

Fall To Temptation

Chapter 1

"Dinner's ready," my mother's voice called from the kitchen.

I imagine, in that moment, my ears perked up like a dog's. My stomach certainly gave an appreciative grumble. And my brain? That was so absorbed by the delicious scents I was inhaling that all I could think about was eating.

My mouth was salivating as I rose from the sofa, jogged to the kitchen. Picture a dog with it's tail wagging, and you'll understand the kind of excited energy bubbling inside me as I jogged into the kitchen to collect my meal.

Say what you will about mother, but *damn* could she cook.

"Over there," Mom nodded, "go easy on the salt, we're almost out."

Her own plate in hand, she walked to the kitchen door, shouted at the top of her lungs.

"Dinner's ready!" She called, loud enough to make my ears ring. "Melody! Get your ass out of bed and come get your food!"

I froze, eyes turning to glance at Mom.

Standing in the kitchen doorway. Waiting.

"Melody!" She shouted again.

No reply. No response from upstairs.

"Here we go again," Mom sighed. "Ben, could you go drag your sister's ass out of bed please?"

I turned to my food, stared longingly at it.

Perfectly roasted sausages wrapped in crisp bacon. Steaming onion rings. Mashed potatoes slathered with home-made gravy. My mother's unique take on bangers 'n' mash. Ambrosia. I knew exactly how delicious those sausages and that bacon would be, knew perfectly well how the mashed potato would melt in my mouth.

With regret in my heart, I stepped away from the meal.

"Sure thing, Mom."

As my mother went to go eat her dinner, I headed upstairs, walked down the hallway to my sister's room, knocked the door.

No answer.

Sighing, I knocked again.

When I didn't hear any sign of life on the other side of the door, I did the only thing I could. I gripped onto the door handle, averted my eyes in case Melody was in a state of undress, and opened the door.

Melody, it turned out, was not naked.

Far from it; she was cocooned in her blanket. Sitting up in bed, staring at her phone. Her slender fingers and pretty, downcast face were the only parts of my darling sister that I could see. Everything else was hidden under the blanket – hair included.

"Dinner's ready," I told my sister.

It was the middle of the day, yet Melody's room was so dark you'd think it was night. The only illumination was my sister's phone screen – casting a dim light on her passive face.

"I know," Melody whispered.

She made no move to get up.

"Melody?"

"I'm not hungry," my sister spoke softly, not looking up from her phone screen.

"Mel..."

What could I say? She'd been like this for weeks. Locked inside her room, only ever coming out to use the bathroom or to eat. If I knew what was wrong, maybe I'd be able to help her. But she never told me. Never said anything.

"I'll... I'll tell Mom that you'll have it later."

Some days, it was like that. She wouldn't eat anything at dinner time, would instead come downstairs in the evening and heat her cold meal up. Other days, she didn't eat at all.

My heart lurched at the sight of her.

But what could I do?

I couldn't *force* her to eat. That was for sure.

"I..."

No words came to me.

I gazed at my sister a little while longer. My big sister who, until so recently, had been bubbly and bright and happy. And, silently, I berated myself for not being able to help her.

Whatever was wrong with Melody, she seemed to want to suffer with it alone.

I sighed, turned away from her, left her bedroom and headed back downstairs.

As I set my empty plate down in the sink, my eyes were drawn to the plate still on the counter. The plate no longer steaming with heat, that was still loaded with food. My sister's plate.

She hadn't come down to get it. Again.

Part of me hoped she'd grab it and heat it up again later, that today would be one of the days where she did eat. But, deep down, I wasn't so sure.

Mom eyed the plate as she entered the kitchen.

Then, as if nothing was wrong, she walked over to the sink and turned the tap on, reached for the washing up liquid.

Pretending like everything was fine.

Before I knew what I was doing, I had my sister's plate in my hands, was walking out of the kitchen. Mom didn't stop me. Didn't even speak. I carried the plate upstairs, strode over to Melody's bedroom door.

In truth, I had no idea what I was doing.

Was I going to force her to eat it? Leave it in her room so she didn't have to come downstairs for it? Was I planning on smacking her over the head with it? I didn't know.

All I knew was that, as I approached my sister's room, I heard soft, pained sobs coming from inside.

I froze.

My heart twisted in my chest.

Another muffled sob.

And, just like that, my body was moving again. Acting on its own. Reaching for the door handle and turning it, stepping inside my sister's bedroom for the second time that day.

Her wide eyes shot to me as I entered. She covered her mouth, tried to hide her face. But I could see the tears. See her bloodshot eyes and how red and swollen her sockets were.

Neither of us said a word. I stood there. She sat in bed with her blanket cocoon.

I glanced down at the plate of food in my hands.

Somehow, it didn't seem so important now.

I walked over to my sister, set the plate down on her bedside table, sat myself down on the edge of her bed.

