

Twinkies & Beefcake



T.H.FOREST

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For my late cousin, Tom Holdorf,
the mega-talented photographer
mentioned in the book.

I miss you every day,
nearly thirty years on.

CONTENTS

Prologue	ix
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PART ONE

CATERPILLAR

1	Snatch'ed	3
2	I'm Coming Out	8
3	Tongue Twisters	11
4	Ghosted	15
5	Fast Times at Westfield High Mall	18
6	Kiss and Tell	27
7	Not So Fast, Sexy Boy	29
8	Please Don't Let Me Hit the Ground	33
9	Man With a Plan	41
10	The Grand Blew-You-Best Hotel	44
11	Chased by the Wolves of Willoughby	51
12	Man, Oh Manchester	54
13	Introducing Ronald, Later Known as Ronnie	58

14	Summer Lovin'	60
15	The Cat Peeks its Head From the Bag	67
16	Meet the Roommate	69
17	The Tigers Get Out of the Bag	72
18	Shawshank Kensington	78
19	Application DENIED, No Chance of Parole	82
20	Covered Tigers, Hidden Angel	86
21	Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	93
22	Meet the Bat'kiv	102
23	House Trumball Gains a Builder	104
24	Good News (for Eighteen-Year-Olds)	108
25	Catch a Tiger by the Tail	113
26	Bad News (for Seventeen-Year-Olds and the Men Who Exploit Them)	116
27	Sleeping with the Enemy	120
28	The Oxford Cumber	125
29	Welcome to Miami, Aye Papi	128
30	Start of the Breakdown	133
31	Blue Monday, Everyday	136
32	Lost in Space	139

PART TWO

CHRYSALIS

33	Not You Again	143
34	Boy Interrupted	146
35	The Guy with the Dragon Tattoo	151
36	Madonna, Rescue Me	155
37	Come Here, Big Daddy	159

38	It All Falls Apart (and Little Bitches Get What They Deserve)	164
39	Phoenix From the Fire, Or Just a Git Burned?	170
40	The End?	174

PART THREE

BUTTERFLY

41	You're Still Here? (I Suppose, Unlike Ferris Bueller, I Do Have More to Say)	181
42	Life Brings You to Your Knees	185
43	Here Comes Your Twentieth Nervous Breakdown	191
44	Blast From the Past	194
45	Talk Me Down	201
46	Bombers Fly at Zero Feet	209
47	The One with All the Sex	213
48	Belfast and Ballyhoo	218
49	Meet the Parents	226
50	Meet the Roommate 2.0	232
51	The Earl and Countess of Knightsbridge	239
52	Wedding (Story) Crashers	243
53	Summons to (Wenham) Court	246
54	The Lotus Eater	252
55	Mean Boys Reunited (and It Feels So Not Good)	256
56	Miracle on Hyde Park (Street)	260
57	The Truth Will Set You Free	265
58	Meet the Fuckers	270
59	Withdrawal from the Bank of Wenham	275
60	Working Boy	279
61	The Wonder Years	281

62	Little Earthquakes	286
63	Lucy, I'm Home	290
64	A Marquess Abroad	293
65	The Madness of the Marquess	300
66	I See Dead People	303
67	Stepford Wife	305
68	The Gronk on the Cape	308
69	Egg Hunting	313
70	(Out of Left) Field of Dreams	315
71	Murder She Wrote	321
72	Birth of Words Babies	324
73	Worlds Collide	327
74	(Our Love) Don't Throw it All Away	335
	Acknowledgments	337

PROLOGUE

IF YOU'VE COME TO HEAR an original story, something unique and other-worldly, something gripping and far-fetched, then let me tell you to walk away now, save us both the disappointment. I mean, who hasn't been convinced as a teenager, by their much older boyfriend, to do porn? To call him daddy as he plowed you a hundred different ways on camera? Who hasn't put up with physical and emotional abuse for years, off-camera usually, and love, nearly, every minute of it? Who hasn't loved someone so wicked, given every bit of themselves to that person, only to be dumped like a used condom for a skinnier, shorter, more submissive twink?

