There wasn’t a long line, and we quickly got into one of the boxes before we moved. Emma was smiling sweetly as we moved higher and higher.

“You like heights?” I asked.

She turned to me and nodded.

“Yeah, it gives you such a thrilling feeling looking down from a high place.”

I chuckled a little. Of course, she would be an adrenalin junky.

“What?” she asked.

“It just suits you.”

“Liking heights?” she asked.

“Exactly.”

She rolled her eyes, but was still smiling. We continued to move, then stopped for a little while. I took my time to watch her, seeing her take it all like an excited little kid.

“You don’t do this a lot, do you?” I asked.

“Going to the fair?”

I nodded.

“No,” she said.

“But I also meant things like this in general.”

“Well, I am not a kid anymore,” she said.

“And? Doesn’t mean you can’t do things like this,” I said.

Emma turned to me and looked a little sad.

“Well, what I meant was that since I am not a kid anymore, my parents won’t take the time to do this, and Elena has a lot of other friends. She doesn’t have a lot of time for me.”

“And you can’t go with her and her friends?”

“I am sure you see we don’t even attend parties together or even go into the school together. We might arrive together but...”

“But she keeps it separated.”

Emma nodded.

“Why?”

“I’m not... cool enough,” she joked.

“She really doesn’t want you around?”

“It’s not that she doesn’t want to spend time with me,” Emma defended. “We spend time together, just her and me.”

“You go out?”

“Like shopping and sometimes to eat, but Elena doesn’t like these sorts of things.”

“The fair?”

“More like rides,” she told me. “She hates heights and anything that goes too fast. She barely wants to break the speed limit.”

We both laughed a little, and Emma had the sweetest smile on her lips after that, but I sensed a little sadness in her.

“You wished your sister spend more time with you?”

Emma nodded.

“But I don’t blame her not for doing it. She has her own life, and that’s okay.”

“Doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with wishing you two could spend more time together,” I said.

Emma smiled at me. It was clear she would not say that wish out loud. She understood her sister had other friends she wanted to spend time with, and Emma saw herself more as a burden.

“I guess she is my only friend,” Emma suddenly said.



I looked at her, surprised.

“Don’t you have anyone else at all?” I asked.

“Do you count?” she asked teasingly.

We both chuckled a little.

“I think I do.”

“Of course you do,” she said and stuck out her tongue.

We continued to laugh a little, but then I turned more serious.

“I mean it. I want to be your friend.”

“Why?”

“I find you interesting.”

“Others find me more troublesome.”

“Not me,” I said.

She looked at me a little suspiciously. I could understand why. I bet few people had told her they found her interesting. So, she struggled to believe when someone actually did.

“So, besides me and Elena, who else?” I asked.

“I told you... No one,” she said and looked away.

“I know you hang out with some other people.”

“You mean the outcast?”

I shrugged, but nodded a little.

“They aren’t my friends,” she said.

“No?”

She shook her head.

“What are they?”

“A distraction... A place where I don't feel like...”

“Like what?”

“Like I just make things worse,” she said.

“Is that what you feel?”

“I mean...” she shrugged a little. “Ask around. You won't find anyone who says I make their lives better. I just... make things worse.”

“I don't believe that is true.”

“No?”

“You haven't made my life worse.”

“Well, I have tried to warn you, but you won't listen.”

I chuckled a little and nodded.

“Okay, yes, that you have. So far, I don't see it.”

“What?”

“That you make my life worse. I enjoy spending time with you.”

“Really?”

She said that so shockingly, and I chuckled a little.

“Yes.”

“You're... serious?”

I nodded.

“I am.”

I could see she simply couldn't believe it. It was going to take some time to convince Emma that not everyone saw her as someone to stay clear of. Or someone who was just going to make things worse. I did like spending time with her. I couldn't say why, but you didn't really need to know why. Sometimes, even opposites clicked.

“Well, if you really mean it...”

“I do,” I quickly interrupted.

She smiled a little.

“Well... then... I guess I would like for us to be real friends.”

“Wait, you accept me as your friend?” I asked her, shocked.

She rolled her eyes as I acted dramatically.

“Do I get like a cool little badge that says I have been let into the Emma club?” I asked.

“You such a dork,” she chuckled.

It was nice to hear her laugh. She really should do that more, but I bet few gave her the reason to. We enjoyed the rest of the ride, and then when we got off, it was clear it was time to go. We had tried mostly everything, and it had already gotten dark.

“Smile!”

I wrapped my arm around Emma again. It was clear she hated pictures and the smile on her lips was forced. I sighed,

and then held up the camera again before I pressed a finger to the corner of her mouth and turned her smile bigger as I took the picture.

“Why did you do that?” she asked.

“That’s a smile, troublemaker,” I told her and showed her the picture.

“I look uncomfortable,” she said.

“At least you’re smiling.”

She shook her head, and we walked to my car. I opened the door for her, and as always, she rolled her eyes.

“You need to stop that,” she said.

“What? Holding the door for you.”

“Exactly.”

I chuckled a little and closed it as she got in, before I got into the driver’s seat and then drove off. We were both quiet as we drove back to her house. We knew the day was ending, and it seemed like neither of us was very thrilled about it. When I parked in front of her house, though, Emma didn’t immediately jump out of the car, and I took that as a good thing.

“We’re here,” I said.

She nodded a little and turned to me.

“Same time next week?” I teased.

She rolled her eyes, but a smile was playing on her lips.

“Dorky,” she told me.

“Very much.”

We sat there for a moment, looking at each other, then Emma grabbed the handle and opened the door, but she didn't hurry out.

“I... I guess I will see you at school?”

“That you will,” I told her.

“I... eh... I had fun,” she said.

“Me too.”

“Thanks... eh, for it all again.”

“Well, maybe we could do it again?”

“I don't think my parents will let me go.”

“I could ask them?” I suggested.

Emma smiled a little, then shook her head.

“I don't want to push my luck, but thank you. I enjoyed this.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow.”

She finally left the car, even if she seemed hesitant about it. I liked to see it though. Emma might not quite believe me when I said I enjoyed spending time with her, or that I wanted to be a friend. But it seemed like I was winning her over a little, and that made me happy. I watched until she got inside the house, then I drove off.

## *Chapter 20*

***-Emma-***

I walked into my room, throwing my jacket on the bed and the little ugly blue bear I had won at the fair. I thought I should just throw it out, but when I looked at it, I couldn't help but smile. I had done so much better than Brendon at the game, and utterly destroyed him. But that wasn't what made me smile. It was just thinking about the day we had spent together. When was the last time I had so much fun with a... friend? It was weird to think of him as my friend. I still couldn't quite believe it, but what if he spoke the truth? What if he really wanted to be friends? Could we... Could we be friends?

"Hey."

I turned around and saw Elena standing in my doorway. Unless I was going to sleep, I couldn't have the door closed.

"Hey," I said.

"How was your day?" she asked.

"It was... fun."

“Fun?”

“Yeah, fun,” I said and smiled.

Elena looked at me, shocked.

“What?”

“You’re... smiling.”

“Can’t I smile?” I asked.

”Yeah, you can, but you never smile like that,” she told me.

“I have different smiles?”

I crossed my arms and looked at her, confused. I did not know what she meant. Wasn’t a smile just a... smile?

“You look like me when I like a guy, or... really any girl when she likes a guy,” she told me.

“What?”

“Do you like Brendon?” she asked.

“WHAT?”

I laughed, but Elena looked at me seriously.

“No!” I said.

“Really?”

“Yes! I mean... I think he is a good guy, and I did like spending time with him, and maybe we could become friends, but I don’t like him like I want to go out with him.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes!”

Elena looked at me a little skeptically, and I stepped closer to her, placing my hand on her shoulder.

“Elena... do you like him?”

She looked at me, surprised, then smiled.

“No!” she said.

“Are you sure?”

“Why would you think that?”

“Because you are acting strange. You seemed so quiet when I told you I was going to the fair with him,” I said.

“I was just surprised,” she told me. “I had never imagined you two spending time together.”

“Okay, so you don’t like him?”

“No. It was an old crush, but trust me, I don’t feel like that for him anymore. Is he still hot? Definitely. But I have other things to focus on at the moment.”

“Like?”

“College, silly,” she told me.

“Oh, right.”

“Yeah, I am done with boys.”

“Good!”

We smiled at each other, and Elena then stepped back.

“Sleep well,” she said.

“You too.”



I closed the door, and I heard Elena go to her own room. I had been worried she might have feelings for Brendon, and didn't like I was going out with him. But it seemed like I had gotten that wrong. She had seemed very honest, and I knew my sister. I believed her if she told me she didn't like him. I was just glad I was not hurting her unintentionally by spending time with him. I probably wouldn't spend more time with him, though. I was certain this was just a small chance my parents had given me because I had stayed out of trouble for a little while and was actually doing my job. I had also apologized to Trevor. I was certain they wouldn't allow me to go out again, at least not until I wasn't grounded anymore. They hadn't said how long I was. So, I was just waiting for them to release me from my prison.

After getting myself ready, I went to sleep. I looked at the blue bear I had placed on my nightstand and smiled. I couldn't help it. It seemed like Brendon knew how to make even a troublemaker like me smile. I shook my head at the thought and closed my eyes, and for the first time, I was actually excited about going to school.

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The next day, after stepping out of Elena's car and seeing her go over to her friends, I heard a lot of cheerful voices. I turned my head and saw Trevor was back in school. *Oh great*, I thought, and saw him shake hands with his friends who were all greeting him, and were happy to see him. He turned his head and saw me looking at them. He winked at me, and I shook my head and rolled my eyes. Soon, he entered the

school with his little group. I saw my sister standing further away, looking after him. I couldn't quite decipher the look in her eyes, but I hoped she wasn't still crushing on him. She told me she was through with boys, but the heart wanted what it wanted. She claimed she was over it all, but I wondered if she really was. I didn't go over and ask. I knew she wanted things separated. So, I walked into the school and quickly found the little cleaning wagon I used. I put in my Air Pods. I could have my phone on me while outside of my home. So, if anything happened, my parents could get in touch with me or the other way around. I had not had it with me when I was with Brendon, though. They didn't find that necessary since they trusted him. When the music began, I started to clean the school.

A little later in the day, I was cleaning the girls' bathroom, just minding my own business and listening to old bangers. The principal didn't mind. I listened to music as long as I still did my chores, and so far, I had proven I could do both. It was very motivating to listen to the music. It made it all more fun as well, and it helped me tune out all the noise from the students as they walked to class or gossiped behind my back. The door to the bathroom suddenly opened. I knew class had begun. Not even my music could shut out the bell ringing. It surprised me when I saw the door open, and then saw it was Simone and her little group. Elena wasn't with her or any of her close friends. They had to be in class, but then why wasn't Simone? I tried not paying them any attention. They were probably just freshening up or something, but then I could see

Simone looking at me in the mirror I was cleaning. I stopped and took out one of the Air Pods.

“Yes?” I asked.

“I heard you went out yesterday. Had fun?”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“I mean, I heard you went out with Brendon.”

“Really?”

“Is it true?” she asked.

“What does it matter?” I asked.

“Answer my question.”

I didn’t know what was going on. A strange vibe surrounded the entire bathroom, and when I looked around, Simone, I saw one of her friends leaning up against the bathroom door. It didn’t feel right...

“Did you go out with Brendon?” she asked.

“Where did you hear this?”

“Where the fuck do you think?” she asked.

I shrugged a little.

“I don’t know. One of your spies saw us?”

“No, your sister told me.”

I looked at her, shocked. It was not that I minded, Elena had told Simone. They were “friends” after all, but I wondered why though. Why bring it up? Maybe she just let it slip. Like

in a conversation, but I really wanted to ask my sister why she thought telling Simone was a good idea.

“So?” Simone asked.

“What?”

“Did you go out?” she asked.

“Yeah.”

“You did?” she shouted.

“What does it matter? We just went to the fair. It’s not a big deal.”

“It’s a fucking big deal! Brendon doesn’t belong with someone like *you!*”

“Listen, Simone, we just spend an afternoon together. If you have a problem with that, take it up with Brendon, okay? He was the one who asked me.”

“Or maybe you threw yourself at him like your sister threw herself at Trevor.”

My sister was a trigger to my anger. No one insulted her and Simone had already done it once. I tried taking deep breaths. I had been so good lately. I was doing my job, cleaning the school, and I had bowed to Trevor and apologized for what I did. I just wanted to be left alone, so I could get this punishment over with and then never come back here again. I didn’t know what Simone’s problem was. They had broken up, or maybe in Simone’s head they weren’t done?

“I didn’t throw myself at him,” I said.

“No? You know, there are rumors saying you have slept with half the guys in town. That you sell your body for a little dope!” she said.

“They are rumors.”

“Sure, they are.”

I sighed and shook my head.

“Listen, I don’t know what your problem is, Simone. Brendon asked me out. We went to the fair as *friends*. That’s it,” I told her.

Simone stepped closer to me. She was taller than me and looked down at me as she leaned a little closer.

“My problem is that you think you can come here and take him from me.”

“Aren’t you broken up?”

She narrowed her eyes even more.

“He is too good for you.”

“Trust me, I know,” I told her. “But you know what, Simone? He is too good for you as well.”

She looked at me, shocked. Then she fucking slapped me across the face. I was so surprised by it I didn’t have time to react, and before I knew it, she had pressed my head into the mirror. I hit it hard and felt the world go black for a moment. Then she pulled me back and threw me to the ground. I was too dizzy to fight back, and just tried my best to soften the

blow before I turned to her. She pointed at me with her long nail.

“You stay the fuck away from him. Do you understand?” she asked me.

I just looked at her. I was too stunned by what had just happened.

“If I see you with him again or even talking to him, I can promise you, Emma, I will make your life hell.”

She then turned around. One of the friends reached under the sink, grabbed a little water and threw it at me. They all laughed as they walked out of the bathroom. It took me a moment to gather myself because I was shaking from the incident. I slowly reached for the sink and helped myself stand. When I looked at the mirror, I saw it had cracked where my head had hit it. Then I saw the blood on the side of my forehead. I hadn't even felt it because of the adrenalin and fear going through me.

“Shit...” I whispered.

I quickly cleaned it, but it was bleeding rather heavily. I grabbed some tissue paper, but I knew I would have to get it looked at by the nurse. I stuck my head out of the bathroom and saw the empty hallways. I hurried to the nurse's office. Luckily, there was no one there either. I knocked softly on the half-open door, and the woman in there turned her head and looked at me, shocked.

“I seemed to have hit my head.

“Oh, come in,” she said. “Let’s take a look at it.”

I walked inside and got patched up. I didn’t need any stitches, but the whole time I felt almost like I wasn’t in my body. It felt like I was doing everything automatically. Was this what it was like being in shock?

## *Chapter 21*

**-Brendon-**

“So, you slept together?”

Aaron was walking beside me, as we began to leave the school.

“What?” I asked.

“You and Emma.”

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“Everyone is talking about you two spending the day together yesterday. So, I assumed you finally sealed the deal,” he said with a smug smile on his lips.

I stopped and turned to him, and he looked at me, shocked.

“Everyone is... what?”

“Yeah, rumors are going around.”

“Why?” I asked.



“I don’t know. I don’t think any big scientists have ever cracked the code why teenagers love gossip.”

Aaron found himself hilarious, but I just shook my head.

“What are people saying? Do they think we slept too?”

“They think you’re dating her.”

“Well, I am not,” I said.

“You’re not?”

“We went out as friends.”

Aaron looked at me, a little confused, then shook his head.

“You’re really doing this the wrong way. Already friendzoned that was fast,” he teased me.

I groaned and shook my head.

“I’m not trying to sleep with her.”

“No? You don’t find her attractive? I think there is something attractive over her rough look, and she certainly doesn’t look bad.”

“I am her friend,” I told him.

“Okay.”

He held up his hands

“If you say so.”

I sighed, not liking that the rumors had spread so far. I wasn’t even sure how it had happened, but words travelled so fast.

“But maybe you should talk to the jealous ex you have,” he said.

“My jealous... what?”

Aaron then pointed down the hallway where Simone was. She was leaning against her locker with crossed arms and glaring at me. It was clear her friends were trying to talk to her, but she kept looking at me.

“Oh, wonderful...” I whispered.

“Good luck...”

Aaron patted my shoulder, then hurried away. He did not want to get caught in the crossfire, and really, I didn't blame him. I walked over to where Simone was. Her friends saw me coming and knew we wanted a moment alone. So, they quickly took off. I placed myself in front of her, but wasn't sure what to say. She looked really pissed.

“So, you and the troublemaker?”

I sighed and shook my head.

“No, you got it all wrong,” I said.

“Oh? Explain.”

“We went out as friends,” I told her.

“Why would you even want to be friends with her?”

I shrugged a little.

“She is actually a lot of fun,” I told her.

“Oh, I am sure. Some are saying you did her behind one of the rides,” she said.

I rubbed my eyes tiredly and shook my head.

“It’s just rumors.”

“Really?”

“I never even kissed her,” I told her.

“Why would you want to kiss her?”

“I don’t want to.”

“It sounded like you did,” she said.

“Simone!”

I groaned her name, frustrated because she was clearly twisting my words and putting a different meaning to them.

“What?” she asked and glared at me.

“I am not dating Emma!”

“You took her out to the fair. We used to go do things like that.”

“I go to these things with my friends as well,” I told her.

“Yes, but Emma isn’t your friend.

“But she is!”

“Why?”

“Why is she my friend?” I asked.

“Yes! Why?”

I didn't even know what to answer. Why was everyone finding it so weird that I was friends with Emma? I knew we might not seem to have a lot in common, but yesterday with her had been so much fun and I found her easy to be around. Emma had almost turned into a completely different person at the fair. She was free, and she was happy. She was just a great person to be around, and she made me laugh.

"I don't even know how to answer that," I said.

"I just don't see why you would want to be her friend."

"Why not?"

"Because she is a nobody. She is a dropout. She has no future, and she hangs out with addicts."

"Maybe she doesn't have anywhere else to hang out because no one wishes to give her a chance," I told her.

"She is a violent person! She broke Trevor's nose!"

"He sort of deserved it."

"You really think that?" she asked. "You're friends!"

"Not really," I said.

Simone looked so shocked when I said this.

"I tolerate him because we are teammates, but I don't want to spend time with him. I never did," I told her.

"So, you want to spend time with an addict?"

"She isn't an addict."

"No?"

“No.”

“You really know her that well?” Simone asked.

“Well, an addict would have been drugged up yesterday too or not have stayed away from the drugs all the time we were together. So, no, I don’t believe she is one.”

“But you don’t know her.”

“I’m getting to know her,” I told her.

“And I don’t see why you want to. You two have nothing in common.”

“I’m not sure that is true.”

“It is!”

“How do you know that? Do you know her, Simone?” I asked.

“I’m friends with her sister.”

“Yeah, and Elena and Emma are like night and day. Just because you know one of them doesn’t mean you know the other.”

Simone didn’t seem to agree with me, but she didn’t comment on it either. She suddenly changed out of nowhere and stepped closer to me. She reached out and placed her hand on my chest.

“I just don’t want her to drag you down,” she said. “You’re doing so well.”

I looked at her, confused.

“Simone...”

“Don’t you think we should end this break?” she asked.

“What break?”

“The break we are on.”

I now realized it wasn’t about Emma. It was because she didn’t like I went out with someone else. Even if it was as friends, she wouldn’t believe it couldn’t turn into more. Simone was not done with me, but I was done with her. I grabbed her wrist and held it away.

“Simone, it’s not a break. We are *over*.”

She looked at me so shocked, but I never said we were on a break. I told her I wanted to *break up* with her. She clearly hoped we might get back together. I needed to make it clear that would not happen.

“And I can go hang out with whoever I want, and I choose Emma.”

I then let go of Simone and stepped around her. I had made myself clear. I just hoped she would listen this time because I didn’t want to do this every time I went out and spent some time with a girl that wasn’t her.

I continued down the hallway, when suddenly I noticed Emma in one of the empty classrooms. She was wiping down the teacher’s desk. I smiled when I saw her, already feeling in a better mood. I had found it hard to sleep last night, thinking about the day we had spent together. The door was open when I walked in. She had music in her eyes again, and I walked

closer, but stopped a little further away. I didn't want to scare her, but when she noticed someone in the room with her, she turned her head and stepped back, as if she was afraid again. She knocked over the bottle with cleaning fluid in it, and Emma bent down to pick it up.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

She placed the bottle on the desk and then pulled out her Air Pods.

“What?”

This time, when she turned to me, I noticed the bandage on her forehead and quickly walked closer. Emma took a step back, and I could see her whole body just tense as I got closer.

“Oh my God, Emma, what happened?” I asked her.

“Oh... eh... I'm such a clutch. I... tripped,” she said.

Anyone would have been able to hear how big a lie that was. She couldn't even look at me, and I could see how scared she was, even if she tried to hide it.

