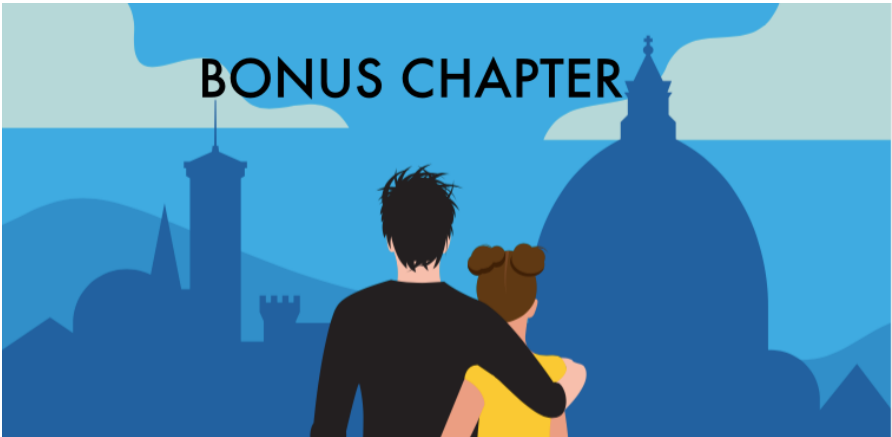




Jenna and Seth's Squeaky Edinburgh Encounter

After a four and half hours on the train from London, we finally reach Edinburgh, where Seth and I are spending a long weekend with my sister Stacey. When we're approaching the platform, I message her:

Almost there. Where should we meet you? Xx

In the station, outside Boots. I need moisturiser. See you soon xx

I almost ask her to pick up some condoms for me. When packing, I realised we were down to two, but since we're sleeping on the pullout couch in Stacey's lounge, we'll probably have to be celibate. There's

no way I can have sex with Seth and stay quiet, everything he does is moan inducing. I imagine Seth and I bouncing up and down on the pullout. Squeak. Squeak. Squeak. I let out a small grunt of amusement.

‘Everything OK?’ he asks. He’s sitting across from me at our table seat. We were lucky enough to not only score this but keep it to ourselves for the entire train journey to Edinburgh. No one seemed to want to sit next to us. My guess is because Seth’s looks are a little imposing. An older woman almost sat down, but after she cast a quick glance at Seth’s spiky hair, all-black ensemble, eyebrow piercing, and ghost-pale skin, she changed her mind. ‘He doesn’t bite, for God’s sake!’ I felt like saying. But at least we’ve been left alone.

‘Yes. All good. Just checking where we’re meeting Stacey,’ I tell him.

Seth nods and returns to the window. He’s been deep in contemplative silence for the past hour. I know he’s worn out and needs to recharge his batteries, so I decided to give him some alone time and read on my Kindle and play games on my iPhone.

He’s finally finished recording the album, so this is a well-deserved break for him. I’ve been looking forward to getting out of London too. I know it’s naughty of me, but I keep imagining Stacey’s face when she sees Seth. The mental image makes me chuckle inwardly each time. She’s going to flip. I suppose I should

have warned her. I let her think he's a conventional-looking guy. So she'll be expecting someone dressed like Gabe, rather than a Goth.

I've kept our relationship on the down low with my family. I'm not sure why. I guess I don't want anyone saying anything that will ruin our bubble of happiness. After Violet's attitude towards my relationship with Seth, I've been a bit gun-shy about telling anyone. But Stacey rang last week and I told her that I'd met someone. And that I was living with him. Of course, she went crazy.

'What! When did this all happen?'

'Uh. During the house sit in Florence.'

'What the fuck! Is he Italian?'

Then I had to explain that it was in fact the guy from the house sit in Hampstead. The one from the studio in the back garden that I was reluctant to meet. And that, now, I was living in the back garden too.

'Turned out Seth Carver was pretty nice after all. Thanks for giving me a push to introduce myself.'

'But how did he end up in Florence?'

'Well, it's a long story...'

I gave her the bare minimum, and glossed over the fact that Seth is a Goth and the lead singer of a semi-famous band. I just said he was tall with dark hair and was really nice. She'll find out soon enough. Like in ten-minutes time when we meet her outside Boots...

After exiting the train with our bags, we head in that direction. I

assume Seth is following me, but after locating Stacey and giving her a hug, I'm subjected to an enquiring look. 'Did Seth not come?'

