

Trying to be a London girl: chapter 2

'You look lovely. I really like it when you put your hair back', mom comments as the same waiter from before pulls my chair back so I can sit down. I give him a small smile and say 'Thank you. I know, you have told me that before. So what are we having for lunch?', I give her a smile.

Mom 'I ordered you a club sandwich with sweet potato fries. I know how much you love it.'

I 'Yes, I really do like them'. As my parents start talking about something work related I try my best to participate in the conversation, Steph, Lisa and Felix are currently having.

Charlotte 'What did I miss?'

Even though I can see how much my sister and aunt wanted to resume where we stopped earlier, they don't and I really appreciate it. Instead Stephanie says 'We are trying to decide, where to celebrate Lisa's graduation after dinner'.

Charlotte 'I thought we were going to Armani Prive?'

Lisa 'Yeah we will probably. But Alexa, my friend is having a party in her house too'.

Stephanie 'House parties are overrated. They never end up as you hope. Usually policy ends them before the real fun begins'.

Charlotte 'I agree. House parties are just an excuse for under aged drinking and drugs'.

Felix 'So Armani Prive it is!' He exclaims way too happy.

Lisa 'It is my day. Shouldn't I decide where we end up going?', she asks upset.

Felix, being the great boyfriend he is, immediately hugs her and says 'You are absolutely right, this weekend is all about you, love. We'll go to your friend's party if that is what you want', he presses his lips on hers for a quick kiss.

Immediately relaxing she gives in 'I suppose we can do both. Drop in just to say hello and then go to Armani Prive'.

Stephanie 'Great now that we finally decided, I really wish for my food to arrive'. That got me laughing. Steph is always hungry. Stephanie 'What are you laughing at?'

Charlotte 'Nothing. It's just I think it is funny how you are either always hungry or in desperate need for coffee'.

Stephanie 'Hey they are both essential to survive. By the way look who is serving our food', she nudges me. I look up and of course it has to be the waiter with the cute haircut. He has green eyes too and while he is smiling at me all I can think of is: will I ever like a guy enough again to feel something tingling inside of me just because of one simple glance from him?

During lunch several topics were discussed with me occasionally contributing in the conversation, but for the most part I stayed silent and listened to what the others had to say.

Mom 'Girls, we have to leave now or we will be late for the appointment at the hairdresser'.

Stephanie 'Charlotte I swear if you do not open up this door immediately, I am going to kill you!', she said while banging against the bathroom door.

Charlotte 'Give me one more minute'.

Stephanie 'Ughh fine, but if you are not out in exactly one minute, I'm going to call your mom. Do you hear me?'

I roll my eyes and say 'Yeahh'. The truth is I don't need any more minutes to get ready. I have been ready for the last fifteen minutes. But I could not get myself to open the door. Somehow a night filled with greeting people, I have never seen before and pretending to be interested in their lives does not sound as entertaining as it did a week ago. It has nothing to do with social awkwardness as some of you might think. In fact, I am a pro at making small talk with random people, I grew up with it. It has more to do with the need to pretend of having a fantastic night in the first place, even if it turned out to be the complete opposite. My grandmother has taught my sister and me already at a very young age that a young lady from a respectable family never shows her real emotions in public. Family always comes first. And my sister belongs to my family. That is why I am not about to ruin her night. Not that she'd forgive me in the first place.

I take a small sip of the coke and vodka Felix has mixed me before, he insisted that everyone had a t least one glass to get us into "party mood", and open the door only to reveal an already fuming aunt.

Stephanie 'You know I was this close to call your mom...' she stops in the middle of her sentence and stares at me.

Charlotte 'No need for that. The bathroom is free now, go on and get ready.' Slowly getting creped out by the way she is looking at me I ask her in what was supposed to be a joking way 'What's wrong with you? One moment you are fuming and the next moment you look at me as though you have seen a ghost'.