“Emma, who did this?” I asked.

“No one. I told you... I tripped.”

“Stop saying that,” I told her.

“Brendon...”

I reached out and grabbed her arm gently, and she jumped a little.

“Emma, look at me,” I whispered.

It took a moment, then Emma turned to me.

“Who did this?”

“It... doesn’t matter. I’m fine.”

“You’re shaking,” I told her.

“It’s fine...”

“We need to report this.”

I was about to walk away when she grabbed my hand and held me back. She was shaking her head like crazy.

“Please... no,” she begged.

“Emma, this is serious.”

“Please, Brendon, no... no...”

The tears welled up in her eyes, and without thinking I pulled her closer, hugging her to me. She didn’t fight me. She just buried her face in my chest and sobbed silently. I knew she wasn’t used to rely on anyone, but I would show her she could rely on me. I wouldn’t let anything happen to her. It was unbelievable how protective I almost was over her, but I had seen the way people were treating her. I didn’t like that. Maybe I had some hero complex. I couldn’t help it. I couldn’t stand seeing anyone being mistreated.

“It’s okay,” I whispered and stroked her back.

Emma continued to cry, and I just held her close. Soon she stopped shaking, but she didn’t move away. It took a little time. Then she took a step back, wiping her cheeks and trying



her hardest to pull herself together. I reached out and ran my hand down her hair.

“It’s okay,” I said again.

“Sorry...”

“No, don’t be.”

“I don’t cry.”

“No, you don’t say,” I said, and smiled.

She smiled back, and it was good to see she was feeling better.

“Emma, who did this to you?” I asked.

“Brendon...”

“Please tell me.”

“And then you will play my knight again?”

“We need to have this handled!”

“Realize it, Golden Boy, no one is going to help me,” she said.

“I will!”

She shook her head.

“Last time, you only made things worse. If I am going to tell you, promise you won’t do anything about it.”

“You can’t seriously ask me that,” I said.

“I am!”

“But...”

She looked at me hard, and warning me with her eyes that if I tried anything, I could probably kiss this sort of friendship goodbye. Emma would not trust me again.

“Promise!”

I sighed and crossed my arms. I didn’t like it, but maybe she would trust me a little more if I could prove to her that I was a person who kept my promises.

“Fine...”

Emma took a deep breath, then looked around me, making sure no one was coming into the classroom. She looked at me again.

“It was Simone.”

I looked at her, shocked. I couldn’t believe it when she told me Simone had done that to her, and I shook my head.

“No.”

“I knew you wouldn’t believe me,” she mumbled, and crossed her arms.

She looked away from me, and I took a moment just to let it all sink in. I couldn’t believe it, though. Simone wasn’t a violent person. She had always been very gentle... or I thought she was a gentle person. Had I really not seen that dark side of her? Could she really do something like that to another person?

“Tell me what happened,” I said.

Emma turned to me, looking at me, surprised.

“Please.”

She sighed a little, then lowered her arms.

“I was in the girls’ bathroom just cleaning it when she came in with her friends.”

“And?”

“She began to talk about that we had spent the day together. I think she thought we were going out, as more than friends, and she didn’t like that.”

“And then she just attacked you?”

Emma shrugged a little.

“The conversation went a little back and forth and she told me you were too good for me. I got a little cocky and told her you are too good for her as well. That’s when she attacked me,” Emma said.

I sat down on the teacher’s desk, needing a moment to truly understand that Simone could hurt someone like she had hurt Emma. I just... had a hard time picturing it, but Simone had acted very jealous lately. And it had been made clear to me there were sides to her I had never seen before.

“I can’t believe this,” I mumbled.

“You don’t believe...”

“No, that’s...”

I stood up and turned to Emma, taking a moment to gather my thoughts.

“That’s not true.”

Emma looked at me, a little skeptical.

“You believe me?”

I nodded slowly.

“I do.”

I found it hard to believe, but I couldn't image Emma lying about this. She was not the lying type. I had quickly learned that. She was brutally honest because she knew she could use that honesty as a weapon. She wouldn't make this up. I couldn't see any reason she would. Emma had made it clear she only wanted me as her friend, which I was happy about. I enjoyed spending time with her, and Simone and I had broken up. Emma knew that, too. So, what reason would she have to lie about it?

“No, you don't.”

“I do!” I told her hard. “I just... it's like I don't even know her anymore.”

Emma looked at me, shocked.

“Have you ever tried that?” I asked. “Suddenly realizing the person you thought you knew better than anyone was just... not at all as you had thought?”

She slowly nodded.

“Yeah, I... I met this guy,” she said.

I looked at her, intrigued.

“I thought he was just annoying for bothering me all the time, but he turned out to be an all right person.”

We both laughed when I realized she was talking about me.

“Well, maybe you should be a little more open next time.”

We laughed again, and the energy changed from tense to relaxed.

“I’m really sorry about this,” I said.

“Why? It’s not like you did it,” she said.

“No, but... but because I took you out, you got my ex after you.”

“That’s her problem. I don’t blame you, Brendon,” she said and smiled before she casually turned back to her job.

I was so surprised when she said it. Emma really was a kind person, wasn’t she? She didn’t hold grudges or blame people easily. She was actually very patient.

“Well, you might not blame me, but I blame myself.”

She looked at me, confused.

“So...” I threw my bag to the floor and grabbed a cloth from her supply wagon. “I’m going to help you clean up the school.”

“You don’t have to!” she said.

I didn’t listen to her though, as I went to one of the bookshelves and dusted it off. I looked over my shoulder and winked at her. She chuckled a little, shaking her head, but she didn’t tell me to stop or tried getting me to leave.

## *Chapter 22*

***-Emma-***

With Brendon's help, I was done much sooner than I usually was. But I had to wait a little for my mom to come pick me up, since Elena had already gone home. Brendon and I just hung out in one of the classes, talking and joking around.

"How about this?" he asked, as he had written an equation on the board.

"I am bad with letters, not numbers," I told him and jumped down from the desk I was sitting on, and solved his equation, handing back the chalk.

"All right, hotshot," he said. "I will make it hard on you."

"Oh, no teacher, please go easy on me."

That made us both laugh and Brendon shook his head. I went back to the desk and sat on it. He then wrote a long sentence and turned to me.

"Oh, that's just cruel," I told him.

He pointed under the first word.

“Well?”

“You’re being evil,” I said.

“Just try.”

I sighed and tried hard to read what it said. My eyes couldn’t help but run over all the words he had written, and my heart pounded when my brain switched it all around. I sighed and looked down.

“I don’t think I like this game,” I whispered.

“I wrote she should have punched him harder. The Troublemaker is a damn hero,” he said.

I looked up, and he winked at me.

“You didn’t write that.”

He just shrugged and erased the sentence before he drew a big smiley on the board.

“Who knows?” he asked me.

I shook my head a little. I was actually enjoying spending time with him. When Brendon saw me smiling at him, he smiled back.

“You know you don’t have to stay with me.”

“I offered to drive you home. You said no.”

“I don’t want you to feel obligated to do anything,” I told him.

“I don’t.”

“You said you blamed yourself for what happened.”

He sighed and came closer to me, stopping only an arm’s reached away. My heart acted funny suddenly when he stood so close.

“I used that as an excuse,” he admitted.

“An excuse?”

“To stay.”

“You helped me clean so you could stay?” I asked, confused.

“Well, troublemaker,” he said, and took a small step closer. My heart did that funny little jump again. What was going on? “You have a way of pushing people away.”

I smiled, a little embarrassed.

“I guess I do...”

“So, I needed an excuse, but I don’t feel obligated,” he said. “I want to drive you home because that’s what friends do for each other.”

“Right... I guess I am still learning,” I told him.

He smiled at me, and I couldn’t understand what was happening. Something changed... My heart was going crazy, my breathing turned quicker. Brendon lost his smile and his eyes darted lower. He took another step closer to me, and then leaned over me, placing his hand on the desk I was sitting on. He moved so slowly. I could easily turn my head or push him back. I had all the time in the world, but I didn’t. A voice in



my head told me it was a bad idea, but I couldn't stop myself even if I wanted. I was in a trance, and when his lips met mine, my whole body shook with delight. It was so simple. Lips against lips, and yet it turned me warmer than I had ever felt. He quickly pulled back, though, and I looked at him, surprised. He seemed suddenly guilty.

“I'm sorry... I... got carried away,” he admitted and looked down.

I didn't know what to say. All I knew was that I didn't want him to stop. I reached out and placed my hands on his neck, turning his head towards me. He looked at me, surprised, and I pulled him down to me, pressing my lips against his. This time, he wasn't so gentle with me. Brendon wrapped his arm around my waist, holding me as he bent me a little backwards and claimed my lips harder, deepening the kiss. His tongue slipped into my mouth and tangled with mine. I did not know a kiss could be like this. I had not kissed a lot and every time it had seemed sloppy or boring. Brendon made me feel something. He made my heart go crazy, and I only wanted more. I wrapped an arm around his neck, making sure he didn't stop this time. I wanted him to continue. I didn't want it to ever stop.

*Prrr.*

*Prrr.*

My phone suddenly rang. It was lying on the teacher's desk, and we turned to it, seeing it move around as it continued to

ring. We slowly turned to each other, both of us panting now. I felt so hot. I was practically burning up.

“I... I should get that,” I whispered.

“Yeah... do that.”

He wasn't letting me go, though, and I was not letting him go.

“It's probably my mom.”

“You should answer.”

It took all my strength to let go of him and walk over to my phone. It stopped ringing just as I reached it and I saw a text on my phone pop up from my mom, asking where I was. She had probably expected I would wait on the side of the road for her.

“I need to go,” I said and turned to Brendon.

He smiled and nodded.

“I will go with you.”

I nodded, and he grabbed his stuff before we walked out of the school together. When we got outside, I could see my mom parked further away. I turned to Brendon, but I did not know what to say. I had not expected that kiss to happen, and it was clear he hadn't either.

“I... Eh, I will see you tomorrow,” I said.

“Yes... see you tomorrow.”

I walked away and down to where my mom was parked. I got in the car and looked at Brendon, who was standing a little

further away.

“You were with Brendon?” my mom asked as she drove away and I lost sight of him.

“Yeah... he helped me today.”

“He helped you?”

“After school, of course. He helped me clean a little,” I told her.

“Oh, he is so nice, don’t you think?”

I nodded as I stared out of the window.

“Yeah, he really is...” I whispered.

My heart continued to beat in that strange rhythm, and I placed my hand over it. What was going on with me? Why had I let that happen? I had been very clear with Brendon, and yet I had kissed him back. I had grabbed him and I had kissed him. I sighed and slid further down on my seat. What was I going to do?

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When we got home, I hurried to my room. I had been able to hide the bandage on my forehead from my mom. She had been busy driving, and I had had the other side turned to her. When I got to my door, I stopped and looked over my shoulder. I was looking at my sister’s closed bedroom door, feeling a little pissed. I walked over to it and knocked on it. There was music coming from the other side.

“Elena!”

I knocked harder, and I heard my sister's voice on the other side. Moments after, the door opened, and she looked at me, shocked when she saw me.

"My God! Emma, are you okay?"

"You tell me!" I said.

She looked at me, confused.

"Is this a weird guessing game?" she asked.

"No!"

"Then I think I need some hints."

"This," I said and pointed to the bandage on my forehead.  
"Your idol did this!"

"Who?"

"Simone!" I shouted.

"Right," Elena laughed.

"It was!"

"Simone would never do something like that. She doesn't beat people up like you, Emma."

I looked at Elena, shocked.

"You don't believe me!"

"I believe someone hurt you, but what reason would Simone have for doing that?"

"Because you *told* her I went out with her ex!"

Elena looked at me shocked, and needed a moment to think it through. She shook her head lightly.

“I just thought she should know Brendon was moving on,” Elena said.

“So, that was why you were acting strange, right? You thought about Simone.”

“I thought she might need a heads-up and that she needed to hurry if she wanted to get him back.”

“My god... Elena, he is done with her!”

“How do you know?”

“He told me!”

“When?”

“On the way to Trevor’s party,” I told her. “He made it quite clear he didn’t feel more for her. If Simone took the time to listen, she might hear it as well.”

Elena looked a little sad, and I sighed, shaking my head.

“I can’t believe this...”

“Emma, I never meant for this to happen.”

I looked at her, not sure what to say.

“I was just trying to warn Simone. We are friends. I never thought she would...”

“You know, I don’t know much about being friends, but I know friends don’t call each other a whore behind each other’s backs.”

Elena almost took a step back as I said this.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“I mean, I think you need to realize that Simone isn’t actually your friend. You’re using each other for popularity,” I said.

Elena shook her head.

“That’s not true!”

“Yeah... it is!” I said. “She called you a whore to my face.”

“No! She wouldn’t!”

“She did!”

“She wouldn’t!”

“She did!”

“Girls! What is going on?”

Our mother suddenly came stomping up the stairs, tired of listening to us arguing. We both turned to her, and she stopped and gasped when she looked at me.

“Emma!”

She hurried to me and grabbed my head gently, turning it from side to side.

“How did you get this? Why didn’t you say something?” she asked.

I sighed and pushed her hands away.

“I’m fine...”

“You have a big bandage on your forehead! That’s not fine!” she said.

“The nurse took care of it.”

“But *how* did it happen? You didn’t have it this morning!”

For the first time, I really heard how worried and scared my mother was. I was so surprised by it, but I didn’t hate it. I didn’t know for how long I had craved to be looked at the way she was looking at me now. I had told myself for a long time I didn’t need anyone. I was starting to believe that wasn’t true. Having someone care about you, trying to make you happy or cheer you up, was nice. I had forgotten what that was like.

“No, I didn’t,” I said.

“So how?”

“Well, I would say I tripped, but you stopped believing those poor excuses a long time ago,” I said.

“So how?” my mother repeated, really wanting to know now.

I turned to Elena, who was not looking at either of us.

“Why don’t you ask Elena?” I asked.

My mother turned to my sister, but Elena kept looking away.

“Elena, do you want to say something?”

“I didn’t do it to her!” she said and looked at our mother.

“Then who did?”

I looked at Elena, hoping she would explain the situation and come clean. I would normally not involve our parents, always holding my hand over Elena if she could get hurt in any way, but today I had lost my patience. I would not hold my hand over anyone.

“Simone,” I finally said.

My mother turned to me and looked at me, confused.

“Simone... Simone, as in Elena’s friend?”

I nodded.

“Why would she do that?”

“Because Elena thought she should give her friend a “heads-up” that her ex was moving on. Even though Brendon and I only went to the fair as friends,” I explained.

“So, she attacked you?”

“Yes!”

“And you did nothing to her?” my mother asked.

I looked at her, shocked. Maybe I shouldn’t have been surprised, considering I had just assaulted Trevor, but still I felt hurt that she even felt like she had to ask.

“Go call Simone’s parents if you need proof. I never touched her and you won’t find any bruises!”

“I am just making sure there wasn’t a fight,” my mother said.

“There wasn’t!” I snapped before turning to Elena and glaring at her.



She looked at me apologetically. I knew this was not what Elena wanted. She was really just looking to help Simone, but it still had consequences. And if she would just open up her eyes to who Simone truly was, she would have seen that something like this was likely going to happen.

“I’m going to bed...”

“Emma! Wait, let’s talk!” my mother said.

“There is nothing to talk about,” I said as I stood in the doorway.

“But there is... your head!”

“Yeah, I felt the sting of it!”

“We should call Simone’s parents and have this solved.”

“Why? Would you make her clean the school as well?” I asked.

My mother looked shocked at me.

“Well, she assaulted me? Or what is an apology enough? Because I will most likely get a scar,” I said.

“Let’s just talk to her and her parents first and then...”

“And then what? I already know how it will go. She gets off the hook as long as she gives me a half-hearted apology and she can just go back to school like everything is okay. And I will continue to be on edge, never knowing when she might retaliate.”

“It’s not a war,” my mother said.

“It feels that way, and I am always on the losing side.”

I closed the door and my mother quickly came over to it and began knocking on it.

“Emma, come on, let’s talk. We need to figure this out,” she said. “I will talk to the principal.”

“Please! Don’t! I don’t want to get into my troubles,” I said.

“But you aren’t the one who did anything wrong.”

“No one will believe that. Can you just let it go?” I shouted.

My mother turned silent, and then I heard her walk away. Maybe I should have stayed quiet, but I had had enough, and this time I was not going to. I just hoped I wasn’t going to get attacked again tomorrow for actually saying something.

## *Chapter 23*

***-Emma-***

I was in one of the empty classrooms again the next day, wiping down all the tables, when suddenly the principal came inside, calling out to me. I couldn't hear her, but I saw her mouth moving. I removed my Air Pods and looked at the older woman. She definitely didn't look pleased, but I did not know what I could have done. I had behaved these last few days, and I had done nothing but minding my own business today.

"Emma, there is someone here who wants to say something to you," she said.

"To me?"

The principal waved her hand in the air, and seconds after, Simone stepped inside, looking at the ground and her arms crossed over her chest. I almost took a small step back, afraid she might jump me again despite the principal being there.

"Simone," the principal said. "You had something you wanted to say, right?"

Simone just looked to the side.

“Simone!”

She took a deep breath, then turned to me, looking me right in the eyes.

“I’m sorry.”

I looked at her, shocked. For a moment, I was sure it was all a dream. I was certain that Simone had not just apologized to me, and it actually almost sounded sincere.

“What?”

“I behaved poorly yesterday. I hurt you and I am sorry,” she said. “I don’t know what came over me. I have had it very hard lately. My therapist knows I am going through a lot and so does the school.”

*What a load of crap*, I thought inside myself, but I would not say anything. I just crossed my arms and nodded a little, acting like I was buying her little act.

“I lost control,” she said. “I acted out, and I let my anger control me. I hurt you, Emma, and I am so sorry.”

“I see...”

“Your parents were in contact with the school,” the principal told me. “And with Simone’s parents. I called Simone into the office today and she admitted what she had done.”

It surprised me to hear it, but something told me Simone had weighed her options. And since she had no cuts on her, it was clear I had proof and she had none. Being honest and

acting like she was truly sorry might win her some points and lessen her punishment. Smart... very smart.

“Do you have something to say, Emma?” the principal asked.

“Am I supposed to say sorry too?”

The principal shook her head.

“No, do you accept her apology?”

I looked at Simone, who was clearly doing her best to swallow her pride, but this was very hard for her. It was better than the apology, which I really didn't care about. The look on her face, though, and the way her shoulders were drawn up, I loved it.

“I do,” I lied, just because I was so happy about what Simone had been forced to do.

I didn't think an apology would help anything, but I was wrong because Simone looked so uncomfortable.

“Wonderful,” the principal said. “Now, Simone, let's go back to your class.”

Simone stepped outside, and the principal turned to me.

“You're doing well, Emma. Keep up the great work.”

Okay, had I stepped into a different universe? I couldn't believe the principal had just praised me so highly. It stunned me more than the apology, and I needed a moment before I got myself working again.

***-Brendon-***

I couldn't stop thinking about yesterday. The kiss... Oh damn, the kiss. It had been so intense. I couldn't even describe it with words, but I knew I really wanted to find Emma again and then... Could we repeat it? Did she want to? I knew I did.

"Why are you smiling like that?" Aaron leaned closer to me and asked.

The teacher was still talking, reading up from an old book that I couldn't listen to because I was thinking about Emma and her sweet lips.

"No reason," I whispered. "Concentrate."

I wasn't even concentrated myself, but Aaron knew me so damn well. He would see right through me.

"You're acting strange."

"I'm fine. Now be quiet."

"Why do you look like that?"

"Aaron, stop!"

"You two!"

The teacher suddenly turned to us, and we sat up straighter.

"Something you want to share with the entire class?"

I shook my head. And so did Aaron.

"No, sir."

"Then be quiet."

We both nodded like two good little students, and the teacher continued, but when I turned to my friend, he was still

looking at me suspiciously. He knew something was up with me, but I told him with my eyes to quit it, and slowly he turned away. I knew he was not done interrogating me, but it bought me some time.

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After class, I hurried out. I didn't have long before I had to go to my chemistry class, but I couldn't wait until I got out of school to see Emma. I found her standing halfway out of one of the supply closets. She was stacking up some toilet rolls on her wagon. I walked over to her, and she noticed me on the way. It surprised me when I saw her blush and look away. Normally, she would never act so shyly. She was arrogant and sarcastic towards me, and I somehow enjoyed that, but seeing her act like that. It made my heart go crazy. I walked up to her and stopped close to her.

“Hey troublemaker,” I said.

“Hey.”

She didn't look at me, and it made me smile. Emma was about to grab the wagon and push it the other way, but I stepped in front of her. Our bodies were practically pressed up together, so close we ended up. She gasped and looked up before taking a step back.

“Are you crazy?” she asked. “As if we don't have enough rumors surrounding us.”

