



“SAM DORSEY AND HIS FIRST DAYS IN COLLEGE” by PERIE WOLFORD

“SAM DORSEY AND GAY POPCORN” Series: Book 3.1

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The book was edited by [3PEditing](#).

Introduction

You're reading SAM DORSEY AND HIS FIRST DAYS IN COLLEGE, book 3.1 in the SAM DORSEY AND GAY POPCORN series. The series channels popular movies and TV shows, so expect a lot of references to classic movies of the 80es and 90es. But don't worry this is not a fan fiction! The stories are 100% original and all the references are made only as a tribute.

Enjoy!

Part 1

The First Days In College

I stand barefoot in grass so tall that its emerald-green blades reach my thighs.

I can feel a breeze blowing against me. And I catch the salty scent of the ocean. And I hear it too, the ocean, its waves crushing gently against the sand at a beach somewhere not far from here. I try to look up but the sun is so bright it stings my eyes. There's not a cloud in the sky, just an immense stretch of the light-blue uniform fabric of it.

I lower my head and look around me. The amount of greenery before my eyes is major.

There's grass, lush and green, very green actually, as green as it can get I think. There are bushes sprinkled with large pink flowers that strike my eye immediately. I bet every one of those spectacular flowers is the size of a football at least. There are trees all around me, surrounding me actually, with their heavy clustery branches swaying in the breeze sluggishly.

If I believed in heaven, that would be my idea of it.

Around me everything is *perfect*, on the first glance at least. But then I notice one thing that is not so perfect—the sounds, they are unnaturally muffled and unclear. I check my ears. I try covering them with my hands and uncovering. But that has little effect. The sounds are still low, stifled.

And then I hear one sound that stands out.

It's the sound of *his* breath, slow, low-pitched, and unpleasant. I turn around trying to catch where it's coming from but I can't. The sound is everywhere, surrounding me, dominating over everything else.

That sound sparks recognition. I know that sound. I've heard it before.

Then I hear it again, much nearer this time, coupled with the slithering scrape of something like fingernails across slate. But those are not regular fingernails; by the sound of it, they have to be made of metal. Knife blades!

The vibrant colors around me start gradually to dim out into a colorless grey mass and my heart starts to thump faster as the sound of *his* breathing becomes louder and clearer. *He* is getting closer to me now. And now I remember who *he* is.

Sweat beads on my forehead as I find myself in an agonizing anticipation of *his* arrival.

Everything around me grows lifeless and silent, and then *his* deep, ragged voice whispers to me, “One, two, Freddie’s coming for you.”

His voice is so terrifying that it sends me running.

I run away from the voice that turns into a loud insane laughter behind my back. *He* is toying with me, I know. I’m just a mouse inside an intricate labyrinth of his terror. He’s going to get me unless I run.

So I run.

I run as fast as I can away from *him*.

When I finally stop I find myself in a dark corridor with black-painted walls and a very high ceiling. Huge industrial pipes twining around me erupt in stream outbursts every now and again. The only light that I see is coming from the boiler room not far ahead of me, unnerving pulsating light of an open fire. I have no choice but to move towards it, minding each step. Behind my back is complete and utter darkness. I’m scared of it, so I gravitate towards the light.

My steps quicken as I hear *him* whisper again.

“One, two...” *he* whispers and bursts into menacing laughter.

The sound is coming from behind my back and I have a distinctive urge to run from it, run to the boiler room that seems to be the only refuge in this shadowy place. But I suppress my panic and move forward cautiously. My breathing is rapid and my heart is racing inside my chest.

“Come play with me, Sam,” *he* says and I can practically see a wide grin gracing his ugly face as he says it.

When I approach a door to the boiler room I see that the frame of it is covered with a ragged screen of dirty canvas. There’s light coming from behind the canvas.

I approach it slowly.

All the sounds fade away as I do so. My muscles tense up in anticipation of something bad. I almost stop breathing for a moment.

Suddenly the long curved finger-blades punch through the fabric, flashing in the firelight, and begin ripping through it as easily as scalpels through flesh, making hideous ripping sounds.

I jump away from the door at once.

I stare at him through the ripped fabric, a shadowy man with a grimy red and black sweater and a weird hat pulled over his ugly scarred face. And it’s *his* fingers that are tipped with the long blades of steel, glinting in the boney light and giving him the look of an otherworldly predator.

Freddy!

“I’m gonna get you, you little fucker!” he screams inside my head without his actual lips moving and I start screaming too, screaming at the top of my lungs because the horror of it all is overwhelming.

I wake up with a jolt and gasp for air, my breathing hard and irregular, my heart pounding inside my chest. I’m covered in sweat. I restrain myself from screaming because I know now it was all a dream, a nightmare.

I started having these nightmares about two weeks ago. And I’ve been having them every night since. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t shake them off. Freddy is somewhere deep inside my mind, somewhere I can’t reach him.

I steady my breathing and relax a little. I look around my room, still dark in the early hours and ponder what just happened... It all felt so real, so incredibly real.

But it was just a dream though. And as the last bits of it fade away, I get back to reality...

The memories start coming back to me in a flood, memories of what happened two weeks ago. My measly attempts to push them out of my head fail miserably. Memories force themselves in, overpowering my will and even the fresh memory of my terrifying encounter with Freddy Krueger.

I immediately feel the longing to go back to where I was just a minute ago, my nightmare I mean. I’d much rather continue to play a cat-and-mouse game with Freddy than deal with what I have to deal with right now.

I sit up and press my bent knees to my chest in an involuntary attempt to make myself smaller, curling tight into a ball in an effort to protect my fragile insides from the cruelty of the outside world. But no matter how tight I press my limbs together, I know that it’s not gonna help me ward off the shadows lurking in the darkness of my room, ready to attack, tear into the flesh, hurt me again; because those shadows are in my head, haunting me, torturing me.

Muscles in my chest tighten and a lump hardens in my throat. I can’t resist it any longer so I burst into tears.

I didn’t think it was possible for a person to cry for hours, for days actually. Well, *now* I know it’s possible. I tried to stop and put myself together several times over the past couple of days, but it was all pointless. Tears come back again no matter what I do. So I cry. In the silence of the early morning, I cry.

Over a course of an hour I cry myself to sleep gradually.

Oh, the sweet relief of unconscious dreams.

So what went wrong? How did I find myself in a terrible place like that?

I wish I had all the answers, but I don't. Everything happened too fast. Well, it happened fast for me but not for Jake, I guess. I bet he had months to think about it, plan it out to the last little detail how he was going to break my heart.

Oh, Jake...

"I think it's gonna rain," he says and looks up at the stormy clouds above our heads.

I look up too. Just twenty minutes ago the sky was clear and blue and now it's dark and unfriendly, shrouded with thundering storm clouds. The lightning flashes bright in the sky. It is definitely going to rain.

"Come on, I think I can see a barn right up ahead," Jake says and grabs my hand. We start running just as the rain starts.

I can see the barn too now, up in the middle of the grass field, about a hundred yards away from us. We were lucky to exit the woods when we did. If we hesitated another ten minutes we would surely have been drenched.

We run towards the barn, anxious to outsmart the forces of nature.

The rain that started shy is growing stronger now, and soon begins to pour down in endless torrents. I can hardly see anything but the water streaming down onto the ground that was completely dry a moment ago and now quickly becomes muddy. It gets hard to run but we are almost there now. Jake is pulling me behind him. I don't resist. I let him rescue me from the storm. I love him so much. I trust him completely.

I wonder what is it with Jake and the rain? The same thing happened the last time we were in the woods together, back at Crest Hollows. We were hiking back then, same as we were today and then the rain started, a real downpour too. Well, first Jake declared his love for me and I said I loved him too, inadvertently, in spite of my having a boyfriend at the time. But I'm sure you all remember *that* story.

We ended up kissing in the rain last time. This time, we end up soaking wet and panting. But at least we're in the seclusion of an empty barn, surrounded by blocks of hay that present a rather nice alternative to being outside in the rain.

"We made it," I say, trying to catch my breath. I can't help smiling. It was a rather pleasant experience. It is a middle of the summer after all. What was the worst thing that could happen? We could possibly catch a cold, but that scenario is unlikely. The rain water wasn't even that cold anyway.

"Yeah," Jake agrees. He is catching his breath too. And he is smiling too. His smile... How

can one not fall in love with that smile? If you look up the word “perfect” in the dictionary you’re probably gonna see a picture of Jake right next to it.

