

Title: HIM

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I'm awoken by my phone ringing. It's an *unknown number* that flashes across my screen. I hit the silent button, laying my head back on my pillow, and fall asleep.

I am sitting on the couch watching tv, while my dad is in the kitchen frying fish from a great weekend at the cabin. He comes into view as the sun is shining through the dining room window before it's time for supper.

"Dad, do you need any help with dinner?" I call out to him. He doesn't reply to me. I call out to him once again, and there is no response from him. He doesn't even turn to look at me. He's just standing there staring out from the window. Beams of light shine on him as the sun is setting. I leave the couch and walk towards him.

As I approach him and place my hand on his shoulder, I softly say, "Dad?" He vanishes, and there are dust particles where he was standing. They are floating around through the air in the beam of sunlight.

I spring awake in a panic. I'm dripping with sweat and start to cry. It is the first time I have dreamt about my dad since he passed away. I am confused as to why he will not look at me in my dream nor answer me. I swear the dream felt so real. It was like he was there staring out of the window.

I walk to the bathroom while collecting myself from that bizarre dream. The light at the top of my phone is blinking. I swipe the screen to unlock it. I see that I have a missed call from Jason and an unknown number. There are three text messages from Jason, as well as a few messages from coworkers, and Troy.

Are you still here?

Where did you go?

Are you okay

All three are from Jason. I left his party last night without finding him to say goodbye.

I reply, saying, *Yea, I'm fine, Jay. I came home from the party. Call you later.*

There is a message from my coworker/roommate Larissa. She likes to go by Ris. Her text reads, *how are you doing, girl? Thinking of you and miss you. Mwah.* A smiley face blowing a heart kiss emoji concludes the text.

Ris is great. We've become very close friends. When I started my job at Facade, we were both fresh out of college. Granted, she came from a higher-class upbringing and having studied at a prestigious college, she is nonetheless warm and very kind. We get along very well. It's the best friendship I have ever had with any female.

This isn't ironic as I've always had more male friends than female friends. The female friends I did have in High School only seemed to like hanging out with me since I was always surrounded by boys.

Ris and I live in a cute little two-bedroom apartment near downtown Milwaukee. It's about twenty or so blocks from work. I wish I could see her right now. She's so caring and compassionate when I need a shoulder to cry on.

She'd fit right in here with all the guys. She pulls off sheik to geek at the snap of a finger.

Therefore, she could pull off hot business chick to countryside hick, no problem.

She is quite wild when she is in a party mode, that's for sure. She's a tad bit on the promiscuous side. Ris and Jason would easily hit it off.

Hey, sorry I've been so quiet. It's been a bit crazy the past few days. Miss you too. Call you later, have some stuff to talk about.

I reply to her message.

The next text is from Troy, a guy I'm kind of seeing back in the city.

Goodnight, beautiful, sleep well!

Troy has messaged me numerous times since I left to come back home to attend my father's funeral. I've been short with him since I got here with one or two-word replies to his sweet little greetings such as "Good Mornings," "Have a great day!" and "Good Nights."

We met about six months ago at a Gala Night for a fundraiser that my boss puts on every year in January. Troy is an amazing guy. He's so sweet and a thorough gentleman. I've mainly only seen him in slacks, a button-up shirt, and a suit jacket. I've seen him a time or two in jeans and a t-shirt, but still with a suit jacket. He seems to be quite proper and high class.

We started seeing each other about a month ago. We're not officially dating. Everything is fresh and new now that I have finally given in. He chased me from the moment we met, but I played hard to get, very hard to get. We've only kissed once since we started seeing each other. He doesn't seem to mind that, at least to the extent that I am aware of.

I hear a car door slam outside, and I rush from the bathroom to the window across the hall. I completely forgot about last night. I had gotten wasted at Jason's and had Luke drive me home in my car. He must have called someone to pick him up. It doesn't look like Jason, though, it looks like a girl.

I hope I don't cause any drama from him staying here last night if he has a girlfriend. I need to thank him for his kind gesture last night. Judging him by his appearance alone, you wouldn't think he has one respectful bone in his body. Most good-looking tattooed men are conceited assholes, and that's just putting it lightly.

Luke is extremely good looking. I was quite drunk last night and was caught off guard by seeing him in that pull barn with my dad's vehicle from his accident. I cannot seem to stop thinking about him since I met him yesterday. I need to know a few things about him. Does he live with Jason? I didn't notice another fire number when walking to that building. However, I was also intoxicated and not paying much attention to what was going on.

My phone rings. It's Jason.

"Sup Alicat?" He says a little too chipper for eight o'clock in the morning.

Which is a little surprising since he was probably drunker than me at the party last night.

"Hey, Jay! What's up?"

"Did you get super shitty last night and drive home?" He questions.

"I got pretty drunk, but I didn't drive home," I tell him.

"Phew, that's good. My dad would've killed me if he found out that I let you drink and drive. Next time, you should just stay the night. I have a guestroom with your name on it, or you can always cuddle up to me." He laughs.

"I'll remember that!" I reply sarcastically.

"How long till you're ready?"

"What? Ready for?" I say, feeling quite puzzled.

"I will be over in ten minutes to pick you up to head to my parents for breakfast! It's the best hangover cure ever, remember!" He proclaims.

"Oh, okay! I got to go change quick," I say.

"See ya in a few," He says before hanging up.

I scramble around to brush my teeth, throw my hair up, and fix my destroyed makeup from crying last night. I throw on some jeans and a t-shirt. I hear a honk coming from outside. Shit. He's here already. I look terrible. I resemble a dog that just threw up.

