

# Broken by Evelyn Miller

## 1: Cheater

LILY

I can't believe what I'm seeing. Oliver, sex hair and shirtless, Leah trembling in her bra and panties behind him. My boyfriend and my best friend.

An icy rage comes over me, and all I can say is, "How long?"

"This is the first time," says Olly.

"Six months," says Leah at the same time.

Olly and I had been together two years, and he's been cheating on me with her for six months. The two of them look terrified, like I'm about to grab a knife from the kitchen and cut his cheating dick off.

Maybe I should, I think, but instead I leave without saying another word.

I run from his house, get in my car, and drive on autopilot until I find myself at my favorite running trail on the outskirts of the city. Then I just start walking, not giving two shits that I'm still in a dress and sandals.

I'm halfway around the lake, totally alone with the trees, when I finally let myself cry. Two years wasted on that two-faced dirtbag. My whole life feels like a lie. What a fucked-up way to end the summer.

I'm full-on sobbing when I round a bend in the trail and stop dead in my tracks.

There, about twenty feet ahead, is a guy climbing out of the water, completely naked.

For a second, my brain short-circuits. He's tall, at least six-four, and broad-shouldered, his skin tanned golden from a summer full of sun. Water cascades down defined muscles, from his shoulders to his chiseled abs, and lower...

Oh my god, I'm staring.

"Sorry!" I say, my voice higher-pitched than usual.

He looks up, startled, then puts his hands over his crotch. "No one's usually here!"

I cover my face with my hands. "I shouldn't have..." I trail off, not sure how to finish that sentence. I shouldn't have walked here?

“Toss me those shorts?” he asks.

I look down at a pair of red running shorts on a rock nearby, with his shoes and socks next to them. After I toss them over, I turn my back.

“I, uh... I didn’t mean to interrupt... your bath?” I mumble.

He laughs. “I actually bathe at home, thank you. I was swimming after my run.”

“Naked?”

“There’s usually not any peeping toms around.”

“I’m not a peeping tom! You shouldn’t be skinny dipping here, it’s a public...”

I turn to confront him but lose my words. He’s walking toward his shoes, shorts on, but still no shirt. He sits on the rock to put on his shoes. His impressive arm muscles flex as he ties them and water drips from the brown curly hair hanging down just above his emerald green eyes. When he finishes, he looks up at me, smiles, totally unbothered that a stranger just saw him naked.

“Rough day, Princess?”

His question catches me off guard. “What?”

“You look like you’ve been crying.”

“No, I’m fine,” I assure him quickly.

“You don’t look fine,” he states.

I glance back down the trail, suddenly overwhelmed by everything—the breakup, the humiliation, the fact that I just saw a very attractive guy naked. “I should probably get going,” I say.

“I’m a good listener,” he says, patting the rock for me to sit next to him. “Tell me what’s up.”

“Why would I open up to a stranger?”

“Stranger? You’ve seen me naked. Plus, strangers are the best secret keepers.”

He might have a point. I can’t tell anyone I know. Olly is like the most popular guy in school. People won’t feel bad he cheated on me, they’ll just think I’m pathetic for letting it happen for six months. Might be nice to actually say it out loud without any fear of a drama bomb going off all around me. Fuck it.

“I just caught my boyfriend of two years cheating on me with my best friend,” I blurt out.

He whistles. “That’s rough.”

I start pacing in front of him. “It’s been going on for six months!” I yell, kicking a stone, instantly regretting it when pain shoots through my big toe. “I don’t get it. It’s not like I didn’t put out!” I shake my head. “And my best friend…” I whisper, sitting down next to the stranger. “You’re not going to kill me out here, are you?” I ask skeptically. “I watch true crime documentaries.”

He chuckles. “I’m not going to kill you.”

“Senior year is going to suck,” I grumble, pulling my knees up to my chest.

“You go to Ridgewood, right?” he asks.

“Yeah…” I say, wondering how he knows me. Do I know him?

With a mischievous grin, he points at himself and says, “Greendale.”

Just when I didn’t think this could get any more awkward, naked hot guy goes to my arch-rival high school…

“So we should NOT be talking.”

“Right,” he says. “Mortal enemies and all that.”

“Though, maybe it doesn’t matter—I might as well transfer out of state after what happened today.”

“I’d hate for our state to lose such a beauty over some douchebag’s mistake.”

Is he… flirting? I ignore it. “I just don’t know who I’m even going to be able to talk to at school after this.”

“You must have other friends?” he asks.

“Yeah. But my best friend Harry is on the football team with Olly and will probably stop talking to me. Ava might still be my friend.” I sigh.

“Wait a minute—Olly? You don’t mean Oliver Kingsley, do you?”

“You know him?” I ask, turning to properly look at the stranger, and taken aback by how beautiful his green eyes are.

“We’re kinda mortal enemies.” He winces.

“You’re Mason Cooper?” I frown, looking him up and down. I hadn’t recognized him without a helmet on.

“Yep! Greendale’s version of Oliver Kingsley. But a better quarterback and better looking.”

“Do you also cheat on your girlfriend?”

“It’s not cheating if you don’t have a girlfriend.”

“No, just sus.”

He shrugs.

“Wow, so we REALLY shouldn’t be talking,” I say. “It would drive Oliver insane.”

“I mean, isn’t that a bonus? You’re getting revenge by talking to the guy who beat your ex’s ass last year.”

“The fight was a tie,” I say, defending Olly out of habit.

Mason snorts. “Oh please! Your whole school hates my guts because he missed three games after I kicked his ass.”

“Okay, maybe you won. And maybe I’m glad now,” I say with a little smile.

I look down at my feet. “You probably don’t want to hear about all my personal problems,” I mumble.

“Are you kidding? I love hearing how much Oliver messed up,” Mason chuckles. “And I need a distraction.”