He glances around the barn and then looks at me, devilishly.

“There’s nobody here,” he says. “Wanna get naughty?”

Do I?

We drop our backpacks onto the floor and pull our T-shirts off.

Our bare bodies collide and so do our mouths. We start to kiss passionately.

I close my eyes as Jake’s lips move down my neck. I mellow out in his arms and let him hold me, spoil me with his kisses. His lips can do magic!

I don’t reciprocate just yet, and simply lose myself in the variety of pleasing sensations. Jake has a lot to offer, being as experienced as he is, and I intend to fully enjoy his skill in that area.

“One, two…” somebody whispers suddenly.

“What?” I pull away from Jake and look at him, confused. “What did you say?”

“Nothing,” he says, looking confused.

“I thought I heard you say something.”

“I didn’t say anything,” he says and shrugs. Must have been just my imagination, or the patter of rain against the barn roof happened to resemble a human voice just for a second.

“Oh, okay,” I mutter and let Jake continue with the kisses.

His dick brushes again mine, both of them hard now. I’m ready to lower my hand down and fondle Jake’s but…

I hear it again.

“One, two, Freddy’s coming for you.”

I hear it distinctively this time. It’s no rain. It’s definitely a human voice. Was it Jake? It must have been. There is nobody else here.

I open my eyes with every intention to confront him, but to my astonishment I don’t see Jake anymore. I’m completely alone.

“Jake?” I call out, confused. “Jake?”

How could he have disappeared so fast? Where did he go?

I look around the empty barn and I can’t find him. One thing grabs my attention though. In

the very back of the barn, in the most distant corner of it, there's an open door and the glimmering orange light is coming out of it.

"Jake?" I try again but he doesn't answer. "Where are you?"

"Three, four, better lock your door," the voice says again faintly. Or maybe it's not a single voice anymore. It sounds more like a couple of voices singing, crooning this verse in a simple melody. But I don't see anybody though.

"Five, six, grab a crucifix."

The voices are coming from that room in the back of the barn. But I don't really wanna go there. I consider going out of the barn to look for Jake outside but the storm is heavy now and it doesn't look as friendly anymore. Lightning flashes and thunder crashes violently outside. An ice-cold gust of wind bursts inside. It makes my skin prickle and the hair stand up on the back of my neck.

So I move deeper into the barn, closer towards the strange door.

"Seven, eight, gonna stay up late," girls continue to croon. I'm pretty sure those are girl's voices, childish voices. Their singing is somewhat soothing; although I don't understand what they are singing about.

I head for it as the song is coming from behind the door.

I approach it. Through the narrow door frame I can see a metal stairwell going down into the depths of something that looks like a factory. There couldn't be a factory under a barn in an open field, could there? I'm not exactly sure for some reason. My mind is clouded.

I step onto the metal platform and start making my way down the stairs.

"Nine, ten, never sleep again!" the girls finish the song on a hard unnerving note. The door behind me slams close, startling me.

I run back and open it.

Behind the door though is a bricked up wall. There was a doorway just a second ago and now it's a wall. There is no going back to where I came from. I've been trapped.

And then I hear a familiar scratch of the knife-fingers against the metal railing of the stairs. I turn around and stare down the stairwell. There is a long shadow moving up the concrete walls. It's coming up towards me like a snake seeking its pray.

I hear the laughter resound through the dense dingy air and back away. But there is really nowhere to go. Wait... There where there was a wall just a second ago is now a long metal platform. I go that way, down the platform.

"You're not gonna run away from me, you little prick!" Freddy's ugly low voice yells from

behind. I run further, afraid to look back. But I still do look back, because not to look is even more terrifying. There is no Freddy following me though. There's nothing.

And then I run into Jake who suddenly appears in front of me, at the end of the platform. I run straight into his arms.

"Got you!" he says smiling and then he sees the horrified expression on my face.

"What happened?" he asks concerned.

"Jake! Jesus! I thought I lost you," I yell.

"I was trying to find you and couldn't," he explains.

"I was trying to find *you*," I say.

"What you were running from?" he asks and looks behind my back trying to see what was it that scared me so bad.

"It's Kruger... he wanted to get to me... I saw his shadow on the wall and I've heard his voice too," I ramble.

"There's nobody there," Jake says and double checks. I look back too, still frightened to see Krueger behind my back. But I don't.

"He was there just a second ago," I say.

"Well, he's not there anymore," Jake says.

"He's here now!" Freddy says instead of Jake.

I turn my head in a jerk to find Kruger standing right in front of me, in the same place where Jake was standing just a moment ago. His crazy eyes are trained on me, laughing at me, mocking my silliness. I've fallen for his trap once again.

"Got ya!" he yells and his knife-fingers tear into the flesh of my stomach.

I scream from pain as my blood and my guts spill out of me. I scream!

I wake up in my bed, convulsing.

I realize that it was just a dream but I still check my stomach for lethal wounds. There are none of course. My stomach is perfectly fine. After all, Freddy Krueger is not real. He is just a nightmare.

I relax my breathing and try to deal with the blinding brightness of the morning light coming through the window. I close the shutters, but some of it is still coming through. Now I have to deal

with yet another day. Great! I'd much rather deal with Krueger again to be honest. It's simple with Krueger, you just run. But what am I supposed to do with this?

I crawl from under the bed sheets and probe the floor surface with the tips of my bare toes. It's cold, just as anticipated. It's September; the weather is getting cold now. I don't like it. I'd much rather stay in bed.

I get back under the sheets and try to lull myself to sleep again. I'm not afraid of Krueger. Well, just a little bit. I'm more afraid of thoughts of Jake though, and they are here to haunt me. If I start thinking about him again, I'm gonna cry. I don't want to cry anymore.

I do start thinking about him again though. There is nothing else on my mind I'm afraid. And I start to cry yet again.

Ten minutes pass, or maybe half an hour, or maybe more than that, I'm not sure. I've completely lost the track of time. Suddenly I hear a knock at the door. I peek from under the sheets to yell, "I'm not coming out of my room, ever!"

"And I'm not hungry," I add, expecting my mom to start pleading with me again, trying to make me eat something, anything. I'm simply not hungry. How can she not understand that? The door opens but it's not my mom. It's Melissa!

I'm so glad to see her face that I forget about everything else for a second.

"Hey," she says tentatively.

"Hey," I whisper back and manage a small smile.

"How are you?" she asks but she can pretty much tell from the horrible way I look—that I'm a train wreck.

"He...he said that...we were...he..." I try to say, sobbing. And then I burst into tears again, unable to hold them back.

"Oh you poor thing!"

Melissa comes over and hugs me. Only she can comfort me in a way no one else can. She is my best friend, my best friend in the entire world.

She puts her hands on my back and caresses me gently. It feels so nice.

And then she slaps me across the face!

Dumbfounded, I stare back at her.

"You need to snap out of this," she says harshly. "Seriously."

“I...” I try to say something in my defense but I don’t know what to say.

“I know you loved him. And I know it hurts. I’m a queen of getting dumped, remember?” she says.

I nod.

“I know it seems like he was a major part of your life and now that you lost him there isn’t anything else worth living for. But you’re wrong!” she declares. “It’s not like you’ve lost a leg. You can live without him. More so, you’re better off without him! He was a *small* part of your life, insignificant part, like a clipped toenail. And you don’t cry over a toenail. It will grow back. You’ll see it once you stop thinking about him all the damn time and look at things from a different perspective. There are other things in life besides Jake.”

The sound of his name brings back the tears but Melissa slaps me again, pretty damn hard this time.

“No! Stop thinking about him right now,” she commands, and I try to pull myself together, the best I can.

“You’re being an asshole, you know that?” I say, but I know she’s trying to help me.

“Yeah, and that is exactly what you need right now,” she says. “Stop whining! You’re not a twelve-year-old girl. You’re a grown-up man. Start acting like it.”

She’s tough. But she has a point.

“Aren’t you supposed to be in Boston, starting your first semester at the Film Academy which you’ve worked so hard to get into?” she asks. And she’s right. I am supposed to be in Boston. I was supposed to be there three days ago actually, but I just didn’t go. I worked my ass off the last couple of years even for a chance to get there and now I don’t feel like going.

“I can’t,” I say, sobbing. “I can’t go. I don’t want to. I’m just gonna stay here until the rest of my days and die alone.”

