Trigger Warning: Mentions of drinking, drugs, violence "A party?" Dean sounded cynical as we walked side by side to my dorm. Lecture was over and I had filled Dean in about Vanessa's text, wondering if he got the same. "It could be fun?" My tone didn't quite execute the way I wanted it to, making Dean sigh heavily beside me like I was having di iculty saying 'no' to someone again. "We don't have to go, Sophia." "But Vanessa invited me! And I don't want to look like an asshole by turning her down..." He must've saw the terror in my expression because he stopped, turning towards me. Extending out a hand, he placed it on my shoulder and I had to force myself not to blush as I awaited his words. "She'll understand," He said quietly. "We don't have to go if you aren't up for it. I can ask them to do something else instead. You not being comfortable with doing something isn't being an asshole. It's setting boundaries." ď I rarely went to parties, the last one I went to before moving here was what caused my breaking point in the first place. But I really wanted to make a good impression on Dean's friends, so I complied. "No," I shook my head. "It's okay, I wanna do this." "You sure?" He eyed me doubtfully. "Yes, I'm sure. You're coming right?" Hope littered in my voice. "Why?" His lips quirked up slightly. "You gonna miss me?" He rang my words back from the other day making me hu out an annoyed breath. a "You're making it very hard to miss you," "Looks like my plan is working." The mention of his plan made me smirk. I leaned in closer, placing my hand on his chest as I tilted my head. "Is that so? Does that mean you'll allow my plan to continue?" a "Do whatever the fuck you want, Sweetheart. I'm not stopping you." "Yeah?" My hand traveled slowly down his chest, his hand shooting up quickly to grab it. a "We're in public." He muttered. "Oh," My eyes widened. A grin replaced the smirk, "You want this to continue in private?" а "What I want," He gritted out. "Is to go home and sleep before this god awful party. Not to fuck you." ď His words should have hurt, I know, but they did the exact opposite. My thighs pressed together slightly and I let out a sigh, pulling away from him quickly before walking ahead. "You are so not fun." "I know you haven't had friends before, Sophia, but they don't normally insinuate fucking one another." He called out from behind. The way he replaced the word sex with fucking caused a slight blush up my cheeks. "Maybe you're a bad teacher," I ruled out once he was walking alongside me once again. "Maybe you're a bad learner," He shot back. "There's ways to teach me..." I trailed o purposely making him glare at me, stoping completely once we reached the outside of my dorm. "Go," He pointed to the direction of the door. a I pouted, "You want me gone so soon?" "Go, Sophia." He gestured once again. "I'll text you when I pick you up." He didn't give me a second glance before walking away. I stood there for a few seconds before calling out one last time. His only response was giving me the middle finger making me let out ď "What am I supposed to wear, Dean!" I groaned, walking out of my closet with a small handful of semi fancy clothes. I didn't own much, trying to keep my wardrobe simple so I could create multiple outfits with a few pairs of shirts and jeans. It was a capsule wardrobe as those fancy ladies online called it. It was more a ordable this way. The only reason I had anything fancy le was from my old life, I had managed to swipe a few dresses and tops before the whole incident. "How the fuck am I supposed to know?" Dean frowned up at me, laying down on my bed as he waited for me to get ready. It was 15 minutes past seven, and I knew Dean was starting to grow pleased at my lack of readiness. Like he thought I was stalling us on purpose which, I totally was, but it wasn't like he had to know that. "Because you know fashion, duh," I gave him a look that told him he was the stupidest person ever. Dean looked down at his outfit, almost fitted but baggy trousers, a black baggy t-shirt, black converse and jewelry to tie it all together. He shrugged, "I don't know fashion, I just wear what I think looks good." "Okay," I rolled my eyes, tossing my clothes at him. "Then tell me what looks good here!" He hesitantly picked through the options I gave him, settling on blue washed ripped jeans at the knees, a white graphic tee, and my everyday white high-top converse. Handing it to me, I thanked him before rushing to change. A er, I brushed my freshly washed hair and let it hang in waves before walking back out. Dean looked me up and down before nodding in approval. Standing up, he walked over to me and paused, reaching behind his neck to unclasp a necklace before standing closer to me. His hands started to reach up when I paused him, confused. "What are you doing?" "What does it look like?" He gave me a dumb look. He started to reach up again when I stopped him, again. a "Wait, but why?" Dean made a sound of a sigh, giving me the same look before responding. "It'll look good, don't worry." Reluctantly, I let go of his hands. I felt a slight brush as he moved my hair out of the way, the cold metal resting on my neck as his hands fidgeted to get it closed. Goosebumps ran up my arm as I willed myself not to shudder, reminding myself that it was Dean. He rested his hands a few moments longer before finally pulling away. "There," He stepped back, his voice hoarse. "It looks good." He đ mirror. It had been a long time since I dressed up to go anywhere, or even taken the time to do my makeup. "You can do this," I said to myself, breathing in and out a few times to calm down the awakening nerves. unintentionally lean closer to Dean. It wasn't that he creeped me out,

