

“Don’t.” Her words were a whisper, but still loud in the back of the limo.

“Don’t, what?”

Finally she looked at him, her deep brown eyes molten in the darkness. “Don’t be my brother’s best friend tonight. Don’t be my cheerleader. Just...” Her hand trembled against his on the cool leather seat. “I’m not America’s favorite sixteen-year-old any longer. I don’t need to pretend I’m still sixteen, and the magazines are already burning me at Trey’s sacrificial altar, so why not send that old image up in flames all the way?”

She leaned across the seat, brushed her sweet lips across his cheek, and Nate nearly lost it. He was holding on by a thread. This was Lily.

The same girl he’d grown up with. The Lily who’d brought him home after school because she noticed he hadn’t eaten lunch for three days. The Lily who cheered for him at the high school talent show. The Lily who couldn’t really want him, because if she did...he would ruin her.

Nate groaned when her lips brushed against his. A bit of her hair had come loose from the sleek updo and brushed against his neck, fanning that trickle of flame even hotter.

Her hand traced the line of his jaw, and Nate’s resistance burned to the ground. He pushed her back into the corner and dug his hands into her hair. “You don’t know what you’re asking for.”

She panted. “I know exactly what I want, Nate Lansford, and what I want is you.”

Nate lowered his lips to hers, tasting the sweetness of her lips for the first time. Her tongue tangled with his, pushing him further, asking him for more. And Nate gave it.

When Lily arched her back, Nate reached for her breast, feeling her nipple pucker beneath the fine silk of her dress. She moaned, a tiny sound, but it was enough to pull him back into the present.

What was he doing? This was Lily. The girl who made him want to be more than the kid from the wrong side of Malibu’s tracks. His friend.

He couldn’t mess that up.

Nate pushed away from her, fisting his hands in his hair as he tried to put a

few more inches between them. The back of the limo was too tight. He was too close to Lily. He needed air. Space.

Distance.

“I’m sorry.” His voice was rough. “That shouldn’t have happened.”

(Book 1 – Light My Fire Excerpt)