Before I can do anything I find myself embraced by her in a tight hug, I 'Okay, seriously what has gotten into you?'

Stephanie 'Nothing. I only realised right now what a beautiful young lady you have become'.

I pet her back and say 'Aww thank you, I guess it runs in the family'.

Stephanie releases me and says 'Maybe, but you are beautiful from the inside and outside'. I awkwardly look away while she continues 'Look in the mirror and tell me what you see'.

I do what she wants me to do and see a girl in a black evening dress, which is tight fitted at the waist and flows down until a bit over the knees with a classic pair of Louboutins and neatly yet lightly applied makeup. And to finish the look of with what appears to be a very complicated, braided hairdo. In other words, a pretty girl in an expensive dress, which is also my answer.

Stephanie 'Yes, but that is not all what that girl is about. I see a girl who has been through so much in the last year and yet is still standing here and pretends to be okay, when in reality she fights everyday against her fears.'

I look at the ground and mumble 'That sounds like a fragile girl in my ears.'

Stephanie 'And that is where you are in the wrong. Only, the fact that you are standing here makes you a much stronger person than you might realize.'

That is the point where I break down, slowly tears start to appear and I cry out 'I am so afraid of him. On some days it is all I can think of. What if Marc comes back Steph?'

She hugs me again and says 'You are safe now. He can't harm you any longer do you hear me? And just know that whenever you are ready to fully talk about that night I am here for you. We all are.'

Charlotte 'I love you so much'.

Stephanie 'I love you more little niece.' She pushes me away but only as far that she can look me strait into my eyes and says 'And I tell you another thing. One day, you are going to fall again. One day a guy will be lucky enough to call himself your boyfriend. You are going to love him unconditionally and you are going to trust him. Do you hear me?'

Charlotte 'When?'

Stephanie 'Soon'. As soon as the words leave my aunts mouth I know that she is right. London will be good for me. A fresh start. No one will know what happened to me. No one will look at me with pity in their eyes.

Charlotte 'Okay'.

Stephanie 'Okay?'

Charlotte 'Yes, okay'.

Stephanie laughs and says 'Okay it is then. Now enough with all this sad talking, we are here to celebrate after all. I have to redo my makeup but as soon as I am finishes we should head down to the bar and check that cute waiter out again'.

I shake my head while laughing and say 'Do you ever give up?'

Stephanie shouts 'No' from the bathroom as I make myself comfortable on the sofa.

Not even two minutes later, someone knocks at our room door.

Stephanie 'Charlotte open the door; don't let anyone into the bathroom I am naked'.

As I walk through the living room toward the door I say 'Way too much information you are sharing there, Steph'.

If she answered I did not hear it because I was too focused on the person that is standing in front of me.

Jo 'Hey little girl, how are you doing?', before he has a chance to take a breath I already launched myself on him and hug him, like my life depended on it.

'Someone is happy to see me', my cousin chuckles.

Charlotte 'Of course I am happy to see you', I mumble into his chest.

Stephanie who emerges from the bath chuckles too and says 'Let the poor guy breathe, Charlotte'

I release my grip on him but that does not stop me from smiling, like a little girl on Christmas.

Meanwhile Jo gives Steph a hug too and says 'Nice to see you too, girl'.

Stephanie 'Oh shut up, I just did you a favour', she winks at him.

Jo 'True. Let me just put my suitcase down really quick. The flight took me ages I need a drink, who wants to join me?'

I take my time to get a proper look at my cousin. He looks so grown up in his black smoking, with the black hair combed back neatly. But then again I expected him to be at twenty-one.

Stephanie 'I just have to change really quick, but you guys go ahead I'll join you'.

Jo opens the door for me and gestures for me to go ahead 'After you my lady'.

I grab my little Chanel bag and ask him 'I see university is turning you into a gentleman?'

Jo puts a hand over his heart and pretends as if my words my have affected him 'You are really hurting my feelings, Charlotte'.