'What? Of course, he did, he's right behind...'

I scan the concourse. Seth is nowhere to be seen. Has he run away?

I laugh nervously. 'He was there. He must've been waylaid or gone to the loo.'

'Uh huh.'

Great, now Stacey's going to think I've made him up!

Then I see his dark spiky hair bobbing in the distance, moving towards us, and I relax.

'There he is.' I point him out to Stacey.

More of Seth comes into view, then all of him, and Stacey stiffens beside me.

'Seriously?' she murmurs. '*You're* going out with *him*?'

'Yup,' I say proudly. I sneak a look at her. Her expression is one of pure shock and her cheeks are flushed pink. I feel a bit mean for not giving her due warning about how hot he is.

'Sorry, sorry,' says Seth when he reaches us. 'I got held up.' He gives me a wry look. Uh oh. I know what happened.

'Autographs?' I ask with an eye roll.

'Yeah. It was a group, they cornered me. I couldn't say no.'

'Autographs?' echoes Stacey, staring at him.

'Seth, this is my sister Stacey,' I say quickly, not really wanting to

get into what he does for a living right here and now.

‘Hi, nice to meet you. Jenna’s told me a lot about you. All good, of course,’ says Seth politely. He holds out his hand to Stacey and she shakes it limply.

‘Um, hi. Are you famous?’ She sounds bewildered.

Seth smiles and ducks his head. ‘Not really. It just seems to be happening a bit more at the moment.’

I squeeze his arm and tsk teasingly. ‘So modest! But we should get going before more Goth groupies descend.’

Stacey shakes herself as if she’s coming out of a trance. ‘Yes, um, we need to catch the bus on Princes Street. To my flat.’

When we’re going up the escalator towards the entrance, she keeps tugging sharply on the sleeve of my jacket trying to get me to look at her. But Seth is right in front of me and I don’t want to risk him seeing she’s having a meltdown.

I’m now massively regretting not forewarning her. I expected a reaction but not to this extent. I guess I’ve become used to Seth’s attractiveness since I see him all the time. I forgot he tends to make women froth at the mouth. Hopefully, she can get a handle on herself. Otherwise, this weekend is going to be slightly awkward, especially since the three of us are going to be cooped up together in her tiny flat.

When we reach Fountainbridge, her second-floor flat is one street over from the bus stop, in a beige stone apartment block. ‘It’s a little

distance from the city centre but still walkable,' she tells us as we troop up the stairs. She's been living here for the past year since she split up with Simon, her ex-husband, and they sold their apartment in Trinity. This flat was all she could afford rent-wise. I have been here before, so I know it's going to be a tight squeeze, especially since Seth is over six feet tall.

'So this is where you'll be sleeping,' Stacey says, turning on the lounge light. All three of us contemplate the room. There is a two-seater couch that folds out into a bed, a twenty-six-inch TV, and a small armchair. Along with our wheelies, there's barely space to swing a cat.

'It's not the Hilton, but it's free,' Stacey adds a touch defensively since neither Seth nor I immediately respond.

'I know,' I say quickly. 'And it's just for a couple of nights, it'll be fine. Thank you for having us.' I'm half hoping she'll offer us her queen bed and sleep out here in the lounge, but she doesn't. I can't really blame her.

'You're lucky it's available. I've had my friend Aster, staying with me for a while.'

'Oh?'

Stacey rolls her eyes. 'A lot of drama. It's a long story.' I've heard Stacey mention Aster before, so I'm interested in hearing what went on, but now's not the time. Seth looks like he needs food.

'What shall we do for dinner?' I ask.

‘I’ll pop out and grab some takeaway. Is Chinese OK?’

We both nod.

Stacey leaves to get the food, and I make a mental note to put a twenty on her bedroom dresser. She won’t accept it if I give it to her. I’m still paying her back the five hundred pounds she lent me for Florence. But thanks to the new interior decorating job I’ve got lined up with India, I should soon be rolling in it. I’m also going to suggest paying rent to India and Drew. I hate feeling like I’m scabbing off them, even if they are mega-rich.

‘Let’s make the bed,’ I say to Seth.

He grins. ‘Interested in a quickie?’

‘No! Well, maybe we have got time for a cuddle before she gets back.’ Admittedly, I am having Seth withdrawal symptoms after five hours on the train and not being able to do more than rub knees with him under the table.

