

Chapter One – The Party

It's Saturday night. I'm at Ryan's party and I'm pretty sure I'm going to have sex. Samantha is sitting on the edge of Ryan's bed twisting her long black hair between two fingers. Twist. Flick. Twist. I wait in the doorway for a second and watch her, trying to act cool. The condom in my back pocket feels like it's burning through my jeans and I wonder if the kids in the hall behind me can see it, like a fluorescent beacon: Dylan's getting laid tonight.

'Have fun,' Tayla whispers in my ear, on her way to the bathroom with two other girls.

Ryan's parents are up the coast for the weekend. It's March, and it's still stinking hot; if it had been my parents I'd have gone with them for the surf. Which just shows what a muppet I am. No party would mean no Samantha on the end of Ryan's bed.

She looks up and smiles at me as I shut the door and hand her a Bacardi Breezer. Her hand, small and delicate, holds it much steadier than mine. I swig my beer. These are our fourth drinks for the night, enough to give us a buzz, but Sam's normally a three-drink kind of girl. She's going to have to stop

soon if she doesn't want to chuck later on.

'I got you some water, too,' I say, tossing a bottle onto the mattress. Ryan's got a double bed, lucky bastard, but there's aeroplanes all over the bedspread like he's still twelve.

'Thanks,' Sam says. She rolls the water bottle across her forehead. 'It's too hot for dancing.'

She was the one who suggested we go somewhere quieter. That surprised me, 'cause Sam's usually shy when it comes to physical stuff; she always waits for me to make the first move. I'm used to having to perform some kind of investigation to figure out what she wants; I still do, I suppose. The party isn't that loud, but Ryan's place is pretty small and crowded. Did she really mean *quieter* or did she mean *alone*? It's standard code for 'let's hook up', but you never know with Sam.

'You could take a layer off to cool down,' I reply, and try to wink. She only *has* one layer, at least up top. It's a complicated red thing that twists around her in a way that leaves her back completely free so I can tell she's not wearing a bra. When I look at it I suck in a breath.

Sam blushes and looks at the wall. She doesn't say anything.

I sit next to her. I don't know if I'm imagining it, but my left leg feels hotter pressed against hers, like I'm giving off some kind of radiation. *Think unsexy thoughts*. I don't want this to be over too soon. I put a

hand on her back and spread my fingers across her bare skin. The Asian kids at our school have two skin types when it comes to pimples: covering their faces like an unfortunate disease, or none at all. Samantha is one of the ‘none at all’s, and her back is like satin to touch. My sister Hazel is always asking her how she does it, what products she uses, her skin’s so baby soft and blah blah. As if there’s a product out there that could make Hazel look half as good as Sam.

I go to kiss her, but she says, ‘My parents would kill me if they knew I was drinking this,’ holding up the Breezer.

‘And here alone in a room with me.’

‘And here with you, yes.’ She gives me a small smile. She’s as nervous as I am – probably more, because losing your virginity seems to be a bigger thing for girls.

‘Naughty girl.’ I try to say it in a sexy way but it comes out wrong. She laughs.

‘They think I’m at Tayla’s. They trust her.’

My turn to laugh. Tayla is awesome; she’s fiercely loyal and loads of fun, but not the kind of person an adult should trust. Samantha’s parents don’t even trust *her* very much; I don’t know why they think Tayla’s so responsible.

I don’t know what else to say to Sam, and I don’t want to talk anyway, so I kiss her. Her skin shifts a little under my hand and she leans in. I’ve been kissing Sam for nearly a year and I don’t think I’ll

ever tire of it, the way her lips are hesitant at first and her fingertips massage the hair behind my ears. Her long hair is loose tonight and it brushes my arms. We're kissing for a few minutes, max, and I feel like I'm going to explode. I move my hand to the knot at her neck and fiddle with the red top.

'Dylan.' She comes up for air and breathes my name, putting her hand on top of mine to stop me.

'Oh, hold on,' I tell her, and I jump up to the door. Ryan may have a big bed, but the idiot doesn't have a lock on his door. I grab his desk chair and prop it under the handle. 'There. We're alone.' Even without the chair, no one would have come in. Kids at parties know what a closed door means. I sit back on the bed beside her.