I smiled a little and looked around, but everyone was so busy getting to their next class, no one was watching us. I

turned to Emma again.

“Let’s meet up when I get out,” I told her.

“And then what? You will help me clean again.”

“No, actually...” I leaned a little closer to her, and her eyes grew wider. “I hoped we could repeat yesterday.”

A small gasp left her, and I saw her eyes turn a little heated. I liked that look on her. It meant she liked what had happened between us.

“We can’t.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“You don’t want to date me,” she said.

“Why not?”

“Because... because...”

“You will drag me down?”

“I have never had a boyfriend,” she told me. “I barely know how to be a friend. I wouldn’t know how to...”

She gestured between us, and I now understood so much better why it was she was trying to push me away. It was not that she wasn’t interested. She was just scared to let me down. That she wouldn’t be good enough. I knew there was nothing for her to fear, but I had to convince her of that as well.

“Emma, no one knows how to be a perfect girlfriend or boyfriend. It takes time to get to know each other and learn what it means,” I told her.



She looked at me nervously, and I smiled at her.

“But you have to try, or you will never know if you are any good at it.”

“I...”

“Let’s talk about it some more later, yes?”

“I... eh...”

“Just say yes,” I told her.

She smiled so sweetly, and I saw her blush some more.

“Yes.”

## *Chapter 24*

***-Emma-***

I met up with Brendon in one of the empty classrooms after school... or he found me. He stepped into the room and then locked the door, and I looked at him, surprised.

“Why did you lock it?” I asked.

“So you can’t run,” he said and smiled teasingly at me.

“Are you going to murder me? A terrible place to choose to do it.”

Brendon chuckled and walked over to me, throwing his bag to the ground and placing his hands on the desk in front of me, leaning closer.

“Nah, you’re too sweet to murder. I just didn’t want us to be interrupted.”

“I am not sweet!”

He chuckled and reached out, stroking my cheek with his finger.

“But you are, and you taste sweet, too.”

I could feel my cheeks heat like crazy and I glanced away.

“God, you look cute when you blush.”

“Brendon!”

I turned to him and looked at him with a warning in my eyes not to push me. But he just smiled that charming smile of his that somehow was working on me.

“Can we just... discuss what you wanted to discuss, so I can escape you and this room?” I asked.

Brendon shook his head, and it confused me.

“What?”

“You aren’t escaping anything,” he said.

“Okay, now I know you want to murder me.”

He chuckled a little, shaking his head again.

“No, murder, I told you, you are too sweet.”

“Stop that!”

He smiled and then stepped around the desk, coming to my side. I looked up at him, feeling my heart doing that little flip. I was starting to understand it had to do with Brendon. It was starting to like him being around us.

“I told you earlier I am interested in you, Emma, more than as a friend.”

“But you said...”

“I was happy being your friend,” he said. “But if there is a chance we could be more, I would very much like to figure that out.”

“How?”

“Well, usually when two people like each other or have an interest in each other, they go on a date.”

“A date?” I asked.

He smiled.

“Yes, a date.”

“What... What would we do on this date?”

“What would you like to do?” he asked.

I shrugged.

“I don’t know... I have never been on one.”

“We could go to the fair again?”

“I don’t think I am allowed out again.”

“We can also stay in.”

“You mean... you would come over?”

“Would you mind?” he asked.

“It’s not like I can stop you,” I chuckled.

He did too, remembering how he had come to my house to ask my parents if he could take me out.

“I would have to ask them.”

“That’s fine. You can text me their answer.”

“And so... what would we do, then?”

He chuckled.

“We could watch a movie,” he suggested.

I nodded a little.

“I like movies.”

“Eat some popcorns.”

“I like popcorns,” I told him.

He chuckled and stepped closer to me. I moved backwards, but he didn't stop coming closer. Soon I found myself back up against the wall, my heart going crazy inside my chest, and I was breathing heavier. Brendon placed a hand on the wall beside my head and leaned closer. He was panting, too.

“Can I kiss you?” he whispered.

I looked at him, so shocked he would even ask. I was not used to being asked. Yesterday we had both just went with it, but this time he asked me. I felt so touched, I for a moment didn't know what to say.

“Can I?” he asked.

I nodded.

“Yes.”

Brendon smiled before he leaned closer to me and kissed me. At first it was sweet and trying, but again, it was like we couldn't control ourselves. The kiss turned more heated, and it felt like the room was spinning. I could barely focus on anything but him, though. Was that what it was like, kissing

someone you actually liked? It felt like my legs could barely carry me, and then Brendon pressed himself closer to me. The sound of our fast breathing turned so loud, and his big body pressed against mine made me feel hot and like my clothes were almost a little itchy. I had never tried feeling attractive to anyone, but Brendon was only turning more handsome for every time he kissed me. God, I couldn't get enough. He pulled away this time. I did not know how he found the strength, because all I could think was that he had to kiss me again.

“Shit... Emma,” he whispered.

“Is it... usually like this?”

My questions made him look at me, confused.

“Have you been kissed before?” he asked.

I nodded.

“But not by people I liked.”

This shocked him, and he looked worried.

“Was it forced?”

“More... experimenting. I didn't like the person. They were just there and maybe a few... were.”

“Forced?” he asked.

“In a way.”

“How, *in a way*?” he asked, concerned.

I shook my head.

“It’s not important.”

I didn’t want to talk about how my first time had gone, and I definitely didn’t want to mention the kiss between me and Trevor. So far, it seemed like no one knew about it and I wanted it to stay that way.

“Emma, it is important. It’s not okay if someone forced you,” he said.

I shook my head again.

“I don’t really want to talk about it,” I told him.

He sighed and then brushed my cheek with his thumb. I closed my eyes, finding myself loving the feeling of his hand on me.

“I really want to kiss you again,” he whispered.

“Then do it.”

His smile only grew bigger.

“But then I don’t think I can stop again.”

“Maybe I don’t want you to,” I said and looked down, a little nervous, before I was brave enough to see his reaction.

He seemed surprised, but a smile was on his lips.

“Oh, please don’t say that,” he whispered.

“Why not?”

I wondered if he didn’t enjoy hearing it and suddenly felt a little scared. He leaned closer to me again, so we were practically breathing the same air.

“It makes it very hard not to not just kiss you,” he whispered.

I swallowed hard. A whoosh of warmth going through me. I had not expected to enjoy hearing that. I thought I never wanted anyone to touch me again, but I almost begged Brendon to do it. How had it changed so fast? First, I wanted him to leave me alone. Now I was practically ready to do it in the classroom with him.

“Shit...” he said and backed away.

Yeah, the tension was thick. I felt it too.

“I really shouldn’t stay,” he said.

I chuckled a little, and he smiled.

“Well, you aren’t really leaving either,” I pointed out.

“You make it so hard to leave.”

“I am not doing anything,” I said and shrugged a little as I placed my hands between my back, showing him I wasn’t stopping him.

“My God...”

He shook his head.

“What?”

“You are just... tempting,” he said.

“Really?” I asked and smiled.

I had never thought I would be called that, but I liked it.

“Very,” he said.



We looked at each other for a long time. It was like an invisible force was pushing us together, and I even leaned a little forward. Brendon did too, but then quickly took a step back.

“Stop it,” he told me with a smile

I held up my hands.

“I’m not doing anything, golden boy.”

He shook his head after I winked at him.

“I’m going now. Text me what your parents say.”

I nodded and looked after him as he picked up his bag and quickly left the classroom. I felt... giddy. Oh shit, I had never thought I would ever feel like that, but I did. What was the golden boy doing to me?

## *Chapter 25*

***-Emma-***

I had been too nervous to ask my mother in the car about Brendon coming over one of these days to watch a movie. And then I had my therapy session. It all had to wait until we were home. She was about to go make dinner when I followed slowly behind her. I placed myself up against the doorframe as I watched her. She turned at some point, grabbing a knife and saw me standing there.

“Something wrong?” she asked.

“I... eh, nothing.”

She smiled and then began to cook dinner.

“Mom?” I finally found the courage to talk.

She looked over her shoulder and waited for me to continue.

“Would... Would it be okay if... if Brendon came over one of these days... to... to watch a movie with me?” I asked her.

My mother looked at me, shocked, then turned her whole body and crossed her arms as she looked at me.

“You are asking if Brendon can come over?” she asked.

“We would just be in the living room. I know I am still grounded. Why I could stay in the house and also... see him?”

My mother smiled, and then suddenly my dad came into the kitchen to get some water. He saw the way my mother looked at me, and he glanced between us.

“What’s going on here?”

“Emma is asking me if Brendon can come over and see a movie with her,” my mother said and looked at my dad.

My dad turned to me and looked at me, almost shocked.

“What? We’re friends,” I said.

“And we were teenagers once,” my dad said. “Don’t think I don’t know what a movie means!”

He pointed at me, and I rolled my eyes.

“Dad!”

“They would be in the living room.”

“I freaking hope so!” my dad said. “No boys in their rooms!”

My mother chuckled, and I shook my head.

“Listen, if I am not allowed...”

“No,” my mother quickly interrupted.

“No?”

“You can have him over.”

“I can?”

My mother smiled and nodded.

“I like Brendon,” she said. “You two would be cute together.”

“Mom... please...”

This was definitely the most uncomfortable conversation we had ever had. My mother held up her hands.

“Oh, right, sorry, just friends,” she said and winked before she went back to the food.

I turned to look at my dad, who was watching me funny.

“What?” I asked.

“You sit in the living room with an arm’s reach between you two. I don’t want to see any blankets shared and hands where I can see them,” he told me.

“Oh, God! Dad!”

I hurried away before the conversation got any more awkward.

“I mean it, Emma! We were young ones!” he yelled after me. “I know teenage boys!”

I covered my ears, shaking my head. It was just getting uncomfortable. I hurried to my room and got inside before I found my phone and texted Brendon.

***-Brendon-***

Emma and I waited until Friday, so we didn't have school night the next day. I walked up to her front door and knocked on it. It wasn't long before her dad was the one to open it.

"Hello, sir," I said. "Nice to see you again."

This time her dad wasn't acting as welcome, and had his arms crossed over his chest as he looked me up and down.

"So," he said.

I looked at him, confused.

"What are your intentions with my daughter?"

"Oh God! Dad, stop!"

Emma came running down the staircase and shoved him out of the way.

"Could you not?" she asked.

"What? It's a valid question," he said.

Emma shook her head and turned to me. A sweet smile spread across her lips.

"Come in."

I walked inside, but her dad was still observing me.

"Don't worry, we are just watching a movie," I told him.

"As if I don't know what Netflix and Chill mean," her dad mumbled.

"Dad!" Emma shouted, and I could see how red her face was getting. "Stop!"

Her dad held up his hands and went into the kitchen, where her mother was sitting drinking some coffee. They could see into the living room too, and when we sat down, I could feel both pairs of eyes on us.

“Could you two...”

Emma turned to them, and they finally left the kitchen and went upstairs. I chuckled a little, but Emma shook her head.

“It’s funny,” I said.

“It’s annoying. They think the moment they look away we will fuck on this couch,” she said and patted the couch we were sitting on.

I continued to laugh, but I couldn’t say the idea didn’t hold an appeal.

“Now, what do you want to watch?” she asked me.

“What do you like?”

“Nothing sweet and romantic or I will puke.”

“What? Are you saying you don’t have a secret love for chocolate and flowers and happy endings?” I asked, acting like I hadn’t expected that.

She rolled her eyes, and I just laughed, before she found the remote and scrolled through Netflix.

“Fast and furious?” she asked.

“Play it!”

Emma had already made popcorns and put out a little to drink and snacks that stood on the coffee table. She grabbed

the big bowl of popcorns and put it between us. We smiled at each other before we watched the movie. Eventually, the bowl was empty. She put it away and then there was a big open space between us. I did not know how it happen, but it was like we were being pulled to each other, and the space turned smaller and smaller. I noticed Emma glance at me, and I turned my head. She did too. Soon we didn't notice the movie playing. I reached out, gently grabbing her chin, and stroking it slightly before I moved closer to her. She didn't stop me and our lips met. God, I loved feeling them. They were so soft and she tasted so good. It turned more heated, and I pressed her back a little, ready to have her underneath me, but then someone cleared their voice. Emma and I pulled away and turned our heads, seeing her dad there, standing with his arms crossed and narrowed eyes.

“Watching a movie, you say, Brendon,” he said.

“I...”

I couldn't really argue my case very well since he had caught me red-handed kissing his daughter.

“Honey! Leave them alone!”

We could hear Emma's mother shouting from upstairs, and Emma covered her face with her hands. She was getting so embarrassed. It was very fun though.

“I'm getting water!” her dad shouted.

“I know you're not! Get back here.”

Her dad pointed at me.

“I’m watching you,” he said.

I just nodded.

“Yes, sir,” I said.

He went back upstairs, and Emma groaned loudly, before I laughed. She leaned closer to me and placed her forehead against my shoulder.

“I’m mortified,” she whispered.

“I find it really fucking funny.”

She looked up, and I turned my head.

“Because I’m the one getting embarrassed?”

“It’s hilarious,” I said.

“No, it’s mortifying.”

I chuckled, then pushed her back, finally getting her down on the couch while I hovered over her. She looked up at me, shocked.

“He is gone now,” I whispered.

Her eyes turned heated.

“Maybe if we are really quiet...”

She placed her hand on my neck and pulled me closer. It felt a little extra exciting knowing we could get caught at any moment, but soon I forgot where we even were. Kissing Emma was that good, and I stroked my hand down her body, then up, squeezing her breast, and she let out a little moan. I pulled back and pressed a finger to my lips.



“Shh,” I said low.

She bit her lip excitedly and smiled. Emma nodded a little, and I leaned closer to her and kissed her again. I only moved my hand a little lower. Inch by inch. I wanted to make sure she knew she could stop me. If she felt uncomfortable, she just had to grab my hand or pull away and tell me so. I would stop right away, but I really wanted to touch her. I wanted to learn what she liked. I wanted to explore her little body with my own. Emma was turning me on like no one else had ever done. I couldn't say what it was. I couldn't explain what drew me to her. Maybe it just couldn't be explained. Maybe this was just the way it was between people sometimes, and I definitely didn't want to ruin it by analyzing it. I just wanted to enjoy it.

“*Brendon...*” she panted against my lips.

“Tell me to stop if you don't want me to,” I said and kissed her jaw, then neck.

The movie had stopped playing, but we didn't notice.

“I will stop.”

She shook her head and grabbed my wrist before placing my hand between her legs. I rubbed her over her pants, and she pushed herself against my hand as she arched her back a little. I kissed her neck, sucked on it. This night was only getting more and more exciting. I was about to open her pants when suddenly we heard someone coming down the stairs. Emma and I quickly sat up and moved away from each other. We saw it was her sister. She looked at us, surprised. Did she not know I was coming over?

“What is going on here?” she asked.

“Just watching a movie,” Emma said and pointed to the black screen.

Shit...

Elena came closer. She turned and looked at the TV.

“But it’s just black,” she said and then turned to us, looking between us.

“Well, then I should get going,” I said.

I stood up and so did Emma, nodding.

“Yeah, it was fun.”

We hurried to the door, secretive smiles on our lips, as we went over there. We almost laughed too, but we could hold it in, not giving ourselves away.

“How about we do this again?” I suggested when I stood by the door.

Emma smiled sweetly.

“Yes, I would very much like that,” she whispered.

“Oh, very much you say?”

She rolled her eyes.

“Don’t push it or I am never inviting you back.”

I chuckled, then wrapped my arms around her, bringing her closer. She gasped, a little surprised. I leaned down and kissed her. I couldn’t stop myself. She tasted too good, but then

heavier steps were coming down the stairs and the kiss was interrupted again.

“I hope he is on his way out,” her dad said.

Emma sighed and looked over her shoulder.

“He is.”

I smiled at her dad, but he was still glaring at me. I chuckled a little and let go of Emma. Then I walked outside. I turned to her again, and she looked at me with the sweetest look in her eyes. Like she couldn't wait until we were going to see each other again. I couldn't either.

“Goodnight, troublemaker,” I said.

“Goodnight, golden boy.”

We continued to look at each other, but then her dad got in the way.

“Bye bye, Brendon!” he said and slammed the door closed.

I shook my head and laughed as I went to my car.

***-Emma-***

“Okay, I think we should have a chat about boys coming over!”

Our dad had put Elena and me on the couch after Brendon had left. He was now going to give us the speech about being young moms and how easily life for a young woman could be ruined because of a dumb teenage boy coming a little too close.

“Dad, haven’t we had this speech like many times?” Elena asked. “No dating until college.”

“Exactly!” my dad said and then pointed at me. “No dating!”

“But Elena…”

“What is going on here?”

Our mother stepped into the living room, looking between us all.

“Just dad telling us that if we ever become a teen mom he will disown us,” I said half-joking.

“Oh, honey, not the speech!” our mother said.

“Yes! They need to understand how teenage boys think!” he said.

“Because you once were one?”

“Exactly!” he said. “I know what they are like. I know they have one thing on their mind. It’s why I say no dating until college! Maybe even later!”

“When then?” Elena asked.

“When… When I am dead!” he said.

“But don’t you want grandchildren?” Elena asked.

My dad thought it over and then sighed.

“Fine! When you’re thirty then.”

“That’s insane, dad!” I said.

“Yes, honey, that’s crazy. You know we don’t have a rule in this house about dating,” our mother said and stepped in front of him.

“Because you keep shutting it down!” he said.

“Our girls are smart. They know to be safe.”

Our mother looked over her shoulder and warned us with her eyes that we better be safe or there really would be hell to pay. I had terrible cramps. I had always had them, so I went on the pill quite early. I wasn’t sure about my sister, but so far, I saw no baby bump, so I guessed Trevor wrapped it up.

“We know, mom,” I said. “You talked to us about this.”

“And we really don’t want it repeated,” Elena said.

“It’s good when parents talked about this. We know how teenagers are. Banning things,” our mother said and turned to our dad. “Only make them want to do it even more.”

“No! It protects them!”

“No, it makes them want to do it even more. Trust me, my dad said no dating either, and I can’t tell you how many guys that...”

“Mom!” Elena and I shouted from behind her.

She looked over her shoulder and smiled innocently.

“I just mean... better to educate them than to tempt them.”

“How is it tempting by banning?” my dad asked.

“Because it always becomes more tempting when you tell teenagers they can’t do something.”

Our mother then ended the conversation and turned to us instead.

“Emma, you’re free to date Brendon.”

“So, you are dating him?”

Elena turned to me and looked at me almost accusingly. I sat there, stunned for a moment.

“You said you were friends!”

“Well...”

“So, you were lying?” she asked.

“No!”

“So, you’re not dating him?”

“Well...”

“Which one is it?” she asked. “Are you or are you not dating Brendon?”

“It’s... complicated.”

“How?”

“Well, I wasn’t lying to you when I said we were friends,” I said.

“Then you’re not dating him?”

“No... well... we have only just begun to... eh...”

I glanced at my dad, who was clearly very intrigued by the answer as well.

“Well, we are just...”

“Just what?” my sister asked.

“Why is it so important for me to define this?” I asked.

Elena looked at me a little accusingly, and then she groaned, frustrated, and stood up before she hurried up the stairs, looking like I had betrayed her or something. I rubbed my eyes before turning to my parents.

“Does this mean I am still grounded?” I asked.

“Oh, you are, but if you want him to come over again, that’s fine,” my mother said.

“I think we should have a discussion about that,” my dad said.

“We just did,” my mom said and looked at him shortly before looking at me and smiling sweetly, winking before she went into the kitchen.

“Mary, I really think we should talk about this!”

My dad followed her, and I stayed on the couch. What a night...

## *Chapter 26*

***-Emma-***

I suddenly felt a pair of arms around me and then someone turned me. The world spun and then Brendon was in front of me. He pulled out my earphones and held them in one hand before he pressed me up against the shelf behind me and kissed me. I melted in his arms right away and moaned softly as he kissed me. His warm hands were resting on my hips, and all I could think about was where one of them had been the last time we saw each other. It was just so intense between us. I almost wanted to beg him to the same now, but school was far from over, and there were students running around just outside this room.

“Missed me?” he whispered against my lips.

“No, not one bit,” I teased him.

He rolled his eyes.

“Not even a little?”



“No. Thanks to you, my dad gave me and my sister an entire speech.”

“A speech?” he asked, confused.

I nodded.

“What kind?”

“The embarrassing kind where he told us teenage boys have one thing on their minds,” I said, and held up a finger.

Brendon chuckled.

“Well, that and video games,” he said.

“Ah! So, two things? My dad was wrong then.”

We both laughed a little, and we stayed with our arms around each other. It was nice. It was actually *very* nice. I liked it.

“My mom says I am free to invite you over again.”

“Really?”

Brendon’s eyes practically shone.

“But I don’t think my dad will allow you in my room.”

“Oh, so we were going to be in your room next time?”

“Well, it would be more private,” I said.