nodded, turning to walk out the door. "I'll wait for you in the car, alright?" He waited for me to respond before leaving, making me look in the

My eyes landed their focus on the necklace, the simple silver chain rested just over my collarbone, the remembrance of the cold metal and Dean's hands making me shudder all over again.

Doing a final once over, I stared back at myself intently.

"Glad to see you again, Sophia." Zayn winked, making me I just still wasn't used to people flirting with me so occasionally. The only reason I kept it up with Dean was because I felt a sense of safety

around him, knowing he would do anything at all to hurt me.

A er I had finally le my dorm, Dean had driven us to the party where

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"Hey! I thought I told you not to call me!" a laugh.

A warning in Dean's voice made him raise his hands. "Sorry man, didn't know." "Didn't know what?" I questioned, looking between the two of them

as Zayn started to retreat, shooting me a small grin.

"It's nothing," Dean muttered, slightly pushing me towards the rest of his friends. đ

"Hi guys," I waved awkwardly.

we met up with his friends outside.

"Zayn..."

I could tell his friend group had good style, everyone had their own pallet but it somehow all worked.

Surprisingly, Ayesha's style was more on the girly side than Vanessa's. But they rocked their clothes, jealousy seeping into my pores at the

sight of them. I wish I could carry myself the way they did. a

"Let's go inside, shall we?" Vanessa clapped her hands together, not waiting for a reply as her and Alyan walked together.

"Are they...?" I asked Dean, walking by his side.

His eyes gleamed, looking down at me briefly. "You noticed it too, huh?"

"Who wouldn't?" I inquired. "They reek of sexual tension." đ⁵ We made it to the door, Dean's friends all going in first. It was my turn next and I hesitated, my body not yet ready for the sudden

overstimulation of drunken bodies and loud music. My legs faltered as I took in a shaky breath of air.

"Sophia?" Dean's voice was soothing, my mind focusing on the way he said my name so I could calm down. "We don't have to do this if

you don't want to. I promise my friends won't be angry." "No," I said quickly. I had to get over it one day or another. Might as well be today. "I can do this. I just need a quick second, parties make

me claustrophobic." The lie slid past my lips easily. đ

"Alright, let's go over here." Dean guided me to the side of the house where I could catch my breath, my hand tapping the accustomed rhythm on my thigh.

One, two, three

I breathed in.

Eight, nine, ten. I breathed out.

Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

"Okay," I stood up at full height. "Let's do this."

I didn't wait for Dean to object, stomping into the party where bodies danced like no one was watching, people drank, laughed and became carefree. I guess you could say it was another world in here, the strobes of colour and varying bodies giving you the opportunity to be whoever you wanted.

I watched with envy, flicking my eyes around to find Dean's friends as I felt his presence behind me. His hand found the small of my back, gently pressing me close to him so I wouldn't get lost in the crowd.