Honestly, it's more likely that you'll walk away because you've heard me tell it already. After Vasyl (that fucker), dumped me, I told anyone who would listen about my pain. My therapist, my sponsor, my friends, my fans (oh I had such glorious fans, the best fans), and everyone else I would encounter, on The Tube, at the drug treatment centers, my fellow AA compadres, and the bartenders, please, we can't forget the bartenders. Bartenders are the unsung heroes of the mental health industry, and there's not one in the whole of the UK that didn't cringe when they saw me coming. I was pathetic. He ruined me, for years, his reach into my life extending far greater than you could imagine, or maybe you can, since I *clearly* can't stop thinking of him, here I am boring you about him all over again, nearly twenty years on.

Everyone listened so sympathetically at first, my best friend Dee especially. She would cradle my head in her soft, ample lap and brush the hair from my face as I sobbed, day after day, and then eventually just on weekends, until finally, after nearly a year, bless her heart, she cut me loose like a boat from a mooring, and off I drifted. She tried everything with me, taking me out, encouraging me, coming to open AA meetings with me, and things would be okay for a day or a week, and then I'd accidentally come across a hot-off-the-press video Vas made with his new

Prologue

twink (and by accidently I mean I would actively seek it out like picking a scab), and I would cry hot tears, my chest burning, as though Satan himself had reached into my ribcage with his fiery hand. My mum, my glorious, beautiful, perfect mum, would be there to pick up the pieces each time. She rubbed my back, did my laundry, paid my bills, but I digress, if you've made it this far I should really stay on topic so I don't lose you too.

I heard just the other month that Vassy died recently. I curled up in a ball, like a discarded wrapper, for nearly a week at that news. How could he have died without me feeling it like losing a limb? I missed his death, missed his funeral, missed my closure. My husband, the saint, tried everything he could to get me out of my funk, but I just needed time. He's the one who suggested I write my story down. Perhaps he hoped that by doing so, it would release me from Vas's grip, and I hoped so too. That by making my story a physical entity, and not just something I sang to the wind and to whatever ear would listen, I could shed him like an over coat or a hair shirt. My only fear, is that people might get the wrong idea, and maybe see me as the villain, but please, remember, I was a child.

Twink [twɪŋk] noun slang. A young, attractive gay man with a slim, boyish appearance. (dictionary.com)

PART ONE

CATERPILLAR

1

Snatch'ed

2015

“Let’s go to Westfield’s after school today,” Dee said loudly over the din of the cafeteria as she finished her second biscuit. “I want to get my ears pierced.” She fondled her earlobes.

“Okay,” I replied, looking past her round face and over her shoulder at Liam Dougherty, our school’s star footballer sitting at the athlete table, and sighed quietly. His blonde hair shone so much brighter than my own, his blue eyes bright like sapphires compared to my washed-out grey ones. I fantasized about him regularly, not always sexually, but usually. Sometimes I liked to imagine just sitting with him, and listening to his beautiful voice complimenting me (naturally). Other times, I imagined him giving me his football shirt, stripping it off in the changing room after a game, his chest all sweaty and muscled.

“You looking at Liam?” Dee interrupted in a teasing tone following my eye.

“No,” I scoffed, feeling myself blush, and straightened on the table bench, as my eyes drifted to Liam’s girlfriend, Iris, the ice queen who ruled the school. “I was looking at Iris, god she’s a beauty. I could never have a girl like that. Liam’s so lucky,” I said, my voice still an octave higher than every other boy in school, and patted my hair before stopping myself from doing something so obviously feminine.

Dee made a sound in her throat and narrowed her eyes at me. “Whatever, meet me at my locker at the bell, we’ll take The Tube.” She stood and grabbed her tray of empty containers and walked self-consciously to the return counter. Her uniform pants were tight over her wide bottom and her shirt was shapeless and bloused over the belt, making her look more like a prison matron from behind than a fifteen-year old girl. She had struggled with her weight for as long as I had known her. I crumpled the wrapper of my meal replacement bar and grabbed my water bottle and followed her, keeping my eyes forward so as not to invite any of the usual comments I got.