“You can go and you will go,” Melissa counters. “You want to go, believe me. I know you well enough to tell you want to go. You just need to stop throwing yourself in a loop pining over Jake and get your mind off of him. And I think I have just the thing to help you with that.”

“What?” I ask curiously.

She shows me a small paper bag she brought with her. She takes something out of it and it’s... I think it’s a... Hair dye? I give her a questioning look.

“What is that?” I ask.

“That’s hair dye,” she confirms. “This is what usually helps me deal with heartbreaks. You need to find a new you and I’m gonna help you do that.”

“Seriously?” I ask. She nods.

“Get up,” she commands. I do get up afraid she’s going to slap me in the face again if I didn’t.

I put my head over the bathtub and let Melissa apply the hair dye. I gotta admit it’s kinda fun. More fun than I expected.

I was curious to what I’d look like if I went blond. But I was never comfortable with the idea enough to actually do it, dye my hair I mean. What if the result turned out to be hideous? But I am so heartbroken at the moment that I don’t really care how I look. Hideous or not, it doesn’t matter. So even if this going-blond thing turns out to be a complete disaster, I don’t think it would matter much to me, just an addition to the rest of my problems.

“So did he really say that he didn’t want to see you ever again?” Melissa asks tentatively.

“Yep,” I say and to my surprise I don’t start crying.

“Ouch,” she comments.

“Yeah, ouch,” I concur.

“He’s such a jerk! I knew you shouldn’t have trusted him. I just knew it,” she says. She did have reservations about Jake. And she was verbal about it. I should have listened. My bad!

“I don’t really wanna talk about him anymore,” I say. Again, to my surprise, I really don’t. And I don’t want to think about him anymore either. There is really no point going over this again and again. What’s done is done and there is no going back now. The sooner I accept it the better.

Melissa looks at her wrist watch. “Okay, I think it’s time to wash it out now.”

I let her wash the stinky mixture off my hair. I watch the bubbly pinkish substance dance its way down the drain and mentally get myself ready to see exactly what that substance did to my hair.

Melissa dries my hair with a towel, not letting me look in the mirror just yet. And then she makes me close my eyes and turns me towards the mirror.

“Okay, are you ready to see the new you?” she asks.

“I don’t know, does it look hideous?” I ask, pretty much expecting the worst.

“No, not at all,” she says encouragingly. “You actually look very cute blond.”

I decide to trust her on that one and open my eyes, still not expecting much. But the reflection in the mirror startles me almost, but in a good way. It’s not me I see in the mirror, definitely not me. It’s a completely different person.

I do look cute! And my hair is awfully blond. But it kinda suits me.

My facial features look a little different now that they are fringed with light hair instead of dark. And my blue eyes really pop up. I really like the new me, to be honest. I really do.

“So? What do you think?” Melissa asks with a smile. She didn’t have to ask. It’s all written on my face. I love it!

“I love it,” I say and smile. God, that’s the first time I smiled in two weeks.

Melissa grins, proud of her work.

“Damn, I’m blond now,” I whisper. Melissa smiles and hugs me.

“Yes, you are.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

I don’t know how Melissa did this but in a matter of several hours not only did she manage to get me out of bed and make me stop crying, but she actually made me feel strong enough to pack my bags, get in the car and start towards Boston.

Boston Film Academy, here I come!

Yes, it’s the same Film Academy Mitch goes to. But I’m not ready to talk about Mitch yet. That’s a whole different story.

I make my way out of town and enter the highway.

It’s not raining yet but the sky is all storm clouds now, especially right ahead of me, right where I’m going. It seems I’m headed for the very eye of the storm. That can’t be a good sign, right?

But even if it is a red flag, I ignore it. There is no turning back now. My mom was so happy to see me go, at last, that I don’t think she’d let me back into the house even if I did come back. I mean she loves me of course. And she would love to have me stay at home, but she knows that going to college is ultimately the right thing to do. Besides she knows how hard I worked for it. In any case, I don’t belong at my parents’ house any more. I belong in the college dormitory. That is where I am supposed to be. I was supposed to be there three days ago actually, but I hope I’m still welcomed.

I can’t believe that just a couple hours ago I was seriously contemplating spending my entire life in my bed, well half-seriously. Thank God Melissa showed up and snapped me out of it. I needed that. I needed a jolt, a push, a kick in the butt to be honest.

The rain starts. I turn on the wipers.

It's a good thing that traffic is not particularly busy today. I can actually sit back and enjoy the ride, sort of. I was so looking forward to this. I worked so hard to get into Academy. It was a dream of mine since I was like twelve. I can't believe I was ready to give it all up because of Jake.

Jake...

Well, I guess I'm strong enough to recap on what happened without bursting into tears now.

What did exactly happen? As I said, I'm not sure I know the answer.

After Crest Hollows last year we had become inseparable. We spent the entire summer together. We camped a lot, just the two of us, snuggling up at the edge of the forest, in a nice cozy tent. We were swimming in the mountain river during the day, naked of course; and making bonfires at night, roasting marshmallows, also naked; having sex, lots and lots of sex. And it was all romantic and fantastic and wonderful.

Jake was never afraid to tell me he loved me, or that he thought I was the one. And I wasn't afraid to say it all back, because I felt exactly the same way. If only I knew back then that all his words were probably lies. I'm not sure he ever loved me at all.

How could he do that? How could he lie about something like that to my face?

Anyway, the summer was wonderful and everything was perfect. We had sex, we had conversations, and we got to know each other well. I didn't think there was a thing about him that he had held back. Well, I certainly told him everything there was to know about me. That time we spent together was a fairy-tale. I never had anything like that before, not even with Mitch.

But then September came, it was our senior year at school. I was doing everything in my power to get into the Film Academy. And Jake was very supportive. His father seemed to be willing to continue and sponsor Jake's football career and get him into a good college as well, in spite of his unexpected and unwelcomed coming out, encouraged by me. Oops!

There was a lot of work and a lot of things needed to be done by the end of the year. We didn't see each other as often as we did during the summer break, understandably. But I was still happy. I thought he was too.

We would usually meet on weekends at my place. My parents were perfectly comfortable with Jake being my boyfriend now, although a little confused and concerned over why I broke up with Mitch all of a sudden. But they were okay with it, and that's the most important thing. They liked Jake too, maybe not as much as they liked Mitch, but they liked him enough. They made Jake feel perfectly welcomed in our house.

Jake's parents on the other hand, they never liked me. Especially Jake's tyrant of a father. I was perceived as a cause of their only son's "*becoming*" gay. And no amount of explanations on Jake's part seemed to convince them otherwise.

But not a big deal, we never met at Jake's house anyway, avoiding the issue altogether. We would meet either at my house or at any other place available. I was perfectly okay with that arrangement and I thought that Jake was too. I never really felt like bringing it up and discussing the subject. Maybe it did bother Jake, a little. Maybe I did do a lot of thinking for him, guessing what he felt instead of asking him.

But in my defense I had a lot on my plate, with Film Academy and all. I just didn't think that we were on a collision course. I thought that whatever issues we had, they were temporary. I thought everything was going to resolve itself once we left for college. Unfortunately it didn't happen that way at all.

I guess I have seen a couple of red flags over the course of the year. But I dismissed them, not willing to give grounds to my concerns and hoping that any difficulties would pass on their own eventually.

But then the summer came and contrary to my expectations we grew even more distant. Jake was coming up with excuses all the time; a *thing* would come up suddenly one time, another time he'd come down with a wild headache. He started skipping on our dates regularly and although I did try to talk to him about it several times he would just brush it off, saying *everything was okay* and that I needn't to worry about anything.

I knew of course that I did need to worry. But I guess I chose to believe him instead. I had no reason not to. I mean it's Jake. We were always honest with each other, to the extent of my knowledge at least. We always told each other everything. Or so I thought.

And then, on Saturday two weeks ago, he called and said that we needed to talk. He sounded serious and I suggested for him to come over. But he refused. He said that we wouldn't be seeing each other anymore. To be honest, I lost the ability to speak at that moment. And I'm not sure that I recall everything that happened after that 100% accurately.

He said that he didn't love me anymore. He said it was a mistake for us to get together in the first place. He said he met somebody else. He said he didn't want to see me anymore. He said that it would be best for the both of us to split. He said that he didn't love me anymore. Wait, I already said that. But I guess that is the most important thing of all. He didn't love me anymore!

Ouch, that still hurts.

I didn't believe it at first. I thought that he was trying to trick me or something, kidding around. I mean how could have I possibly taken those horrible things he said seriously?