"Stay with me, Sophia." Dean talked in my ear so I could hear, the loud music ringing in my other one. "This house is large and you can get lost easily. Don't wander o , alright? If you wanna go somewhere, the buddy system is the best."

I nodded.

"Good girl," He nodded back, leaning away as he used the hand that was on my back to gently guide me to his friends that were all standing in a corner, most of them talking animatedly with each other.

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Good girl..l smiled to myself at his words.

"Are we gonna party, or what?" Brandon asked and the rest of the group cheered. They were a unit, always supporting and having each other's backs.

"To our last week of freedom before we have to get back to our god awful jobs!" Zayn raised his glass, downing it before anyone else could join his toast.

"Sure, whatever," Brandon muttered, downing his drink as well. From the sounds of it, Brandon wasn't very fond of his daytime job. He was an elementary school teacher, I recalled what Dean had said. And love isn't very kind in that department.

Ayesha held pop in her hand, elaborating once she saw my questioning eyes. "I can't drink," She pointed at the alcohol. "My

religion forbids it." **1**03 My eyes widened in understanding, leaning in slightly so she could

hear my reply. "I'll take a soda too if you have any." She grinned, reaching over to pull one out of the case before handing

it to me. "Not a huge drinker?" She asked. "Not a huge fan of alcohol," I replied honestly. "And, I'd like to be on time for class for once."

I took sips of my soda, engaging in a conversation with Ayesha about what I wanted to do when I was done with university. I still felt Dean behind me, he was talking to Brandon about whatever guys talked about at parties, the warmth of his hand flushing through my entire body. My cheeks heated him, once again thinking thoughts I shouldn't be while talking to a pretty girl.

"Well, I was hoping to get a clerkship with a judge I like," I shrugged. "But honestly, interning for a year would be a good experience too."

"That sounds hard but I know you can do it, Sophia." Ayesha's words warmed my heart, a smile lighting my lips.

"Was it di icult moving so far from your family?" She wondered. "What do you mean?"

"It took years for my mom to get around to the idea of me moving for college. They expected the typical brown girl to stay close to them, get married etcetera, etcetera."

"Oh," I said embarrassedly. "They didn't really have a say in it," "Really?"

I think Dean could sense my discomfort because he swooped in, telling Ayesha that he forgot he and I needed to do something. I felt relief at my core, guilty that he had lied to me but grateful nonetheless since I wasn't particularly fond of talking about parents who no longer existed.

She waved us o, sending me a wink. "It was great talking to you, Sophia. I hope you stick around, you seem to be the only one to put Dean in his place."

Before I could respond, Dean coughed, cutting me o . "Bye, Ayesha.

Talk to you later!" I shouted as I was dragged away. Once we made it to the quiet kitchen, I breathed out a sigh of relief. "Thank you." I li ed myself up on the counter so I could reach his height so he wouldn't have to constantly bend down to talk to me.

"It's no problem," Dean shrugged. "You needed a break."

"I keep you in your place, huh?" I teased, kicking my legs so ly. "Don't bother, Ayesha is a hopeless romantic and fantasizes too

much in her head." "Oh, like how you fantasize about me?" I questioned innocently,

hoping to get a small reaction out of Dean. What I didn't expect for him was to smirk, making my eyes slightly widen. "Yes, exactly like that." I swallowed. "Looks like you like me, Dean. Maybe you should stop

before you get all prissy and lose your balls." "Get that from one of your law books, Sophia?" He taunted.

"No, I got it from my dick. Wanna see?" "Lose that fucking attitude, Sweetheart," He warned.

"Or what?" I edged. "You gonna fuck it out of me?"

Out of all his reactions, I didn't anticipate him to laugh.