'This isn't what I meant when I said—'

'Oh, come on.' I roll my eyes. 'It's not like I haven't seen you topless before.'

'Yeah, but . . .'

I kiss her again and again, excited now that the door is shut. This is really happening. It's real.

'Dylan — I'm not wearing . . .'

'I know,' I say, as I get the knot undone. She's beautiful. I will never tire of the sight of her perfect breasts. It sends me into a frenzy and we're a mess of kisses and hands and smooth skin.

'Dylan,' Samantha manages, when we break apart for a millisecond. 'Slow down.'

Shit. I'm losing control. 'Sorry,' I say, and force

myself to sit up. I scull two-thirds of my beer, trying to calm myself, but I want her, and desire strains against my boxers. I pick up Sam's Breezer and press it into her hands. Liquid courage. She shakes her head.

'Water,' she says. She opens the water bottle and drinks, then I put both bottles down on the floor and lie back on the bed with a sigh. Sam's trying to rearrange her top, as though it matters now. It's not an image I could erase from my head if I tried.

'Leave it,' I say, tugging at her hand. 'No one's going to come in.' I nod at the chair under the door, and Sam lets go.

'Dylan—' she starts, but there's too much going on in my head and my body; I can't talk right now.

'Shh,' I tell her. 'Let's just lie here a minute.'

She's quiet for a bit and I pull her arm till she's lying beside me. I run a finger from her cheek down her neck to the dip of her collarbone and across to her shoulder. She squirms a little, smiling.

'Tickles?'

She nods.

'How about this?' I follow up with kisses and she laughs, wriggling from me so I have to straddle her to hold her down.

'Okay, okay!' I say as she pushes at my chest. 'No more tickles.'

'Thank you.' She's breathless.

I look down at her face, her naked shoulders

obvious in my peripheral vision, and it sends another shudder of desire through me.

‘God, you’re hot,’ I whisper.

I kiss her again and that’s about all I can handle so I pull the condom out and keep kissing, pressed against her, my eyes shut as I’m undoing my pants. I can’t look at her yet or I’ll lose control and it’ll be over before it starts.

‘Dylan,’ she breathes again and I mutter ‘Samantha’ back at her. I look down so I can get the condom sorted. Sam tries to sit up to help but I’m still straddling her and her skirt’s caught under my knee. The beer’s made me dizzy so I don’t think I can climb off without falling over.

‘It’s okay,’ I tell her. ‘I’ve got it.’ And then it’s on and I kick my jeans off my ankles and that’s it. Dylan and Sam. Saturday night, 17 March. Neither of us will ever forget this.



When we’re finished, I want to talk to Sam, check she’s okay and all that, but someone is rattling at the door handle and whooping. Suddenly, it seems like a party was the worst place to do this. I try not to think about all the questions and knowing faces behind the door. I’ll get it right next time – my place or hers, when our parents aren’t home.

‘Piss off!’ I yell at whoever is outside. I hear Ryan’s

laugh and Emre's low voice, moving away.

'Sorry,' I mutter to Sam. 'We didn't think this through, did we?'

She doesn't say anything. She seems a bit weird, actually, all tensed up. She doesn't even look at me.

'Hey, don't let them make you feel bad. They'll find someone else to talk about soon. Just wait until Tayla chucks up on the steps or something.'

I'm pulling my boxers back on now, but Sam just lies there. The hottest chick I've ever known, mostly naked on Ryan's plane-covered bedspread. With me. God, I'm lucky. I fiddle to get my belt back on and pick up my beer, which got knocked over somehow and is seeping into Ryan's carpet.

'Shit.' I rub at the beer with a T-shirt from Ryan's laundry basket. When I give up and toss the shirt away, I see that Sam is crying. Not big ugly tears, but silent ones, dripping down the side of her cheek.

I freeze. What am I supposed to say to her? We just had sex and now she's crying, which I'm pretty sure is not a good sign. I hope it isn't me. I'm not, you know, the largest in the world. A couple of guys wolf-whistle in the hall and Sam squeezes her eyes shut. I feel a surge of anger towards the kids outside.