I rolled my eyes 'As if'.

Jo links my arm with his as we stroll down the corridor and admits 'Okay maybe not my heart but my ego, which is way worse'.

Charlotte 'You'll get over it; after all you are a real gentleman now'. I missed our harmless bantering. But most of all I missed the times, where we spent entire nights talking. The last time we did that was over a year ago, back at our grandparent's

summer house in Hampshire, England. It did have some disadvantages having your favourite cousin studying law at Harvard University. And although I am proud of him for getting accepted at such a great university I sometimes wished for him to be studying not that far away. Pretty selfish, I know.

Jo 'You changed too, Charlotte. The last time I saw you you were still a little girl and now look at you. Wow'.

I roll my eyes 'The last time you saw me was on my eighteenth birthday and I am nineteen now. By the way does that mean that you stop calling me "Little girl" now?'

Jo 'You might be all grown up now but you'll always be a little girl in my eyes'.

Charlotte 'Good, cause I kind of like that nickname'.

Jo 'A whiskey for me and a coke for my date', when the waiter who has been eying me earlier hears Jo calling me his date, he turns tomato red before hurrying off, probably to get another waiter to serve us our drinks.

Charlotte 'Was this necessary?'

Jo 'Yes, I did not like the way he was staring at you'.

I shoot a glance towards the bar only to see what I already knew. The waiter passing on our order to one of his colleagues, when he caught me looking at him, he immediately looked in a different direction.

Charlotte 'You just wanted to play the card "don't mess with my cousin".'

Jo 'Maybe. But the guy has to know to stay away'. I was not about to argue with him, because of something silly as that. After all I wanted the waiter to stay away. And now I don't have to worry with him trying to make a move on me.

To change the topic, I ask 'Have your parents arrived yet?'

Jo takes a sip of his drink, which has arrived in the mean time 'Yes, they'll be down any second now'.

Felix 'Hey man, nice finally seeing you again'. The guys exchanged one of those weird boy hugs before settling back down.

Jo 'How have you been?'

Felix 'Pretty good, been doing a lot of studying and sports. Still playing tennis?'

Jo 'Yeah, you bet. But I miss skiing...' as they continue to talk about sports I take my time to look around.

The bar is getting pretty busy now. Couples, family's and business partners occupy different tables and booths. As I look around I notice various girls looking at our table. Looking at Jo and Felix. To be fair they both look very handsome in their smoking's. Both are tall and muscular. Felix has curly brown short hair and dark green eyes, which makes his face even look more striking if you ask me, while Jo's hair is a bit longer and his eyes have the same sea blue colour as mine. Plus, his defined jaw and high cheekbones add points to his attractiveness. So no wonder that they have girls swooning over them. Only problem with that is while Felix is completely in love with my not less beautiful sister, Jo has zero interest in settling down at the moment. He is still young and wants to enjoy life. The last thing on his mind is a serious relationship. He has been talking about taking me sailing this summer with him. And I definitely don't want to share my cousin with some stuck up bitch who is only after his money.

Jo 'So how are you feeling about moving to London?'

I take my time to answer his question while sipping on my second coke today 'Pretty nervous, but excited'.

Jo 'Good you should be nervous. But don't worry you are going to love your university life. Am I right man?'

Felix 'Definitely. Especially freshman year and all those parties. Oh god I got myself into all sorts of problems'.

Lisa 'In what problems did you get yourself exactly?'

My sister just entered together with Steph the room and they both look incredible. Lisa wears a tight dark blue dress from Dior and her usually straight hair wavy, while Steph has decided for a black Herve Leger dress with pumps so high that I am seriously questioning myself how the hell she will be able to walk in them.

Felix 'You look stunning', he pecks her on the cheek. Lisa 'Thanks. What problems?' Felix compliment might have been appreciated but it was not enough to make her forget what she heard before she joined us. My sister has always belonged to the jealous type of girl. I am actually curious how Felix will get himself out of this situation.