“I like that.”

His voice turned lower.

“And no one can interrupt us.”

“I like that even more,” he said.

My whole body tingled as he leaned closer and kissed me again. It was so quick we began to almost pull at each other's clothes. He just made all sense fly out of the window and all I saw and felt was him. Suddenly, the bell rang, and the door to the classroom opened. Brendon and I pulled away quickly and smiled at each other. He quickly slipped out, no one really noticing us, and then I left as the class was about to start.

The rest of the day went on quietly, but when I was about to pack some stuff away, I could feel eyes on me. I looked around. Simone stood with her group further away and glaring at me. I waved at her, and she narrowed her eyes even more. I chuckled and turned away, but then she came over to me, backed up by her entire group. She closed the door which led into the supplies I needed, and I sighed, turning to her.

“Yes?” I asked.

“I hope you know when I apologized to you, I didn't mean one fucking thing I said.”

“No, I know.”

“Good, because if you think this is over...”

“Simone, I am not competing with you.”

“Oh, you wouldn't even be able to,” she said. “You're nothing.”

“Okay.”

“We are not even at the same level.”

“Okay.”

“You could never reach me,” she said

“Okay.”

“Stop saying that!” she yelled.

“What do you want me to say?” I asked.

“I told you to stay away from Brendon,” she said and pointed her finger in my face. “If you don’t, there will seriously be consequences to face.”

“Oh, will you smash my head against the mirror again?” I asked.

“Worse.”

“Lock me in the janitor’s closet like Trevor’s friends?”

“Worse!”

“Oh, I know. Run me over with your car. Well, Trevor’s friends tried doing the same thing,” I told her. “Simone, I don’t think you can even compete with them.”

She grabbed my arm hard and dug her nails into my skin. I tried not to flinch, but it was a serious pinch I felt.

“You can joke around all you want; I am warning you.”

“Simone, Brendon is done with you. Why can’t you just accept that?”

“He might be done with me, but he is certainly not going to date someone like you.”

“Why not?”

“Because as I have already said, Emma, you are nothing!”

I glared at her, but she just looked eyes with me.

“Everything you touch, you destroy. Why do you think your sister doesn’t even want you near her when you’re here?”

I felt the sting deep in my heart. Like Elena was a trigger, she was also my weak spot. I didn’t like to be reminded that she didn’t want me to talk to her when we were here at school. I, of course, didn’t mind. Again, I understood she had a life and friends of her own, but it still hurt getting thrown in my face.

“What goes on between me and my sister is none of your business,” I told her coldly.

I tried to show her I was unaffected by her words, but I knew she saw through me.

“You ruin things, Emma,” she said.

I just looked at her blankly.

“I love Brendon,” she told me. “I won’t let you destroy him.”

“I am not trying to,” I said.

“No, but you can’t help yourself. It’s what your kind does. You destroy yourself and the people around you.”

“And what would you know about that?”

It was then I remembered something. Simone had once had an older brother. He was quite a few years older than her, and he had had a terrible drug addiction. He had been driving high and run right into a tree, dying on the impact. Her protective

behavior suddenly made sense. It didn't mean I was justifying her, smashing my head into a mirror, but I certainly understood why she needed to protect Brendon so much.

"I know enough," she whispered, not wanting anyone to understand that.

I did, though, and I sighed a little.

"Listen, I will not destroy him," I said.

"Oh, but you will!"

"Simone, I asked him to stay away, but Brendon is a big boy. He can choose for himself."

"Try harder!"

"I have. Now I am done," I told her.

"What does that mean?"

"It means I don't want to push him away. He is one of the few people who wants to talk to me like I am a normal person and sees me even as one."

"As normal?"

She almost laughed at it, but I wasn't going to start a new argument.

"I like him," I admitted. "And I enjoy spending time with him, and he enjoys spending time with me. If you have a problem with it, why not take it up with him?"

She let me go and crossed her arms, looking a little offended. I smiled, realizing why.

“Oh, maybe you already did... and let me guess, he said, mind your own business?”

She narrowed her eyes, and I chuckled a little before I opened the door again and took out some papers for the copy machine in the office, which needed to be filled. I closed the door again.

“Well, then I think he made himself clear.”

“This isn’t over.”

“But it is, Simone. It is.”

I walked away, not wanting to deal with her anymore. I feared she might be right. It was probably not over between us, but I would not start any fights. If she came for me, there would be consequences and I would defend myself, but I would not stop seeing Brendon.

## *Chapter 27*

***-Emma-***

I was sitting at home two days after my little run-in with Simone and her threats were still playing my mind. I knew I should let it go, but it was hard when she had already attacked me once. Brendon and I were going to see each other tomorrow after school. He was going to come over and we would spend a few hours together. I couldn't wait. It made me all warm to think about. I had decided we would not be in the living room. We were going to spend some time in my room. I just hoped my dad wouldn't freak out too much about it. I chuckled a little, as I threw a tennis ball against the wall and it bounced back. Then suddenly, a lot of commotion could be heard outside my room. I looked over my shoulder at my half-closed door. I left the bed and walked over to her, opening it, and seeing my mother knock on Emma's door as she threw on her jacket.

“Elena, are you ready?”

“Just a second!”

“What’s going on?” I asked, confused, and stepped outside.

My mother smiled and turned to me.

“We are going to the school’s football game. Elena is part of the cheerleading squad. Have you forgotten?”

I actually had. Elena was part of the squad. Simone was the captain.

“And we are going to cheer on your team!” my dad said. “Brendon is crushing it this season.”

Hearing Brendon’s name made something click on inside of me. The door to Elena’s room opened, and she came out in her red and white cheerleading uniform looking beautiful.

“Ready!” she said with a huge smile on her lips.

“Good, let’s go.”

My mom and she walked away, when I called out to them. They turned around and looked at me, confused.

“Can... Can I come?” I asked.

They both looked at me, so shocked. I had never been interested in attending any of the games and... well, they also banned me from the school grounds, so there was no reason to return. I still had a little over a week of cleaning the school, so technically I could go.

“You want to come?” my mother asked.

I nodded.

“Can I?”



“What is keeping you?” my dad shouted.

“A moment, honey!” my mother said.

“We are already late!”

“Please?” I asked.

Elena looked between me and my mom. I couldn't quite read her. We hadn't spoken much after she heard Brendon and I were kind of seeing each other. We had not defined what we were, and I just wanted to take things as they came. I believed he did, too.

“This wouldn't have anything to do with a certain star quarterback?” my mother asked me.

I felt myself blush. We all knew I wasn't coming to the game to watch Elena cheer.

“Well...”

I trailed off, unable to answer the question, and felt my cheeks getting warmer.

“Can you behave?” my mom asked.

I looked up at her.

“Haven't I been good these weeks?” I asked her.

She thought it over, then nodded.

“You have.”

“So... can I go?”

She smiled a sweet smile.

“Well, I am sure some extra motivation for Brendon wouldn’t be bad. Seeing his girlfriend among the audience is probably only a plus.”

“We are not...”

I glanced at Elena, who was waiting, looking at me a little skeptically.

“We are just... hanging out,” I said.

My mother chuckled.

“Sure. Come, grab your jacket and let’s go.”

“I can go?” I asked excitedly.

She nodded, and I hurried in to get my leather jacket I could wear over my t-shirt. We then all hurried downstairs. My dad looked at me, confused, when I walked by him.

“Wait, Emma is coming too?”

“Let’s go dad!” I said.

He just shrugged, and we all got in the car and drove to the school where the game was being held. It was close to starting, and we hurried to find some seats. Elena ran to the other cheerleaders. I could see Simone being quite annoyed that Emma was late, but it didn’t seem like they had begun yet. The players were only running into the field and getting set up. It didn’t take me long then I found Brendon among them. I couldn’t help but smile as I watched him. The game begun, and for the first time I actually got into a football game. I sat there on the edge of my seat, constantly switching between

feeling excited and nervous. I knew people could get hurt in the game. And I didn't want to see a group of guys weighing the doubled of me landing on top of Brendon or something like that. He was amazing though, earning them points after points, and the entire audience stood up and cheered for him. I did too, shouting his name. Maybe it was a pure coincidence, but he suddenly looked right towards me. I was unsure if he saw me, but after that, it quickly became clear who won the game.

Our team!

They were all shouting and cheering, the players, as they ran to each other and began hopping up and down, while the losing team was walking away, not wanting to speak with anyone or watch the other hop around. I chuckled as I watched the players. The audience was clapping like crazy. Brendon was an excellent player. The team was lucky to have him.

***-Brendon-***

My family was waiting for me after I had showered and changed my clothes. It had been a good game, and we were going out afterwards, the entire team, to celebrate. I wanted to see them quickly before they went home. They smiled as I came closer, and my mother hugged me right away, telling me how proud she was. My dad came afterwards and hugged me. My brother just told me I played well while looking at his phone. It made me chuckle a little, but then I looked around and found someone else I had hoped to run into.

“I will talk to you later,” I said.

My mother grabbed my bag.

“Don’t be home too late,” she told me.

I nodded and then walked over to where Emma was standing together with her mom and dad. They were clearly waiting for Elena, and were just chatting. Emma saw me coming closer, and so did her parents.

“Well played, Brendon!” her dad said and held out his hand.

I took it and thanked him. Clearly, now that it had nothing to do with being alone with his daughter, he was thrilled to see me.

“We all gave it our best tonight,” I said.

“That you did!”

He sounded so excited, and I chuckled a little before glancing at Emma.

“Oh, I think I see Elena,” her mother said and stirred her father in another direction.

“Where? I don’t see her. Weren’t we supposed to wait for her?” her dad asked, confused.

Emma and I tried hard not to laugh as her mother helped us get a moment alone away from them, and her father’s overprotective behavior.

“You came,” I said.

“I did. I can’t believe you didn’t tell me you were playing.”

“I normally don’t have to tell people.”

“Well, you know me. I don’t care about such things,” she said and crossed her arms.

I smiled and stepped closer to her, placing my hands on her hips and leaned a little closer.

“Then why did you come?”

“Elena, of course,” she said. “She is on the cheerleading team.”

“Right! How could I forget?” I asked.

We smiled at each other. We both knew the real reason she had come. I leaned even closer and kissed her lightly. She let out a sweet little whimper that made my heart go crazy in my chest.

“Thank you for coming, troublemaker. I gave it all tonight to impress you,” I told her.

“You saw me?”

“How could I not notice you?” I asked her.

It really was an honest question. I didn’t know what it was, but something always drew me to her. She had just caught my eye that day she punched Trevor, and I never stopped looking in her direction. Emma smiled sweetly and wrapped her arms around my neck.

“Well, I am glad I could give you a little motivation,” she said.

“You definitely did.”

We smiled at each other, then I heard someone shout my name and saw our coach and the entire team had gathered together and were ready to leave.

“See you tomorrow?” I asked her and turned to her.

She smiled and nodded.

“See you tomorrow.”

I leaned down and left a light kiss on her lips before I let her go and then joined the others to go celebrate that we had won. I felt like I was flying, though. Not just the high of the win made me feel that way. No, it was the taste of the troublemaker on my lips that made me feel that way. What was she doing to me?

## *Chapter 28*

***-Emma-***

I knew right away who was knocking on my door the next day after school. We hadn't really seen each other the whole day. Fans at school surrounded Brendon, and I still had my chores. So, I was so excited when I heard the knocking. I sped down the stairs and opened the door. There he was... We said nothing. He just stepped inside and wrapped an arm around my waist before kissing me. I was glad he was holding me because he was making my knees weak.

“Hey,” he said as he pulled back.

“Hey,” I said back.

We smiled at each other, and I closed the door before taking his hand and leading him back to my room. We walked inside and I was about to close the door, but like my dad had super senses, he somehow knew.

“No closed door! Remember the rules!”

I sighed and closed my eyes for a moment. Brendon just chuckled, and I looked at him again, smiling as I saw him looking around my room.

“Wow, a look into who Emma is,” he said. “The mystery sister.”

“More like the problematic sister,” I chuckled and crossed my arms as I placed myself in the middle of the room.

“No, that’s a wrong definition of you,” he said.

“Oh?”

He looked over his shoulder and smiled, then grabbed a picture from my desk.

“Aw look at you!” he said and held up the picture.

It was me and my sister from when we were seven years old, having our birthday together.

“You’re adorable,” he teased me.

“Argh!”

I walked over to him and took the picture, placing it down on the desk.

“I should never have brought you here.”

“I think your dad agrees,” he teased me.

I shook my head and was about to walk away when Brendon grabbed my arm and pulled me back. He pressed me up against him and then made me move backwards over to the bed. I fell down on it with him on top of me, and the tension between us rose. He glanced at the half-closed door.



“It definitely is more private,” he whispered.

“Definitely,” I agreed.

We looked at each other and smiled a little secretively before he leaned closer and kissed me. I let out a little moan and his hands stroked my thighs, while he move in between them, pressing himself closer to me. I scooted a little higher on the bed and he followed me. He ran his hand up my inner thigh and I whimpered when he stroked over my covered pussy. His hand moved to my pants, then paused. He pulled back and his eyes were so heated it made me gasp.

*“I really fucking want to touch you,”* he leaned down and whispered in my ear. *“Can I?”*

I nodded, wanting him to. If our kisses were like this, then how wasn't it being touched by him? I could barely wait. Brendon opened my pants, but took it slowly, making sure I could stop it if I wanted to. Then he slipped a hand inside and I let out a little whimper that I couldn't keep in. Brendon's breathing only quickened, and it almost seemed like I was the one touching him. He found that sweet spot of mine and I leaned my head back, pressing it into the bed as he rubbed my clit.

*“Shit,”* he whispered against the skin on my neck and bit it.

It seemed like he was finding pleasure just from touching me. When he moved a little faster, I put my hand over my mouth. I was going to come. I was getting so close.

*“Brendon...”*

He moved back and then looked at me, a little concerned. I pulled him down to me and kissed him lightly.

*“Don’t stop.”*

He smiled and then picked up the pace a little. As my body shook and I came hard, I silently screamed, trying not to let out any sounds. I had made myself come before, but there was something unbelievable about Brendon doing it. I came for the longest I had ever done, and he continued to kiss and suck on my neck, keeping me going for so damn long. I was panting deeply when I finally came down, and he had such a smug smile on his lips when we looked at each other.

“Fuck, that was amazing,” I whispered and kissed him hard.

“How about I do it again?” he asked me when I pulled away.

I was about to tell him to go ahead, when suddenly I heard someone coming up the stairs. We quickly pulled away, and I fixed my clothes. Then my sister knocked on my door.

“Yes?” I asked and stood from the bed, while Brendon stayed seated on it.

She pushed the door opened and looked a little suspicious between us.

“Is he staying for dinner?” she asked.

I turned to Brendon. He smiled and nodded.

“He is,” I said.

“I will let mom know.”

“Great!”

Elena looked between us one more time, then she disappeared. I turned to Brendon, walking over to him, and he pulled me down, making me straddle him.

“That was fucking close,” I chuckled.

He did too. There was something exciting about sneaking around like this.

“I want to be alone with you, though,” he whispered against my lips. “If you, of course, would want the same?”

I nodded.

“I do. I really do,” I told him.

I hadn’t felt like this before. Every time we touched or kissed, I only wanted more of him. I knew I wouldn’t regret us ever being together, but my situation was complicated.

“I’m still grounded, though.”

“For how long? I want to take you out,” he said. “So, we can just be you and me.”

I sighed and leaned my forehead against his.

“I don’t know...”

“Damn...”

I nodded a little and just enjoyed being so close to him.

“My thoughts exactly,” I whispered.

“So, you insulted Trevor, so what?” he asked and pulled back. “Is it really necessary to keep punishing you for that? I

mean you apologized.”

I nodded.

“I did...”

I did more than just apologize. I did the last thing I ever thought I would do. I kissed the damn idiot.

“I can’t tell you when my parents will let me out,” I said.

Brendon sighed and fell down on the bed. He looked good like that. Beneath me and under my power. I smiled a little teasingly, as I ran my hands down his chest and stomach. His eyes went back to me and I smiled at him.

“Doesn’t mean we can’t have a little fun.”

His eyes turned heated again, but then a voice echoed into my room.

“And what’s going on here?”

We both turned our heads and saw my dad standing in the doorway. Brendon pushed up, and I got off him.

“Nothing,” I said.

“Sure. Nothing,” my dad said.

“Can you close the door?” I asked.

“Not a fucking chance. We have rules now that you’re grounded.”

“Dad...”

“And if it was up to me, no boys in your rooms grounded or not!”

My dad only pushed my door wider open, and I sighed, as he walked away before I turned to Brendon. He looked rather disappointed as well, but there was nothing to do. I would not be caught with my hands in his pants, and I easily would if we had the door wide open. It wasn't long though, then we were called to dinner.

***-Brendon-***

"And where have you been?" my mom asked as I entered the house.

She sat in the living room, reading a book.

"You know I was at Emma's," I told her and smiled as I stepped inside.

She smiled at me knowingly.

"And when am I going to meet Emma?" she asked.

"You have met her."

"When she was fifteen. It's three years ago," she said. "I knew the younger version of her. When am I going to meet the young woman?"

I smiled and chuckled a little before scratching my neck.

"I don't know."

"Are you hiding her from us?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"No, she is still grounded."

“Well, coming over for dinner wouldn’t be a problem, would it?”

I shrugged a little.

“I could ask.”

“Would make me thrilled if you did,” my mom said.

I smiled and was about to walk away when my mom called out to me. I turned around, and she looked me a little up and down.

“Something is different,” she said.

“What?”

“About you.”

“Me?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“What?” I asked, a little concerned.

“You’re... happy!”

I looked at my mom, shocked, and she chuckled a little.

“What is that supposed to mean? Did I not seem happy before?”

“No, it’s not that, but I know you weren’t in love with Simone in those last few months of your relationship,” she said. “She didn’t make you happy.”

“You noticed that?”

“I know my son!” my mom said.

I just nodded a little.

“No, she didn’t... Took me some time to realize, though.”

“People grow apart,” she said.

“Yeah... they do...”

“But now... now I see my son almost glowing from happiness,” she told me. “And I know why.”

I chuckled a little.

“I do like her.”

It only made my mom smile. She seemed, except maybe for Emma’s mother, the only one else who was happy we were starting something together. Others seemed skeptic about it or thought it didn’t make sense. Maybe it didn’t, but I didn’t care what they thought.

“I can see that,” she said.

“Everyone else seems weird about it, though.”

“Weird?”

“Like they don’t get it. They don’t get why I like her and honestly, I am not sure why I do either,” I told her.

“Is that a problem?”

“To others? Yeah!”

“But they aren’t the ones dating her, are they?” my mom asked.

I shook my head, and she patted the seat beside her on the couch. I went over to her and sat down.

“Well, if you’re the one dating her, it should only matter to you.”

I nodded. I agreed with that.

“So, does it?”

“No.”

“Then why are you worried?” she asked.

I shrugged a little.

“Maybe they are getting into my head,” I said, chuckling nervously.

My mom placed her hand on her shoulder.

“Don’t let them,” she told me.

“Easier said than done.

“You like the girl so much. I can see that. She brings something out in you that I have not seen others bring out in you. Not even your friends. A freer side. A more carefree one.”

“Others would think she was going to bring me down.”

“I don’t believe that is true,” my mom said. “I think you’re changing each other.”

“Yeah?”

“Well, has Emma gotten into any trouble since you two started dating?”

I shook my head.

“But that could just be because she is already on thin ice.”



“Maybe when she is done serving her punishment, then you might find out if that is true, or if it has something to do with you. I think it does.”

I smiled a little. It was nice talking to my mom. She always seemed to have the answer or could make you worry less. My dad was far too busy, often working late nights, to even be there to talk about it.

“I will wait and see.”

“All you can do,” she said.

“I’m going to get some sleep.”

“Sleep well.”

“You too.”

## *Chapter 29*

***-Emma-***

I had one week left, then I didn't have to clean the school anymore. The principal was just inspecting a little of my work while I was dusting off some shelves in her office.

"You have done very well, Emma. I am surprised," she said as she walked around the room, almost following me to check I did everything well enough.

"Thank you," I said.

I didn't have my earphones in while I was in her office. It felt too risky to do so. I feared she might have something to complain about.

"You only have a week left," she said.

"I do."

"Then I really hope to never see you again."

I closed my eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath before I turned to her.

“Don’t worry. I am not coming back.”

“Good. No more assaulting my star players.”

She pointed at me with a painted nail, and I nodded obediently before turning away.

“And I would suggest not dating any of them, either.”

I turned back, shocked, whipping my head around.

“What?”

“Brendon has a bright future ahead of him, and don’t think I don’t hear what is going on,” she said.

“Are you telling me I can’t date him?” I asked.

She shook her head.

“I can’t tell you that.”

“So, what are you telling me?” I asked.