I hop inside Jason's truck, and he gives me a stare.

"What?" I say to him in annoyance.

"You look fucking hot!" He grins.

I roll my eyes at him and pull my purse onto my lap.

"A purse? Since when do you lug around a purse." Jason laughs.

"Shut up! I am a girl just so you know, and we do use purses for our shit." I reply.

"I know that, but, honestly, it's weird to see you with one." He chuckles.

I look at him and flick him off before gazing out the window. It's so pretty out here, so many trees. It's so different from the city, and even the smell is different. I see birds flying around, bugs buzzing by, and wildlife roaming all over. The country is so peaceful.

"How did you get home last night anyway?" Jason asks.

I was dreading this question, but perhaps I will find out more information on Luke.

I fidget with my fingers in my lap.

"Um... Luke drove me home in my car."

I can see the anger building on Jason's face. Why is it a big deal to Jason that he gave me a ride home? It was very nice of him to do so.

"Did you sleep with him?" Jason barks.

"What? No!" I reply him back in a pissy voice. "He slept on my couch and was picked up this morning by some chick."

I can see the blood boiling in Jason. He grips tightly to his steering wheel and clenches his jaw together. He looks cute when he's angry. But damn, he's pissed. I wonder what beef he has with Luke. How could anyone not like that guy? He's hot and seems to be a gentleman!

"Stay the hell away from him Ali, I mean it," Jason says, straight-faced as he looks at me dead in the eye.

"Why? He was nice enough to bring me home while I was drunk and upset last night."

"He's not a good guy, Ali. He's a piece of shit, and to tell you the truth, he should've never come here." Jason says quite fumed.

I clearly don't know the history between these two, but I could tell something is amiss. I give him a concerned yet confused as hell look.

"He pulled up to the shop one day on his stupid ass motorcycle and never left. If it wasn't for your dad, Bridget and I would still be together." He says before looking at me like a lost but angry puppy.

"What do you mean if it wasn't for my dad?" I demand.

I need to know now. I want answers.

"Your dad took Luke under his wing. They did everything together, and your dad taught him a lot about cars. Granted Luke knew a lot already, more than most of us," Jason says.

"We hit it off pretty good at first, and I even had him move into my house. That's the one you were at last night. I was having one of my parties, and Bridget and I got in a fight because she was flirting with Luke and was all over him."

I can see Jason getting more and more worked up as he continues to tell me the story. I wasn't aware that he and Bridget were in a relationship. All he did was sleep with her a bunch of times back in High School along with a bunch of other girls. They never had anything serious since she slept with other people too. All of this comes to me as a surprise. So much has changed in these six years. Jason being in a relationship, is quite surprising and that too with a girl who slept around just like him.

"A few buddies of mine told me about Bridget disappearing from the party. I went to look for her. I ended up finding her butt ass naked in Luke's bed. I threw a punch, and we began to fight. It was a huge fight, and a lot of stuff got broken at my house. My dad and your dad came to intervene and break us apart."

After hearing the story, I cannot help but feel sorry for Jason. I know Jason, but barely know Luke. I need to hear the other side, but for now, I need to be sympathetic towards my friend.

"Oh my God, Jay. I'm so sorry," I say while I grab his hand.

That explains why Luke was sitting all alone yesterday at Mary's.

"Luke moved all of his stuff out and into the pull barn. Your dad helped him fix it up and add a living quarter on the back. I wish he would've just left town. I hate that motherfucker." Jason says angrily.

I feel awful for Jason. How could a friend do such a horrible thing to you after you welcome them into your home? Why was my dad so close to Luke? Suddenly, I have so many questions. One thing I cannot understand for the life of me is the relationship between my dad and Luke. At the same time, I keep wondering why my dad never told me about him at all. I need to find out more to that mysterious hunk of deliciousness.

Why would my dad help him? I know my dad has a kind soul. However, I know that he'd never help someone over Jason. Bridget must have been the girl who picked up Luke from my house this morning.

"Please, just stay away from him, Ali." Jason pleads.

I am quite shocked and clueless. At that point, I agree with him just so he will calm down.

"Okay," I reply, looking at him.

Jason turns up the music, and we ride the rest of the way to his parent's house in silence. I cannot get one thing out of my head. Luke must not be that bad if my dad was willing to help him. He even made him the head mechanic at his shop. Did that piss Jason off too? There could be more to this than what Jason is saying. I know my dad would never be this kind to anyone without any reason.

Just as we pull into Jason's parents, my phone rings.

"I will come in right after I take this," I say to Jason as he hops out of his truck and heads into the house.

"Hello."

"Good morning, sweetie!" My aunt says joyfully.

"Good Morning!" I mutter.

"Tomorrow, we are meeting with your daddy's team of lawyers to go over his will. We can postpone until next week if you aren't ready." She exclaims.

I run my hand across my forehead because I know I'm not ready. I don't think I will ever be ready to hear who gets whatever is left of my dad's shit. I need to get back to work, and next week will be too long to be away from my job.

"Tomorrow is fine," I reply with a sigh.

"See you Tomorrow then, sweetie. Make sure to dress in your Sunday best! Hugs and kisses!" She says, making smooching sounds before hanging up.

I look up from my phone to see Ernie and Jason on the deck. They are standing with their shirts tucked under their chins and pinching their nipples while they're sticking out their tongues. Those two dorks have been doing shit like that since I was little. Which most definitely lightened the mood.

I laugh as I hop out of Jason's truck, shaking my head.