“Jack Sprat could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean,” someone said, followed by a round of laughter from the table in the middle of the room.

I gritted my teeth, that one was getting old. Fucking assholes, I hated secondary, couldn’t wait to get through and get the fuck out of this town. Problem was I still had two more years, I hadn’t even started my A-levels, and time was marching so slowly I felt as though my life was slogging through molasses. I would have given anything to be broader of chest, have a deeper voice, be less gay, not that I admitted it to anyone, though slews suspected it. But, how could I really be anything when I hadn’t even been kissed by anyone, yet anyway, I slid my eyes across the rugby players to Liam. I wondered what it would be like to kiss Liam. He had thin lips, but I had more than enough so maybe we’d balance each other out. I sighed and went to class, tuning out the noise, one of the few things that I was really good at.

After class I found Dee waiting at my locker, impatient as always, and she took my arm after I stuffed my backpack with books and led me to The Tube. Her chatter filled my ears the whole ride, as she talked about her latest, unrequited, crush, the stack of homework she had, and what her slag of a sister had to say about her weight over dinner the night before.

“Darling, you’re beautiful,” I said to her as I put my arm around her, meaning it. Her face was stunning, like a rounder, teenage Brigitte Bardot, and I loved her body as much as she, and every fat-shamer on the planet, hated it. I loved hugging her. She was pure, nurturing comfort, and someday, when we got out of this god-forsaken school and city, she and the world would realize it and embrace it.

I waited in Claire’s, looking at the jewelry, imagining myself in dangly earrings, while she picked out the studs she wanted. She cried nervously for me to come hold her hand while the shop clerk prepped the ear-piercing gun.

“You’re going to be fine, Dee, you’re the strongest girl I know, nothing fazes you.” I squeezed her hand and looked out the glass wall into the shopping center, my eye drawn to a tall man outside, walking with two other men. He wore his short black hair in a buzzcut fade, and had what looked like a neck tattoo peeking up above his collar. He was wearing a black button-down shirt open at the throat

and black pants that hugged his muscled body almost scandalously, or maybe I just thought it was scandalous because of how my body was reacting. Jesus Christ, my cock went ping in my pants and I had to look away, straightening my school blazer to cover myself. I turned to face Dee and then jumped when she shrieked with pain as the gun made a hole in her lobe with the gold stud, her voice echoing out the open doors of the shop. I looked back outside and met the man's eyes, her cry drawing his attention. He stopped briefly to look at me, his friends continuing on oblivious. Something in his look bent my shoulder and snatched my breath. I saw the faintest of a twitch to his mouth and eye, almost as if he were going to smile at me but didn't, and I looked away hurriedly.

"I don't think I can do the other," Dee was saying urgently.

"Ice might help," the shop clerk said. "You could run next door and get some."

"I'll be back in a flash," I said, squeezing Dee's hand before letting go, looking at her pale face and hoping she didn't faint.

I ran two stores down to the coffee shop and waited in the short line to ask for a cup of ice, a muffin, and a packet of crisps, paying with a twenty-pound note. I turned and found myself face to face with the dark-haired man, or rather face to neck. My stomach reacted like Simone Biles herself was inside me as I looked up at him. He was fucking beautiful up close, though some might say his chin was a little weak, but that would be the only thing they could say, well, that and that one of his hands was heavily tattooed like an ex-con. He looked Eastern European and smelled delicious.

"Ello," he said in a cockney-sounding accent, "your girlfriend gonna live?" Again, his mouth twitched and his eye narrowed but this time he followed through and gave me a half smile, so full of sin it almost knocked me over.

I swallowed to free my voice. "She's not my girlfriend." I smoothed my hair nervously.

His eyes followed my hand and his eyebrow flicked at my answer, or maybe at my voice.

I looked past him to the entrance, suddenly feeling claustrophobic and in desperate need of air. "I've got to bring this to her." I walked past him and felt his eyes on my back.

Later on, I would think of all the witty things I wished I had said to him, wished that I was wearing something better than my school uniform, which made me look like a twelve-year old bean pole in a coat and tie. The wankers at school sometimes told me I looked like an anorexic girl, and that I'd never get my period if I didn't eat a sandwich.