"You really are gonna see this plan to the end, aren't you?" "Of course," I rolled my eyes. "I'm not one to lose, Dean. Just so you

know." "What a coincidence," He mocked. "Neither am I. And if you think

about it, is it really losing?" I scooted back into the cabinet door, my breath uneven as I tried to find my composure. He was getting close again, reminding me about

that day in the park with our game of twenty questions. "Is what really losing?"

"This game. I mean, it doesn't matter who wins if we're gonna fuck each other in the end." "Who said this is a game?" I tilted my head up to hold his gaze. His

eyes narrowed, a wicked grin curving his lips. "You just made it one."

A giggle ripped out of my chest and Dean's smile widened, before he

took a step back. Tilting his head in the direction of the party, he sighed.	đ
"Let's go back, troublemaker." "Whatever you want, pretty boy." I jumped o the counter, Dean stepping forward with his hands raised in case I fell before he guided me back to where we last saw his friends. I could see the pink hijab on Ayesha's head in the distance, giving me a clear view of where they were situated.	'ਰ ਹੈ
Catching my eye, she waved us over. "Where's Vanessa?" Dean asked, looking around. Alyan was there but not her. "Probably making out with someone to get molly, I don't know." Ayesha shrugged.	
Dean groaned, "Not again" "Just let her have fun dude," Brandon grinned at him. "She has to go back to her dickhead boss tomorrow anyways." "Molly?" I wondered out loud. Dean looked down, shooting me a pointed look. "You aren't getting	ตี ส
any." I mockingly frowned, "Why not?" "Yeah, why not Dean?" Zayn spoke up, wagging his eyebrows up and down like he was suggesting something. "Because it's dangerous and addictive and can get you killed." Dean's	้ส
eyes were still on mine. "I thought you wanted me gone?" I said low enough so no one else	
would hear. "I want you gone, not dead."	ď
"Does it matter?" I laughed, turning back to the rest of the group. My chin was suddenly clutched in Dean's hands, turning my head back to look at him. His eyes gave me an unreadable expression as he finished. "It matters." We stared intently at each other, my eyes searching for his questions	a'
and his eyes searching mine for answers. We were broken apart when Zayn stepped forward, latching his arms around our shoulders. "Come on guys! Drink, party, get relaxed. You won't be able to continue this when you become hotshot lawyers, you know."	
"Zayn, leave them be. They don't want to have a raging headache for school tomorrow a er blacking out like someone I know." Ayesha scorned making Zayn send her a quick wink. "Who said I'm gonna get blackout drunk this time?"	
"You always say that, man." Brandon shook his head. "And then you proceed to drink your own body weight." "Whatever," Zayn waved o . "It's like Russian roulette." "No it isn't?" Ayesha started.	đ
My mind blurred out their conversations when my phone dinged with a text. I became rigid instantly and with shaky hands, I clicked my phone open and I held in my breath as I read the text. Unknown: I see you.	å
Attached was an image of my back. More specifically, of my back at this party. You could clearly see in the photo that I was with Dean as he guided me to the kitchen to calm down. Immediately, my head shot up in alarm, looking around to catch the well known set of eyes that I grew accustomed to love and hate. When I couldn't find him, I started to panic.	
Dean and the others were still engaging in the banter but I couldn't hear a thing. My mind blurred out sounds as I stumbled back, turning my body to continue the search.	
Where is he? Why is he here? I thought I was safe. I thought I had more time. Walking further ahead, I glanced down at my phone, my shaky hands	ů