I waited for a long time for his voice to start cracking up, turning into a good-natured laughter, but it never did. Neither did his voice quiver at the weight of the things he was saying to me. I mean it was major! He could have at least pretended to care, sob a little or something. But his voice was firm and unflinching. And that scared me the most. It *was* serious then.

I don't think I was coherent when I was trying to say something back to him, plead my case;

my case being that I was hopelessly in love with him, still. He didn't want to listen to any of that.

Then I think I might have become a little hysterical. And that's when he simply hung up on me.

I was left with a cold automatic beeping of the telephone line.

I'm not sure how much time did I spent holding the receiver in my hand and staring at it pointlessly, trying to process what just happened. It was beyond comprehension. If I was in a science fiction movie I guess I would have felt the same way after an alien abduction, not believing what happened happened for real.

I started calling him back after a while, determined to get to the bottom of this. He did make himself quite clear but it wasn't enough for me, I'm afraid. I needed answers, real answers.

Nobody was picking up the phone though. When I was ready to give up trying to reach him over the phone and just go there myself, right to his house and knock at his door until he opened, and make him listen to me and look me in the eyes, someone did pick up the phone. But it wasn't Jake. It was his mother.

"Young man, you are being very rude and you need to stop calling this house at once," she said mercilessly. "More so you need to forget that number, do you understand?"

"I need to talk to Jake," I muttered. God, I knew I hated that woman the first time I met her, vile and vicious old bitch! She looked a lot like Cruella De Vil too, a rich bitch from 101 Dalmatians. Guess what, people like that exist in real life too.

"I'm afraid that is not possible. There is nothing else my son wants to tell you other than what he already did. There is going to be no further communication between the two of you."

"I need to talk to Jake!" I shouted into the phone angrily.

"He doesn't want to talk to you," she responded calmly, coldly like a snake, hissing menacingly. *You mess with me and I will bite you, poison you to death! You hear me, stay away!*

"Please," I whispered on a verge of crying.

"Take my advice, forget him," she said. "Goodbye."

I was replaying that conversation in my head over and over for days and nothing of what she said even made sense. But then it did. I guess Jake never loved me at all. He just lied about the whole thing. Maybe he wanted to get back at Mitch, show him his place you know. Or maybe it was something else entirely. But whatever it was, the point is that it was all a game, a play, a charade. None of it was real. He is just as poisonous as the rest of his family.

I dumped Mitch because of Jake and I hurt Mitch's feelings. I lost my best friend over it. And now Jake dumped me and broke my heart in return. Frankly, I got what I deserved. What comes

around goes around doesn't it?

So that was it. That's how the fairy-tale ended. I never believed in fairy-tales anyway. And there I was thinking that Jake and I were made for each other. I was so stupid. I hate myself for being so stupid!

I arrive on campus as it's raining cats and dogs outside.

And I don't have an umbrella of course. I've packed everything, but I didn't pack a fucking umbrella. Ugh, I am so frustrated and pissed right now, mostly at myself, but also at the world that is being totally unfair to me at the moment.

I screwed up, I get it. I've ruined a perfectly good relationship with Mitch and for what? For Jake? Well, as it turns out Jake never really wanted me. Oops, I'm sorry, my bad! How could I have known? I was just following my heart. I thought I was doing the right thing. I'm sorry!

I sit behind the wheel in a stupor, hesitant to get out of the car. I'll get wet in a second under a downpour like that for sure. The last thing I need right now is catch a cold.

But I can't sit in my car forever. I wish I could but I am already late as it is, three days late to be exact. So I open the door and step out into the rain.

The rain droplets seem to be made of ice. Jesus, it's freaking cold!

I grab my backpack from the back seat and start running towards the dormitory building. It's a good thing I've been scrutinizing the campus maps for years, fantasizing about one beautiful day when I'll be here as a rightful student. Well, the wonderful day has come. I'm simply (sarcasm warning) bursting with joy!

The dormitory building is measly ten yards away but I get wet nonetheless, soaking wet that is, dripping water all over the tile floor as I enter the lobby.

Immediately I receive an unhappy glance from a Latino receptionist girl in her twenties who seem to be thinking she owns the damn place. I gulp at the prospect of going over there and starting a conversation.

I take a few steps towards her and she watches me closely as I do so.

"Hello," I force myself to say.

She looks me over as if I was a dog that happened to wander in to its own misfortune, a very very bad ill-behaved dog! And that dog just did something particularly annoying too by simply opening its mouth.

"I'm listening," she says. Oh great, she has an attitude! Just as I suspected.

“I’d like to get the key to my room, if possible... Please,” I say barely audible.

“You do, do you?” she asks with a grin.

“Yes... please,” I say.

She takes a glance at her wrist-watch and then at me. “Oh, excuse me, but it seems that you’re... 72 hours late, young man,” she declares.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper. That is all I can think of saying really. Nothing else comes to mind. She doesn’t seem satisfied at all with my reply. She gives it a few more seconds, apparently waiting for me to explain myself in a more elaborate fashion, but nothing follows on my part. My mind is completely blank.

“Name?” she asks then.

“Sam Dorsey,” I say, thankful to God that I still remember my name.

She flips through a registration book and stops her long pink-polished fingernail at my name apparently.

“Room 106, roommate Mitch Blake,” she announces.

Oh shit! I’ve been meaning to call and change that arrangement.

You see, me and Mitch made that reservation back when the two of us were together and apparently he didn’t cancel it and neither did I; although one of us definitely should have.

The idea was to have a perfect college experience with the two of us living together. Sounds perfect, right? Who knew I was going to break up with him and ruin the prospect of such delightful experience? Stupid me!

“Umm,” I mutter.

“What is it?” the girl asks, even more annoyed now. Turns out that not only is the dog ill-behaved but it has lice too. Bad dog! Bad bad bad dog!

“Is there any other room available, because I really can’t be roommates with Mitch Blake?” I say tentatively.

“Why in the world not?” she asks making it obvious that I’m stretching her patience right now.

“Umm,” I mutter, not sure what I’m supposed to say to that. It wouldn’t be right to tell her that Mitch was my boyfriend and we broke up. I mean I don’t want to out Mitch to this person.

“Personal reasons...” I whisper.

“So, let me get this straight,” she starts and lowers her elbows onto the counter. “You come

here 72 hours after the move-in day and you want *me* to find *you* an exclusive room with no roommates?”

Her eyebrows are sky-high.

“Not exactly,” I utter. “I *want* a roommate, just not Mitch Blake, please?”

“Well, this is not a hotel. This is a dormitory. You’ll get exactly the room that was assigned to you.”

I contemplate my options. Maybe I *could* patch things up with Mitch after all. Sure we haven’t talked in a year. Well because he stopped returning my calls. Sure he seems to be extremely angry with me and basically wants nothing to do with me anymore. But *maybe* we could straighten things out and be friends? That would actually be fantastic, if only he could find it in his heart to forgive me.

The idea of making up with Mitch no matter the effort it’s gonna take doesn’t seem that bad actually.

Well, that is until I see him walk in.

Mitch walks in casually. Mitch! I haven’t seen him in so long that I almost forgot what he looked like. He looks great actually, all grown-up and mature somehow, even though it’s only been a little over a year. He lost his leather jacket and the ripped jeans. He’s wearing normal jeans now and a nice orange T-shirt that does everything to accentuate the bulging muscles on his upper arms. His chest looks great too.

And then my eyes meet his eyes, inadvertently.

He gives me such a cold eye that I get chills. Yeah, patching things up with him is probably not gonna work. Forget it!

Not even flinching at the sight of me, he turns his gaze to the receptionist girl and nods a friendly hello to her. That nod is meant exclusively *for her* and don’t I dare misappropriate it. I won’t. I’m not stupid, well not that stupid anyway.

“Hi, Medina! Looking good as usual,” he says in a friendly tone, although I can feel that my presence makes him tense and uncomfortable.

“Oh Mitch...stop it you,” she responds flirtatiously.

He then walks right past me without saying a single word or in any way acknowledging my existence. Wow, he didn’t forget a thing! And he is *still* hurting. And he is still mad as hell too. And there I was thinking that we could maybe still be friends.

I mean we never had a fight or anything. No anger or frustration was expressed. He stopped returning my calls, yes. But I just thought he needed time to process it all. I knew it wasn’t gonna be

quick but I still believed we'd reinstate our friendship eventually.