I wished I'd met him some place more romantic like the river bank, or the pub. He could pick me a flower, or buy me a pint and offer me a smoke, and I would smoke it so expertly, though I had never had a cigarette in my short life, never actually wanted one before, but something about that man made me want to

do bad things. It was absurd really, because everything that passed between us was fully in my head. He said one thing to me, five words actually, yes, I counted, and I made it an entire conversation.

Dee looked at me when I came back and pulled a face. "Why are you all red?"

"What?" I asked. "Oh, I made a Freudian slip when I ordered your crisps, it was so embarrassing."

"What did you say?" Dee asked with a grin, putting the ice in the napkin I handed her and holding it to her bare ear, the other earlobe flaming red.

"I asked for a packet of tits," I lied smoothly. "Her bosom was massive."

Dee laughed, an infectious raucous sound that always made me feel warm inside. "Robin Trumball, you're a muppet."

"I didn't mean it, that's why it's called a Freudian slip. It's not like I asked if her muffin was any good."

Dee rewarded me with another belly laugh, I smiled, pleased.

We rode The Tube home, my eyes scanning the shops as we left the centre, hoping for a glimpse of the man in black. I giggled slightly to myself thinking he was nothing like Johnny Cash.

"What's so funny?" Dee asked, following my aimless eyes.

"Nothing, was just thinking again of what I said to that busty lady."

Dee made a sound and touched one of her red ears.

"You better use rubbing alcohol on those and turn them frequently, Felicity's got infected and she had to take them out and go back and do it all over again," I said. "But she's an idiot, you're not." I put my arm around her shoulder above her backpack and squeezed.

I left her at the corner and walked four blocks to the brick townhouse at the end of the row on a quiet street in Kensington where I lived with my parents, two younger brothers and my older sister, the idiot. It was a big house with windows on three sides, but not the biggest by far on the street or in the neighborhood, and we only had a medium-sized garden in back, big enough for a patio, flowers, and kicking a ball around, which my brothers did a lot. My dad made a slew of money doing something in high tech, I could never remember, only that his boss was occasionally a wanker, and his secretary was borderline incompetent, though it was his fourth one in as many years, so maybe it wasn't their incompetence that was to blame.

My mother was a housewife, though nowadays there's probably some more politically correct term, like domestic manager, or some shite, but she couldn't be anything otherwise with four kids at home to manage. She loved me best, though she never said, and was careful to dote on us all, but I knew the truth. I know most

kids my age complain about their parents, are rude, and rebel, but not me, I loved my mum. She did everything for me, rubbed my back when we watched telly, laughed at my stupid jokes, and soothed my feelings when I came home sad, which I did on more than one occasion.

"Hallo," I called letting myself in with the key I wore on a long chain under my button-down.

"In the kitchen darling," my mother replied.

I dropped my heavy bag at the bottom of the stairs and followed the fragrant smells into the kitchen. "Something smells amazing." I kissed my mum's waiting cheek, so soft and smooth, and ruffled my youngest brother, George's, hair as he sat at the kitchen table doing his homework.

"Where'd you go after school?" she asked, smiling at me.

"Dee and I went shopping, she got her ears pierced, finally," I said. "She's been talking about doing it for like three years now. She was such a baby, I had to get her ice," I laughed.

I saw my mum look at my ears, "I'm glad you didn't want to get yours pierced," she said with a weird smile.

"God no, Mum, I don't need to give the wankers at school any more reason to harass me."

"Language, Robin." She looked pointedly at George.

"Sorry," I said, hating the way I lisped when I said it, and made a mental note to keep doing those mouth and tongue exercises. The ones that made Dee roll on the floor with laughter, saying it looked like I was practicing giving oral. That thought made me think of the man from the shops and I felt a twinge in my pants. "I'm just gonna study for a bit, call me when dinner's ready."