“I’m suggesting you don’t ruin that boy’s future. He has amazing grades, does so well on the team and has made this school shine. Don’t ruin it for him.”

“I’m sorry. What is it exactly you think I will do to him?” I asked and crossed my arms as I turned my body.

“I think you will corrupt him.”

“Corrupt him? You mean get him to drink and do drugs?”

“Most likely. First it is skipping school, then comes the rest.”

I sighed, so tired of everyone telling me I was going to destroy Brendon. I mean, I had believed it myself. I had told

him us getting involved was a bad idea, but I could not stay away or even get him to stay away. We just couldn't, and I was believing it could actually work out between us. Everyone else, though, they still believed I was going to ruin his future, and now even the fucking principal was telling me to let him go as well.

“Listen, I care about Brendon,” I told her. “And I protect those I care about. I would never ruin anything for him.”

“So, you say, but Emma, I don't think you do it on purpose. It's just who you are.”

I looked at her, shocked. Her words hurt. I had to admit, but I would not have this discussion with her. It was none of her business.

“If you will excuse me, I have more rooms to clean.”

She didn't stop me as I took my things and walked out of her office. I tried hard not to cry as I left, but the tears still stung in my eyes.

***-Brendon-***

I had practice after school. So, of course, I was staying later. It meant, though, when I got off, I could go see Emma, but just as I was leaving the locker room, Trevor called out to me. He was pulling down a t-shirt over his head, and I turned to him.

“Why in such a hurry, golden boy?” he asked me.

“I am meeting someone.”

“Oh, you mean Emma?”

Suddenly, everyone seemed interested in our conversation. At least those close around us.

“Yeah, Emma,” I confirmed.

He smiled smugly.

“Has something to say?” I asked.

“No, I mean I would be in a hurry too,” he said. “She is a wild thing.”

“And she would punch you again if you got too close,” I told him.

He chuckled, and I rolled my eyes.

“Nah, I think she likes it a little rough. What do you guys think?” Trevor asked and looked around at his friends before turning to me. “But, of course, Brendon can answer that.”

“You’re such a dick,” I told him.

“Oh, so you haven’t fucked her yet?”

“I will not answer that.”

“Oh, come on, we need to know. Is it true she sells her body for a little weed?”

“That’s fucking disgusting,” I told him.

“Or maybe it is true she likes to be fucked by multiple guys,” he said making the others laugh. “What do you say, Brendon? Up for sharing?”

I had had enough of his bullshit. I dropped my bag and moved closer to him, pushing him up against a lockert behind

him. Aaron quickly stepped in, and so did Trevor's friends. Aaron got in between us.

"Brendon, stop, he is not worth it," Aaron said.

I wasn't so sure anymore. Maybe I should check if Emma broke his nose properly. Trevor just smiled, of course. I was about to back off when Trevor spoke again.

"I know for a fact she tastes sweet," he said.

He ran a finger along his bottom lip as I looked at him, confused.

"The kiss we shared... That was hot. Her sister knew nothing but Emma... Oh, she knows how to make it so good you get hard in seconds."

I had had enough. I went for him...

***-Emma-***

I was going by the boys' locker room when I heard the shouting and the yelling. I didn't know if I should go in there, but it sounded fucking serious. I looked around for any teachers first, but I couldn't see anyone. I was unsure if someone was getting very hurt. I jumped inside and saw Brendon and Trevor on the ground. Brendon was punching him over and over, but was bleeding himself as well. Aaron and a few others were fighting Trevor's friends, and it looked like half the team against the other half.

"Brendon! Stop!" I shouted.

I ran over to him and tried grabbing him, but his arm slipped from my grip.

“Brendon!”

I tried going for him again, but then Trevor rolled them around and punched Brendon. I looked around for something I could use to break them off, but I couldn't see anything.

“Stop it!” I shouted again, but they weren't listening to me.

I groaned, frustrated, and jumped into the hallway. I ran to the principal's office and found the principal and a few teachers that were still there. They seemed to have a little meeting, and the principal quickly stood from her chair looking angry I had interrupted them.

“Emma, we are in a meeting!” she said.

“I know, but it is the football team. They are fighting!”

“What?”

All the teachers quickly left their seats and ran into the locker room. I followed behind them, and the shouting soon started. It wasn't long then they broke off the fight. The coach had also arrived now, and was shouting at his team for behaving like wild animals. I had my eyes on Brendon. He was bleeding from a cut by his eyebrow and nose. Trevor looked the same. They all looked like small kids, though, as they stood there and accepted the scolding of their lifetime. What the fuck had even happened?

## *Chapter 30*

***-Emma-***

I found Brendon a little later. Most of the team had to go by the nurse's office. She hadn't left yet, luckily, but there was enough for her to do. The nurse had stitched Brendon up and he was holding an icepack to his face, while he sat in a chair, waiting for Aaron to get stitched up too. Trevor and his friends had already left. I walked in and Brendon smiled when he saw me.

"You look like a fucking mess," I told him.

He chuckled a little.

"Well, you should see the other guy," he said.

"I did."

He held out his hand, and I walked over to him. I grabbed it and he stroked mine as he looked up at me.

"Don't worry, someone had my back," Brendon said and gestured to Aaron.



“And I fucking regret it.”

We both chuckled a little and Aaron hissed as the nurse ran the needle through his skin.

“What even happened?” I asked Brendon, but his entire face changed, and I looked at him, confused. “What?”

“It was nothing,” he said. “Dump stuff.”

“Trevor said you and he kissed,” Aaron confessed.

“What?”

“Aaron!”

“What?” he asked innocently. “Don’t you want to know if it is true?”

He looked at his friend, and I turned to Brendon too. I knew it... I fucking knew it. Trevor couldn’t keep his mouth shut, and was just waiting for the moment to reveal what had happened so he could use it to his own advantage. Brendon wasn’t looking at me, though, and I feared what he was thinking.

“Brendon...”

“You don’t need to say anything. Trevor is a fucking asshole, and I knew he lies like crazy.”

I sighed and knew I couldn’t be dishonest about this.

“He wasn’t lying...”

Both guys looked at me, shocked, and I looked at the ground. Brendon slowly let his hand slip from mine and I crossed my arms.

“I didn’t want to,” I told him and looked at him.

“What does that mean?”

He lowered the icepack and sat up straighter and looked at me concerned.

“He blackmailed me. Back when I was forced to give him an apology. He told me that unless I kissed him, he was going to tell his parents I had only insulted him again and never given him an apology. I couldn’t bring my family into more troubles. So, I... kissed him,” I admitted.

I looked at the ground again, and the entire room seemed to turn quiet. The nurse patched Aaron up and then left us to ourselves. They were her last patients, and it was clear she knew when some people needed privacy.

“He blackmailed you?” Brendon asked, shocked.

I nodded, and I suddenly felt his arm around my waist. I turned to him and looked at him, surprised.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want anyone to know. I was fucking humiliated that I even did it, but I didn’t want to risk anything.”

“Fuck, he is an asshole!” Aaron said.

I looked at him and smiled a little. He smiled back. I had never spoken much to Aaron, but it felt like we were sharing a moment just then.

“I agree,” I said.

“I should have punched him harder.”

I turned to Brendon and shook my head before running my hand through his hair and resting it on his neck.

“No, don’t ever do something like again. Not for me.”

“Why not? You can do it for your sister,” he said.

“Yes, and look where it got me!” I said. “Look where you two are!”

Brendon looked down for a moment before he could meet my eyes.

“I am not worth that!”

“That’s not true,” he said.

“Brendon, everyone thinks I am going to bring you down, and this...” I said. “This just seems like they might be right. I warned you too!”

“It was *my* decision!” he said.

“Yes, but you only made the decision because you and I are now... well, we are...”

Brendon just looked at me, waiting for me to finish that sentence.

“Involved,” I said.

He smiled a little at how I ended the sentence, but then nodded.

“You wouldn’t have made that choice, if we weren’t...”

“I am not sure that is true,” he said.

“But it is. You don’t punch people,” I said. “I made you do that, and now I think maybe it is best if you and I don’t continue.”

Brendon looked at me, shocked, then shook his head.

“Don’t say that,” he said.

“Brendon... really... look at where you are! I can’t be the reason your entire future is ruined,” I told him.

“You’re not!”

“Brendon...”

“You’re not, Emma!” he said. “I lost my mind. I know that. It won’t happen again. I promise, even if he tells me he fucked you or something, I will be a good boy and not do anything. I will ignore him.”

His words of choice made me smile a little, and he smiled back.

“Don’t say that’s over,” he told me almost a little pleadingly.

I looked at him, shocked. I had not expected it to hit him so hard when I said it was not a good idea that we continued this.

“I’m... going to head home.”

We both turned to Aaron, who had been caught in the middle of it all, and it was clear he wanted to make a quick escape. Brendon nodded to him, and he said a quick goodbye to us before he left the room. Brendon pulled me closer and down onto his lap.

“I don’t want it to end,” he said.

“But maybe it should.”

“No!”

“Brendon...”

“You make me happy, Emma,” he said.

“And I make you punch people.”

He shook his head.

“Yes! Today wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t started something.

“I don’t think that is true. I have wanted to punch him for a long time!”

Brendon tried joking a little, but I was not laughing and his smile died. He sighed and then leaned his forehead against mine.

“I don’t want us to stop. We have barely begun,” he whispered.

I sighed too. I didn’t want it to end either, but everyone seemed to be right. I couldn’t deny it truly seemed like they were. He was being dragged down by me. I was changing him... And not for the better.

“Emma...”

His lips suddenly found mine, and I moaned a little. I couldn’t think when he was kissing me, though, and I turned my head.

“Don’t do that,” I said and got off him. “I can’t think when you do that.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t.”

“Think?” I asked.

He nodded, and I crossed my arms, looking at him a little annoyed.

“I just mean, I think you’re over analyzing this!”

“No, I am not! I warned you and everyone else warned us both!” I told him.

“But it doesn’t matter what others think!” he said. “It matters what *we* think.”

He stood up too and grabbed my hand, pulling me a little closer, but not touching me, except holding my hand.

“Brendon, I just... think it’s not a good idea. I don’t want to ruin things for you. You have so much in front of you. What if I just... mess it up?”

“How?”

“What if I... make you do something?”

“Like?”

“Like punching people,” I said.

“I made that decision, Emma, and I promise I will never do that again. I swear it.”

I wasn’t sure I believed that, and I knew he could see it on my face.

“Maybe... Maybe if you told me everything that happened between you, then there won't be another trigger,” he said.

“What else do you think happened?” I asked him.

“You tell me!”

“I kissed him! That's it!”

“That's it?”

“I promise!”

I reached up and touched his cheek, careful about not putting too much pressure on it since it was bruised. He smiled a little, and it confused me.

“What?”

“You really want me to believe that? I mean, you are almost desperate.”

I looked at him, shocked.

“Of course! I don't want you to think I would ever sleep with a pig like Trevor!”

He chuckled a little, and I couldn't help but smile.

“So, just a kiss?” he asked.

“I promise, just a kiss.”

Brendon smiled and reached up with his other hand and brushed my cheek with his fingers. It sent shivers down my spine, and I continued to smile.

“You feel that?” he whispered.

I looked at him, a little confused.

“It’s so good, Emma,” he said. “How could you ever ruin anything for me when this is so good?”

I sighed a little.

“I’m messed up,” I whispered.

“It’s okay, troublemaker. I think you’re actually more lost.”

“Lost?”

He nodded.

“I think you just need some time to find yourself,” he said and smiled.

I smiled back, and my heart was going crazy inside my chest.

“But don’t be afraid for me,” he said. “I know who I am and what I want. I would let no one ruin that. Not even you.”

I chuckled a little, and Brendon smiled, his eyes showing his amusement.

“Well, I am glad you won’t let me stop you,” I said sarcastically.

“I won’t,” he said. “I care a lot about you, but I wouldn’t let you change me completely.”

“So, you would let me change you?”

“Only for the better,” he said.

I looked at him, confused. I had always seen myself as a person who made more trouble than she did any good, so I couldn’t quite understand what Brendon meant.



“The better?”

“You make me smile.”

“Well, that’s easy,” I said and reached out, squeezing his side a little and he grabbed my wrists, giving me a warning with his eyes. “You’re ticklish.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

I chuckled a little and smiled teasingly at him.

“Oh... then what?”

“I can’t explain it,” he said and placed his hand on my cheek again. “You just make everything better.”

“How?”

“I told you I can’t explain it.”

“I have a habit of breaking things,” I said. “I can’t see how I make anything better.”

“You just do.”

He leaned closer and kissed my forehead.

“Don’t be scared.”

I exhaled deeply, not sure what to think or feel right now. The last thing I wanted was to hurt Brendon. He truly had so much good going for him, and today had made me scared. Terrified, actually. He said it wouldn’t happen again, but how could we be certain? A guy like Trevor didn’t change, but could Brendon really stop it from getting to him again?

“I don’t want it to end either,” I whispered.

“So, don’t let it.”

“What if it happens again?” I asked him.

“It won’t.”

“How can you be sure?”

He smiled and kissed me lightly.

“Because you will break up with me if it does.”

I smiled a little.

“Definitely.”

“Then it won’t happen again.”

I was scared. Even though he did his best to calm me, I could feel it. Brendon hugged me to him and I hugged him back. I was scared, but I wouldn’t let this break us. I trusted him if he said it wouldn’t happen again.

## *Chapter 31*

***-Emma-***

It was my last day at the school. Mr. Carlsen was there expecting all my work and nodding approvingly. He had definitely enjoyed the month off. He was just smiling, as he looked at it all, and he looked all refreshed and not at all tired or even a little grumpy. I could get off earlier since I had been doing so well, and because the principal really just never wanted to see me again. So, once the bell rang, I would be off as well. The principal had made a comment, though, saying that she hoped she wouldn't see more of her star football players fighting over me again. If she just understood, it had nothing to do about fighting over me. Brendon and Trevor were not friends, and I knew something had been boiling between them. Trevor liked to be the center of attention, but he would never be as good as Brendon at anything, really, and it was Trevor who had pushed him. He could just have kept his mouth shut and Brendon wouldn't have thrown any punches. I was still worried about it, but I had to trust Brendon and that

he could control himself. He wasn't me, after all. I was the one with a temper. Not Brendon. My therapist had been very clear about not projecting. I hadn't even realized I was doing it until I brought up the incident. And she had quickly helped me find out where my fears were coming from, which was the fear of losing. Rather run before others could. I had to be strong, though, and fight through it. I had to put work into our relationship like Brendon was or we would get nowhere.

“Very nice.”

I snapped out of my trance as I stood leaning against a wall in the classroom I had just cleaned up.

“You think so?” I asked.

Mr. Carlsen turned to me and smiled.

“You have kept this school spotless. Even the bathrooms.”

“Yeah, they somehow got worse every day.”

Mr. Carlsen only laughed, and I smiled a little.

“Well, you did well, and this is your last day. You should pat yourself on your shoulder, but I hope not to see you again,” he said.

I chuckled a little.

“Don't worry. I am not coming back.”

The bell rang, and we smiled at each other.

“Thank you though,” I told him.

“For?”

“Just for treating me nicer than others,” I told him. “I know you didn’t ask to get stuck with a troubled teen like me.”

“It was only for a few days, then you could take care of everything yourself.”

“Still,” I said and shrugged. “Few think I have a lot going for me.”

“Well, they don’t see the potential I do.”

I smiled a little, feeling myself blush.

“Hey!”

Suddenly, Brendon poked his head inside, smiling at us both.

“Is she free?” he asked Mr. Carlsen.

“That she is.”

“Good, then I’m going to take her.”

“Go ahead.”

Brendon grabbed my hand and pulled me with him.

“Brendon!” I chuckled before looking behind me. “Bye, Mr. Carlsen.”

“Don’t come back!” he yelled after me.

I laughed and followed Brendon outside. The sun was shining and everyone just seemed happy that it was Friday.

“Freedom!” Brendon yelled as he jumped outside with me right behind him.

“And here I thought you loved school.”

He turned to me and looked at me, almost offended.

“Who the hell loves school?”

“A golden boy like yourself,” I teased him and wrapped my arms around his neck.

His arms came around my waist, and then he leaned down and kissed me. The students walking by us teased us and whistle, and I quickly pulled away.

“Maybe not here. Besides, now that I have served my punishment, I am technically not allowed back.”

“Means you can’t come and see me play on Sunday?”

I shook my head.

“I will ask my dad to film it. He seems very invested.”

We both laughed, and then I heard a car honk. I turned my head and saw Elena waiting further away. She knew I was getting off earlier, so she was going to drive me home.

“I need to go,” I told him.

“Talk to you later.”

I kissed him lightly.

“I will call you.”

“You better,” he promised.

I walked away, but then turned.

“Don’t you have a party to go to?” I asked him.

“Yeah, and wish you would come. So, call me!”

I waved a goodbye, then ran my sister. I got in the car, and then we drove home. She was going to the party as well. It was Simone who was throwing it this time. I wasn't that thrilled about Brendon going, but I knew he was done with her. I knew she wasn't done with him, though. Elena hurried to her room when we got back, so she could get herself ready. I went to the living room and threw myself down. Elena left quickly again, going early to start the pre-party, while I was stuck there on the couch just scrolling through Netflix. An hour or two went by, then my parents came home. They were chatting happily, and I saw my mom was carrying a small white box, which made me think she had brought home a cake.

“What's in the box?” I asked.

“Why don't you come and see?”

She walked to the kitchen, and I turned to my dad, who smiled happily at me and then waved me along. I followed them into the kitchen and my mom opened the white box. As I had guessed, it was a cake, but it had something written on it.

“Why did you write on the cake?” I asked my mom.

“Read it.”

I looked at her a little annoyed, but then did my hardest. There were only two words, and I could make sense of them.

“Not... Grounded.”

It took me a moment for my mind to process what it was I had just read, then I looked at my parents. My mom was smiling excitedly, and my dad looked happy.

“Wait... you mean that?” I asked.

My mom nodded, and I felt so happy. I couldn't contain myself. I screamed excitedly and then went to hug them both.

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”

“You have done so well,” my mom said. “We thought since you were done cleaning the school, it was only fair we made you not grounded anymore.”

“But you still have a curfew,” my dad said.

“Eight?” I asked.

“Eleven,” he said.

I looked at him happily, then hugged him hard again.

“Wait, does this mean I can go to the party too?” I asked.

“What party?”

“The one Elena went to. Simone is throwing it.”

“Oh, you want to go with your sister?” my mom asked.

I shook my head.

“No, actually... Brendon is there,” I said and felt a little embarrassed.

My parents knew we were seeing each other, but it still felt strange talking to them about it. I had never had any boyfriends to bring home, but I knew they liked him.

“Well, if Brendon is there, you can go,” my mom said.

“Yes!”



“But eat some cake first.”

I devoured the slice I got. Then I hurried to my room, texting him, and then got ready.

***-Brendon-***

My friends were already drunk, and I had had a few beers but nothing strong. I had quickly caught onto what Simone was doing. While it wasn't uncommon for her to throw big parties as well, I saw her being overly flirty with Trevor. A person she had once told me she wouldn't let touch her even if they were the last two people on earth. I ignored it. If she wanted to be with him, she could. She knew she would be another number on the list, and I would not be there to comfort her. I received a text later in the evening that Emma was coming. After that I really couldn't care less what stupid things my friends were doing or if Simone had her tongue down Trevor's throat. I believed they both thought it would bother me, but it didn't, and when I saw Emma enter the house, I hurried over to her. I picked her up, and she let out a happy little laugh.

“Brendon!” she chuckled, as I put her down and then kissed her hard. “What has gotten into you?”

She pulled back and smiled.

“Sorry, I might be a little tipsy,” I told her and held up two fingers close to each other.

She laughed and ran her finger over my lips.

“Well, you taste of beer,” she said.

We smiled at each other. Then handed her the can I had, and she took it and drank from it.

“So, you’re really free?” I asked.

“Not grounded anymore. My mom bought a cake and everything.”

“Perfect! Then you’re coming over for dinner.”

“Dinner?”

“At my place.”

“I am?”

“You are.”

“When?” she asked, looking a little nervous.

“How about we do it after the game on Sunday? I will be starving.”

“You aren’t going out to celebrate?”

“We might lose.”

“With you playing, you won’t,” she said confidently.

“Well, I am thrilled my girlfriend believes so much in me,” I told her.

“Your girlfriend?”

“Can’t I call you that?” I asked her.

She smiled sweetly, then nodded.

“You can.”

“Good, because I really like to call you *my* girlfriend.”

She shook her head at the funny way I said it. Maybe I was quite tipsy. I was acting more foolish than usual, but it made her smile, so it was worth it.

“I really like it too,” she said and pulled me closer, kissing me slowly, then more demanding, as if she couldn’t get enough of me.

It took my breath away.

“I think we should go to the bathroom,” she whispered.

“Both of us?”