I locate some sheets and a duvet from a hallway cupboard and pass them to him. ‘I’ll just use the loo...’

‘Oh, so *I’m* the one making the bed,’ he says, folding his arms and giving me a mock frown. I smile angelically and blow him a kiss. ‘You’re so good with your hands. Besides, I’m busting.’

Hopefully, he’ll have it done by the time I get out. I hate making beds.

I’m sitting on the loo when I get a message from Stacey who’s waiting for the takeaway order: *What’s the deal with Seth xx?*

I type rapidly, grinning. Hah! I *knew* she'd message:

He's the lead singer of a Goth band, Sublime Misery. They've put out an EP. Look it up on Spotify. It's popular with the morbid demographic xx

Wow. I will. He's lovely, btw. Have you told mum and dad? xx

I grimace: *Not yet. xx*

I'm contemplating how that would go when a small movement by the door catches my eye. I watch in horror as a tiny brown mouse squeezes itself through the gap under the door and scampers into the bathroom. It scuttles behind the toilet and I let out an almighty screech. Hastily pulling up my knickers, I flush and race out to the lounge. Seth has been lying on the freshly made-up bed waiting for me, but now sits bolt-upright.

'Why are you screaming?'

'Mouse, mouse, mouse!' I squawk, hopping from one foot to another in case it suddenly appears and runs up my leg.

'How big?'

I hold up my thumb and forefinger a couple of inches apart.

Seth guffaws. 'It's tiny. Nothing to worry about.'

'It's tiny but it's fast!'

Seth holds out his hand. 'Come here. I'll protect you.'

Gingerly, I lie down next to him on the lumpy bed and snuggle into his arms. He kisses me and I try to forget about Mr Mouse. It works. But now, I'm turned on.

'Do you think we can get away with doing it tonight if we don't move much?' I ask breathlessly. Seth undulates his hips to test out the springs of the mattress. There's a faint squeaking noise.

'We can damn well try,' he says. God, I love him. I want him. I can't lie next to him and *not* have sex with him. It will be like the lyrics of his song *Tortuous Love*: "I suffer / In torment / I want you / In all the wrong places".

Seth leans in to kiss me again, but I notice that even though he's stopped moving his hips, the couch is still squeaking. Weird.

Slowly, I turn my head and see Mr Mouse in the doorway, sitting on his hind legs, paws in the air, sniffing. He lets out a squeak and I squeal loudly.

'Jesus, my ear!' groans Seth.

'There it is! There it is!' I exclaim excitedly. 'Oh no, now it's in the lounge!'

The mouse, frightened by the commotion I'm making, has sped off around the skirting board and disappeared behind the TV.

'Just ignore it,' says Seth calmly. 'It won't bother us.'

'I'm not having sex with you with a mouse in here!' I state.

That seems to change his mind about dealing with the mouse. He

launches himself off the bed and peers behind the TV. 'I can't see it. Maybe go and get a bit of cheese or something, so I can lure it out?'

Dutifully, I head to the kitchen, glad that Seth is now taking the mouse situation seriously. Either that or he really wants to have sex tonight. Hmmm.

I spy a broom leaning against the wall. Perfect. Forget the cheese. Seth can deal to it with the broom. Stacey will be pleased we're doing her a favour, ridding her flat of pesky mice.

I go back into the lounge and hand him the broom.

'What's this for?'

'Sending it to mouse heaven,' I say flatly.

Seth's face blanches. 'I can't. I'm an animal lover.'

'Mice are dirty and carry diseases. You don't want to catch bubonic plague, do you?'

He sighs and takes the broom, 'Fine. You'll have to get it out from behind the TV though.

I pull the TV stand back from the wall and move a few cables. The mouse darts out and freezes, nose twitching, when it sees us. It's in the perfect position for Seth to pound it into oblivion. So why is he hesitating?

'Kill it! Kill it!' I yell at him, jumping up on the chair. 'It's vermin!'

Seth raises the broom above his head and the mouse quivers. At that moment, Stacey comes bursting into the lounge, lugging white

plastic bags full of several containers of Chinese.

‘What’s with all the racket? I could hear you from the stairwell!’

The mouse sees the opportunity to save its life, shoots between her legs and flees into the hallway.

I point at it open-mouthed.

‘Oh yeah,’ Stacey says ‘Sorry, I should’ve mentioned. I have a pet mouse, Tickles. I let him run around the flat. Cute, huh? I got him last weekend.’ Then she sees Seth holding the broom above his head. ‘What are you doing? Sweeping the ceiling?’

