

## Broken | 2: The Water Tower

### 2: The Water Tower

LILY

The moonlight reflects on the pool's surface and the water is warm against my skin.

"So, how does it feel doing something that Kingsley never let you do?" Mason asks. He's floating a few feet away, his curly hair clinging to his forehead.

"Good," I say. Though that's actually an understatement.

Being naked in a pool with a hot boy who I one hundred percent should not be talking to in the first place is the most exciting thing that's happened to me in months.

"What else wouldn't Kingsley let you do?" he asks.

"It's stupid, but I always wanted to climb the water tower," I say with a small laugh.

"You've never climbed the water tower?" he asks, drifting closer to me. "What was his excuse for that?"

"That it's immature and pointless," I say as I lean against the side of the pool.

"The more you talk about him, the dumber I think he is," Mason says. "And I already thought he was pretty dumb."

He's only a couple feet away from me now.

Did he just try to sneak a peek? I'm surprised to find I don't mind.

"Guess he's not holding me back anymore," I say, feeling both happy and sad about that. "I finally have my freedom, but the summer's almost over."

"We still have a month left of summer."

"Think I can pack everything he wouldn't let me do into one month?" I ask.

"Just how long is this list?" he says with a laugh.

He leans against the wall next to me.

His shoulder brushes mine, sending an electric shock through my body.

I can't believe I didn't even know him this morning and now his naked body is inches from mine.

Before I overthink it, I blurt out, "Want to help me?"

"Do the list?"

"Yeah? Be my list buddy."

"I'll be your list buddy, sure," he says, nodding. "We'll do every single thing that the Neanderthal said no to before the end of the summer."

I can't help but smile at his determination.

But then a thought hits me, and my cheeks warm. "Um, almost everything," I correct.

"Why not everything?" Mason frowns.

"There are things on the list that we just wouldn't be able to do," I say vaguely, sinking into the water up to my eyes to hide my face.

Mason watches me for a moment before his lips curve into a mischievous smirk. "You mean sex things."

"Shut up!" I groan, splashing water in his direction. He laughs, splashing me back.

"Anyway," I mumble, my cheeks still burning. "Is there anything you want to do?"

Mason hesitates, his green eyes flicking away for a moment before returning to mine. "I've always wanted to jump off that waterfall just out of town."

"Then add it to the list," I say, relieved by the shift in conversation. "I'll jump with you."

"Deal," he says, giving me a penetrating look.

The only sound is the soft lapping of water against the pool's edge.

Feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of his gaze, I sink into the water.

\*\*\*

Two days later, I'm getting ready to meet Mason for a run when I hear a banging on my front door.

I open it to be greeted by an angry-looking Harry and Ava.

My body is instantly overcome with anxiety.

*Did they find out I hung out with Mason Cooper?* They love me, but sleeping with the enemy is a capital offense at Ridgewood.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Ava demands. I’m frozen, but she continues, “I can’t believe you broke up with Olly.” She steps around me to get inside.

“Yeah, I broke up with Olly,” I say, relaxing my shoulders.

THAT secret I can deal with being out.

My house would be burning to the ground right this moment if they knew about Mason.

That’s how much Harry hates him.

Harry wraps his arms around me in one of his famous bear hugs. “You okay, babe?” he asks, looking down at me.

“I’m fine. We just had a fight and broke up,” I lie.

I don’t want everyone knowing he cheated on me.

I’ll be the laughingstock of the school, and if I tell Ava everyone will know.

I love her, but she can’t keep a secret to save her life.

“What’d you fight about? He wouldn’t tell us.” She pouts. “Leah’s taken his side,” she adds.

“It’s none of anyone’s business,” I snap. “We fought. I broke up with him. End of story,” I state, breaking out of Harry’s hug and grabbing my keys and phone. “I’m about to go for a run.”

“Lily, we care about you,” Ava says.

“I know. I just don’t want to talk about it.” I sigh, hoping they’ll drop it.

“Talking about it will help,” she says gently as she touches my shoulder. “I’m here if you need me.”

“Want some company on your run?” Harry offers with a sad smile.

“No, thanks. I just need some alone time,” I lie.

Alone time with Mason...

“Okay, I’ll text you later,” he says softly. He seems to understand.

“And I’ll come around tonight,” Ava adds, not giving me an opening to say no.

I drive the short distance to the trail, get out, and start running.

Mason and I agreed to meet halfway down the trail, so people wouldn’t see us together from the road.

I round a corner and find him waiting where I first saw him, though this time he’s wearing clothes.

Barely. A tiny pair of shorts and no shirt.

Beads of sweat drip down his bare chest. “Fancy meeting you here, princess,” he smirks. I catch him looking at my legs.

“Surprised you’re not skinny dipping,” I say.

“Surprised *you’re* not—you seemed to enjoy it the other night,” he says with that damn grin of his.

Just thinking about the other night makes me blush, so I turn away, start walking.

He falls in step with me.

“I was trying to be able to run this whole trail by the start of school,” I say, “but I don’t feel like that’s happening.”

“Another thing for the list!” he declares. “We can get you there, we just need to come at six when it’s cooler.”

“Six a.m.? During summer vacation?” I snort.

