

Chapter Three

Destiny had six messages waiting for her when she logged on. One, she immediately deleted. The guy wasn't very attractive and his message was awful. Though she was by no means a grammar snob, she had her limits, and this guy crossed them with, "i climb, riding, and shooting guns. I have bike, degree, house. i was hoping we could be good friends. maybe i take you for ride sometime." The message barely made sense and she wondered exactly what sort of degree didn't require someone to use proper punctuation.

The next one was better. He could at least use the English language well and while he wasn't a knockout, he was cute enough. He said, "Hey there! Looks like we have some things in common. Would you be interested in chatting and seeing where it takes us?" Simple and to the point. She read his profile. He had listed motorcycles and knife throwing with his hobbies. The idea of throwing knives both intrigued and scared her. Perfect.

She wrote back, "Knife throwing, huh? Sounds dangerous. I like it ;)" She read her response a few times. Was it long enough? She hit send with an uneasy feeling. This was all new to her. What was the protocol for these sorts of things? Were there "rules" like there were in the dating world? Like not sleeping with someone until the third date. Did you not give out your number until the third message? How did any of this work?

With a sigh, she went onto the next message. Whoa. This guy was hot. She held her breath and clicked to open his message, but quickly breathed a sigh of relief. Even if his username was a bit cheesy, makeUpurrr left a good message: "Hiya. Love your pics and profile. I'd love to take you for a ride on my bike sometime. What kind of weapons are you into?" He'd asked her a question, obviously read her profile and wasn't creepy. This could be her perfect man.

She responded back eagerly. "Love your profile, too, cutey! A motorcycle ride sounds perfect. I don't own any weapons yet, but I'd love to learn more about guns and knives. Do you shoot?"

She felt good about this one. He was smoking hot. His thick muscles and deep brown hair cut short were the perfect backdrop for his glowing green eyes and chiseled jaw. One of his profile photos showed him on his bike and the image alone turned her on. Maybe this online thing would work out after all.

She was thinking that maybe she shouldn't even bother with the other messages since makeUpurrr sounded so good, but then she saw a glimpse of the photo of another man who messaged her. He was just as yummy as makeUpurrr. She

clicked on his message: “Hiya. First messages are always so awkward, so I’ll just say hey. If you look at my profile and like what you see, message me back and we can get to know each other.” She smiled at the simple message and clicked on his profile.

Every one of wildman28’s photos showed him smiling. He looked so happy, she wondered if he had any bad boy in him. Maybe he ended up on this site by accident. His hobbies included fighting and painting. The painting made sense. He seemed peaceful enough to stand in front of an easel for hours making art. But fighting? Obviously, she couldn’t tell by the photos alone, but he looked too much like a pacifist to be a serious fighter. But his message had been nice and he was so cute, she couldn’t pass up the chance to at least message him once or twice.

As she was typing a response, a message popped up in the instant chat window. She didn’t even know what it was at first, but then she saw that rider9843 had said to her: “Hey, I sent you a message.”

Destiny hadn’t gotten to read it yet. “Thanks!”

“Is that all you have to say?”

She frowned. What was the deal with this guy? “Well, I haven’t read your message yet.”

“Why not?”

She took in a sharp breath and clenched her teeth. “Because I’m answering other messages.”

“Oh, I see. I’m not good enough for you or what?”

Okay, this was enough. “With that attitude, nope. Goodbye!”

She deleted his waiting message without reading it and clicked to close the chat window. But before she could even get to the next message, the window popped back up.

Rider9843 had said simply, “Bitch.”

Then, under his username, it said: “This user has blocked you.”

She blinked at the screen in shock. What in the world? She scrolled back up to read through the chat. What had she done to deserve that? He was rude from the start. She wasn’t going to let him get away with that. Well, good riddance to him. Guess if you want to play with bad boys, there’s always the chance they actually are the jerk they often pretend to be.

She read the next message, but she was so distracted, she couldn't focus. She closed her computer and went into the kitchen to wash the one dish sitting in the sink. It wasn't enough. She went into the bathroom and started scrubbing the floor, trying not to replay that awful chat in her mind.

Did this sort of thing happen all the time with online dating sites? If that was the case, she didn't need it. Better to stay single than to deal with this sort of ridiculous, uncalled for belligerence. Her phone buzzed a few times with notifications from the site, but she ignored them.

When the bathroom was clean, she dressed for bed and brushed her teeth in her shining bathroom. Then she climbed into bed to read after putting her phone on "Do not disturb." Maybe tomorrow she'd just delete her profile and be done with it.

Chapter Four

In the morning, Destiny was feeling better about her chat incident the night before. It had lost some intensity in her mind during the night and when she reached for her phone, she smiled to see that she had eight waiting messages. Over her morning coffee, she opened the app and looked at the list. Nothing from that jerk rider9843. But there was one from makeUpurrr and one from wildman28. Her heart jumped at the sight of their names.

She read all eight messages and they fell into categories in her mind. Two of the men, she was not interested in at all. Three, she was highly interested in, and the rest fell into a place where she would keep messaging them, but if they didn't get more interesting, she'd stop. The top runners at the moment were makeUpurrr, wildman28, and a new man who'd messaged her for the first time, hazzard666. The newest guy was a car buff. He explained his name had something to do with the car in Dukes of Hazzard. The fact that he often raced these cars was what intrigued her.