writing out a text. Me: Where are you? My heart was erratic, my breathing heavy as I stared down at the	đ
three dots typing out his response. Unknown: Not close enough. But I will be, babe. Soon. The ounce of relief I felt vanished once I read the last word. Soon.	10
I blocked the number, shoving my phone deep into my pocket as I searched for something, anything to make me forget. My eyes landing on a solo cup, I reached for it before downing the contents. I knew I should have poured the drink myself, but I couldn't think. Couldn't breathe.	a
My hands soon found another cup, drinking that down as well as I continued my search for more. Who had taken the photo? Did he hire someone to stalk me? The mere idea of that had me almost whimpering, exhaustion once again	
piling onto my shoulders as I stumbled around the dance floor, pushing bodies le and right to gain access to some alcohol. "Sophia!" I heard Dean call out, but I ignored it, not wanting to put him in even further danger. He deserved better, better than me. He would be safe with his friends, I'm sure of it. I continued my aimless stroll, my arm being taken by someone and I glanced up, noticing a	
random girl with a weary smile. She looked down on me, eyes dilated making me realise she had been taking drugs as she continued to lead us further and further	
away from Dean. "Where are we going?" I stumbled again, catching myself. I was grateful I'd worn sneakers and not heels knowing the disaster I'd cause at this moment.	
"We're gonna have fun," She winked at me, leading me out of the sliding door. "I saw you alone drinking soda looking exhausted. So boring. Let's get you something that will numb it all, uni is hard." Usually, I'd protest but I couldn't form words to object. I wanted this. needed this.	I
"Okay." I agreed. We were outside now and she led me to another group, looking back at me. "What's your name, by the way?" "Sophia," I breathed out.	
"Hi Sophia, I'm Darcy. These are my friends and you're gonna have fun." She gestured to me to get out my phone before entering her number in.	đ
Darcy grabbed my hand, placing a singular pill on the palm and nodded for someone to hand them a cup before handing it to me. I looked down at the items in my hands, hesitating. Number one rule of partying was to always pour your own drinks and here I was, taking	
candy from a stranger. "Can I pour it myself?" I asked and she shrugged, tossing me a water bottle.	
I unscrewed it feeling safer and closed my eyes. Do you really wanna do this?	
"Yes," I murmured quietly to myself, throwing the pill back and taking large sips of water so it was easier to swallow. "Atta girl," Darcy rubbed my back, pushing me to a sitting position. "Ever done this before?" Some guy spoke up, curious.	đ
"Yeah, I have," I lied, not knowing if saying yes would get me into trouble. Guys usually lust a er the inexperienced, and I wasn't going to let him do that to me. He smirked at me, walking closer making me shi back in the chair.	
"Looks like we're gonna have some fun together, babe." He was closer now with every word. His body was bent, his hands on his knees as he tilted his head at me. "Who said I'm into guys?" I retorted.	ď
"Oh, is that so?" His eyebrows rose. "Maybe I can change your mind" I sco ed, crossing my arms over my chest. A wave of the drug was	æ
hitting me but I didn't let it show. "That's not how sexuality works but okay." "We can make our own rules," He gleamed.	් අ
I rolled my eyes, sighing. "Sorry, I don't hook up with guys who don't understand the simple concept of sexuality." "Are you calling me dumb?" "I'm calling you an idiot." I beamed at him, turning my head to look for Darcy.	¶° T
Where was she?	å