When I spoke, my eyes were forward – away from Melody.

"What's wrong, sis?"

Silence.

A silence so absolute, I could hear my own heart beating.

I felt Melody moving, her weight on the bed shifting.

"Nothing," she whispered so softly I could barely hear her.

"Cool," I said. "In that case, you won't mind if I hang out in your room, will you? We can talk all about how nothing is wrong and everything is okay."

Melody didn't reply.

As the silence wore on, I felt myself getting annoyed.

Admittedly, that probably wasn't the 'right' emotion to be feeling given the situation. But, that's what I felt all the same. Annoyed that Melody wouldn't let me help her. Annoyed that she was doing this to herself. Annoyed that I felt so powerless.

"So, there's this new game I've been playing recently," I told my sister, forcing my voice to sound casual. "It's all about mixing and matching magic spells. You're in these teams of four and-"

"I don't want to talk about it."

That was, come to think of it, probably the longest string of words my sister had spoken to me or Mom in the last few weeks.

"Okay," I said, nodding my head. "I understand."

I leaned back, stared up at my sister's bedroom ceiling.

"But," I added, "something *is* wrong. You might not want to say what, but you can't deny *that*."

Melody said nothing.

"I want to help you," I told her. "You don't want me to know what's going on? That's fine. But I'm done watching you slowly starve yourself while you lock yourself in your room all day crying."

I turned to look at her; saw her wide, golden-brown eyes staring right at me.

"I'm going to help you," I promised. "One way or another, I'm going to make all this better. And you're going to cooperate with me, otherwise I'ma be coming in here all day every day to tell you about my wizarding adventures. Okay?"

Slowly, my sister nodded her head.

"Good."

I spent the rest of the day, and half of the night, online.

Searching medical sites, mental health sites, alien abduction sites – I may or may not have gotten sidetracked once or twice. And, after all that searching, I'd come to one simple conclusion.

Depression was a son of a bitch to deal with.

I didn't even know if Melody *was* depressed. She seemed to fit the criteria, from what I'd seen. But she also fit the internet's criteria for 'fat, male, twenty year old, gamer virgin'. Which, as a skinny, male, twenty year old, gamer virgin, I found highly offensive. Just 'cause someone locks themselves in their room and becomes entirely antisocial, doesn't make them a gamer.

Regardless, I had about as much luck finding a cure for my sister's 'condition' as I did at finding reliable, concrete proof of alien abduction.

A whole lot of nothing for all those hours spent searching.

I was going to call it a night when, while reading a list of possible treatments for depression, I saw it. Hypnosis.

A thing that, until then, I fully believed was fake.

Even *after* reading it on this list of treatments, I thought it was probably a fake, nonsense parlour trick. Seeing it on a professional, mental health website made me question said website's authenticity.

But I was desperate.

I wasn't some therapist or psychologist or shrink. I was a dumb fucking nerd who liked playing video games. The fuck did I know about helping someone with depression?

I didn't even know if that's what Melody had!

So I latched on to this idea, hoping beyond hope that it was real. Actual therapy and guidance, I couldn't do. Not without years of education. But hypnosis? How hard could *that* be?

I looked at the clock, bookmarked the page, went to bed.

And, in the morning, I looked up hypnosis and how to perform it.

"So the game revolves around collecting these magic runes, and each rune has a specific element. What you've gotta do is combine the runes to make spells, and combine spells to-

"Fine!" Melody groaned. "Fine..."

She was, once again, cocooned in her blanket. Only her face visible. Several messy strands of chocolate brown hair had escaped from the part of the blanket that rested atop Melody's head, falling over her face and sticking out at odd angles.

"You'll let me hypnotise you?" I asked, grinning.

"Sure," Melody muttered. "Whatever. Not like it's gonna work anyway."

"Maybe," I shrugged. "Maybe not. From what I read, it changes from person to person. The more susceptible a person is to hypnosis, the easier it is to get them into a trance."

"It's weird," my sister said.

"So is how you've been living for the past nine weeks."

Melody huffed.

"It'll be easy, don't worry," I told her, making my voice calm and relaxed – just as the instruction had said to. "If it doesn't work, I'll come up with something else. Just remember, I can't make you say or do anything you don't want to while you're under. Since you don't want to tell me what's wrong now, I won't be able to make you tell me while you're in a trance."

From what I'd learned about hypnosis, even *asking* Melody a question that she didn't want to answer could jeopardise the hypnotic state. I'd have to be *very* careful with what I said.

"Now, are you gonna keep complaining, or are you gonna let me get on with this? The sooner I start, the sooner it'll be done."

"Whatever," Melody said under her breath.

For someone who always used to be so happy, seeing her like this was a punch to my gut. What happened to the cute, bubbly Melody?

"Alright," I said, keeping the emotion from my voice. "Lay back and get comfortable. This might take a while. I want you to listen to my voice..."