“It’s not that bad.” He shrugs. “Anyway, I was thinking we should climb the water tower tonight.”

“Yeah?” I ask, feeling a smile take over my face.

“Why not? But first... Race ya!” he calls out as he takes off running.

“Not fair!” I call back and break into a sprint.

I try my hardest to catch up with him, but he beats me to the parking lot by a good few yards. “You cheated,” I pant, trying to catch my breath.

“You’re fast,” he says, his muscular chest heaving with deep breaths. “I was going to go easy on you, but shit, princess.” He shakes his head with a laugh.

\*\*\*

At nine that night, I’m looking out my living room window waiting for Mason to pull up. The second I see his headlights, I run outside and jump into the passenger seat.

“Someone’s excited,” he laughs as I put my seat belt on.

“I am.” I smile widely. It’s a short drive there, but the nerves build the whole way.

“Is this illegal?” I ask when Mason pulls up in the field surrounding the water tower.

“You’re not going to chicken out on me, are you?”

“No,” I say, biting my lip as we get out of the car.

I grab the bottom rung of the ladder and start pulling myself up. It’s a long climb and my stomach is churning the whole way.

Mason is right behind me though, which makes me feel safer. We finally make it to the top. “Whoa,” I say, looking at the view. I can see the whole city from up here.

“Crazy, right?” Mason says, sitting down and sliding his legs through the railing.

“It’s so quiet out here,” I whisper as I sit next to him. All I can hear is our breathing and crickets. It’s like we’re the only two people in the world.

“I have to say, I’m surprised you did this,” he says. “Rumor is you’re a goody-two-shoes, and here you are doing something illegal.”

“You said it wasn’t illegal!”

“I never said that.”

“Well, I guess rumors aren’t always true, are they? Like, you’re not as big an asshole as everyone says.”

“That’s what everyone says?”

“Some people,” I say quietly, embarrassed.

He shrugs indifferently.

“So, tell me, princess, what else did your crazy ex-boyfriend not let you do?” he asks, pulling out his phone.

“He never let me try marijuana.”

Mason laughs and says, “*Try marijuana?* No one says it like that.”

“He never let me smoke a fatty?” I say.

“Okay, that’s worse. I’ll just put it on the list and we’ll move on.” He types it into the notes app on his phone, then says, “Next?”

“Get my nose pierced.”

His eyes widen. “I’m not getting my nose pierced.”

“You don’t have to,” I laugh as I picture it.

“I’ll come with you though,” he says, adding it to the list.

“I always wanted to try eating that seventy-two-ounce steak just out of town,” I mumble.

“Eat a giant-ass steak, got it.” He smiles.

“Drink a whole bottle of wine straight from the bottle.” When he finishes typing that, I whisper, “Quit the cheer team.” He raises a questioning brow but doesn’t say anything as he types.

“That’s it,” I say, looking over his shoulder at the list he’s made. “Don’t forget the waterfall,” I tell him, and he adds it at the bottom.

“Why are you doing this for me?” I can’t help but ask.

“Because you’re fun to hang out with,” he says with a smile. Then his face darkens and he looks out at the city lights. “And I could use the distraction.”

“From what?” I whisper.

He looks at me and his lips part to speak but then close again and he turns away to avoid my gaze. I reach out, placing a gentle hand on his arm. “I’m a good listener,” I say.

He closes his eyes, and the words finally come. “My brother died last month,” he murmurs.

I don’t know what to say, except, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” he mumbles, opening his eyes. Even though it’s dark, I can see tears welling up in his eyes.

“I’m happy to be your distraction,” I say, putting my head on his shoulder.

“Thanks, princess,” he whispers back, resting his head on top of mine. We stay that way for a minute or two. It’s nice.

“Are you really going to quit the cheer team?” he asks.

“It’s on the list, so I have to,” I joke. “But yeah,” I say, no longer joking.

“I don’t want the summer to end,” he says quietly. “Back at school, everything will be more...complicated.”

I’m dreading going back, too. “People are going to gossip about me and Olly, and when I drop out of cheer, it’s going to be worse. Nobody knows how to mind their own business.”

“I’ve seen a few people around and they’ve just given me this look of, I don’t know, pity. Which just pisses me off.” Mason frowns. “I don’t think I have the patience to deal with them,” he adds, shaking his head.

“What about your friends?” I ask. I can’t even imagine what he’s going through.

“They’re trying to treat me the same, but it’s like they’re too scared to make a joke around me.”

“You have a sense of humor?” I gasp, pressing my hand to my chest.

“Very funny, princess,” he deadpans before an amused smile breaks out on his face.

Mason’s gaze softens as we lock eyes. I can feel the warmth of his body next to me. My breath catches as he leans in—is he going to kiss me? The whole world has gone quiet.

We stay that way for what feels like forever, but then it’s like we both know we shouldn’t and turn away at the same time.

“The stars are beautiful,” he says.

I just nod, still recovering from that almost-kiss.

Finally, I say, “Can I ask you a serious question?”

“Sure.”

“You weren’t serious about running at six a.m. were you?”

He laughs and then flashes that mischievous grin of his.

Next Chapter

[Continue to the next chapter of Broken](#)