I grabbed my bag and took the stairs two at a time looking at my watch, and saw I had about twenty minutes before dinner. I hurriedly undressed, changing into track pants and a hoodie and laid on my bed, wishing that my cock was bigger, thinking of that man, his tattooed hand stroking me, his hand over mine, my hand over his, and came quickly, the thrill of it all and the urgency of not getting caught. I mopped myself with a tissue while I thought about him. He was nothing like Liam or the other ballers at school, and probably twice my age. I didn't know what it was about him. He could very easily have been a mobster, or criminal, no, not your average criminal for sure, more like a high-ranking Russian gangster. One with wads of cash in his pockets and women fawning over him, pressing their bare breasts against that neck tattoo of his, while he looked at me across the room and smiled that sinful smile.

2

I'm Coming Out

I FINALLY GAVE the man a name, given how much time I spent thinking about him. I named him Boris, after Boris the Blade from my favorite Guy Ritchie movie, the one where Brad Pitt absolutely nailed the tinker accent. Not because he looked like him, god no, but because it was the most Russian name I could think of, and I loved that bloody movie. I watched it again, for Brad of course, that man was beautiful, and marveled at Guy Ritchie's gift for movie making. He was hot too, or used to be, so I may or may not have wanked to him as well, guiltily of course. He broke my queen Madonna's heart, and he should never be forgiven for that, no matter how handsome he once was.

Halfway through the term, I had forgotten about Boris, well, forgotten is the wrong word, more like I shelved him, temporarily, for my renewed interest in Liam, someone who I could stare at daily, surreptitiously of course, didn't need any more fuel for the teasing. Dee kept watching me, wondering, and I worried she would declare it before me. I knew by then that I was most definitely 'team penis,' and not 'team vagina,' and I wanted to be the one to acknowledge it, not have someone else point it out to me, as if I needed help with my identity.

"You want to come over after school? Watch a movie?" I asked her, ready to spill the beans with some glitter and eye shadow if necessary.

"Of course," Dee said, ever the steadfast friend.

I smiled. "See you at my locker." I threw away my wrapper and left the cafeteria, careful to walk like a man, *whatever that meant*, I scoffed to myself. I am a man, why the bloody hell I couldn't walk however the fuck I wanted, really got under my skin to be honest.

"Watch those hands gay-boy. I don't want to lose an eye," some asshole of a baller said as he pushed past me.

"Sod off," I muttered.

The jock turned and stared at me. He was one of Marcus Willoughby's friends, and Marcus was the rugby star who went after me relentlessly. "What was that?"

"I said sorry." I shrugged, my testicles crawling up inside my body like the cowards they were.

He glared at me and kept walking, like a lion ignoring a mosquito. Well macho man, mosquitos carry malaria, and I spent Latin class fantasizing about him dying a horrible death.

I made popcorn and cuddled next to Dee on the couch in the basement, turning on *Rent*, thinking it'd be good but found myself dozing midway through.

Dee elbowed me awake. "Come on, this was an amazing musical, and was a huge hit in America."

"Sorry," I shrugged, thinking it was the over-hyped musical of the millennium (this was before *Hamilton* swooped in and stole that title). "I know the guy died."

Dee scoffed. "You have no taste."

"I beg your pardon," I chafed, "I am an expert on musicals, that one was overwrought, and pointless. No fucking thank you, I'll take Cole Porter or Gershwin any day over that shite. Even Sondheim, though at times he was tedious as well."

"You take that back!" Dee cried. "He is a musical genius."

I shrugged, holding my ground. I was fifteen, would be sixteen in three months and chock full of egregious opinions, though I stand by these, (especially about *Hamilton*, sorry, not sorry).

Dee turned the movie off. "Fine, should we watch something else, or paint our toenails?"

"Did you bring polish?"

"I always have polish." Dee grinned and I followed her up the stairs.

Once in my room, I peeled off my socks, running to the bathroom to get my sister's polish remover, q-tips, and clippers. I closed the door behind me and looked at Dee, rummaging through her bag, pulling out three different bottles of nail polish.

"I'm gay," I said and bit my lip, leaning back against the door. "I think." I remembered adding.

Dee stopped what she was doing and stared at me for a few beats. “No shit,” she said like I had just said the sun was hot and went back to fishing through her bag, finding a fourth bottle and standing up straight.