She nodded and bit her lower lip. Then she grabbed my hand and pulled me with her. Apparently, making her officially my girlfriend did something to Emma. She was suddenly starving for me, and after pulling me into the bathroom and locking it, she pressed me up against the sink. She got on her knees in front of me, and I felt my blood pumping faster, hardening my cock.

“Fuck...”

I watched as she opened my pants and pulled them lower, freeing my cock, and then taking me in her hand, stroking me. Shit, that felt good. She looked up at me almost a little nervously, and a thought popped into mind.

“Have you ever done this before?”

“Sucked someone off? No,” she said.

“Just don’t bite me,” I joked.

She rolled her eyes, then she took me inside her sweet mouth. I groaned from the pleasure going through me. Fuck, it felt good, and I got ahold of her ponytail, just holding tightly, and letting her set the pace. It was driving me slowly nuts, though. It felt so fucking amazing. I didn't remember it could be this good, but Emma was always surprising me. She was driving me wild for her, and I couldn't help but taking over a little, guiding her to go faster. Suddenly someone tried opening the door, and I glanced at it, but it was locked.

“Could you hurry?” someone shouted from the other side.

I could hear the voice belonging to a woman, but not who it was. The music from the living room was masking the source a little.

“Oh, shit... yes, hurry,” I whispered to Emma because the pleasure was building fast and I was getting desperate to come.

Emma sucked me deeper, and I hit the back of her throat. I was coming. I knew in just a fucking moment I was going...

*“Fuck...”*

I tried being as quiet as I could. I believed the music masked my voice too. But I couldn't help but groan deeply from the pleasure rippling through me and my balls, getting emptied of everything I had. I came down her throat. Emma swallowed it all before moving back and wiping her lips with her thumb.

“Shit...”

She slowly stood up, and I pulled her in for a kiss.

“Liked that, golden boy?”

“Very fucking much,” I whispered against her lips.

The knocking turned louder.

“Hurry!”

We smiled at each other. I fixed my clothes, and then Emma went and opened the door. She got a strange look on her face and just hurried out. I looked after her, confused, but then I stepped out and saw it was Simone who had been knocking. She looked at me with an open mouth. I gave her an awkward smile, then I hurried after Emma. I found her among the group in the living room and stepped over to her. We looked at each other nervously, then laughed.

“It’s not funny,” I said, but I was still laughing.

“She is going to make my life hell.”

Emma wrapped her arms around my neck, and I shook my head.

“No, I won’t let her.”

“Oh, my knight in shining armor,” she teased me before kissing me.

Yes, this night just turned so much fucking better.

## *Chapter 32*

***-Emma-***

I stood in front of my mirror at home, running my hands down my dress for the... I had forgotten how many times. My hands were disgustingly clammy, and I was very nervous. I was going to go eat with Brendon and his family soon, and I was doing my best to look presentable. Normally, I would wear some jeans, a top and a leather jacket. Now I was wearing a black dress with long sleeves. My hair was down and I had put on some light makeup. This was not at all me, but I wanted to impress his parents. And if the game didn't go well, it was important I gave them no other reason to be upset.

*Knock.*

*Knock.*

“Come in!”

My mother suddenly poked her head through the door. I was allowed a closed door again, and they had given me back my phone and laptop. Things were actually going smoothly.

“Oh, look at you!” she said.

“Please don’t.”

“What?” she asked. “I barely said anything.”

“I feel really weird.”

“But you look so beautiful.”

She walked over to me and grabbed a lock of my hair, pushing it a little in front of my shoulder. She was just smiling from ear to ear as she looked me over. For the first time in a long time, I saw pride shining in her eyes, and she even looked a little tearful.

“Mom? Are you okay?” I asked her.

“Oh, sorry, I just... for moment, I just felt like I had missed you growing up,” she told me.

“Me growing up?”

“Time moves funnily, and your small babies are suddenly not babies anymore. You try to act like they are because you want them to always need you, but they grow up.”

“Okay, it’s getting weird,” I told her.

We both chuckled, but I understood what she meant. I understood she was seeing me in a new light. I was seeing myself in a new one. Since all of this shit with Trevor had gone down, things had changed. *I* had changed.

“You look so beautiful,” she told me.

“I do?”

She nodded.

“I wasn’t sure...”

“You do,” she quickly said, and then winked at me.

I smiled at her, and she ran her hand down my hair.

“You have really come far,” she said.

“Come far?”

“Just personally,” she said. “You aren’t getting high or drunk, and you’re holding the curfew. You don’t argue with me and your dad. You don’t get into trouble.”

I looked down. I felt guilty about it all. I knew I had been acting out a lot, but I also knew why I had. My therapist had made me realize a lot of things.

“I guess I didn’t really care,” I told her and looked up.

She looked at me, confused.

“It felt like you had all given up on me. So, why did it matter if I did all those things?”

“Oh, Emma...”

“I thought no one cared,” I told her.

I had never been so honest with her before, and I could see how it touched her. My mom pulled me closer and hugged me. She was a little taller than me, so it really was nice, almost being enveloped by her.

“I’m so sorry, sweetie,” she said. “I really am. I never meant for you to feel like that.”



I felt the tears in my eyes as well now and did my best not to cry. I didn't enjoy crying, and I had already been vulnerable enough for one day.

"I care more now," I whispered. "Brendon made me care. Care a lot."

"He is a good boy."

I chuckled a little.

"Definitely."

My mom pulled back and wiped her eyes, and I did the same with me.

"Now, let's not get all worked up. You have an important date."

"It's not a date. I'm just meeting his parents."

"And that is a gigantic step," she said and ran her hand down my hair again. "I'm so proud of you."

I looked at her, shocked. I had never known how much I needed to hear those words, but now that she spoke them, they filled me with so much happiness.

"Really?"

"Really."

I hugged her again, and then pulled back, smiling up at her.

"Now, your dad just texted. They won the game."

"They did?" I asked happily.

"Your boyfriend played fantastic again."

I chuckled happily and enjoyed how my mom was referring to Brendon. It made me thrilled to hear.

“Well, then I better get going,” I said.

“Want me to drive you?”

“Do I want to be embarrassed in front of my boyfriend’s parents? Wait a moment... let me just think about that.”

My mom rolled her eyes and sighed.

“No, I will be fine. I choose no public humiliation.”

“Always so dramatic,” she teased me.

I chuckled a little, then told her goodbye before I went to Brendon’s.

***-Brendon-***

I had barely had time to shower before Emma was coming over. I thought I had dressed nicely, but when I opened the door, I was met with an incredible sight. Emma was dressed in a black dress that didn’t show off much or anything, but it made her look so damn beautiful. She only became hotter in my eyes wearing that, and I lost my jaw.

“Are you going to invite me in?” she asked.

“I’m sorry stranger, I am waiting for my girlfriend, but thank you for the offer.”

She rolled her eyes and stepped in, pushing me back and I closed the door, grabbed her hand and then kissing her as I brought her closer.

“You look so beautiful. Where have you been hiding that dress?” I asked her.

She smiled at me secretively.

“Well, I guess you will have to come over at some point and find out.”

I loved to hear it. Emma knew how to get my blood pumping, just using a few words. I was about to say something back when I heard my mom yelling from the kitchen.

“Brendon! Is that Emma?”

“Yes, it is!”

I took her hand and led her to the kitchen where my mom and dad were. My mom made sure he didn't have any work tonight or more like make sure he took time off, so we could focus on me and Emma. My mom smiled as she saw Emma and quickly wiped her hands before coming over to us and hugging Emma. That clearly shocked her. She wasn't the biggest hugger, and it made me chuckle.

“Oh, look at you!”

My mom pulled back.

“You have grown so much!”

Emma chuckled a little nervously.

“It's good to you again, Mrs. Martin.”

“Oh, please, call me Sarah,” she said.

Emma smiled, then went and said hello to my dad.

“My God, where is Sam?” my mom asked and looked around.

“Probably playing in his room,” I said as Emma and I sat on two stools by the kitchen island, snacking on some vegetable snacks.

We smiled at each other. It was already going very well this evening. It thrilled my parents to meet her, and that only made me happier.

“Could you get him?” my mom asked me.

“Mom, he lives on another planet. Let him!”

“He sits too much in front of a screen. He will forget to eat if I don’t remind him!”

“It’s a phase,” my dad said.

“You say that about everything!” my mom countered.

Emma and I chuckled. I reached out and stroked some of her hair behind her ear, before I leaned closer and kissed her.

“Thank you for coming.”

She blushed sweetly, then glanced at my parents. I turned my head and saw them watching us with a smile. I coughed uncomfortably, and Emma only blushed more. My mom forgot all about fetching Sam though, and continued with dinner, directing my dad around and telling him what needed to be done. It wasn’t long then we were finally at the table. My mom shouted for Sam, who then joined us at the table with his phone, of course.

“Put that away!” my mom said.

Sam didn’t react, and she just rolled her eyes before turning to me and Emma sitting in front of her and my dad.

“So, Emma, I have been all caught up on what happened over at the school,” she said.

Emma glanced at me.

“What? It’s not like it was a secret.”

She just shook her head.

“So, now that you are done cleaning the school, what do you plan to do next?”

“Next?” she asked. “Am I cleaning more schools?”

That made everyone laugh, and Emma smiled a little nervously.

“No, but I’m sure your sister is off to college soon, and so will Brendon and many others be as well.”

I saw Emma lose her smile. It was too early for us to talk about that. I still had a little under a year to figure it all out with her. I hoped we would still be together, but college was hard. It often made couples break up if they weren’t near each other.

“Well, I am not going,” Emma said.

“No, but that doesn’t mean you couldn’t have other ideas,” my mom said.

“Such as?”

“Like... maybe you have other hidden talents,” she said.  
“Talents, you could make a living off.”

Emma seemed to think about it as she ate a little. I hoped my mom hadn't overstepped, but then Emma surprised me.

“I enjoy drawing,” she said.

“Oh, really?”

She nodded.

“Ever considered getting into art school?”

“Isn't that very hard?” Emma asked. “And I am not sure I am *that* talented.”

“That's why you go to school and improve those skills.”

I had thought it might offend Emma or she might feel like my mom was overstepping, but it didn't seem that way. The two of them quickly began to lay out almost a plan for Emma, and she seemed excited. I didn't even know she drew. I had to interrogate her some more about that, I thought.

\*\*\*

After dinner, Emma and I went to my room. She wasn't going to stay over, but I felt compelled to ask. My parents had a rule, though. No girlfriends staying over when there was school tomorrow. I understood that. Emma's dad had made it clear parents understood what was on teenagers' minds. We probably wouldn't get much sleep.

“And you said I was cute, look at this,” she said and grabbed a small picture of me, dressed as a young football

player.

I walked over to her and took the picture, nodding.

“I know. I am adorable.”

She rolled her eyes, and I placed the picture away as she walked around, looking at the room. Then suddenly she sat down on the bed and smiled at me, a little flirty.

“So, I don’t have to go right this moment,” she said.

I walked closer to her and placed my hands on either side of her.

“No?”

“I think I might have a few minutes left.”

“What can we do with those minutes?” I asked her and then kissed her, pressing her into the bed and finding my place between her legs.

She chuckled happily, and we continued to kiss and caress each other. I wished we had a little more time and more privacy. I wanted more of Emma. I was crazy for her.

“How about we go out?” I asked her.

“Now?”

I shook my head.

“No, but on a date. You and me. A real one.”

“A real date?” she asked a little teasingly.

I nodded.

“Where would we go?”

“We could go eat, or see a movie.”

“I would love that.”

“Which one?”

“Let’s start with a movie,” she said.

“Want me in a dark room, troublemaker?”

She chuckled and nodded.

“Definitely. So I can corrupt you in all the good ways.”

“I love that.”

We both laughed, and she kissed my lips lightly.

“What then?”

“Well, I know my parents are out on Friday.”

“They are?”

I nodded.

“Eating with some friends. They are taking Sam with. They have a son his age,” I told her.

“So, it would just be us here? Alone?”

“How would you feel about that?” I asked her.

A big smile spread across her lips.

“I would really like that.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”



I kissed her again, harder, already getting so excited about it, but I had to control myself. *Friday*, I thought. Friday, we could have all the privacy we needed.

## *Chapter 33*

***-Emma-***

I was sitting in my room with my laptop and a few papers around me, trying to figure out if this art school might be something I could do. It was complicated for me to understand and I groaned loudly. Someone knocked on my door and I heard my mom on the other side.

“Yes?”

She opened the door and looked in.

“What is all that groaning?”

“I am just... working.”

“Working?” she asked.

She walked inside, now intrigued, and then grabbed a paper lying on my bed. She looked at it, and then her eyes grew wider.

“Art school?” she asked.

I nodded a little. She smiled and turned to me.

“What?”

“I think that’s a wonderful idea.”

“Might not happen. I can’t figure any of it out.”

“How about we do it together, then?” she asked.

I smiled and then grabbed all the papers, putting them together and then patting the empty seat beside me. My mom smiled too and sat down before we both looked at the computer.

“Remember, you can always ask for help.”

I nodded. Then we began looking at it all together.

\*\*\*

When I got ready for my date with Brendon, I was a little nervous. I had told my parents I wasn’t going to be home. My dad had a lot of things he was ready to say, but my mom had stopped him and just told me to have fun and “be safe”. I didn’t want to confirm or deny anything because I knew it would trigger my dad, and he would give me the speech again. I didn’t want to hear that damn speech ever again. I was eighteen. It was not like I didn’t understand how women became pregnant, and I certainly didn’t plan on getting pregnant tonight. I just wanted to spend some quality time with Brendon. Now that I wasn’t cleaning the school, I didn’t see him as much. He couldn’t forget his grades or the training he often had after school ended, which meant even when the bell rang, he was not off from “work”. It was why it was so important we found some time to spend together. He had

already texted me he was here when I ran down the stairs and said goodbye to my parents. I opened the door and ran outside, where Brendon was waiting. I leaned closer to him when I got in the car and kissed him. He had such a cheerful smile on his lips when I pulled back.

“What?” I asked.

“You look good,” he said and looked me up and down.

I wasn't in a dress tonight, but in much more casual clothes. Still, Brendon's eyes were almost shining as he looked at me.

“Drive, golden boy,” I said and pointed to the road.

He laughed and drove to the movie theater. We were watching a new zombie movie and snacking on popcorn and snacks. But we were only halfway into the movie when we had already eaten all the snacks and lost focus. Brendon's hand was suddenly very high on my thigh and it sent a delicious warmth through me. He just held it there, but I grabbed his hand and he turned to me, shocked, as I pushed it higher and higher. His eyes turned heated, and I leaned closer to him as he stroked me over my pants. I panted into his mouth, whispering his name.

*“You really want to see this movie?”* he whispered.

I shook my head. Not anymore.

*“Do you want to go?”*

“Have you parents left?” I whispered.

He nodded.

“They have.”

“Then let’s go.”

We quickly left our seats, apologizing to the people we walked by before we hurried out of the movie theater and went to Brendon’s car. Smiles were on our lips as we drove back to his place. When he was opening the door, I simply couldn’t wait and just as he had turned the key, I grabbed him and kissed him. He moaned in delight, and we stumbled through the door. He closed it and locked it, before we both worked on getting his jacket off, and then mine. We threw it to the ground, not caring. I jumped into his arms, wrapping my legs around him, and he easily carried me upstairs to where his room was. He closed the door with his foot after we got inside. We couldn’t stop kissing each other. We were too desperate for each other. Brendon laid me down, then pulled off his t-shirt. I pulled off mine and threw it away and his eyes turned more heated when he saw me in my black lace bra. I had some nice underwear lying around I had never worn, but I thought tonight was a good night to use them.

“What more are you hiding underneath, troublemaker?” he whispered, and leaned closer.

I unbutton my pants and slid them off, now only in my underwear. His eyes were practically burning as he ran them down my body.

“Fuck, you look so good,” he said and found my eyes again.

He kissed me and then unhooked my bra. It joined the clothes on the ground. He kissed his way down and went to

suck on one of my breasts. I gasped and ran my hands through his hair, tucking on it, but he didn't stay there for long, then he was kissing his way down my stomach.

*“Brendon...”*

“Has anyone ever gone down on you before?” he asked and kissed my hipbone.

I shook my head.

“Are you a virgin?” he asked and slid my panties off.

I shook my head again.

“How many?”

“One. You?”

“One,” he said.

I knew who he was talking about, but I could feel he wanted to ask me about *my* first. I shook my head, though, telling him not to ask. I would rather not talk about it. I had been high out of my mind when it happened and I regretted it like crazy. Brendon didn't ask, and then got on his knees on the floor, before he pulled me closer, and then his mouth was on my pussy. I let out a little scream of pleasure and fell down on the bed, clutching the sheets.

“Fuck... there,” I whispered, when he hit a spot that sent pleasurable sparks through me.

I thought I would be more nervous, but I wasn't. Not with Brendon. He made all the fear disappear and made me feel so good. He used his mouth so skillfully on me. And when found

the spot I liked, he pushed me hard right there, until I was screaming and coming on his tongue.

“Oh, *shit... yes!*”

He pushed me through the delicious pleasure, prolonging the orgasm, before he stood up and moved over me, kissing me.

“You still want to?” he asked.

I nodded.

“I want you,” I told him.

He smiled and kissed me again. I scooted further back on the bed. Brendon got rid of the last of his clothes. Then he got a condom from the drawer. He got on the bed and pulled off the wrapping before sliding it on. He leaned over me. I spread my legs further, and he moved in between them, positioning himself and then sliding slowly inside of me, filling me up. God, it felt good when he moved inside of me. It was a bit of a stretch. He was definitely above average, but I loved it. I loved how he filled me up and invaded my body with his. We both moaned softly when he was fully inside me.

“*God, you feel good,*” he whispered in my ear.

We were both shaking in each other’s arms. He began to move, sliding in and out of me, the pace quickening. He moved back a little, and I reached up, placing my hands on his neck, and looking into those blue eyes of his that were heated with lust. I loved looking into them. They shone with all his feelings, and I could see how much he enjoyed this. How

much he loved we were taking this step together. I did too. I never thought I wanted another guy to touch me, but Brendon wasn't just anyone. My heart was beating stronger and stronger for him. I knew it at that moment. I was falling for him. It wasn't quite love, and I was unsure if I would ever be brave enough to say the words, but I knew it was happening.

*"I need more,"* I whispered against his lips.

Brendon reached between us and found my clit. It didn't take a lot then I was coming again, and he followed right after, sliding in and then coming hard. His whole body went tight, and I could feel all those firm muscles underneath my hands. It felt amazing. *He* felt amazing. After that, we were both lying there, panting and recovering. Brendon was leaving small kisses up and down my neck and I giggled happily.

"Are you ticklish too, troublemaker?" he whispered in my ear, and I could hear the laughter in his voice.

"Maybe just a little."

He moved back and kissed me, and I moaned softly. His hands moved over my body again, turning me on.

"Give me a moment, then we are doing that again," he whispered.

I nodded. I was definitely not done for the night.



## *Chapter 34*

***-Emma-***

*Ding! Dong!*

“I got it!” I shouted as I ran down the stairs, in my red little dress I had bought for the occasion.

I opened the door and found Brendon on the other side. His eyes turned big when he saw me.

“What is that?” he asked.

“Don’t you like it?” I asked and turned a little. “I’m Santa’s little helper. Even got the ears.”

Brendon laughed, and I pulled him inside. My dress was green and red striped like the stockings of an elf. And I had put on small ears to make it look like mine was pointy, like an elf’s.

“You look so funny,” he told me, as he kissed me.

“I think I look good.”

He chuckled and shook his head, but it was clear he liked it. I had invited him over a few days before Christmas, since he had to go be with his family on Christmas's Eve, and I had to be with mine. He was going to be busy over the holidays, too. Brendon had a big family, and he was going to visit some of them. He was also going to celebrate New Year's with some extended ones in Europe, meaning I wouldn't see him until the new year.

"Is that Brendon I hear?" my mother asked as we walked into the kitchen.

"That it would be," Brendon said.

He walked over to my mother and hugged her, and she smiled happily at him before she returned to the Christmas cookies she was making. She had already prepared most of the food. It wasn't a big Christmas dinner or anything. We were just having something simple, but we had to have cookies. She stood strongly on that.

"Try one," she said and handed Brendon one.

"These are amazing!" he said.

I chuckled a little and shook my head. Brendon always knew how to charm my parents.

"Oh, stop it. They are good," my mother corrected.

"That's where you are wrong. They are amazing!"

My mother handed him another, and he went over to me, handing me one.

“Something tells me I am special, and you haven’t tasted them yet,” he whispered in my ear.

“That’s correct.”