Felix starts to cough awkwardly while struggling to find the right words. Lucky for him, Jo has no problem when it comes to lying to my sister. Jo 'Actually I was telling Charlotte here about all the wild parties I used to throw in my first year of university. And Felix here asked me to share some of my stories.' You can see that my sister is debating whether she should

believe them or not, but in the end must have decided that it was a pretty reasonable explanation and planted a kiss on her boyfriend's mouth. At this Felix immediately relaxed again and we all sit down.

Lisa 'I am so happy that you could make it Jo'.

Jo 'You are kidding right? I would have never missed this day, nothing can stop me from celebrating tonight with you'.

Lisa 'Aww this is one of the reasons why you are my favourite cousin'.

Jo 'And there I thought it was because of my good looks'.

Lisa 'That might have been the second or even third reason'.

Jo 'Hey! What is it with you and your sister treating me badly today?'

Charlotte 'What are you talking about?', I ask trying to act all innocent.

Jo 'Don't act all innocent I fly all the way over here for what?'

Charlotte 'Common I was just teasing you, you know that'.

Jo 'Did not seem like it', he says pulling the puppy face look. I stand up and hug him. Shortly after we are joined by everyone else. Charlotte 'Are you feeling better, you big baby?'

Jo 'Yes, this is nice. I like it', everyone starts laughing.

Felix 'I call for another drink who's joining me?'

Steph 'I am', they left our table to walk to the bar. Which is a good decision considering that no waiter was approaching our table after Jo intimidated the poor guy.

Lucas 'I see my son got the attention of the two best looking girls in the room again, while the other guys stare in envy at him. I honestly don't know how he managed that.'

I turn around with a big smile on my face and answer 'It could have to do something with us being cousins'.

Lucas 'Ahhh you might be right there, Charlotte'

Jo 'Seriously, dad?' he asks him with a pissed expression while I run to Lucas and engulf him in a hug, I 'I missed you so much, uncle'.

Lucas chuckles while he tries to free himself 'I missed you too, little girl'. I love the way they both, Jo and Lucas, still call me that. It makes me feel protected and loved. Lucas 'I am so proud of you' he goes and tells my sister while I greet my other aunt, Ulli.

Charlotte 'It is so nice to see you again'.

Ulli 'Same. How have you been, by the way congratulations for getting accepted at the university'.

Charlotte 'Thank you. In some ways I still cannot believe it'.

Ulli 'Well you better start believing it, you are leaving on Sunday'.

Charlotte 'In less than 48 hours'. My aunt takes a sip from my freshly filled glass, I 'Hey get your on glass', I try to get it back but there is no use. Ulli is towering over me with her 20 inches high heels 'Where are your parents?'

Before I get a chance to answer her question my mom steps through the door, shortly followed by my dad 'We are here'. I must say my mom looks stunning tonight in her red Oscar de la Renta dress and her hair artful braided back. To pull the look off she is wearing diamond earring's and her engagement ring. Even though my parents have been married for over twenty years now, she still wears it. To be fair I must say the ring is one of the most beautiful pieces Harry Winston has ever created, in my opinion. While my dad looks quite handsome himself in his smoking. After a couple of more drinks, which consisted of water for the women and whiskey for the men, it is time to leave for the ceremony. Everyone drives off in different cars, because we are too many we could have never fitted into one car anyways. I am sharing a car with mom and dad, and stare out through the tinted windows to get a better look at the streets and people walking by, while my parents are both responding to some emails, yet they steal hold hands, which makes the typing more complicated than it should be in the first place. But they don't seem to be disturbed by it, which makes it even cuter in my eyes.

They don't need to talk to let each other know how much they are still in love.

And even if I am clearly not ready for dates right now, I still wish to be happily married in my future. Find a guy and be his everything. Don't judge me, a girl is allowed to dream right?