"What is your name?" I asked, heart pounding.

"Melody Martin," my sister answered.

"Do you know who I am, Melody?"

"Yes," she answered softly.

"What is my name?"

"Ben Martin."

"What is your favourite colour?"

Melody's mouth opened, her eyebrows knit together. She didn't say anything, just frowned in thought.

"Forget that last question," I said quickly. "And answer this one instead; *do* you have a favourite colour?"

"No," Melody breathed, face relaxing again.

You'd think, given the circumstances, I'd feel powerful right about now. In control. Influential. But honestly? I was fucking terrified.

One wrong move, one question that I hadn't thought through, and the trance would

break.

Every word I spoke had to be smart. Planned out in advance.

I had no idea what I was doing.

Sure, I'd read up on hypnosis. I'd learned everything I could in the few hours since waking up. But this? This wasn't something *anyone* could prepare for. I was flying blind. The map was dark. Terra incognita everywhere.

I continued to ask my sister simple questions. Her address, where she'd grown up, our mother's name.

The guide I'd read said that this was to establish some kind of 'baseline' or something. It had to do with making sure the subject felt safe and relaxed, testing the trance, making sure everything was okay. Really, I just had no idea where to go or how to help Melody out. Asking basic questions filled the silence as I tried to remember everything I'd read.

"You haven't been yourself lately," I said eventually.

A statement of fact. Not a question.

"And you don't want to tell me why," I continued. "Which is fine. You deserve privacy, and have the right to keep your thoughts to yourself. I'm not going to push you. I'm only here to help."

I shut my eyes, tried to recall exactly what the guide had said.

"I want you to imagine a box," I said. "A simple, plain box that you can open and close, with a little lock on it. Can you do that for me, Melody?"

"Yes," my sister answered quietly.

"When something is put inside that box, it's stuck in there until you let it out again. If you put a memory in that box and lock it, you won't be able to remember it again until the box is unlocked. Think of it as a subconscious block. A way of you to set things aside. Not just memories, but thoughts and feelings too."

The instructions had been very specific. This was not a cure, it was a postponement. A way of setting one problem aside so that the subject could focus on something else.

Not a cure. Just temporary release.

"I don't know why you've been upset and miserable recently, I don't know why you've been in so much pain, but I *can* help. That box you're picturing? I want you to put all your negative emotions in it. Not permanently; hypnosis doesn't work like that. You're just going to store them inside there for the time being. That's all. Just a few hours where those things aren't affecting you."

Melody's eyebrows twitched.

"Pour it all in there, Melody. All the pain you've been feeling, all the emotions that've been eating away at you. Let yourself forget about them for a few hours. Just a little, short escape. Put them all in that box..."

I didn't know if this would work.

Really, I still wasn't quite sure the hypnosis itself had worked. Part of me was convinced that Melody was just pretending to be under so that I'd get off her ass about it.

But, if it did work, it'd be worth it.

"When the box is full," I said, "when all of your negative emotions are inside it, I want you to close the box's lid. Picture a key. A glowing, special key. And turn that key in the box's lock. Seal it shut for me, Melody."

I crossed my fingers, hoped that'd be enough.

Melody's eyes blinked open.

She glanced around in confusion, saw me sitting on the edge of her bed. Her confusion doubled, then her eyes widened as she remembered. The realisation must've shocked my sister because, the next this I knew, she was sitting up in bed.

The blanket cocoon slipped away, dropped from her head and slid down her shoulders to reveal my sister in full.

Chocolate brown hair, frazzled and messy and in need of a good wash. Dark circles under her eyes from a lack of sleep. Full lips that were parted enough for me to see a flash of white teeth.

She was wearing an old, large t-shirt, though it wasn't on quite right – one of her shoulders wasn't covered, the t-shirt slanted haphazardly. Her chest bulged out, her huge breasts revealing their slightly-sagging roundness under the cloth of Melody's top. Two faint protrusions brought a blush to my cheeks, made me look away.

She wasn't wearing a bra.

The bedsprings creaked behind me, my sister's weight shifting on the mattress.

Then a warm, marshmallowy softness pressed against my back.

Two slender arms wrapped around my chest from behind and, a second later, my sister placed her head on my shoulder.

"Thank you," she whispered, sounding on the verge of tears.

"I don't-"

"Thank you, Ben," she repeated quietly.

He held me in place for a minute or two. Not saying anything, not pulling away. Just hugging my back, her huge tits squished against my body. I tried not to think about it, tried to ignore the fact that she was braless. She was my sister, dammit. What kind of guy gets a boner from his sister hugging him?

When she finally pulled away, broke her embrace, I looked back over my shoulder at her.

Melody smiled at me.

The first time she'd smiled in far too long.

It was, perhaps, the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen.

"Should I let Mom know you'll be coming down for dinner today?"

Blushing, my sister slowly nodded her head.