I grabbed the cookie and took a bite and he wrapped his arm around my waist, and pulled me up against him. We stood like that and enjoyed the cookies. I felt so safe and warm in his arms. It was always amazing when he held me like that. I just knew nothing bad could touch me when he did. When we had eaten the cookies, Brendon quickly asked if we could help with something, but the dinner was ready. She just asked us to get the others and soon we were all sitting around the table. Elena might have been acting strange about me and Brendon dating, considering her friendship with Simone, but that had all changed after a little while. And now she was laughing and joking with us. Sometimes she would come watch movies with us too or go for a drive. It was really great how we could all hang out together now. Elena had completely quit boys now. She put all her energy into school, even though a few had tried to ask her out. I was trying my hardest too, as well. I had to finish high school in order to get into art school, but me and my mother were working hard on figuring out how I could do that with the struggles I had. It was taking extra help. But my parents were happy to put in both the work and money, so I at some point hopefully could finish high school and then maybe go to art school from there.

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When we had eaten dinner, Brendon and I went upstairs. My parents had allowed him to stay over since he was going to be gone for a while and we would not be seeing each other. I dropped his bag on a chair, and then just as he had closed the door, I walked over to him and pressed him against it.

“So, what do you wish for Christmas?” I asked him.

He chuckled a little and shook his head. We had promised each other no gifts. We didn’t want the pressure of it between us, and I liked that idea.

“A horny elf,” he told me.

“I can check with Santa.”

He continued to shake his head, then plucked off my little elf ears.

“Hey! I liked those.”

“I will not fuck an elf tonight,” he said.

“No? Who do you want then?”

“Who else but my lovely girlfriend?” he asked.

I smiled and kissed him first softly, but then it turned more passionate and I wrapped my arms around him before I sank to my knees. Brendon’s eyes quickly turned more heated. I loved how they did that whenever I went on my knees for him. I hurried to get his pants lower, getting so excited to drive him crazy. I always loved seeing him lose control to me. It turned me on like crazy, and I took him in my mouth, sucking him fast and hard.

*“Shit!”*

He bit down on his hand, so as not to make too much noise, and I continued to suck him harder, teasing the head with my tongue.

“Oh, fuck, slow down, Emma.”

I wasn't going to. I wanted him to come fast and hard, and soon he grabbed my hair hard and spilled his cum down my throat. He was shaking afterwards, barely able to stand. I loved that. I slowly got to my feet again, looking up at him smugly.

“Fuck, you just love to drive me crazy, don't you?”

I nodded, and my smile only grew. Brendon then picked me up and brought me over to the bed. He laid me down and pushed up my dress. When I made him come so fast, he always wanted to retaliate. He ripped off my red underwear, throwing it away, and then his mouth was there. I gasped and put my hand over my mouth, as he sucked hard on my clit before playing with it with his tongue.

*“Brendon!”*

I was going to come. I was going to come...

*“Shit! Yes!”*

I came hard, my whole body shaking and my thighs squeezing his head. He continued to prolong my orgasm, and it felt like I couldn't breathe until he finally gave me a break. He pulled away and smiled as smugly as I had.

“Turn around,” he said.

I smiled and did, and he found the zipper on my dress. Brendon pulled it off me, and then had me on my hands and knees. He got rid of his own clothes, then got on the bed behind me. He positioned himself and slid inside of me before he grabbed my hips and began to fuck me. God, it felt good. I wished we could be louder. I had quickly learned with Brendon; I liked to be loud. I liked to call out his name when I came, but we weren't alone in the house. I buried my face in my sheets as he continued to drive into me harder and harder. He reached around and stroked my clit. Then I was coming all over him. He continued to slide in and out of me, chasing his own release. He whispered my name when he drove into me one last time and then he came inside me, before he joined me on the bed. We both laid down on it, sweating and panting, as we looked at each other and smiled. I reached out and stroked his cheek, and he kissed the palm of my hand.

“I love you,” he said.

He smiled as I looked at him, shocked.

“You don't have to say it now, but I wanted you to know before I left.”

I nodded a little.

“Let's get cleaned up,” he said, and we left the bed.

***-Brendon-***

I was lying with Emma in my arms. Neither of us was sleeping. She was running her fingers along one of my arms, and I felt like there was something on her mind. I could guess

what, but I didn't want to bring it up if it made her uncomfortable to talk about. I had meant it, though. I really loved her.

“Did you mean it?”

Like she had read my mind, she asked that exact question. She turned her head and looked at me.

“Did you really mean it, or was it some post-orgasm thing?” she asked.

I smiled a little and stroke a small strand of hair away from her face.

“I meant it.”

Tears welled up in her eyes and I looked at her, a little confused.

“Why are you crying?”

She smiled at me.

“Because... Because I love you too,” she whispered.

I felt my heart go crazy in my chest. I leaned down and kissed her hard, pouring all my feelings into that kiss and making sure she felt how deep I meant those words.

“I love you,” I whispered again. “I love you, I love you, I love you.”

She laughed, and soon she wasn't crying anymore. She was smiling, and we both grew hungrier for each other. It was going to be a long three weeks away from her.

## *Chapter 35*

***-Brendon-***

“Brendon!”

I heard the sweetest voice call out my name just as I came out of the terminal. My family was walking behind me, but I dropped everything in my hands as Emma came running to me. She threw herself into my arms, and I laughed happily. I had missed her so much. Her lips found mine, and she kissed me hard. We had video chatted a few times, but I had had little time to talk with her. I hated that, but now we were finally reunited. My family laughed as they walked by us.

“Okay, let my son breathe,” my dad chuckled.

Emma pulled away and smiled, and I let her down, before she grabbed one of my bags and I took the other, following my family.

“I didn’t know you were going to be here,” I said.

“I wanted to surprise you,” she said and smiled at me.



I brought her closer to me and kissed her, pouring all my feelings into the kiss.

“I feel so damn lucky,” I whispered.

“Brendon!” my mom called.

I turned my head.

“Coming with us or going with Emma?” she asked.

I turned to Emma, who was smiling from ear to ear.

“I’m going with Emma!”

They waved at me, and I followed Emma to where she had parked her car. We got inside and then drove off. I told her all about my trip and she told me what she had been up to. We held hands, and it just all felt so nice and relaxed. I had missed her so much, and I squeezed her hand a little hard sometimes because it felt good to be back. Though, I did fear what was going to happen when I went off to college.

“What are you thinking?” Emma asked as she drove.

“Just... the future.”

She glanced at me, surprised, and I gave her a small smile.

“What happens in the future?”

“That’s what I don’t know...”

Emma turned a little sad and squeezed my hand back.

“What do you want to happen in the future?”

“I want to pack my girlfriend into a suitcase and take her anywhere I go.”

Emma chuckled, and I smiled, too.

“Really?” she asked.

“Really.”

Suddenly, Emma made a sharp turn, and I looked at the road, confused.

“You’re going away from my house,” I said.

“I know.”

She suddenly pulled into a small road going away from the main one and in between trees. She didn’t drive far, but just so we were hidden from prying eyes.

“Are you murdering me?” I asked.

“Better.”

“Oh better? Got some kinks we didn’t cover.”

She chuckled as she turned off the car and then unbuckled her seatbelt before she went to straddle me.

“You’re right, this is far better,” I said.

She kissed me, and her hands quickly went to my pants. She opened them and then reached inside. I leaned my head back and moaned as she stroked m. God I had missed her hands. She only did it until I was completely hard. My cock was pulsing with pleasure. She then, with a little help from me, could get one of her pant leg off and then pushed her underwear to the side. She slid right down on me. We both groaned deeply, loving to feel connected again. No words were really spoken. She just rode me, faster, faster, faster. The car

turned fucking hot. We weren't even kissing, just having our face close as we breathed the same air. She reached between us and stroked herself, and then we were fucking coming together. She had almost timed it perfectly. We slumped together down on the seat, just recovering.

“Fuck, I missed you,” I whispered.

She moved back and kissed me.

“I missed you too. So much.”

We sat like that for a little while, but I knew I had to go home. I wasn't going to stay away from her for long, though.

-Emma-

Brendon was already back in school just days after he had returned. We had spent a lot of time together, enjoying each other's company. It felt amazing spending those days with him. It was awful when school took a lot of time again. I knew I had a lot of work in front of me. I got a lot of special help so I could complete high school, but my parents had never been prouder, and we took it all step by step. It might take a long time, but I was determined. More determined than I had ever been before. I was seeing Brendon after school. He must have seen me coming as I walked up to his house. The door opened and there he was. I kissed him when I stood in front of him, and we quickly went to his room. We were all giddy and happy every time we saw each other. But when we fell down on the bed, I heard a funny sound and turned, seeing I had landed on top of some magazine. I grabbed it and saw it was one for a college.

“Harvard?” I asked and looked at Brendon.

It was strange. Brendon didn't look happy when I held up the little magazine, explaining about the college and everything you could look forward to.

“Yeah, that's just my dad's suggestion.”

He grabbed the magazine and threw it to the floor. He tried kissing me again, but then I grabbed one of the others lying on the bed, holding it between us like a shield.

“And Princeton.”

He grabbed the magazine again and threw it on the ground.

“Another suggestion.”

“So, what will it be?” I asked.

“What?”

“Harvard or Princeton?”

“Neither.”

“Why? You're a perfect student. Smart! A star athlete! You got nothing, but A's,” I said.

Brendon smiled a little.

“Yeah, and I would go to a college with the same people.”

“And that is bad because...”

“I don't want to go to a school like that,” he said.

“You don't like yourself because I think you're quite great.”

He smiled a little.

“No, I just... I want to go there not because of its status and popularity. I want to go somewhere of *my* choosing.”

“You’re feeling pressured to choose?”

“It’s not just my dad. It’s the teachers too, and the principal.”

“What about your mom?”

“She just wants me to be happy with your choice.”

“Which is?”

“If I could choose?”

I nodded.

“NYU.”

“You want to go to New York?” she asked and sat up.

I sighed and nodded.

“That’s... That’s... far,” she said.

“Many of these are too,” he said and held out his hand towards all the magazines lying around with different colleges. Many of them were hard to get into.

“Yeah... that’s... of course, right,” I said, and bit my lower lip.

Brendon sighed and sat up as well, moving a little closer.

“It’s far from California, though. NYU.”

He nodded.

“It is.”

“Like... all the way on the other side.”

He nodded again.

“We would... never see each other,” I said.

“Emma...”

“No, it’s your dream, and you should go,” I whispered. “I support whatever you choose. Even if it is Harvard or it will be NYU.”

Brendon smiled and stroked my hair back, before he leaned closer and kissed me.

“We could make it work,” he whispered.

“Could we?”

“I think so.”

“You don’t think it might just be a... dream. Many couples say the same thing and it often ends the same way,” I said.

Brendon sighed and looked down.

“I don’t want it to.”

“Me neither.”

I placed my hand on his cheek.

“But it’s your dream. It’s your future. I can’t get in the way of it.”

“I wish you could come with me.”

“I’m a California girl,” I teased him.

I wasn't much for travelling. I liked to stay close to home, and still... what would I be doing in New York?

"I love you," he whispered.

"I love you too."

"I don't want to think this will get an end."

"Then let's not think about it."

Brendon sighed and leaned his forehead against mine.

"So, we just pretend?" he asked.

"It might be all we can do. We still have a few months left."

He smiled a little and nodded before he kissed me slowly, but the mood had changed. We were both fearing what the future might bring. Neither of us wanted to let go... but we might just have to.

## *Chapter 36*

***-Emma-***

“No.”

“Aw, come on!” Brendon said.

“It’s not happening!”

Brendon looked at me, annoyed, as we sat in front of each other in his living room. I had come over so we could spend a little time together. It felt like time was flying by so fast, and I got more and more afraid the closer we came to summer because it meant Brendon would be leaving. He still had not gotten an answer about his university yet, but I knew the answer was on its way. I was scared... so scared, but I tried not to think too much about it and just enjoy the time I had left with him. Now he was asking me to do something I simply would never be caught dead doing.

“It’s prom!”

“Yeah, and I am not doing it!”



“But we have to go together,” he said.

“I am not allowed on the school grounds.”

“I will ask the principal for an exception. I am sure I can get convince her.”

“Yes, because you are the golden boy of the school,” I teased.

He looked at me, annoyed again.

“Say yes.”

“It’s a no.”

“Why?” he asked.

“Dressing up, drinking punch with no booze, and dancing is not my thing. The whole thing screams desperate teenagers.”

That made Brendon chuckle, and I couldn’t help but smile.

“Say yes,” he said.

“No.”

“Say yes!”

“No!”

“Say yes!”

He then jumped over to me and pressed me into the couch. He tickled me, and I screamed at him to stop as I laughed.

“I won’t stop until you say yes.”

“No! Go with your friends!” I chuckled.

“They all have dates.”

“Well, that’s not my problem,” I said and looked at him as he stopped tickling me.

“But it is.”

“How so?”

“You’re my girlfriend. This is a girlfriend’s duty.”

“Going to prom?” I asked.

He nodded.

“Definitely.”

I sighed and just looked at him.

“You really want me to?”

He nodded.

“We could buy one of those inflatable girlfriends and you could bring her?”

Brendon cringed, and I couldn’t help but laugh.

“Could you imagine?” I laughed.

“Not funny.”

“It’s hilarious.”

Brendon rolled his eyes and looked at me seriously.

“Say yes,” he said.

I groaned and covered my face with my hands.

“I hate these kinds of things!”

“But do it for me!” he said.

“That’s so evil,” I said and looked at him.

“What do you mean?”

“You know I will do anything when you say that.”

He smiled smugly.

“I know, troublemaker.”

He leaned closer and kissed my lips.

“I know.”

I rolled my eyes. He knew how to play me so well.

“If I say yes to this, you will never ask me to do anything like it,” I told him.

“It’s one party.”

“One stupid party.”

He chuckled and then nodded.

“Fine, I will never ask you to do anything for me again,” he said.

“That’s more like it.”

I smiled, pleased, and he kissed me again.

“You will have to dress up,” he said.

“Do I?”

He nodded.

“We have to do it right,” he said.

“So, a dress and everything?”

“A dress and everything,” he confirmed.

I sighed, but then nodded.

“I will do it.”

“And you must smile in the pictures.”

“You have a lot of demands, sir,” I said.

“That I do.”

He smiled at me happily, but going to the prom was worth it seeing such a radiant smile on his lips.

“I want the memories with me forever,” he said and stroked my hair back.

He was making my heart go crazy inside my chest.

“Forever, you say.”

He nodded and kissed me lightly.

“I want to take them with me.”

I felt sad when he said this and he saw it.

“Sorry, I know we promised not to... talk about it.”

“Maybe we should.”

He sighed and nodded.

“Maybe it was time...”

We both turned quiet, though, and he gave me a small smile.

“After prom?”

“After prom,” I said.

I knew we were just pushing the inevitable, though, but neither of us wanted to say the words out loud. When Brendon went to college, it would be the end of us... Yeah, those were not words you wanted to speak, when you loved your boyfriend so much.

“You will not buy me flowers or that little wrist thing,” I told him.

“You mean a corsage?” he asked.

I nodded.

“Exactly!”

“Very well. No flowers,” he said.

“No flowers,” I agreed.

## *Chapter 37*

***-Emma-***

“Oh my, you two look so good!” my mother said when my sister and I came down the stairs.

I sighed, feeling ridiculous. I didn't do this. I didn't dress up like this. Elena was wearing a beautiful, long red dress and looked like a dream. I was wearing a dark blue one and had my hair up.

“Okay, pictures! Pictures!”

My mom was ecstatic and quickly placed Elena and me in the living room before she got her phone, so she could take some pictures.

“Yeah, no...” I said and was about to walk away.

“Argh, come on!” my sister teased and brought me closer, wrapping her arm around me and holding me in place.

“Smile girls!”

Elena was smiling, looking like a dream, while I just looked into the camera.

“Emma, smile!”

I tried my hardest, and my mom just looked over the camera at me with a confused expression.

“I said smile.”

“It is my smile!” I said.

My mother sighed and took a few pictures, then I was luckily saved by the bell. Literally.

“Oh, that must be Brendon!” my mom said. “Let’s get him inside so I can get some pictures of you two.”

“No!” I quickly said, and grabbed Elena’s arm. “No pictures!”

I hurried over to the door and opened it. Brendon was about to say something when I pushed him back and pulled my sister outside, closing the door behind us all.

“What’s happening?” Brendon asked.

“Let’s get to the car before my mom chases us with the camera.”

Brendon chuckled, and we waved to Elena, who went to her own car. She was going to prom with her friends, doing exactly what she had told me, being done with boys. Brendon and I got in his and he smiled as he looked at me.

“What are you doing? Drive!” I said.

He chuckled, then took something from the backseat and handed it to me.

“What’s this?”

“Open it.”

It was a small red box, and I looked at him with a warning in my eyes.

“You know I don’t like presents.”

He sighed and shook his head.

“Just open it.”

I did and found a small necklace inside. I pulled it out and saw two letters hanging from the end. It was a B and E intertwined and I looked at it, shocked, before turning to Brendon.

“You had this made?”

He nodded and smiled.

“Why?”

“Because I know you won’t want any pictures, so I thought I would give you something else to remember us by,” he said.

I felt the tears in my eyes, but held it back. I handed him the necklace and smiled.

“Please,” I said and turned my back to him. “Can you put it on?”

“My pleasure.”



He put the necklace around my neck, and I slowly turned to him again before leaning closer and kissing him.

“Thank you,” I said.

“Anything for you, troublemaker.”

“Good, then get the hell out of here.”

He chuckled and started the car before we drove to the school. Young teenagers were streaming inside and I could see lights in the windows and hear the music, even from outside. Brendon held the car door for me and helped me outside. He whistled when I finally stood in front of him.

“What?” I asked.

“You look amazing.”

I blushed and tried to brush it off, but he brought me closer and kissed me.

“My sister helped pick it.”

“You two chose well.”

“You don’t look so bad yourself,” I said and wrapped my arms around his neck.

We stood there for a moment, smiling at each other and enjoying this little intimate moment.

“Ready for this?”

“No, but for you I will do it,” I said.

He chuckled, then held out his arm. I took it and we walked inside.

“I still can’t believe you got the principal to say yes.”

“Well, I am her favorite,” he said.

I shook my head, and we walked to get our pictures taken. Brendon wanted it done right away to make sure we wouldn’t forget. I did my best to smile, but I hated pictures. Brendon leaned down and whispered sweet nothing in my ear suddenly and when he pulled back, I was smiling, just as the picture was taken.

“Perfect,” he said, as we continued into the big gym that had been made into the ballroom now

Everyone looked like they had a great time, and Brendon quickly pulled me to the dance floor.

“Oh, no!” I said.

“Oh, yes!” he said.

“Why do you enjoy torturing me?”

He chuckled and spun me around before he did a funny little dance move.

“You’re so silly,” I told him.

“You love it!”

He pulled me closer and smiled at me.

“I do. I love *you*,” I told him.

He smiled and leaned down and kissed me. I thought it would be hard to enjoy the night, but with Brendon, everything just became so easy. I had a lot of fun. I did scout after my sister a little. She was with her friends, having fun. I

was so happy about how happy she had become, and the incident with Trevor hadn't affected her as much as I had thought, and what I did hadn't ruined anything for her.

“Everyone!”

Suddenly, another student took the stage and was going to represent the prom king and queen. Brendon stood with his arm around me as we looked at the stage. It was no surprise when it ended up being Brendon, who was crowned king. He leaned down and kissed my cheek before he took the stage.

“And now, our queen!”

I should have seen it coming, but my stomach still tightened in fear when it was announced Simone was the prom queen. She went up to the stage and stood beside Brendon being crowned. Then they announced the king and queen were going to dance. I didn't like it and crossed my arms as I disappeared into a corner. I didn't watch them. I didn't want to, but someone else found me in my dark corner.

“Hello, killer.”

Trevor placed himself in front of me, one hand on the wall and caging me in while his friends surrounded us.

“Oh, great...”

“Are you having fun?”

“I was until you appeared.”

“Ouch,” he said with a smile.

“I see your nose is all pretty again,” I said.

“It is.”

“That’s too bad. I liked it better before.”

That made him chuckle, and I saw him take out a flask from his jacket. I had smelled some alcohol on him, but I was unsure if I was just imagining things. Now I saw I wasn’t. He had snuck it with him inside, and I rolled my eyes.

“Want some?” he asked.

I shook my head.

“I will pass.”

“Really?”

I nodded.

“And here I thought you were the fun sister, or did golden boy turn you boring?” he asked.

“Just not interest, Trevor. Could you back off?”

Trevor didn’t listen to me and turned to look at Brendon and Simone, who were still dancing.

“They look good together,” he said to taunt me and looked at me again. “Don’t they?”

“Aren’t you dating her?” I asked.

He shook his head.

“We just have some fun. She uses me to get to Brendon and I... well, I get a hole to fuck.”

“You’re fucking disgusting.”

He just chuckled.

“I didn’t think you went back for seconds.”

“Some are worth it,” he said. “Your sister would be too, but she won’t even talk to me.”

“No wonder.”

He just smiled.

“Want to know a secret?”