“What do you need a distraction from?” I ask before I can stop myself.

“Life.” He sighs.

I raise an eyebrow. *What could that mean?*

“You’re Lily, right? The cheerleader?” he asks, changing the subject.

“I am.” Though now I’m thinking about quitting the team when school starts.

“I hate it. I only joined because Leah... Oh god, being on the same team as Leah—I can’t handle that. I’ll want to punch her in the face every chance I get,” I groan, and Mason laughs.

"It's not funny," I snap.

"It's not," he agrees quickly. "I'm laughing because I thought you were quiet."

I purse my lips together and quirk my head to the side.

"I've seen you at games before. You never really talked with the others," he explains.

"Because they all suck!" I exclaim, and he laughs again and agrees.

"How about you? Want to spill some secrets or have a full-on emotional breakdown in front of me to make me feel better?" I ask.

"Maybe next time." He winks.

"Next time?" My eyebrows shoot up in surprise.

"I have to go. But you can text me if you want to talk," he says, handing me a black iPhone.

I look at the phone then back at him. Is he serious?

"You're supposed to put your number in," he says, and I roll my eyes, punching my number in.

"Thanks for listening," I whisper as I hand it back to him.

"Anytime, princess." He smiles sadly, kicking a rock with his sneaker as he walks away.

I'm still watching him go when my phone vibrates. It's a message from him.

555-465-9987

Hi, it's me, your naked therapist.

I laugh and save his contact as M. I don't even want the name Mason Cooper in my phone.

When I get home that night, I kick off my shoes and flop down onto the sofa.

I should probably call Ava. She's my best friend and I love her, but she's also so extra and I can't deal with her right now.

I think about calling my parents, but what's the point? They won't answer.

It feels like they're away on business more than they're home nowadays.

I guess I fell asleep, because I'm woken up by my phone ringing. The time on the screen says twelve o'clock.

"Hello?" I answer, my voice heavy with sleep.

"Did I wake you?" A male voice comes through.

I pull back my phone to see "M" on the screen. "Mason?" I ask, sitting up on the sofa.

"Look, I'm sorry. Go back to sleep," his voice comes out soft yet strained.

"Do you want to come over and eat pizza?" I offer, remembering we have one in the freezer.

There's a pause, and I check to make sure he hasn't hung up again.

"What kind?" he finally replies.

"Pepperoni."

"Text me your address."

I quickly pull my phone away from my ear and send a text to him.

"I'll be there soon, princess," he says almost immediately after I hit send.

"See you soon," I whisper as I throw the frozen pizza in the oven.

*Holy shit. What the hell am I doing? Why am I inviting Mason Cooper over to my house? If Harry or anyone from school finds out, my life will be made a living hell.*

My internal freak-out doesn't last long as Mason texts to say he's outside.

I open the front door and find him standing on my porch dressed in a black hoodie and basketball shorts.

He pushes back the hood and his curls fall onto his forehead, above his electric green eyes.

*How is he making the most casual outfit possible look so hot?*

"That was fast," I say faintly.

"I live two streets over." He half-smiles as I open the door wider for him to come inside.

“Sooo...” I draw out as we sit next to each other at the counter, the pepperoni pizza between us.

“You feeling any better?” he asks, grabbing a slice.

“Yeah,” I answer honestly. Crying and sleep seemed to help.

“I’m more angry than sad now,” I add, taking a bite of my slice.

“You seemed pretty mad before.” He smiles down at me.

He has a nice smile, but it doesn’t reach his beautiful eyes.

“You seemed...sad,” I say. “Is there something you want to talk about?”

“I’d rather just be distracted.” He sighs. He looks tired, and not just because it’s after midnight.

“Do you want to go swimming?” I ask, standing up as I finish my slice of pizza. “I have a pool.”

“I didn’t bring swim trunks. Though you already know that’s not a problem for me,” he says with a grin.

“No, I guess it’s not...” I say, biting my lip nervously.

“So how about it, Princess?”

“Um... I’ve never been skinny-dipping,” I blurt, biting my lip nervously.

“You haven’t?” He gapes at me.

“All my friends have, but Olly always said it would make me seem like a slut,” I mumble, feeling myself blush.

“He’s an idiot.” Mason snorts, rolling his eyes. “Come on then, princess.” He smiles, standing up.

“A-are you serious?” I ask, looking at him with wide eyes.

“I promise I won’t look.” He chuckles. “Let’s live a little.”

Once we’re outside standing at the edge of the pool, my nerves nearly get the better of me.

“You really won’t look?”

“I made a promise, didn’t I?”

“You’re not going to tell anyone, are you?” I add, turning my head to look at him.

“What, say I went skinny-dipping with someone from Ridgewood? That’d be social suicide, and I actually want to enjoy my senior year.”

I take a deep breath, closing my eyes as I reach for the zipper on the back of my dress.

I struggle to reach it and huff. I’m about to just pull it over my head, but instead I feel Mason’s fingers brush my bare skin softly, then he slowly unzips my dress.

I let it drop to the ground and pool at my feet. Mason’s hands touch the middle of my back, giving me goosebumps, then I realize he’s undoing my barely-there strapless bra.

Once my bra has joined my dress, I take another deep breath and slide my panties off.

I look to my left to be greeted by Mason’s bare, chiseled chest. *And those abs... What kind of killer workout routine does he have?*

He must feel my eyes on him, because he chuckles. “You’re looking.”

My eyes shoot back up to his face as my own turns red as a tomato. “I never promised not to.”

“Touché.” True to his word, his eyes are focused on the pool in front of us, but his smile finally looks real.

“Ready, princess?” he asks.

“Ready,” I say and grab his hand.

“Three, two, one,” he counts down quietly before we jump into the cool water.