“Well, that’s not fair.” I frowned. “There are plenty of guys who are like me and straight. It’s not an open shut case.”

Dee’s face softened. “Of course not, I’m sorry,” she said. “It’s just that, I would have been more surprised if you said you were straight.” She shrugged. “Either way, I love you, you’re my best friend, and I don’t care.” I saw a mischievous look pass over her face. “That being said, how much do you lust after Liam Dougherty?”

I laughed with relief. “A lot, but so do you, and half the school.” I stopped, and wondered about telling her about Boris.

“To be honest, Marcus is the one everyone lusts over, but he’s such a bully to you I would never,” she said and then shook the bottles in her hands.

Marcus was beautiful, and I felt like a weirdo thinking that about my bully. “Thank you, I promise to never lust over any of your bullies either.”

She looked at me and laughed. “That’s because you’re gay! Now, which color do you want?” she asked, changing the subject.

3

Tongue Twisters

IT WAS HOT, for April, and I loosened my tie as I went straight from school to grab an ice cream alone. Dee had to go with her family to her cousins' for the weekend in Kent so we said goodbye in front of my locker.

I walked the two blocks to the ice cream shop that had only just opened for the season, my backpack feeling like it was full of bricks.

"Mint chip on a cone please," I ordered from the pretty girl behind the counter, careful not to lisp my 's.'

I handed her a quid and turned to leave, licking my ice cream happily. I pulled up short, nearly dropping the cone mid-lick as I found myself face to neck with Boris. He was wearing jeans and a blue sweatshirt with the sleeves pushed up, and I saw that he had another large tattoo on the same forearm as his hand ones. His eyes were locked on my ice cream covered tongue which I quickly drew into my mouth and swallowed. I saw his mouth move ever so slightly, and held my breath waiting for the half smile. He looked past me, to the girl behind the counter who was looking at him, appraisingly, that slag.

"I'll have a mint chip, in a cup," he said in a medium-deep voice, his accent sounding more Northern than straight cockney, but he hadn't said enough yet for me to discern.

I didn't know whether to stay or leave. My cock wanted me to stay, but my brain told me I was being an idiot, standing there like I didn't know where I was or what I was doing. I turned reluctantly back to the door and took a step.

"You got a hot date?" he asked my back.

I turned. "I'm sorry?" I lisped in my nervousness.

His mouth twitched, and he paid for his ice cream. He crossed the small space to stand next to me and ate a spoonful, his even white teeth visible for a split second.

"You better lick that," he said in a soft voice, nodding with his head at my ice cream which was beginning to drip down the cone.

I snapped out of my daze and licked, turning the cone and running my tongue across the surface, catching the legs of ice cream before they touched my fingers. The way he was watching me, my tongue, made me feel like swooning. I felt like Elio seeing Oliver for the first time, and yes, I know I had an unhealthy obsession with the book *Call Me by Your Name*, but I promise I never tried to fuck a peach. I laughed nervously and made for the door, both wanting him to follow, and hoping that he wouldn't because I was certain I would say something dumb.

"Sit with me," Boris commanded and gestured to the café table outside the shop.

I looked around nervously and then shrugged, taking my backpack off and nearly groaning with relief as the weight was lifted and I sat down.

"Why the hell do you have so many books in that thing?" Boris asked, saying thing like 'fing,' and dropping his 'h's' because of his accent.

"I have a lot of homework." I shrugged and licked my ice cream, Boris' eyes locking again on my tongue as he took another bite of his.

"What's your name?" he asked, turning his spoon upside down and licking the ice cream.

"Robin, but my friends call me Robby, or Rob," I answered. "What's yours?" I held my breath, willing him to say Boris.

"Vasyl," he replied. "My friends call me Vas," he added, giving me a version of his half smile.

"Are you Russian?"

Vasyl laughed. "No, Ukrainian, though the Russians like to think of us as theirs," he added in a flinty tone.

"What are those tattoos?" I asked, feeling bold, nodding at his hand, not sure I wanted to know, or if he would tell me the truth. I prayed they weren't prison tattoos indicating just how many people he killed with his bare hands or a shiv.

