

Revelations

"You good?" Johan's voice cut into his thoughts.

Max looked over his shoulder. "No."

"You beat him pretty good."

"He f****g made her cry. You didn't see her, Johan. She was on her knees like she was one nudge away from breaking completely."

"Is there some unwritten rule you are the only guy allowed to make her cry?" Johan ung himself onto the sofa.

"What is that supposed to mean?" he rattled the ice in his glass as he turned to look at his best friend who simply let himself into his condo without invitation.

"You used to make her cry all the f****g time. Why do you get a pass, but no other guy does?"

"What the f**k are you talking about?"

Johan raised an eyebrow at him curiously. "Dude, you spent almost every f****g day from grade six to twelve making her cry."

"No, I didn't. Christ. She's like my sister. I wouldn't make her cry."

"All the f****g time, man. All the time."

"Name one time."

"Eleventh grade when she got her driver's license and the b****h Mona asked if you two were going parking and you asked if you were also expected to get in the back seat with your dog since they were both your best friends?"

"She laughed. She didn't cry."

"No? She didn't cry. So, when she showed up to chemistry class and her eyes were bloodshot and swollen, it was nothing to do with you."

Max frowned, "I wasn't in her chemistry class. I was in her bio class."

"I was. I was in most of her classes. Each time you made fun of her at lunch time, she came to rst period afternoon class with puffy eyes and super quiet."

"I never made fun of her!"

"You are my best friend, Max. We've been through it all together. I've seen you do a lot of things, but do you know the one thing you and I have ever fought over? We've been friends since we were ten years old. There is only one thing we have ever fought about."

"We never ght. Hell, we don't even argue."

"True, because she left before prom was even over and there was no reason to ght over her since."

"Wait, are you saying we fought over Lark?"

"Remember the homecoming game? Senior year. We both had dates. You were supposed to give the girls a lift to the party from the football game. Ollie f****d off with the goth girl from the other school. You left with one of the cheerleaders. I ended up having to put Lark in the car with me and my date and my date was f****g pissed. I ipped out at you because you were getting laid, and I wasn't because my girl took off on me as soon as we got to the house party because she was a third wheel."

Max pulled his head back, "no. Ollie drove her and some guy she irted with at the game."

"No. You were supposed to drive them. In fact, you told your father and her father you would when we were all in the parking lot and then you f****d off and left her there. Both of you did. Alone."

"But the guy!"

"There was no guy!"

Max thought about it.. "It was one time."

"What about the time at the science fair when you were supposed to partner up with her, but you decided you wanted to work with the brunette from the debate team? By work with, I mean f**k her over the science lab tables. We saw it by the way, Lark, and I when we ended up forced to work together for the project because you took my partner. We went to the lab to get our supplies and you were railing the girl on the stainless-steel tables."

"You lie," he fought a grin on his face at his friend and then let it fall off as Johan lifted a quizzical brow in his direction.

"Lark's comment was she really hoped you guys sprayed down the tables after. For the record, she hated science classes. She took the mandatory ones, but she always knew she was going to study corporate law. Do you know how much work two people who hated science class needed to do to get a passing grade on our project? You ditched me with Lark." Johan stretched his arms along the back of the sofa, "I can go on and on and on about the number of times you or Ollie ditched Lark or made her cry."

"This is bullshit. You were her friend too."

"Yeah, I was. I'm not the one who ditched her in study hall and left her crying behind the library stacks while you screwed her study partner."

"Now hold on. Why would she be crying if I slept with her study partner?"

"Seriously, you had to know she crushed on you, man."

He staggered backwards at the accusation. "She did not."

"You're an idiot." Johan laughed loudly. "Maximilian Villeneuve has nally found a woman he can't read and it's his so-called best friend from childhood."

"She did not have a crush."

"No? You sure? Why do you think everyone in the school thought you were a couple who was always on again and off again. Nobody respected her because they thought she was your doormat. You f****d her and whoever you wanted."

"I never touched her once!"