“Not really,” I said, hoping he would leave me alone.

He leaned closer.

“I had her suck me off before I broke her heart.”

I pushed off the wall, ready to fucking kick his ass, and all his friends laughed as I made Trevor back a few steps away. I knew he was just messing with me, but he knew how to trigger me. He laughed too, of course. He knew he was the one who stood strongest if I tried anything.

“I like you, killer,” he said.

“I don’t like you.”

“I think we should be friends.”

“I would rather wash my eyes with acid,” I told him.

“And friends share secrets,” he said.

“Oh, so am I now supposed to share mine?”

“No, I want to let you into my little club.”

“I repeat: I would rather wash my eyes with acid.”

He chuckled and then wrapped his arm around my neck, bringing me closer.

“You will love this,” he whispered in my ear.

Suddenly, he guided me out of the gym.

“Let me go, Trevor.”

“No, really Emma, you will want to see this. I know you will.”

“If you are trying to get me somewhere dark and quiet...”

We had just left the gym when Brendon came running.

“Trevor!”

We stopped and turned. Brendon came over to me, quickly pulling me from him.

“What the fuck are you doing?” he asked.

“Oh, just inviting Emma into our little club?”

“Our?” I asked confused and looked at Brendon.

“Oh, you haven’t told her?” Trevor asked.

“I am not part of any club. It’s just something stupid Trevor made a few years back. I have nothing to do with it, and I *told* him that,” Brendon said and looked at him.

“Wait, so there actually is a club?” I asked.

Trevor drank from the flask again, hiding it quickly afterwards.

“There is. Want to see?”

“No, she doesn’t.”

I looked at Brendon suspiciously. Why was he hiding this?

“Maybe I do,” I said.

“See?” Trevor said.

“Emma...”

“Why are you acting so weird about this?”

“I am not! I just don’t see the point!”

No, something didn’t feel right. I turned to Trevor, crossing my arms.

“How do I get in?” I asked.

“That’s my killer!”

“I am not *your* killer. Just show me.”

Trevor laughed and waved me along. I followed behind him and his friends and Brendon followed behind me.

“Emma, let’s not do this!” he said when we were outside and walking across the football field.

“Why not?” I asked. “What is this club, even?”

I looked over my shoulder, but he was not answering me. If he would not tell me, I was going to find out myself. After crossing the football field, we almost came to the end of the school, which had a small forest behind it. There at the edge of it laid an old shed, probably used for supplies once. Trevor smiled and found a key from his pants, opening a lock that kept a big chain together. He pulled the chain away and held

open the door. He swept his hand through the air and told me to go in.

“You first,” I said.

He chuckled.

“That’s why I like you, killer.”

He stepped in, followed by his friends. I was about to walk in too, when Brendon grabbed my arm.

“Emma, stop!”

“Why?” I asked. “What is it you don’t want me to see?”

“Nothing! I just don’t want you to go in there.”

“Why?”

“Because it is a place Trevor and his friends hang out and...”

“And what?”

“Sometimes they bring girls there. Sharing them.”

I looked at him, shocked.

“And you knew this?”

“It’s a disgusting place. Let’s just go back to the dance.”

I had a feeling there was more to it all, though. I didn’t want to go back. I wanted to go inside and look. I pulled away from Brendon and walked in.

“Emma!”



He followed me, but when I stepped inside, I froze... Trevor and his friends were standing around the room or had taken a seat on some old stools that had seen better days. There was a disgusting old mattress in here as well. All stained. But that wasn't the horrifying sight that made me freeze. Trevor had taken a seat by the wall furthest away, where a lamp was now turned on, and above his head hung pictures. Polaroid pictures of naked girls... some of them I recognized. Some I didn't, and I could clearly see these pictures had not been taken with the girls' knowledges. Some of them had covered edges as if they had taken them through a small hole or a finger, maybe covering a little of the lens. I just stared at it... I couldn't process what was going on. Then my eyes fell on something I never thought I was going to see... a picture of my sister naked. She was looking a little away from the camera, but I knew right away it was her. She still had a bra on, but the rest was gone... I turned to Trevor, anger now boiling through me, and he just smiled.

“What... the... fuck... IS THIS?” I shouted.

“Our club,” he said and held out his arms. “Don't you like it?”

“What is that?” I shouted and pointed to the wall. “These pictures... they are...”

“Good, right? Some of them are quite old and we still needed some practice, but they got better. Look at the new ones,” he said and pointed to the one that was my sister's.

“Trevor! YOU PIG!”

I was going to throw myself at him, but Brendon grabbed my arm and held me back. I turned to him, looking at me him shocked. It was then I realized...

“Did you know about this?” I whispered.

He shook his head.

“No! I promise! I didn’t!”

“But you knew about the club?”

“Oh, be honest Brendon!” Trevor said and stood up. “You knew!”

“Did you?” I asked.

He shook his head like crazy.

“No!”

“But you knew about the list,” Trevor said.

“What list?” I asked, and looked at Trevor.

He pulled out his phone, and then he handed it to me. I saw we were in a group chat with all the guys from senior year. In there, there was a list. Every girls’ name from the entire senior year had been written and beside the names some of the guys’. I found my sister’s name. It was written like this:

Elena: Fucked by Trevor (30 points)

They kept score...

It was a game...

I looked up at Trevor, who smiled.

“We made an exception and put your name there, too. That’s how special you are, killer,” he told me and I looked at him, shocked, before I scrolled further down and found my name.

Emma: Kissed by Trevor (5 points)

I couldn’t believe this. I slowly turned to Brendon, who was looking at the ground and I could just see the guilt in his eyes. I held up the list and showed it to him. His name was there too. Just by Simone’s, and further down, mine was written again and there his name was, too.

Emma: Fucked by Brendon (30 points)

“Did you know about this?” I asked him.

He couldn’t look at me.

“DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?”

“I never took part,” he told me.

“Your name is right there,” I said and pointed to my own where his was written beside it.

“They did that!” he pointed to Trevor, who was smiling so smugly. “I never took part! I couldn’t give a damn by their list or becoming the ultimate player! I don’t care!”

“But your name is there!”

“I did not write it!” he shouted. “I never joined in!”

“But you knew about it?”

He sighed, and then slowly nodded.

“I did...”

“Why did you never say anything?” I whispered.

“I didn’t think it mattered. It’s a stupid list. A stupid game they made up last year. I don’t care about it, and I have never joined in. Emma, you are not a game to me.”

“You say that, but...”

“No! I promise! I was never a part of this!” he said desperately.

I wanted to believe him, but this... all of it just showed that I had been the fool. I turned to Trevor, shoving the phone into his chest.

“I decline your invitation to join your club,” I said between gritted teeth before I stormed out of there.

“Emma, wait!”

Brendon ran after me and caught up with me when we were halfway across the football field. He grabbed my arm, but I shoved him back.

“NEVER TOUCH ME AGAIN!”

He looked so hurt when I said it. I pulled the necklace from my neck and threw it at him.

“And take your fucking gift back.”

He leaned down and grabbed it before turning to me again, tears in his eyes.

“Emma, I never joined in,” he promised.

“But you knew about it!” I shouted through the tears. “You knew about their club and their stupid list!”

“I never knew they took pictures!”

“It’s Trevor!” I shouted. “What did you expect?”

“I...”

“No, you didn’t *want* to know, but deep down you knew!” I shouted. “You KNEW!”

He shook his head, but didn’t say anything.

“I trusted you!”

“Emma...”

“I was so stupid...”

“Please...”

“No, I don’t want to hear anymore. I am done!” I yelled. “I am done with this relationship and I am done with you!”

I walked away again, and Brendon called out to me.

“Leave me alone!” I shouted back.

He did, and I walked away...

## *Chapter 38*

***-Emma-***

It was a few days after prom. I still couldn't get the pictures of what I had seen out of my head. Brendon had tried calling me many times, but I didn't want to talk. I had turned so quiet at home. Even my parents found it weird and kept asking what was wrong, but I just shook my head and said I didn't want to talk. I couldn't forget what I had seen, and every time I looked at my sister smiling and laughing, I just saw that picture of her. I had to do something... I had to. So, one night I decided to sneak into the school grounds. I had taken a big plier with me and a flashlight. I had snuck out after my parents had gone to bed and then I taken the car. Luckily, the shed was behind the school and I didn't have to try to sneak inside the actual building. I walked around it and ran across the football field and over to the shed. I cut through the big chain and then I walked inside. I looked around the room. Then I found the lamp that stood on a small table and turned it on. I took pictures of it all before I looked through the shed and checked

if I had missed something. Except for some condoms and protein bars, I hadn't. I quickly left the shed again. I had brought a new lock and chain with me. Trevor would probably be very confused why he couldn't open the shed, but it would buy me some time. I was going to expose him. I was going to have him punished like he deserved.

The next day I text Brendon after I knew he had gotten out of school. I asked if I could come over, and he had answered quickly, telling me yes. When I was parked in front of his house, I told him to come outside. He did, and I walked over to him.

“Shit, Emma, I am so happy you texted. I wanted to say...”

“Save it,” I interrupted, not wanting to listen to a word he had to say.

“Please... Emma...”

“I want the list.”

“What?”

“The list. Send it to me,” I told him.

Brendon looked at me, shocked.

“Why?”

“Just send it.”

He sighed and pulled out his phone before he did exactly that.

“What are you going to do with it?” he asked.

“That's for me to know...”

I turned around and Brendon called after me, but I ignored him.

“Emma, I didn’t know!” he shouted after me.

I just got in my car and drove off. I had all the pictures I had taken printed out at home and I put it all in a folder. The next morning I drove to the school, waiting for it to start before I walked up to the door where the school guard stood.

“You’re not allowed here.”

“I need to talk to the principal. It’s important,” I told him and held up the folder.

He looked at me a little suspiciously.

“It’s about her star players,” I told him.

He still seemed skeptical.

“You can follow me there,” I told him. “And if she doesn’t want to see me, I will leave right away.”

He seemed satisfied with that, and we walked in before going to her office. The guard knocked on the door and stuck his head inside when the principal told him he could come in.

“Emma is here?” I heard her ask.

“She says it is urgent.”

I could hear the older woman sigh.

“Very well. Send her in.”

The guard let me come inside, and I hurried over to her and put the folder down.



“What is this?”

“Proof that those star players you love to shower with love are disgusting perverts who have taken illegal pictures of naked girls and are keeping them on a wall in a shed behind the school,” I told her.

The principal put on her glasses, then looked through my little folder with evidence. She took her sweet time, and I crossed my arms, waiting for her to be done. Eventually, I got too impatient.

“So? When are you expelling them?”

Slowly, she took off her glasses and looked at me again.

“I will have a chat with them,” she said.

“A chat?”

“Yes, we will figure this out.”

“What is there to figure out? The evidence is right there!” I said, and pointed to the folder.

She just looked at me blankly, and it was then I realized she wasn't going to do anything. So many names were on that list. Almost the whole damn football team, and expelling them all, meant no football team and an enormous scandal that would not look good for the school.

“You won't do anything... won't you?” I asked.

“Emma...”

“They should be expelled! Fuck, they should be in jail!” I shouted. “My sister is in one of those pictures.”

“And we will have it all solved, I guarantee you that.”

“What? A slap over the wrist and that is it?” I asked.

“No, I will make sure a suitable punishment is given and these pictures will, of course, be taken down.”

I could see it in her eyes. She wouldn't care if they were. She just wanted to cover it all up. She held onto the folder as I tried to reach it.

“I will keep this.”

I glared at her. I couldn't believe this, but I had to leave. I couldn't stay. She wouldn't let me. The guard saw me out and made sure I left the school grounds. I went home, feeling angrier than ever. What did you have to do to get a little justice in this world? I wondered.

## *Chapter 39*

***-Emma-***

I was sitting at home a few days later. I had heard nothing about Trevor receiving any sorts of punishments or his friends. And since he hadn't come knocking, something told me he did not know it was me who had broken into his shed. Or maybe he just didn't care. He knew he could get out of the situation if needed to, and right now, it seemed like he was right. My sister was sitting beside me on the couch, watching a movie with me, and I couldn't stop watching her. I just saw that damn picture of her in my head.

“What?”

Elena suddenly noticed I was watching her.

“Nothing.”

“Will you ever tell me why you and Brendon broke up?” she blurted out.

I shrugged a little.

“I don’t know what there is to say... He is leaving for college.”

“Yeah, but you two are like... epic!” she said and push her hands through the air like she was making an explosion. “Don’t you think you could make it?”

I shook my head.

“No. Not really.”

“I think you’re letting fear control you,” she said. “Why don’t you fight for you two?”

I sighed, closing my eyes for a moment before I turned to my sister.

“I really don’t want to talk about it, Elena. So, drop it, okay?”

She looked at me, shocked.

“Okay,” she said. “Sorry...”

I shook my head a little, then get off the couch and went to my room, where I fell down on the bed, feeling damn defeated. What the hell did I do? I wanted Trevor punished for what he had done. Not just to Elena, but for every other girl out there and future girls they might take pictures of. But how? The principal wouldn’t even do anything. What else could I do? I slowly sat up, as a thought popped into mind. I wasn’t sure if they would care. Maybe they would brush me off like the principal, but I had to try.

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Fresh evidence was in my possession when I went to the police station the next day. I told them I would like to speak to the chief of police. I was led to his office. He was an older man with a little grey in his hair. He looked rather confused that I had requested to see him. I told him it was a serious case and handed him the evidence. His daughter wasn't in senior year, but a few classes underneath my sister, and I knew seeing all of it alarmed him. He promised me this was going to be taken care of, and I truly hoped that was true, but I guessed only time would tell.

After having given over the evidence, I was practically shaking. I did not know if there was even going to happen anything. And so I made a foolish decision and went back to the old skater park where I found my old crew.

“Hey! Look who it is!” Danny said.

Everyone turned to me and shouted my name, already high out of their minds.

“I thought you had become too good for us,” Danny said.

“Shut up,” I said.

“What can we do for you?” he chuckled.

“I have come to drink.”

“Oh, that we can help with.”

He handed me the bottle of vodka he was holding and I grabbed it before I just drank right from it. It didn't help much, but I was worried. Would the police even do anything, or was Trevor once again going to go free?

## *Chapter 40*

***-Emma-***

“EMMA!”

Someone shouting my name woke me from me from my nap on the couch, and I quickly sat up. I looked around, trying to figure out what was going on. My parents nor my sister was home yet. So, I was very confused who was shouting my name, but then the front door opened and Elena came inside. She looked pissed, and she came storming over to me where she shoved her phone in my face.

“Did you do this?” she shouted.

It took me a moment for my tired eyes to look at what was going on. There was a video of some guys being brought out of school in handcuffs. I then realized it was Trevor, some of his friends, and a few other guys who were being taken out by the police while students were gathered around, filming it all. I knew it wouldn't be long then there would be articles all over the internet about it.

“He actually did something...” I whispered.

“What?”

“The police. They did something!” I said excitedly, but then when I looked at the expression on my sister’s face, my excitement died down. “What?”

“How the fuck could you?” she asked, and lowered the phone.

“Elena, they had pictures! Of girls! Of YOU!” I said and stood up.

“I KNOW!”

I looked at her, shocked, my head unable to understand what she had just admitted.

“You... knew?”

“I know! Yes! I let him take it!”

“What?”

“I let him take the picture! I was stupid and I let him!”

“Did the others let him?” I asked her.

“No... but I did...”

She crossed her arms in front of her.

“Why?”

“Because I was stupid!” she said. “But mom and dad were handling it!”

“How?” I shouted. “The pictures were still there!”

“They were handling it in secret! After the whole incident, they came and talked to me because you told them to and I confided in them. They told me they would handle it and I know they were!”

“It’s almost been a year!”

“It takes time to make settlements! They were trying to help the other girls too! But it was being handled!” she said.

“I didn’t see anything being handled! Not until now! Not until I went to the police!” I shouted.

“And look now what has happened!”

“I fixed it!”

“No, you made it worse!” she yelled. “Don’t you know it is all going to come out into the open? For the rest of my life, I will have this following me. They will ask me to testify!”

As my sister began to cry and shake her head, I was not sure what to say. I guessed... I hadn’t really thought of what would come *after*.

“Elena...”

“You made it all so much worse! Why is it you can’t just mind your own business?”

“I... I was just trying to help.”

“No, you were doing this for yourself. Again!”

“Elena...”

I tried stepping forward and touch her, but she pulled away and shook her head at me, as she pointed her finger at me.



“I am so tired of getting dragged down by you. You stay fucking clear of me! You hear me?” she snarled.

“Elena... Elena!”

She turned away and ran to her room, and I just stood there before slowly falling down on the couch. What had I just begun?

## *Epilogue*

### ***-Brendon-***

A few months had passed since the scandal with Trevor and his friends. I guessed he didn't expect Emma would go to the police, or maybe he had hoped his parents could save him from this. They almost could. He was going to serve some community service, but this was going to go on his record, making this very difficult for him in the future. I had not heard from Emma. I had called and texted, but I didn't want to show up at her house because I knew I needed to give her some space. I couldn't do that anymore, though. Next week I was going to New York. I had gotten into NYU and despite my dad hoping I would have chosen Harvard; I didn't. Honestly, I wanted out. I wanted far away. I couldn't say what it was, but I wanted to be far away from everything. I wanted to see more and experience different things. I had told no one about it. Not even Emma. I could barely understand it myself. Therefore, I hadn't told her. I was hoping maybe I got the chance before I left. So, I showed up at her house, knocking on the door. It

took a few seconds, then the door opened and there her father stood.

“Brendon,” he said with a small, cheerful smile. “It’s been a while.”

“It has,” I said.

“How have you been?”

“Good... Good.”

It was a little awkward. Her dad definitely knew why I was there, but I wasn’t sure he knew why we had broken up.

“Eh... I’m flying to New York next week,” I said.

“I heard.”

“I... I wondered if I could speak to Emma?”

Her dad suddenly turned sad, and it confused me.

“Emma doesn’t live here anymore.”

“What?” I asked, not able to understand what he was telling me.

“Yeah, we thought after everything it was... it was best for the girls not to live under the same roof. This... This hit Elena hard,” he said.

“Well, where did she go?” I asked.

“To live with her aunt.”

“And where does she live?”

Her dad sighed.

“Brendon, I like you. A lot. You changed our Emma for the better. I could see it. We both could. You gave her some purpose, and you made her happy.”

His words made me smile a little.

“But Emma is also my daughter, and she was very specific. Should you ever show up asking where she was, then I shouldn’t tell you.”

I looked at him, shocked.

“And I have to honor her wish,” he said.

“I see...”

“I am very sorry,” he said. “You two were good together, and I am not completely sure what went wrong between you two, but... but I am happy with the influence you had on her. You were very good for her. I know she cared a lot about you.”

I only felt saddened by his words now because I realized how badly I had messed this up. I realized how badly I had ruined things between us.

“Thank you, sir,” I told him.

“Good luck in New York. They are lucky to have you.”

I nodded thankfully before I stepped away. The door closed slowly. I stood there looking at it for a few seconds, then I turned away. I did not know where Emma could be. It was clear she never wanted to see me again, but wherever she was, I hoped she doing good. And if there was even a slight chance I might see her again, then I really hoped it would happen. I

couldn't just forget my troublemaker. She had gone deep into my heart, and I knew it would be long before I ever got over her... if it ever happened. I got into my car and turned it on before I drove home again. It wouldn't be long then I was starting a whole new life, but my thoughts weren't on my new life. They were of *her*.

Where had my troublemaker gone?

**To be continued...**

## *Afterward*

Thank you so much for reading *Saved by The Golden Boy*. This story does have a sequel called *Chasing The Troublemaker*, which will be released soon. Please do go check out *Also By* to find more of more books.

## *About Author*

Anne T. Thyssen is a Danish/English writer. She started writing back when she was around six years old. It has always been something she loved to do, and at the age of 12, she dreamt of becoming a writer and publishing her own books. It wasn't until 2019 that she was burned out, had dropped out of law school and Corona had taken over that she got serious about her writing and began to write online. She became successful with her series Wolves' Fated Mates on Dreame and ended up publishing about 40 books over 2 years on different platforms. She also published a short story collection (Hvem Fxck Er Jeg?) and a novel (Flugten Fra København) in her country. Now she has spread on sites such as Dreame, Amazon, Wattpad, Inkitt, Booknet, and Readink. She even became one of the prize winners on Booknet in their competition Bound by The Moon with her book The Alpha Prince's Precious Mate. Anne T. Thyssen is best known for her paranormal romance books, but she likes to write in many genres and so if you are not into werewolves and vampires finding love, she has many other books for you. Anne T.

Thyssen is still exploring the internet and publishers around the world to help get her work out there and reach more readers.



*Also By*

Go check out Anne T. Thyssen's website  
[annet.thyssenbooks.com](http://annet.thyssenbooks.com) to find all her books and what sites  
she writes on.