

Excerpt from *BOSS OF ME*

IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT and there's a good crowd. The music is loud and the atmosphere is lively.

I hover at the entrance, scanning the bar. Dawson told me he'd arrive early and snag a table in the back corner so we'd have some privacy.

I look toward the rear of the room. And that's when I see him.

He's sitting alone at a table texting on his phone.

The sight of him shoots through me like a flaming arrow, setting every one of my senses on fire.

He's not just attractive.

He's fucking gorgeous.

Thick straight hair the color of black licorice falls across his forehead as he bends over his phone. He has slashing black eyebrows and cheekbones sharp enough to cut glass. The shadow of a beard accentuates the hard angle of his jaw.

He looks like a fallen angel, too beautiful for any earthly realm.

As I send up a prayer of thanks to the patron saint of matchmaking, Dawson suddenly lifts his head and sees me standing across the bar.

He goes completely still, staring at me with an arrested look that sends my heartbeat into maximum overdrive.

I stand rooted to the spot, staring back at him until the door opens behind me, the arrival of more bar hoppers snapping me out of my daze.

I swallow thickly and will my feet to move forward, weaving my way between the densely packed tables as Dawson watches me. My stomach is flipping over and over, turning somersaults like the ones Ember and I used to do on our front lawn as little girls.

As I draw closer to Dawson, I'm ensnared by the blueness of his eyes. They're so dark they're almost navy. They remind me of the color of the sky at twilight. Stunning. Potent. Seductive.

He stands as I approach, his dark gaze sliding over my body like a burning caress. It leaves me hot and quivery, nipples hard as diamonds.

"Hi." My voice is barely a breath. "I'm Marlowe. You must be Dawson."

The corner of his mouth quirks up ever so slightly. He's much taller than I expected, with long legs and thick thighs wrapped in tailored dark slacks. Beneath his dark blazer, his shoulders are breathtakingly broad and his chest hard with muscle. His white button-down shirt highlights the healthy glow of his tanned complexion. The first three buttons are undone, exposing his strong throat and a triangle of smooth skin.

He's hotter than I could have ever hoped for. Hotter than I could have imagined in my wildest fantasies. On top of that, he smells amazing.

He moves to pull out my chair, but I'm so nervous that I sit down before he reaches me.

Those deep blue eyes glitter in the low light before he returns to his seat across the table.

Up close, I notice a faint dimple in his chin beneath his five o'clock shadow. He has the sexiest mouth I've ever seen, a firm upper lip with a full lower one that has a slight dip in the middle. I want to slide my tongue over it, suck the cushiony plumpness into my mouth and hear him groan with pleasure.

I realize that he's watching me and feel my cheeks warm. Clearing my throat, I nervously tuck my hair behind my ear and offer what I hope is an alluring smile. "Please tell me you haven't been waiting long."

"I haven't." His voice is a dark rumble, liquid sex poured over hot gravel. It sends a lick of heat twisting through my stomach.

I don't remember him sounding so orgasm-inducing on the phone. Seriously. I could come just from the sound of his voice.

"What're you drinking?" he asks.

I usually order a margarita or a vodka cranberry, but I'm feeling adventurous tonight. "I'll have a whiskey, neat."

Dawson lifts one brow, the corners of his mouth twitching toward a smile. I can't tell if he's surprised or impressed by my selection.

As he signals the waiter, I sit back in my seat and cross my legs, holding his gaze across the small table. "So . . . come here often?"

His lazy white grin sucker punches me between my thighs. "C'mon, beautiful," he drawls. "You can do better than that."

I laugh as my heart does a funny skipping dance. Jesus. You would think he's the first man who's ever called me beautiful.

When the waiter appears, Dawson orders us both a neat whiskey. I find myself watching him, drinking in his darkly handsome features. The heavy eyebrows, the square jaw, the mesmerizing blue eyes framed by a thick fringe of lashes as black as his hair.

He exudes raw sex appeal, a savage magnetism that oozes from his every pore. It's nearly overpowering.

I don't realize the waiter has left until Dawson speaks to me, interrupting my fascinated perusal of him.

"Um, sorry." I blink like I'm coming out of a trance. "What did you say?"

There it is again, that slight twist of amusement that curls his mouth. His sexier-than-sin, please-suck-my-clit-till-I-scream mouth.

"I asked how you like living in Texas," he says. "Hot enough for you?"

I laugh. "Well, I've only been here a couple months, but the weather definitely takes some getting used to."

His eyes gleam. "Too hot for you?"

"A little," I admit.

When he smiles at me, my breath snags in my throat. God, he's gorgeous. How can he possibly be single?

"*You're* obviously used to the heat," I blurt out.

He quirks an amused brow.

"Because you grew up in Texas," I clarify.

"I did," he affirms, lips twitching. "Been here all my life."

Before I can respond, the waiter returns with our drinks. We pick up our glasses and gently clink them together.

"Cheers," he murmurs.

"Cheers." I smile and sip my drink, feeling the whiskey burn a path down my throat to my hypersensitive clit.

Dawson watches me over the rim of his glass. The heat in his eyes is more intoxicating than all the liquor served at every bar on this street.

“So you’re a whiskey girl, huh?” he draws.

“Just depends on my mood.”

“Hmm. And what kind of mood are you in?”

I smile slowly. “A daring mood.”

His eyes lock with mine. The sexual tension sizzling between us is so hot it’s almost suffocating.

Three pulse-pounding beats pass before Dawson takes another sip of his drink.

I can’t help staring at the large, tanned hand wrapped around his glass. His fingers are long and broad with clean, blunt nails. They look strong enough to crush his glass with no effort.

They match the rest of him, I note, staring at the muscled bulk of his shoulders. He’s not as huge as some overinflated bodybuilder, but he’s definitely big enough to be intimidating. He looks rugged yet refined. Tough yet urbane.

Judging by the expensive cut of his blazer and the platinum watch circling his wrist, he’s obviously loaded. He seems out of place at this trendy hipster bar. He’d probably be more at home at some high-end restaurant with dark wood paneling, crisp white tablecloths and no prices on the menu. The kind of place that would bankrupt me just walking past it.

I watch as he lowers his glass from his mouth. His glistening lips make me want to rip my panties off and sit on his face.

“Do you do this often?” he asks.

I blush. “Do what?”

He leans slightly forward. “Go on blind dates.”

“No. Not really. Actually,” I confess, staring into his eyes, “you’re my first.”

“Am I?”

“You are.”

The wicked gleam in his eyes sends an illicit shiver down my spine. There’s something seriously dangerous about him. Something that excites me, pulls at me, unravels my inhibitions like thread off a spool.

His lashes lower as his gaze drops to my mouth and lingers. “I wonder what other firsts I can talk you into,” he says in that obscenely sexy voice.

I lick my lips, pulse rioting. “I guess that’s for me to know . . . and you to find out.”