She'd only had time to read the messages, not respond. After she got to work, listened to the voicemails that had come after hours, responded to and forwarded emails, and got the coffee made, she had some time to get on Wild Hearts.

She started with the guys who seemed less interesting. One was outdoorsy, which she didn't like, but he made weapons and was kinda cute, so that made her continue to message him. There was another gun guy with a photo showing off his display of gun racks. And a biker. But when she got to her top three, she found herself spending much more time answering those messages.

She kept the Wild Hearts site open in a tab in her browser and checked on it throughout the day. After making copies for Caleb Greene, she checked it. After pointing Michelle White, the paralegal, to the fresh paperclips, she checked it. After lunch and after one particularly annoying phone call in which a man thought it was a law that any lawyer had to represent him for free, and therefore was demanding free counsel, she checked her inbox on the site.

Messages would come through one or two an hour. Like the morning, if it was a new guy, she'd check his profile and decide if she was interested, then respond accordingly by either hitting delete or sending them a message back. She noticed, though, that when something came through from one of her top three, her heart leaped and a smile stretched across her face as she read. And those were always the ones she responded to the fastest and longest.

By the end of the day, she had exchanged too many messages to count, and several each with her top three. That night, she stopped on her way home to get dinner. She wanted to spend as much time as possible messaging these guys. That meant no time for cooking or doing the dishes tonight. She sat down at her kitchen table with her laptop, a glass of wine and a huge grin.

After sharing so much with these men, she started to wonder, what was the next step with this online thing? In person, it was easy. Give a guy your number, you start texting, you go out. But weren't they doing something like texting already? Did that mean that these men asking her out was the next step, or asking for her number was?

She texted her friend Francesca, who had done this sort of thing before. "I signed up for an online dating site." She hit send and waited. Sure enough, the response was what she expected.

"GURL! For realz?"

"Yup. Tell me everything."

Destiny watched the texts come in short and sweet:

"Make a killer profile with hot pics."

"Find guys you like, send them a flirty message. Make sure you call them hottie or something."

"You can tell pretty quick which ones are losers, because they say, like, nothing."

"If they ask questions, they're interested. If they only ask about your cup size, delete."

"Some guys take forever, but others will ask you out immediately."

Destiny interrupted with a question. "There are a few I've been messaging. What's the next step usually?"

"Depends. Some guys just ask you out, some like to text first."

"What if I want to do the asking?" she texted.

"They will love you."

"Really?"

“Ya,” Francesca texted. “Dudes be lazy. You make the first move like that, and they’ll go nuts.”

“Thanks, girl. :)”

“I expect full details!”

“Of course.”

Destiny put down her phone and turned back to her computer. Okay then. Maybe she’d just go ahead and ask these guys out.

“Hey.” It was a text from Francesca. “How long have you been on?”

“Made my profile last night.”

“Okay. Make sure you talk to each dude for at least a few days before you agree to go out with them. That will help weed out the pervs.”

“Gotcha.”

She pulled her mouth to the side in thought. It had only been a day. Maybe it was too soon to ask any out yet. A few days. Well, if those few days were as good as today was, that’d be no problem.

She did what Francesca said and waited. But she need not have even worried over it. By the end of the week, a full four days of being online, she had graduated to texting three men and had two dates for the next week.

When she had lunch with her friend Ava that Friday, she gushed all about it. “Two dates, can you believe it!”

Ava took a long sip of her soda. “When are they?”

“One is Tuesday, that’s with makeUpurrr—”

“Wait. Don’t you know their real names?”

“Oh.” Destiny smiled to herself, thinking back to the message where Jaxon had more formally introduced himself. “Yeah. Jaxon. He’s Tuesday night, and then Friday night with Aiden. Parker mentioned going out sometimes, but we haven’t set a date or anything.”

“Are you texting all these guys, too?” Ava gave her a skeptical look.

“Jaxon and Aiden. Then this other dude, Ethan. Sort of. I don’t know. Ethan seems boring.” She took out her phone and opened the screen with his texts to show Ava.

“Oh. Bleh. Ditch him.”

“Yeah.” Destiny sighed. “But now he has my number.”

“So do telemarketers.” Ava stuck a forkful of her steak salad into her mouth and then pointed it at Destiny. “You better take pepper spray and text me before and after these dates so I know you don’t get yourself murdered or something.”

“I will.” She grinned. “I’m so excited. It looks like I’m going out with two of my top three picks.”

“Two? But you have three dates.”

“Yeah. Well, Jaxon and Parker were in the top three. The other one, hazzard666 disappeared. I never knew his real name. Aiden seems nice. I don’t know. I don’t want nice.”

“Well, hopefully, he’s more wild than he seems.”

She thought of wildman28’s last message and grew warm all over. “I hope Parker and I nail down a date soon. He sent me a pic of him shirtless after working out.” She bit her lip.

“Let me see!”

Destiny brought up the pic and showed Ava.

Her mouth dropped open. “Dang, girl. He is fine.”

“I know. So is Jaxon.” She showed her his pic, as well.

“What about Aiden?”

She brought up her favorite of Aiden, where he was standing on the edge of a very high cliff, looking perfectly at peace being so close to possible death.

“Aww, he’s cute, too! No shirtless pic of the others?”

Destiny sighed. “Not yet, but I’ll see what I can do.”

“I expect a full report.”

“Obviously.”