Vas looked at the blue-green ink on his knuckles and then his arm, turning it under the sunlight. "This one," he pointed to a conch shell, which he had on his thumb and first two fingers, "is the Buddhist symbol for battles won, and these two

are my initials in Ukrainian,” he pointed to his ring finger and pinky. “The design up my arm is something my cousin drew.” He raised his sleeve so I could see the full tattoo of two tigers locked in battle, one tail wrapped around his wrist and the other around his elbow.

I looked at his forearm briefly, having no idea then just how intimately I would become acquainted with it, and his other tattoos, in the coming years. “Why aren’t the tigers orange and black?”

He just looked at me, and then away. I felt so stupid in that moment, I wanted the earth to swallow me up as I felt my face flame. I cursed my fair complexion and smoothed my hair to busy my free hand. He caught the movement in his peripheral and turned his gaze back to me, lifting one side of his mouth as he looked at my red face.

“You play any sports?” he asked. I watched him take another bite, the spoon disappearing into his beautiful mouth.

“Tennis, and squash, but not on a team,” I answered, wishing in that moment I played something more impressive like football or rugby, I bet he played rugby. No, probably not, he still had all his teeth, it was more likely that he spent a lot of time in the gym, he certainly looked more than fit.

“What do you do for fun?” he asked.

“I like video games, movies, hanging out with friends.” I shrugged and licked my ice cream with the tip of my tongue, feeling that the flat of my tongue winding around the mound of ice cream was too suggestive. It looked like he thought otherwise, his gaze was even more focused on the point of my tongue, and I tucked it back into my mouth quickly.

“How old are you?” he asked in a forced casual tone.

“I’m sixteen,” I lied, “but my birthday is coming up,” I added, wondering about the tension I heard in his tone. He seemed so sophisticated and confident I hated pointing out how young I was, but didn’t dare try to pass for any older.

The little half-smile returned. “When’s your birthday?”

“June Fourteenth. How old are you?” I countered.

“Twenty-seven,” he said holding my gaze and shifting in his seat. “You must think I’m ancient.”

“No, definitely not,” I said and licked my ice cream before it could drip down my hand, I really wanted to throw it away, it made me feel like little kid, *why didn’t I get it in a cup?*

“What video games do you play?” he asked after a moment.

“League, Halo, Call of Duty, Sometimes Pokémon with my friend Dee. Do you play?”

“No,” he answered and looked around again. “Haven’t got the time.”

“What do you do for fun?” I asked, licking my ice cream while his eyes were averted.

“Go to the gym, hang out with friends, go to the pub,” he looked back at me. “I love football, though I watch more than I play.”

“You look really fit,” I said, and then blushed a deep red.

I got a full smile from him for that, and felt the effects of it all the way down to my toes, his features softened as they folded into laugh lines. He looked as though he was about to say something but my phone buzzed in my pocket, interrupting us. I fumbled getting it out, this pair of pants tighter than my other ones, and I looked at the screen. It was my mum reminding me I had to look after George today so she could get her hair done. I cursed silently to myself, not wanting to leave without finding out why Vas was here sitting and talking with me.

“I’ve gotta run.” I stood and picked up my backpack, slinging it over my shoulder.

Vas stood. “What’s your number?” he asked quietly, putting down his ice cream and taking out his phone.

“You want my phone number?” I asked, unable to keep the incredulous tone out of my voice, as my knees went weak.

“Yeah,” he said simply, his mouth transforming into a wicked smile.

I blew out a breath. “But I don’t know you.”

“You worried about stranger danger?” he asked in a mocking voice. “You have an Instagram?”

Holy shit, that would be so much worse if he turned out to be a serial murderer. Photos of my family and friends, my house, no I wasn’t going to give him my Instagram, yet. I shifted on my feet as I chanted, ‘should I? Shouldn’t I?’ in my head. I don’t know why I hesitated. This hot-as-fuck man, with a smile full of sin and promises, wanted my phone number and I was shifting back and forth like I had to pee, what the fuck was there to consider? I rattled off my number in a rush and fled.