'Hey,' I say, sitting beside her. 'It doesn't matter what they think. This is you and me. We didn't do anything wrong.' I take her hand and kiss it.

'Please go,' she whispers. She moves, finally, reaching for her underpants.

‘Are you sure?’ I ask. She nods, so I kiss her on the top of the head. ‘Love you.’

The hallway is empty, but I’ve barely made it into the living room before I hear Ryan cheer. I try not to grin. It’s pathetic, the way they’re turning us into entertainment, and Sam’s upset in there. But I can’t help it – a smile creeps up.

‘Dylan!’ says Emre, clapping an arm around my shoulders. He’s the kind of guy that seems a few years older than the rest of us – not just mature, but knowledgeable about things. Even though I’m positive he’s a virgin, a part of me feels like he’s welcoming me into a club. ‘How was it?’

‘None of your damn business,’ I tell him. ‘Where’s Tayla?’

‘Vomiting in the kitchen, I think.’

‘Aw, shit!’ Ryan says. ‘I’ve got to clean this place before my parents get back. The last thing I need is essence of Tayla all over the floor.’

‘At least it’s tiles,’ Emre says. ‘Easy to mop up.’

‘Oh, yeah, I spilt beer on your bedroom carpet,’ I tell Ryan.

‘What? How am I going to get the smell out of that? That’s the last time I’m letting any of you in my room!’ He yells it to the crowd, and one or two people glance over and laugh. No one ever takes Ryan seriously. He’s too short, with too many freckles, like everybody’s little brother. He’s got this blond, floppy hair that could make him look like a cool surfer, if

he had the right tan. Instead, he looks like he's been playing with peroxide.

'Relax, man, we'll help you clean up.' Emre disappears into a mass of dancing limbs. Ryan sighs and throws his hands up.

I lean against a wall for a bit, watching the crowd. The lounges have been taken over for making out, mostly by the established couples from school: Maddie and Scott, Riya and Sai, Wai Lo and George. Samantha and I have been together longer than any of them, but we were never a couple to make-out in public. Sam doesn't like to have everything on display, and her parents are crazy strict. If a friend of a friend's daughter saw us attached at the mouth, you can bet Mr and Mrs Chen would start picking her up from the school gates. No wonder she was so upset at the thought of anyone coming into Ryan's room.

The left end of the couch seems to be for random drunk kissing. When I came in, it was Tayla's older sister, Kaitlyn, and a boy I didn't recognise. Now it's Amita and Jacob. I could swear Amita was there with a different guy when Sam and I left for Ryan's room.

In the middle of the room, there's a group dancing. There's only about ten or fifteen of them, but Ryan's living room is small, so it looks like a lot. Emre is in there, hands in the air, looking even taller than usual, dancing with a girl who I think is only in year nine. He shakes his long black hair in time with the beat.

Everybody loves Emre. He's always the one with the ideas: let's make a horror movie; let's all write the same wrong answer in the physics test and freak Mr Matthews out; let's go bowling, no, seriously, ten pin bowling. Anyone else would be called lame, but with Emre it's like, 'Hey, I haven't done that in years!'

I watch him with the year nine girl. She makes that girly face like 'ohmygod!' to one of her friends, and I shake my head. *All* the girls want Emre, but so far he hasn't dated any of them. It's part of the appeal. He'll spin them around a dance floor, get their hopes up, then kiss them on the cheek and come back to hang out with me and Ryan.

'Want another beer?' Ryan asks me.

'Nah. I don't want to end up like Tayla. Coke.'

'Come on, we're celebrating.'

'Celebrating what?' I ask, and stare him down, daring him to say it. He stares back at me, and the eye contact lasts until the end of the song. Ryan breaks first.

'Fine,' he sighs. 'Coke.'

Ryan goes into the kitchen to play host and I'm alone, watching groups form and split apart again, like little waves out in the middle of a lake somewhere. The music is crappy house music, not my style, but it's got a beat that crawls under my skin and I end up tapping my foot to it. I glance at the clock. Nearly two. Ryan needs to turn the music down if he doesn't want the cops to show.