Once he's gone, I turn back to the receptionist girl, Medina.

"Medina, I really can't be roommates with Mitch," I plead. "Please!"

"It will be Ms. Medina for you, young man!" she snaps.

"Sorry," I apologize. "Is there any other room I could take?"

She looks down into the book and then back at me, "All rooms have been assigned 72 hours ago. Nothing else is available. Sorry."

Shit!

"Please..." I breathe out and make my best attempt to make puppy dog eyes.

"Listen, I don't know what you want me to do. All the rooms are taken. You should have been here 3 days ago," she says a little more friendly now. "If you want to get a different room you need to file an application for it and wait for it to be processed by the administration."

"Wait? For how long?" I ask grimly.

"A week, two weeks, a month maybe," she says. "I don't know. People usually bother to show up the moving-in day."

"Where I'm gonna stay for a week?" I ask hopelessly.

"A hotel?" she suggests.

"I don't have money for that," I admit.

"Well, there's nothing I could do," she says. "All rooms have been taken."

"Isn't there anything?"

She sighs heavily and thinks about it for a moment. Then her face lights up at a sudden idea. A grin appears on her face as well.

"Well, there's a bed in the janitor's closet, but I'm sure you wouldn't consider something like that," she says. "Would you?"

"Janitor's closet?" I mutter in disgust. I get to live in a company of brooms and floor rags. Yay!

She nods with a wide grin.

Shit!

So I settle in, in the janitor's closet.

About a dozen brooms and floor rags welcome me; also there's a bucket of some undeterminable liquid in the corner. I don't think I want to know what that is.

Other than that the accommodations are pretty much acceptable. The room is unexpectedly spacious and there's even a tiny little window at the top of the wall. And there's a bed of course, some shelving and nothing else to disturb the eye. The walls are a grim dark-green color though. Ugh!

I hope that the janitor, whoever he is, is not gonna mind me being here. If he is anything like Medina I'm gonna be in a lot of trouble. God, I'm so tired at this point that I just want to fall asleep! I need rest desperately. Between Jake and Krueger I haven't been able to have a good sleep in what feels like ages.

I don't even consider attending any classes today. I'm still wet from the rain. And I'm sweaty. And I feel dirty and exhausted. So I just crash down on the bed and shut my eyes.

Please God, let this horrible day be over. I can't take any more crap today. I seriously need a break.

I thought this was gonna be the most magical day in my life. I was looking forward to it since I was little. And look what it turned out to be, a complete and utter disaster!

Ugh! Kill me now.

So I get out of the janitor's closet and head for the lobby with every intention to have a serious talk with Medina. It's unacceptable that a student has to live in a janitor's closet. I have every right to have a room! I deserve to have one!

I'm aware that this *might* be the karmic punishment for my sins, but I feel that the sentence isn't fair. I will need to talk to whatever manager fate has, right after I'm done talking to Medina.

But I stop dead in my tracks when I hear a familiar voice coming from the end of the hallway.

"Hi, I'm here to see Sam Dorsey. Can you tell me where his room is?" Jake asks.

"Oh, sure..." Medina responds, snappy as usual. "Just go down this hallway. When you see a door marked 'janitor's closet' that's where Sam's room is."

"Excuse me?" Jake says a little confused.

"You heard me right. We had him settled in the janitor's closet," Medina says with an audible grin. Why is she being so bitchy to me? What in the hell did I even do to her? I've only known her for like a few hours.

“Down the hallway, last door on the left, honey,” Medina repeats.

“Thanks,” Jake says, a little spiteful now. He cares about me; I can hear it in his voice. He still loves me! He does.

Oh, Jake! He’s here to save me from this hell. He is going to fix everything and make everything alright again. There is nobody else who could do that but him. It’s my Jake.

I don’t dare move waiting for his sweet face to appear from behind the corner and it does. Oh God, it *is* Jake. He’s as beautiful as he’s ever been. Just looking at him makes my dick perk up.

He sees me and a warm smile stretches across his face. I smile back!

I can’t keep myself still anymore. I wanna run, run towards him and have him wrap me in his arms, and forget about everything that happened over the past couple of weeks. And I do run. And Jake catches me in his arms. And it’s perfect!

When I finally peel myself off of him, I look him in the eyes. He looks at me too, smiling, happy.

“What are you doing here?” I ask, genuinely perplexed to see him here.

“I came to see you,” he says and looks at me as if I just asked the silliest question ever.

“But you said…” I begin but he interrupts me at once.

“Forget everything I said! I didn’t mean any of it. I love you Sam, more than anything in the world. I want to be with you. I truly do!” he exclaims.

Oh, that makes me so happy! I can’t even express how elated I feel right now. Until…

Until I hear the voices.

“One, two, Freddy’s coming for you.”

I’ve heard that chant before, I’m pretty sure. It sounds very familiar but I can’t quite remember where I heard it or recall what it means.

“Three, four, you better lock your door,” two girls croon somewhere out of sight. I look around trying to find the source of the voices but I can’t; it’s just me and Jake in the hallway and nobody else.

“What is it?” Jake asks.

“Do you hear this?” I ask back.

“Of course I do,” he says amused and takes my hand. “Come on!”

Jake starts pulling me towards the other end of the hallway. I don’t really want to go there. I

can now see the ominous fiery red glow coming from the open door of the janitor's closet.

"Five, six, grab a crucifix," the voices repeat faintly and expressionlessly.

I try to stop Jake but he squeezes my hand in his and pulls me harder.

"Come on!" he insists.

"Jake stop," I plead.

"Come on," he says and almost crushes my hand with his clenching fingers. It hurts!

"Jake, stop!" I shout angrily, trying to pull my hand out of his grip.

"Come on!" he suddenly shouts in a low inhuman voice. "Don't you wanna have fun?"

And then I hear that insane laughter rumble through the hallway; I heard it before, I'm sure. But I can't quite remember.

I pull harder and my hand slips free. Jake stops without turning to me and stares at the fire glow in the end of the hallway as if enchanted with it. I back away from him, scared as hell now.

"What's the matter, Sam?" a low voice asks me. "Don't you trust me?"

Freddy! I remember now!

And then Jake turns around and... And it's not Jake anymore. It's Mitch!

He looks at me with his puppy dog eyes. His face is so kind and sweet. I mean it's Mitch, the best friend I've ever had. Mitch would never hurt me, never.

"Don't you trust me?" he asks amiably.

"Mitch?" I ask confused.

He stretches his hand to me.

"Come on," he says. "Come with me."

I hesitate. I mean it's Mitch but it can't be Mitch. How can it be Mitch? Everything is so hazed. I don't understand what's happening anymore.

"Come on," he says and smiles warmly.

"No," I mutter and shake my head. My instincts tell me that there's something wrong with the picture.

"Come on," he repeats and starts down the hallway without me. He is getting away from me now, fast.

“Mitch?” I shout after him as the distance between us grows larger. I don’t want there to be *any* distance between us. So I make one cautious step in his direction.

“Come on,” an echo of Mitch’s voice resounds through the hallway.

I suddenly find myself completely alone and in the dark. And the darkness comes from behind me. It closes itself around me, trying to engulf me completely. But there is still a way I can escape.

The only way where there is light is in the other end of the hallway. The trembling fire light is coming from the janitor’s closet.

I start, first uncertainly and then more confidently. I can see Mitch turn around and look at me one more time before he enters the closet and disappears in there. That scares me. I quicken my pace, wanting to catch up with him as soon as I can.

“Seven, eight, gonna stay up late.”

I start running but suddenly the hallway stretches in a bizarre manner, and the janitor’s closet door that was only a dozen feet away from me appears so far away that I can barely see it.

“Mitch!” I cry out.

I feel suddenly that the soles of my shoes begin to stick to the surface of the floor. Every step turns into an effort. But I keep on. I try to keep on but my legs begin to sink. The floor turns into a quicksand.

I sink!

“Nine, ten, never sleep again!” the girls scream and I scream together with them in an attack of pure panic.

I wake up with a jolt, again.

I’m all sweaty and breathing so fast as if I just ran a mile.

“Hey, hey, are you okay, buddy?” a man asks and approaches me from the other end of the closet.

Startled, I almost scream.

“Who are you?” I ask, loudly.

“I’m the janitor,” he says and points at an embroidered tag on his uniform that confirms it.

“Are you okay?” he asks.

I try to catch my breath. “Yeah, just a bad dream.”

