

Chapter Two - Selma Duncan

Selma Duncan folded shut her cell phone and walked back into her room, sliding the door closed. A nippy wind coming from the Sound was chastising the balcony where she had just called Justin McFarell. Justin wasn't there to take her call, though, always busy with his career.

She sat upon her bed and heaved a deep sigh. Thelma was already asleep, as though without a care in the world. They had had a stupid fight in the afternoon over Justin. Thelma hated him and made no bones about it. "He's a creep," Thelma said. "Why are you seeing such a creep?"

Selma tried to defend him. He was not a creep. She was just *jealous*.

"So what if I am?" her sister asked.

They had stared at each other, her little sister pouting slightly, seemingly hurt.

"Because you don't have to," Selma replied. "That's why."

Selma peeled her Dolce & Gabbana sequined dress off, the very same she had worn in Betty Sackville's sweet-16 party that Bernie and Louise Sackville had thrown in the Astoria for their precious teenage daughter. Selma felt slightly light-headed from the booze she had ingested. Her parents were right next to her and they hadn't even noticed her gulping down several Don Perignon glasses and Bordeaux goblets. It's not like they didn't care, it was more like they didn't worry so much about her and her twin sister, as Rick and Polyna Duncan would rarely find fault in anything their daughters did.

Selma slipped under the silk sheets of her bed and tried to sleep. Even though she felt really tired and her eyelids threatened to close for a good night sleep, Selma was restless. She hated it when she fought with Thelma. Her sister meant the world to her, and she couldn't bear the thought of going to sleep without throwing a peace offering to her sister. Five years before, fighting was so common that she would rarely lose sleep over it. Now that they were sixteen, almost seventeen, everything had changed. They had grown closer, becoming best friends, inseparable, as if conjoined at the hip.

Being a twin was really confusing at times. They were mirror twins, which meant that Selma's left side was identical to her sister's right side. Every tiny imperfection, birthmark, was mirrored in the opposite half on her twin's body. On and off Selma got the odd impression that Thelma was not a real person, but rather an extension of herself. She had only to stretch out her hand and be transported to the other side of the looking glass, like in *Alice in Wonderland*. Thelma was really hurt when Selma told her about her daydream.

"If I am not a real person, you aren't either!"

Selma's train of thought kept wandering towards the party and then to that mysterious girl who kept staring at her at the New York club. Selma was used to being stared at.

Men, women, boy and girls—they all had their reasons for staring. It could be lust, envy, or a little of both, but that had never bothered her before. Since she was seven she'd been on the receiving end of open adulation, because of her platinum blonde looks, her uncannily bright, round blue eyes, and her pouting lips. Polyna Duncan never believed in protecting them from the world. Her daughters had been socialites since they turned thirteen, lying about their ages and getting away with it in the New York club scene. However, that over-curious girl, in a party meant for teenagers only, had messed with her nerves. She had even asked who that girl was and to her surprise they told her it was Amber Leigh. Selma had a vague recollection of her, something like she had been raped by some guy. She couldn't really recall.

Selma fell into deep sleep and dreamt about Amber Leigh. It was as though the girl was desperate somehow. She wanted to talk to her, but was unable to.

"Amber Leigh, Amber Leigh, what am I going to do with you?" said a voice, who sounded like hers but it wasn't hers.

Amber Leigh, with her long reddish curls, screamed mightily, scaring Selma to death.

"Stop it," Selma begged. "Stop screaming. You're hurting my ears."

Selma woke up, startled, and then she let out a shrill yelp. A shadow bent over her. She got scared.

"Selma, shut up, it's me."

"Thelma?"

"Yes, who else?"

"Wha—what happened?" Selma asked, her eyes adjusting, focusing on her sister's silhouette. It was still dark outside.

"You were having a bad dream. You woke me up with your whimpering."

"I'm sorry."

"You should be."

"I am."

"So, what was the dream about?"

They had discussed Amber Leigh before. Selma told her sister the truth.

"Are you attracted to this girl?"

"No," Selma denied, shaking her head with vehemence. "I'm just... intrigued by her."

"Why?"

"I don't know why."

"Then call her and get it over with."

"Call her? You have her phone number?"

"No, but I know who does."

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