"I bet you did multiple times in her dreams."

He refused to answer, and Johan snorted.

"All I know is, there were a group of us guys in high school who would have done anything for a chance with her, but she turned everyone down. We all knew she was hoping for you to see her. The only guy who ever convinced her was the guy from prom and it was only after you made it clear to the entire cafeteria during one of your famous table-top performances you were going stag to the prom because you weren't committing to one girl for a whole night."

He rubbed his face thoughtfully and shook his head, "you wanted her?"

"All the guys did. She's gorgeous. Have you seen her?"

"Yeah, I've seen her. Damn, Johan, I've never not seen her." He was stunned. All this time everyone believed she was into him. "Why did you not say anything?"

"We did! We all f****g did. Who was the guy who worked in the library?" Johan snapped his ngers as he tried to recall, "weird looking dude with a huge nose and the black rimmed glasses. He straight out said it to you in senior year. If a girl looked at him the way Lark Hoffman looked at you, he'd put a ring on it. We laughed at him because he was a total nerd who would have never stood a chance. Everyone around us constantly asked if you were a couple and it was because --"

"Of me." Max corrected him. "Everyone knew how I felt, and I made it easier for Lark. Jesus. She thought of me as her brother. She was humiliated every single time one of them said something, so I took the focus off her."

"Wait," Johan held his hands up incredulously. "How you felt?"

"Well yeah, dumbass. My father used to tease me all the time for crushing on Lark. At least until high school."

Johan was now seriously invested in the conversation, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees studying Max as if he suddenly sprouted an extra head. "You are not standing in front of me right now, telling me you f****d twenty girls through grades ten to twelve because you were in love with Lark Hoffman. Nobody screws someone else when they love someone else."

He was struggling to breathe as he took a seat in the chair opposite Johan. He steepled his ngers to his forehead with his eyes closed. "She didn't. She couldn't have."

"Uh, yes, she did. She had it bad. When you brought her to prom, we all thought nally and then you f****d off on her."

"What do you mean, I f****d off on her?" He perched on the edge of a chair feeling sick to his stomach.

"You ditched her at prom."

"I didn't. Did I? She was so devastated when the i****t told her it was all a joke to bring her. I thought she really liked him." He immediately left when she cried about how Dylan hadn't really liked her. He thought she was upset because she'd really liked the guy. He'd immediately drowned his sorrows in one of the girls from the cheerleading squad. s**t.

"Max, what are you thinking?"

"I didn't know."

"How could you not have known?"

"She was my best friend! I thought she considered me a brother." He was feeling sick to his stomach.

"You f****d anything with a pulse!" Johan shot back. "How on earth are you sitting there saying you crushed on her too when you screwed everyone else?"

"I thought she wasn't interested so I went with whoever would be. Just being around, her in high school was torture. She'd be watching all the guys doing sports and s**t and it made me insane. I forced myself to get away from her before she found a fool of myself." He looked up. "You're f****g with me, right? This is all a joke? She never liked me, right?"

"Why on earth would I be f****g with you? Are you sitting here telling me you were in love with her? You felt something for her?"

"Did, do, probably always will," he rubbed his chest.

"Well s**t. I sent her a text asking her on a date when she's feeling better after nding the boyfriend f****g his secretary. She didn't answer me yet but if you want me to back off," Johan let his words fall off.

"She hates me," he whispered. "She told me last night in the club she hates me. She said I was a shitty friend, and she hates me."

"Max, are you alright?"

"No." He gripped his chest. "I can't breathe." He was gasping for breath. He tried to get off the chair but then fell back into it. "She hates me. I have always had it bad for her and she hates me."

"She doesn't hate you," Johan pulled his lips back as if he were trying to convince the pair of them.

"She said it bluntly." His chest was aching. Pain ooded through his lungs. Was this what dying felt like? He gasped for breath.

"s**t, Max. Are you okay?" Johan was on his knees in front of him.

"Can't breathe. Think I'm having a heart attack." He lost her over his own stupidity and now he was going to die.