“Hmm, I can never remember my dreams. Maybe I don’t even have any,” he says and gets back to collecting his janitor equipment that is all over the room. There is only one small window here and the morning light is not bright enough to get the place lit well.

I want to get out of bed, but then I suddenly realize that I have a boner. Jesus, I just had a terrifying nightmare and I still get a morning boner? What’s wrong with me?

So I cover myself with a blanket and stay put.

“So, Medina told me about your... situation,” he starts. I just nod.

“I mean it probably sucks. You come to college for the first time and you have to settle in the janitor’s closet,” he says. “That gotta suck.”

“I’ll survive,” I say.

“I mean you’re welcomed here as long as you feel comfortable,” he says with a warm friendly smile. “But I mean it’s a closet. It’s not exactly a five star hotel room.”

“It’s okay. It’s fine,” I say somewhat convincingly.

“Okay,” he says. “As long as you feel comfortable. I mean I’m gonna try not to intrude much. But I do use this closet to keep my stuff in.”

“Sure,” I utter.

“I usually come around six in the morning and six in the evening,” he clarifies. “I mean, the rest of the day the closet is all yours.”

“Thanks,” I say, feeling honestly grateful that he doesn’t mind me being here. It is his closet after all.

“Okay, cool,” he says. “My name is Carl by the way”

I nod. “Nice to meet you, Carl. I’m Sam.”

“Cool. Nice to meet you, Sam.”

I smile.

“Okay, I’ll leave you alone now,” he says and opens the door.

So I decide to finally attend some classes.

I barely make it in time for the Film History class because it still raining out there. And I still don’t have an umbrella. But I didn’t get as wet as I did yesterday so that’s a plus. On the downside

though when I entered the auditorium my gaze immediately stumbled unto Mitch. And I can tell he wasn't particularly happy to see me.

I've taken a seat in one of the most distant rows, as far away from Mitch as possible. And I did so not because I didn't want to be close to Mitch but because I know he doesn't want me to be in any close proximity to him actually.

The lecture starts and I notice that a big chunk of students have clustered around Mitch. They all seem to be friendly. Well of course, they had time to get to know each other well attending the pre-college program which Mitch went to and I didn't. Also those who didn't attend the pre-college program same as me probably arrived on campus about a week ago and not yesterday. I suppose I was the only one who arrived yesterday. Thus I pretty much singled myself out.

It's always hard to make new friends. It's even harder now that I'm obviously a black sheep. So congratulations, Sam! You've managed to make things worse for yourself yet again. I mean none of it was intentional, but the fact remains.

The History of Film was one of the classes I was looking forward to the most. And I wanted to enjoy it and I wish I could say that I did but I can't. I just couldn't concentrate on what the lector was saying. My glance kept sliding back to Mitch.

I could never even imagine that things between us would become so awkward. I really expected us to stay friends. And I know Mitch said that we would stay friends. Also he said that he wouldn't give up on me. But I guess he gave it a second thought and decided that I wasn't worth the trouble.

We did call each other a few times after we broke up. But the thing is, I was in a new happy relationship with Jake and Mitch was newly single and brokenhearted, thanks to me. I could feel that talking to me was painful for him.

I guess eventually I allowed him to distance himself from me because I knew it was the right thing to do. But I did miss him, enormously. Mitch is truly a great guy. If I didn't have those feelings for Jake, I wouldn't let Mitch go ever.

But it is what it is and I can't turn time back. Now I guess I have to suffer through it and stop complaining. I brought it upon myself and I deserve this.

The rest of the classes flash by in a blur.

I've been trying to avoid Mitch all day today and since he seems to be the most popular kid among my peers, I automatically avoided all the others as well. So, no making new friends, not today.

By the end of the day, I'm so tired that I just crash on the bed in my closet and lie there afraid to fall asleep. I don't want any more encounters with Freddy Krueger. I just want to rest. I

already have dark rings around my eyes and those are not pretty. Well, at least I stopped crying over Jake. That's good! I want to stop thinking about him. That would be for the best.

The door opens and Carl peeks in, snapping me out of my thoughts.

"Hey there," he says. I'm so glad I have at least one friend around here. Carl is in his late thirties I guess, blue eyed and square-chinned. He is kinda good-looking and his uniform doesn't look half bad on him. I wonder how he wound up being a janitor. "I just needed to grab a broom."

"Sure," I say and he walks in.

"So, how did the first day go?" he asks while shuffling inside, grabbing some cleaning products and a bucket as well as a broom.

"It was alright, I guess," I say. I wanted to say that it was a complete disaster but I feel awkward discussing that with a stranger.

"Good, good," he says nodding. "It's gonna get better, you know. You will make friends and you'll get used to the place. The first day is always the hardest or so they say. I mean I didn't go to college myself obviously. But you know following a broom around for the past eight years I've learned a couple of things. Never underappreciate the value of education, kid, I'll tell you that."

"I won't," I say with a smile. "Thanks."

"No problem," he says and heads for the door. "If you need anything just let me know, okay?"

"Sure. Thanks."

And then he leaves. And I go to sleep. And I meet Freddy again and he rips my inside into shreds. Ouch!

My dreams were always symbolic to what was happening in my life. So Freddy is here for a reason. I think he represents all of the things that haunt me. Like my relationship with Jake that failed to work; or my friendship with Mitch that doesn't exist anymore. Or it's my general state of despair that brought Freddy to life.

The question is how do I get rid of him?

The next day and the day after that are basically all the same. I try to study and take in the information I can but my mind keeps fixating on Mitch, on being lonely, feeling miserable and on having a horrible encounter with Krueger each night.

By Friday I'm a train wreck of a person.

I don't make a single friend. And now the majority of students are gonna go away for the

weekend to visit family and friends and I have nowhere to go.

I wanted to jump into my car and go home. God knows I could have used some comforting from my parents and some of the delicious food my mom cooks, which I now know is really delicious compared to what they serve in the cafeteria here. But my car's engine decided not to start, even after several dozen attempts and almost breaking the key in the ignition. And I really don't have the energy to deal with it at the moment.

I'm gonna need to call a mechanic or something; well find one and then call him, arrange for my car to be towed away and figure out a way to pay for that. But seriously I just don't even want to think about all that right now.

So I stay on campus. I have my closet after all. There is no walking away from it.

But I do decide to call Melissa. I really need some support and words of encouragement. And I really want to talk to somebody who'll understand.

I use the outside pay phone to make the call. I've noticed some students asking Medina to make a call using the phone at the reception desk. And she kindly allowed them. But I don't think she would allow *me* to use it. I mean Medina and Mitch seem to be on particularly friendly terms. There is no way she is going to betray that friendship over me.

So the pay phone it is.

While I'm waiting for Melissa to pick up, counting the rings, I look at the nice way the sun light spills over the beautifully trimmed campus lawns. It's sunset. It's nice outside right now but it's gonna rain again soon, I can tell. There are dark clouds on the horizon and I've definitely heard a thunder a minute ago.

"Hello?" Melissa finally answers.

"Hey," I say and suddenly tears begin to push their way out of my eyes. I hold them back the best I can.

"Are you okay?" she asks.

"No, not really," I say.

"What happened?"

"I hate it here. I never thought I'd say it after all the work it took me to get here, but... I just hate it here," I confess.

She sighs.

"Look Sam, it's not easy to start something new. Do you think it's easy for me here? Everything's new, the people are new; it's an entirely new environment. It takes time to get used to it."

“But at least you’ve made new friends, haven’t you?” I ask.

“Well, a couple. Didn’t you?” she asks.

Me? New Friends? Do I count Carl, or maybe Medina? (sarcasm warning).

“Everyone seems to be friends with Mitch and I’m trying to stay out of his hair, so...”

“You have to make up with him,” Melissa says. “Confront him and tell him how sorry you are.”

“Do you really think he’d want to hear that?” I ask. I think Mitch would be perfectly happy if he never saw me again for the rest of his life.

“Sure he would,” Melissa says. “He loved you, believe me. I wouldn’t be surprised if he still does.”

“Did he tell you that?” I ask. They are friends after all. I’m not sure if they have been staying in touch lately or not. I was kinda afraid to ask her about him. I wish I did.

“Sam,” she says and sighs. “You have to talk to him. You can’t avoid him forever. You’re gonna have to talk to him eventually.”

“I know. I’m just not sure what to say,” I admit.