Seth lowers it. ‘Ah, something like that. I’m allergic to cobwebs,’ he says, giving a small cough.

Stacey raises her eyebrows at me as if to say *That’s a bit weird* and I shrug to indicate *He’s a Goth, he has strange habits*.

‘Well, we can have dinner once you’ve finished sweeping,’ she says, heading to the kitchen.

Phew. I’m glad we didn’t kill her pet mouse, but now I’m going to be on tenterhooks all night waiting for Tickles to make another appearance in the lounge. Seth grins at me and wiggles his nose, whispering in my ear as he goes past, ‘Squeak. Squeak. Squeak.’

I’m glad at least he finds it funny!

Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed this bonus chapter! 🐭

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The Holly Project

Holly, the Project Manager, lives in the Old Town with her dog Crumpet. A bit of a loner who hates the festive season, Holly reluctantly attends her client's Christmas party. However, after a drunken TikTok of her antics goes viral, Holly escapes Edinburgh with Crumpet in tow heading for the Highlands.

After her train is cancelled, she bumps into Bailey, the chef she met at the party, who's full of festive cheer, and reluctantly agrees to spend the night at his family home – only to discover it's Christmas on steroids. Even worse, everyone assumes she's Bailey's girlfriend and he doesn't correct them.

Fake dating & Christmas romance



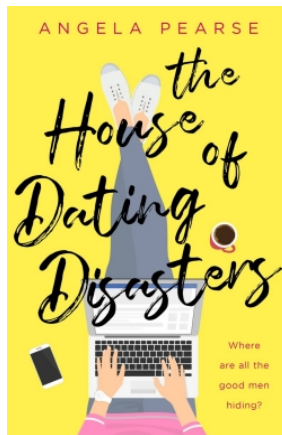
[AMAZON](#)

The House of Dating Disasters

Aster, the freelance editor, lives in Frederick Street. She's sick of online dating and manages to find a guy she likes offline. But he also happens to be her flatmate, Dee's, new man, physiotherapist TJ McKelvie.

Love triangle trouble ensues when the three of them head down to London for a long weekend. As you can imagine, things get a little testy between Aster and Dee...

Enemies to lovers & forbidden love



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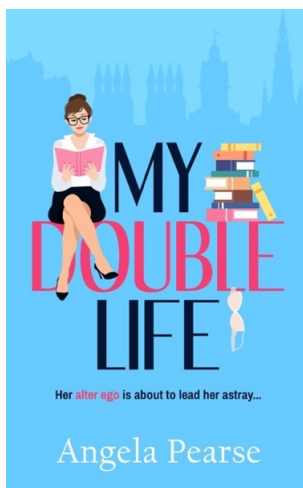
My Double Life

Emma, the librarian, lives in Leven Terrace. She needs some extra cash as her rent has gone up and since she likes to try new things, she takes on a side-gig as a life model. As you do.

However, she keeps it quiet because her boyfriend Callum is a conservative realtor and he'll flip his lid if he finds out. The other part of her plan is to get in a flatmate for her spare room, but the only person she likes amongst the interviewees is Nathan Ellington.

Unfortunately (or fortunately if you're Emma) he's a hot Kiwi construction worker. How do you think Callum will feel about that?

Love triangle & flatmate romance

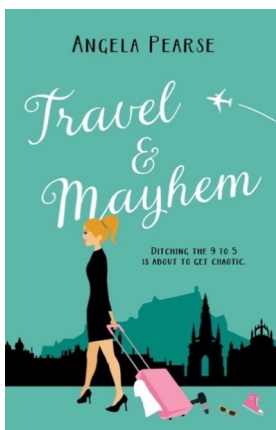


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Travel & Mayhem

Jane, the frustrated receptionist, lives in Clerk Street. She's desperate to quit her boring receptionist job at a local accountancy firm, take off overseas and be a freelance travel writer. But she's clueless about how to make it happen. At the office, she meets James McAvoy, an emotionally unavailable, but exceedingly hot, graphic designer, who needs help with his taxes. He's a mine of information about freelancing and suggests they travel together to Europe for three months (just as friends) so he can get his head together and Jane can do her travel writing. But the best laid plans are doomed to fail, as Jane soon finds out, and things get even more awkward since she's crushing hard on James.

Slow burn romance & forced proximity



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