‘Sam’s gone.’ Tayla appears at my side.

‘What? Where?’

She shrugs. ‘Home, I guess.’

‘*Home?* She had four Breezers!’

‘Not her home, doofus. Mine.’ Tayla’s mum is notoriously chilled about this stuff. Sometimes I wonder if Mr and Mrs Chen have even *met* Tayla’s family, their perspective is so skewed. But Tayla is one of three girls and doesn’t have a brother (or a dad) to ‘distract’ Sam.

‘She didn’t say bye. Is she okay?’ I think of her crying. Maybe I shouldn’t have left her.

‘I dunno. I’m going too, in a sec,’ Tayla says.

I pull my phone out of my back pocket and type a message.

Didn’t see you leave, sorry:(Thanks 4 tonight.
You OK?

‘Look after her.’ I don’t know what else to say: Tell her not to worry what they think. Tell her I’ll stand up to her parents and bring her to live with me if they find out. Tell her she’s stunning and every guy in this room is jealous of me. ‘Tell her I love her.’

‘Will do.’

When Tayla and her sister, Kaitlyn, leave, it starts a trickle of guests coming up to Ryan to say goodbye. Soon his place is half empty, and it’s mostly guys left. Someone pulls out the PS4 and starts a tournament, but Emre and I get stuck helping Ryan to bin everything. We play scissors-paper-rock to avoid

kitchen clean-up duty. Ryan loses.

By the time Emre and I have combed the living room for rubbish and made three hundred trips down the steps to Ryan's recycling bin, almost everyone has gone. There's a guy asleep on the couch, someone's friend from another school. Ryan nudges him but he doesn't wake.

'That's new. Are you two staying the night?'

I nod, but Emre only lives two streets over and he's already looking around for his keys.

'No room, apparently,' he says, glancing at the sleeping guy.

'Want me to walk with you?' I ask. It's a warm, clear night and I'm too pumped to be tired.

'If you want.'

Ryan pours the dregs of another beer bottle down the sink.

'You can take my bed. It's probably better if I sleep in my folks' room.'

'Because I might contaminate it?' I joke. I nudge him with my foot.

'You already contaminated mine. I don't want to sleep in your—'

'You're sick, Ryan, you know that?'

'I'm going now,' Emre cuts in. He's lost his joking, fun-guy persona. Emre gets grouchy when he's tired, like a toddler.

'Okay. I'm going to bed. I'll leave the door open for you,' Ryan says. He nods at Emre. 'See you

Monday.’

Emre doesn’t say anything as we head out onto the street. I shake my T-shirt, which is sticky with soft drink or something. It’s nice out here, quiet but not lonely. Even at this hour, an occasional car passes us, and the street lamps block out most of the stars. The air is still thick with humidity. It will stay that way until a storm breaks in the next couple of days.

Emre walks with his head down. He’s a runner, and his natural stride is long. I’m stretching to keep up, but I don’t mind. It gives me something to think about. When we reach his driveway he pauses and puts his hands in his pockets.

‘Night, Dylan. Did you . . . was it a good party?’

‘Yeah,’ I grin. ‘Not exactly how I was planning, but I’m glad it happened.’

We don’t say any more. It’s like an unwritten rule between us – serious conversation doesn’t take more than ten minutes, and has to be balanced with twice as much mucking around. I trust Emre. He’s a good mate.

As I walk back to Ryan’s, I wonder if Sam and Tayla are talking about me. They seem to have the opposite rule – always talking, never *doing* anything. They’ll be going over all the details. Me, I don’t care about every little thing we said and who did what. I care about what it was like: amazing, like no one is ever going to make me feel as good as Sam does. This was an experience I definitely plan to repeat.

When I get back to Ryan's place, the house is quiet. I kick off my shoes and jeans and dig around for another of Ryan's T-shirts. I check my phone. No texts from Sam. She's probably asleep by now.

I fall asleep under a bedspread of planes, with the smell of stale beer creeping up from the carpet and the image of Samantha's smile on the back of my eyelids. I'm happy.

The Things We Can't Undo

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