“Say everything that’s in your heart. Be honest. He’ll respond to that. You know Mitch better than I do,” she says and that makes me feel a little bit better. I do know Mitch. I never knew he had this cruel bitchy side, but you live you learn. I did hurt him pretty bad for him to become bitchy to me, that’s for sure.

“Okay, I have to go now. Are you gonna be alright?” she asks. “Because if you want me to come over, you know I will.”

“You’re four hours away,” I say.

“I’ll come regardless. Just say you need me and I’ll come,” she says earnestly.

“No, I’ll be fine, I promise. You stay where you are,” I say.

“Okay. Bye! Don’t forget to call me and let me know how it went.”

“Sure. Bye!”

Okay, it was a good idea to call Melissa. I do feel a little bit better now. I just gotta figure out the way to get Mitch to talk to me. Shouldn’t be too hard, should it?

Well, I guess I was wrong about that.

Another week goes by and I still didn't get to talk to Mitch. For one thing, he is always surrounded by friends. He is literally never alone even for a second. I guess he *is* popular. Secondly, I was considering slipping a note under his door but decided against it. It would remind him of the previous note that I slipped under the door of his parent's house and that wouldn't be too good a start for a patching-things-up kind of conversation. It would only remind him that it's not the first time I've screwed things up. No wonder he doesn't want to talk to me.

I've been working up the nerve to come up to him and would chicken out what seems like a million times this week. I just can't do it when he's with somebody else. I guess the thing is that I need to catch him alone. And desperate times call for desperate measures, I guess.

So, Mitch steps out of the men's room stall and bumps into me. Thank God he was only peeing there and not doing the other thing or else it would have been weirdly awkward. But it's still awkward.

"Oh hey," he blurts out, taken by surprise.

"I need to talk to you," I say directly. No need beating around the bush. He very well figured out that if I decided to stalk him in the men's room between classes than it must be important.

"Sam," he says with a sigh.

"No!" I practically shout at him. "You can't shut me out."

He looks at me wide-eyed.

"I know you don't want to talk to me. I know that I've hurt you bad and you just want to shut me out. But you can't! Well, at least not in these circumstances."

He listens.

"We'll see each other on a daily basis now and as much as it seems that you are enjoying seeing me suffer I know that you really don't. It hurts you as much as it hurts me."

He sighs, apparently agreeing with this.

"Just listen to me," I plead. "Please."

He looks at me. There's so much written in his eyes—hurt, weariness, indifference, and at the same time...love?

"Okay," he says simply.

Okay, now to the hardest part.

"The truth is... I still love you," I begin. "I always have. It's just that Jake was there first. He has taken a place in my heart and I couldn't get him out of there even if I wanted to. But it doesn't mean that I didn't love you."

“Okay,” Mitch says and looks down at his feet.

“I’m very sorry for the way it happened but the truth is if the situation was reversed and you were in Jake’s place you’d want a second chance. The truth is, I did the right thing and we both know it.”

He keeps quiet.

“I know we might not be able to be friends any more but we ought to try,” I say finally.

He thinks about it.

“Okay,” he whispers and looks at me.

“I’m really sorry, Mitch. You know I really am. I wish I could turn the clock back and undo everything. You have no idea how much it hurts me to know how much pain I caused you. Meeting you was the best thing that happened to me and I screwed it up. You have no idea how much you mean to me,” I say and I can barely hold back tears.

“Okay,” he says as plainly as he can master but his voice quivers a little.

“So, will you try to forgive me?” I ask.

He looks down and nods.

It takes a moment for me to regain composure.

“Okay, I think class is starting” I say. “Mitch, I really want us to be friends.”

“Okay,” he says. It seems that “okay” is the only word he knows but I’ll take it. We’re speaking again and that is all that matters.

Okay, that went well, I guess.

I just expected... I don’t know, maybe for him to say something other than “okay” and for his general reaction to be less moderate. Maybe he did get over me already and it wasn’t as big a deal for him to see me every day as I thought. Maybe it’s just me.

As hard it is to admit it, there’s a strong possibility that neither Jake nor Mitch cares about me at all anymore. Ouch!

Okay, I lock myself in my closet and cry.

I’ve been holding it in for as long as I could have but now I just need to let it out.

It just sucks. All of it!

Sleep didn't come that night.

It's a good thing that it's Saturday morning and I don't have any classes today. Again, it would have been nice to go back to Newton and spend some time with my family, which to be honest I miss them so much. But my car is still broken and I don't even know when or how I'll be getting it repaired. I don't even want to think about it.

I take a long shower and then look at myself in the mirror.

My newly platinum blond hair reminds me of Melissa and what she said. I mean I did my best. I've talked to Mitch. I made it right. Right?

He is never going to forgive me completely; neither is he going to forget what I did. So it is what it is. I'm just gonna have to settle for being able to talk to him at all and be civil. I'm not gonna get my best friend Mitch back. That Mitch is now gone.

So is Jake.

Now it's just me. And I guess I have to face the loneliness and start living my boyfriend-less life the way I did for so many years before I even met Mitch or Jake. I can do it.

I gotta admit the idea of being alone scared me a little, well a lot. But it's not the end of the world. So what if I don't have a boyfriend? So what if I don't have any friends here? I'm pretty sure I can survive without. I'm damn sure!

Jake doesn't want to be with me anymore? Well, screw him! Mitch doesn't want to be my best friend? His loss!

I mean, I don't need either of them. I can fix my own problems.

Speaking of which, I really need to get that car fixed.

Okay, that's exactly what I am going to do today.

After spending an entire day at the repair shop I return to campus.

I feel good. I feel content. My car is fully functional now and I did it myself. Not the actual repairing of course, but I solved a problem. And I'm gonna solve more, starting tomorrow because I'm completely beat today.

All I can think of is getting back to my closet which doesn't even seem all that bad anymore and crashing on the bed. I just want to fall asleep, Krueger or no Krueger. After all, it's just a dream. It's not like a movie character can hurt me or anything. It's actually kinda cool when you think about it that I got to meet Freddy in my own dreams. My imagination is pretty amazing.

So I enter my closet and to my surprise I find that all my stuff is gone. My backpacks, my

clothes, even my dirty socks are all gone!

Jesus, now what?! Can't you give me a break?

I rush to the reception and I'm telling you Medina better be there.

She is.

"Where is my stuff?" I demand.

"Excuse me," she says, perplexed.

"All my stuff, it's gone," I explain.

"You mean things you had in the janitor's closet?" she asks to clarify.

"Yeah," I say.

"Oh, I think your roommate picked it up," she says without further explanation.

"I don't have a roommate! That's the whole point of me living in the janitor's closet," I shout angrily, tired of being polite to a person who openly dislikes me.

"You do now," she says simply and hands me the key to my new room.

"Oh," I say, confused.

"Go now," she says, annoyed with my presence. I really have to make Medina like me, somehow. But I will deal with that one later. Right now I need to find out who my new roommate is.

I go up to the second floor and head down the hallway. Room 209 as it's labeled on the key tag. I start looking for the room 209. There, found it!

I hesitate in front of the door, not sure what I am going to find behind it. By the way, whoever that roommate is, what is he doing on campus? It's Saturday. Everybody has left for the weekend. Well, almost everybody. There are losers like me, I guess, who are stuck here for various reasons. I guess my new roommate and I must have a lot in common.

Okay, here goes. I open the door.

The first thing I see is the empty bed and my stuff laid out on it, carefully. Okay good, so I'm at the right place.

Then I step inside and I see him...

Mitch!

He is lying on the bed, reading a book, but his eyes are locked on me now. I smile,

involuntarily. I'm not sure who else was I expecting to see. Mitch is the only person whom I know in the entire college, not counting Medina and Carl. Nobody else would have cared to bring up my stuff here.

"Hey," Mitch says.

"Hey," I say back. "You've picked up my stuff?"

"Yeah," he begins. "I was gonna just talk to you and suggest we live together, the way we planned all along and the way the dorm administration planned too. And then I realized that you would probably think it wasn't a good idea. I mean with all the stuff we have to work through and all. So I decided to just go ahead and get your stuff here so you won't be able to say no. Which I now realize is pretty stupid."

I smile.

"I'm not gonna say no," I say. He beams.

"Good," he says.

I come inside and I close the door behind me. No more janitors' closet. I will miss Carl though.

We have a moment of silence and then Mitch speaks up.

"Listen, Sam... I do forgive you," he says seriously. I nod.

"Friends?" he asks.

"Friends," I reply.

I wake up because I think I heard someone calling my name.

