

## CHAPTER 1

“Can you feel, now?”

“Call 911. I did something really stupid,” are the last words I remember saying clearly. Whatever pills I had swallowed had begun to make me loopy, or maybe it was the bottle of Puerto Rican rum I had washed them down with, or hell, maybe it was from the blood loss as my arms streamed ribbons of ruby red. Either way though, the night takes on a nightmarish quality that leaves all but the major details hazy to me.

The day had started out normal enough. I woke up, and sighed in exhaustion at still breathing. I had gotten dressed in my usual outfit, black combat boots, black pants,

## **The Finer Points of Becoming...**

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black shirt, black sweater, heavy eyeliner. The vacant look in my eyes comes naturally now; I don't have to put that on anymore. I am sixteen years old. I am that weird kid in your class you whisper about and make fun of because she dresses in black and the few friends that she does have also dress in black and listen to depressing music while smoking cigarettes in the bathroom at lunchtime.

My name is Emma, but that isn't important. This could be your story, the kid down the street's story, and in a way I wish it was; but it's not. It's mine, and mine alone to tell.

It was a fairly noneventful day. Get on bus. Go to school. Ditch most of my classes. Smoke cigarettes. Get on bus, go back home. December 16th. The only reason I remember the day is because this is the day that the shit hit the fan and I was forced to start dealing with all the crap in my head—or spend more time in a padded room than anyone should ever have to.

I had an older boyfriend named Donnie.

He was a 21-year-old musician with bleached blond hair and beautiful features and looked *just* like the lead singer of my favorite band, which is probably the entire reason I loved him in the first place.

Anyways, school ends and he doesn't meet me like he was supposed to. A phone call a few hours later manages to tear my heart in two. “You've got too many problems, Emma. I'm sorry, I think we shouldn't be together anymore.”

Looking back, it wasn't so much him that broke me. It was the fact that I poured what was left of my love and humanity into him and he, like everyone else in my life, hurt me. When I called my mom for condolence, she simply said, “I'm sorry you're hurting,” but her voice told me the exact opposite. She didn't care either. Something bad and dark inside me clicks.

You see, I am the product of an abusive home, where violence, guilt, and lies are a way of life. I grew up watching my mother get beaten black and blue, and eventually