My face was forcefully yanked back to face the guy in front of me, an angry look replacing his smirk as his hands gripped my jaw tighter. Flashes of my past ran over my head, the e ects of the drug stronger than it was before. My eyes threatened to close, my body collapsing in numb pain. "Get your fucking hands o of me," I hissed. "Or what?" He taunted. I didn't give it a second thought, kicking his stomach with my foot making him buck over and let my face go. I stood up, gripping his hair and slamming it down on my knee making him fall. I swayed, looking down at him. "Don't do that again," I spat, suddenly feeling the need to take half a dozen showers. Turning around, I proceeded to walk back to the house when my hair was yanked back, a slight cry escaping my lips. "Bitch," He muttered.

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The drugs were taking its full height, the sudden yank pulling me

down on the floor in a heap. "You think your smartass mouth will save you this time?" He kicked my stomach. My bruises and bones weren't fully healed from before,

making his attack far more painful. ď I couldn't respond. My head ached, my body convulsed as I retreated

comfort in myself. I let out a small whimper, cursing myself heavily in my head.

Get up! You took self-defence classes yet you're gonna let some guy kick your ass?

Yeah, I trained for this when I wasn't high as a kite. I laughed. Yes, that's right. The one time I decide to do molly I get beat up. Great. It's not like my day was going to get any better, anyway.

"What the fuck are you laughing at? Got nothing to say?" The guy chuckled, kicking me again. I rolled my head to look up at him, his figure coming out blurry.

Why the fuck wasn't anyone helping me?

I heard a gasp come from afar before someone ran up to me, crouching down. "Blake, what the fuck did you do!"

It was someone new, someone I didn't recognize. She was dark skinned from what I could see through the blur of my eyes. And really

fucking pretty, I really wanted to hug her. a "Alex, she was smart-mouthing me!" He defended, hands raised as

the girl shot him another glare. It was venomous and filled with disgust.

"So you decided to kick the shit out of her? Fuck you and fuck this. We're over." Alex shouted, then turned to face me. "Hey, I'm so sorry. He's beyond fucked up and this is all my fault. I saw him approach you and didn't do anything at first, I'm so sorry. Let's get you out of here, alright?"

She shi ed her body to wrap her arm under me, li ing me so I was standing by her side.

"Did you come with anyone?" She asked and I stirred, trying to blink away the blurriness.

Dean," I murmured

"Who? I can't hear you."

"Dean," I tried to say louder.

"I still can't understand you, pretty. But I'll take you home, okay? Let's go." She said so ly, holding me tight as I struggled to walk. My stomach was burning in pain, and I could feel it but I also couldn't at the same time. a

We were inside now, the smell of sweat and alcohol heavy in the air

making it hard to breathe. "Sophia?" I heard a familiar voice speak up. "Oh my god, what

happened to you?" They exclaimed.

"You know her?" Alex asked. "Yeah, she's my friend. Oh my god, what happened to her?"

"My ex beat her up," Alex said, ashamed.

"What the fuck? Let me take her, thanks for your help but we're good."

"Are you sure ...?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. You've done enough."

I was moved to someone else's arms, they were now carrying me to god knows where as I tried to keep myself awake.

Everything was spinning and my head was killing me, my head was

resting comfortably on their shoulder.

"What the fuck did you get yourself into, Sophia?" They hissed.

Familiarity arose inside me. "Vanessa?" I whimpered.

"Yes, it's me you fool. And once Dean sees you he's gonna kill you."

She hissed down at me. đ I let out a pathetic laugh, attempting to joke. "At least he'd finally be

rid of me."

She didn't speak for a few moments, pushing me to walk faster. She looked terrified and my stomach dropped, feeling guilty.

"Hey," I whispered. "I'm really sorry. Please don't tell him."

"And why the fuck not?"

"Please," I begged. "Please just...you can tell him about the molly but not about me getting beat up."

"Vanessa? Is that Sophia? What the fuck?!" I heard Dean exclaim. I couldn't keep awake at this point, my eyes shut completely.

Make it stop, make it stop, make it stop.

"What the fuck did you do?" Dean demanded, and I knew it was his arms around me when I smelled citrus.

"I didn't do shit, Dean. She got herself into some trouble. And why weren't you with her? Did you forget that she's new?" Vanessa argued

back. "Woah, what the fuck happened?" I heard Alyan ask.

"I turned my back for one second and she was gone. I've spent half an

hour looking for her, V. I even texted and called dozens of times, don't make it sound like I didn't do shit." He sco ed.

"Whatever. She's here now and we gotta go. I don't know if that dickhead of a guy is gonna come back for a second round."

"Second round of what?" I could feel Dean narrow his eyes.

Please don't tell him.

"Of..." Vanessa hesitated. "Drugs. Molly, specifically." ď

I relaxed in his arms.

Dean cursed, pushing me closer to his body. "What the fuck have you gotten yourself into, troublemaker?" đ⁵