I stand up from my bed and listen. Nothing. I approach the door and open it slowly, trying not to wake Mitch up. It's well past midnight.

I get out into the hallway and stop there for a second. I listen.

"Sam!"

There it is again. Someone is calling my name and I think it's Jake's voice. I start down the hallway.

When I reach the stairwell I hear it again, more distinctively this time. It's most definitely Jake, calling my name.

I get to the first floor and I see the light coming out of the janitor's closet. It's the same

reddish light, one that I've seen there before.

“Sam!” Jake screams. “Sam!”

His voice is distorted with agony. It sounds like he's in pain.

I try to tell myself that it's not really Jake screaming but his voice is so real that I can't stop myself from going down there to find out for sure.

“One, two, Freddy's coming for you,” the familiar girl's voices chant.

“Sam!”

I continue my slow uncertain pace towards the janitor's closet. The closer I get to it, the more distinctively I can hear the sounds of the boiler room, faint but unmistakable. The dancing fire light creeps up the walls, making it feel like I'm headed for a very source of the fire. I gotta be careful not to get burnt.

“Three, four, better lock your door.”

I reach the door and push it open slowly. There is no janitor's closet behind it, only the stairs. Firelight is reflected upon the walls, and upon my hands, and upon my face. I step through the doorway and down the stairs.

The sounds of the boiler room down below are very clear now.

I descend a winding steel stair to the lowest level, and then I hear the sound of the knives scratching from down another shaft. I can see that there's an even deeper place down there.

Again, and then again, I descend; each ladder narrower and more twisting; each level deeper, wetter, darker, more and more airless.

“Sam!” Jake continues to call me.

“Five, six, grab a crucifix...”

Soon I begin to gasp for air, but I still push myself on. I don't stop until I break out at last at the very bottom of the place, a wet, fire-lit sump deep in the bowels of the place.

Right in front of me I see a vast maul of the working boiler, fire burning ominously inside it; irrepressible flames trying desperately to make their way outside the protective metal grid. The fire is hissing like a snake now that I'm staring at it unharmed. It wants to burn me, hurt me, and kill me probably. But it can't.

“Seven, eight, gonna stay up late.”

I stare at the boiler, anticipating for the metal grid to burst open and for Krueger to climb out of there, ashen but not dead, never dead.

“Nine, ten, never sleep again!”

Suddenly I hear a racket of laughter behind me, like right behind me.

I turn around and find Freddy standing right in front of me, grinning, with his metal knife-fingers ready to attack, fire reflecting wickedly in his eyes.

“Got ya!” he shouts, triumphant.

I scream in panic and try to back away. But there is nowhere to back away to. It’s just the boiler behind me. I take a few steps backwards and begin to feel the heat of the open flames.

“You’re not gonna get away from me this time,” Freddy says. “You’re all mine!”

I take a few more steps and my leg touches the scorching metal of the boiler. Fire licks the fabric of my sleeping pants and burns it, burns my skin as well. I scream.

Krueger laughs, feeding on my pain.

I consider trying to make an escape. If I’m quick there’s enough room on the left or on the right from Freddy for me to jump and dodge his grip. But as I’m starting to outline the trajectory in my head Freddy’s arms begin to stretch to the sides, unnaturally. It seems he read my thoughts.

His hands touch the opposite walls and he begins to laugh again because he just blocked any way out for me.

There is nowhere else to go. I’m just gonna have to face him.

“Are you ready to dance?” he asks and then jumps at me finally. I get ready to feel the cold metal of his finger-blades penetrate my belly but I don’t feel anything.

Krueger suddenly stops inches away from me, looking confused, and then... he hugs me, literally takes me in his arms.

I expect him to start choking me like a boa constrictor or something but he doesn’t do that either. He just holds me.

What the hell?

I wake up but to my horror I can still feel Krueger’s arms pressed tightly around me.

I feel the urge to scream and shake his dirty hands off of me. But I suppress the urge when I realize that it’s Mitch’s hands that are holding me, not Krueger’s. It’s Mitch who has me in his embrace. Mitch!

Mitch is spooning me.

Mitch is spooning me!

He must have heard me fidget in my sleep and crawled into my bed to comfort me. That's Mitch for you.

I press myself tighter against his body and relax. There's nothing to worry about now. Everything is good. Everything is the way it's supposed to be I guess.

I feel so calm in Mitch's arms that it doesn't take me long to fall back asleep.

I don't have any more nightmares this night or the following nights. There's no more Freddy! Mitch got rid of him as easily as he got rid of my birthday curse several years back.

I don't know what subconscious fears caused Freddy to come to life in the first place but now he's gone; and I hope whatever fears I had are gone with him.

This is the beginning of my new life. I had reservations about it at first, wishing that things would go back to the way they were. But now I'm ready to embrace this new chapter.

It's all good.

Besides, now I have Mitch by my side again. And it just makes it a thousand times more exciting, in a good way.

As to Jake...I still love him, of course. I will always love him...but this is a new page of my life and there is no room for Jake I'm afraid.

If fate is good to me, I will never see him again.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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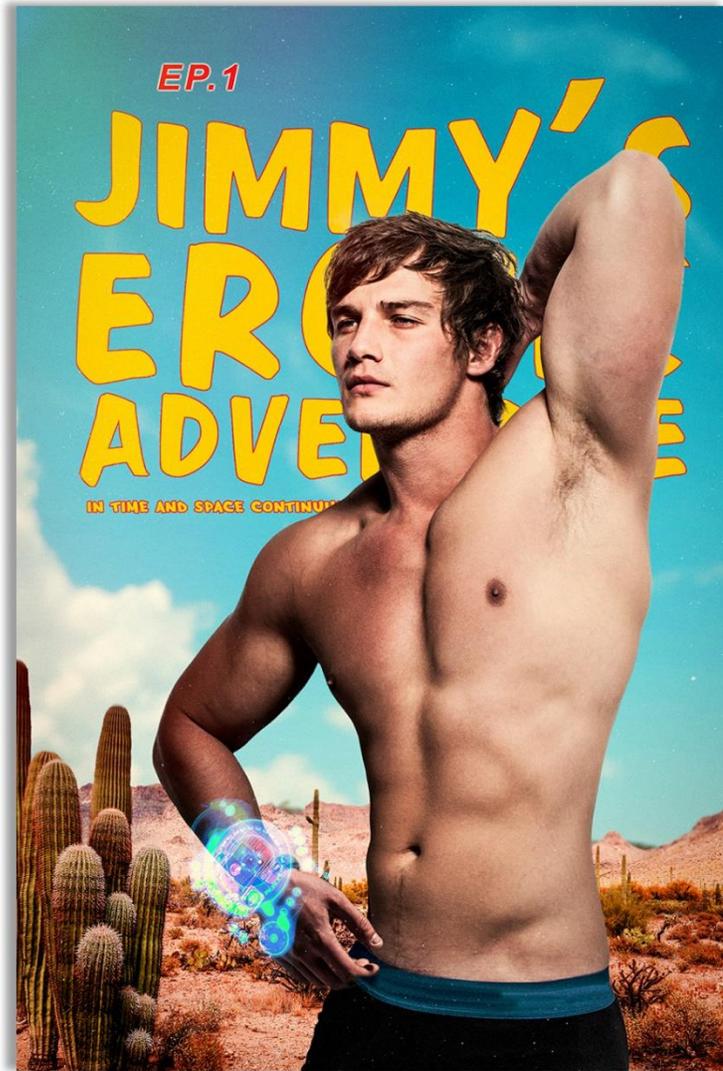
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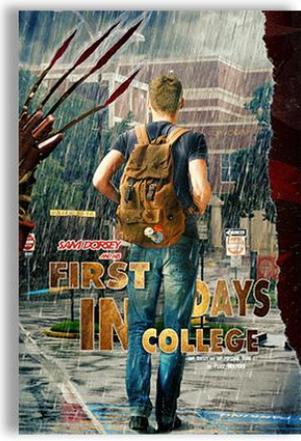
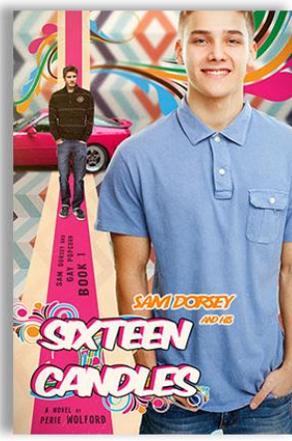
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