

Platinum by Cayleigh Pine

Characters: BETHANY - sixteen, rebellious, charming, has dysfunctional family.
AVA - sixteen, dramatic, privileged, innocent, has crush on BETHANY.
MOTHER - Ava's mother, caring, overprotective.

Time: Present.

Place: A New York apartment in a wealthy neighborhood.

(Lights come up on AVA as she is combing her hair at her vanity mirror. She's wearing pajamas and still has stage makeup on from her show. There is a tap on her window pane and she jumps in fright. BETHANY is on the fire escape and opens the window. She is barely seen under the hood of her jacket.)

AVA: *(Annoyed.)* What are you doing here?

BETHANY: *(Sheepishly.)* Can I sleep over?

AVA: *(Beat.)* Just get in here.

(AVA pulls BETHANY inside her room. BETHANY falls in, AVA going down with her, and both lie against the wall.)

AVA: *(Stands and crosses arms.)* Are you gonna tell me why you're here?

BETHANY: *(Noncommittally.)* Had a fight with my parents. The usual. I took the subway here to just get away from everything and thought I'd drop by. Saw the light was on in your room.

(BETHANY stands and plops onto AVA's bed. AVA follows and hovers over BETHANY.)

AVA: And when did I ever agree to this?

BETHANY: You didn't. But it's not like you could kick me out now. Or that you'd want to.

AVA: You're right. I'm too good to you. In fact, I'm so good, that maybe my *best friend* could come see my play-oh wait, you missed it.

BETHANY: Shit, Ava, was that tonight? I'm so, so sorry, I just had so much going on-

AVA: *(Puts hand up to stop BETHANY.)* Save it. There'll be more performances.

BETHANY: I'll be there. Promise.

(BETHANY sits up and holds out her pinky. AVA intertwines their fingers. Both girls stare at their hands for a moment before breaking away awkwardly.)

AVA: Um, what's with the ratty hoodie? *(Gestures towards BETHANY's clothes.)*

BETHANY: What? Oh. *(Uncaring.)* Mickey lent it to me. Before we broke up.

AVA: *(Pretending to not care.)* You've never worn his stuff before.

BETHANY: Yeah, well. *(Shrugs.)*

AVA: *(Glares at hoodie.)* You can take that off. You look kind of ridiculous in yellow.

BETHANY: *(Gasps in fake offense.)* How dare you! You of all people, to be criticizing my clothing? Remember your stupid, preppy blazers and turtlenecks?

AVA: *(Embarrassedly dismisses this.)* Okay, that was middle school, I thought we were forgetting about that.

BETHANY: Yeah, no. That's implanted in my brain, thanks ever so much.

(There's a pause in conversation. AVA suddenly rips off BETHANY's hood.)

BETHANY: *(Embarrassed.)* Ava-

AVA: *(Gawking at BETHANY's hair.)* You. You're...orange?

BETHANY: *(Defensively.)* You hate it.

AVA: *(Placatingly.)* No, no, I don't hate it! I swear! *(Sits on bed next to BETHANY.)*

BETHANY: *(Mournfully.)* It was supposed to be blonde. Platinum blonde, the bottle said. I got the damn dye from Julie Price; she's a senior. I thought it'd be fine since it seemed like such a simple thing to do on yourself. I guess the color didn't turn blonde 'cause my hair's too dark. I should've known Julie wasn't gonna warn me about how hard the process is, how would she even know. I mean, look at her shitty ombré! Whoever told her she could do hair, I'll never know.

AVA: *(Calculating)* Platinum blonde? Were you... *(Trails off and looks away.)*

BETHANY: *(Suspicious.)* What?

AVA: *(Runs hand through hair, exasperated.)* Nothing.

BETHANY: (*Insistent.*) No, what?

AVA: (*Sighs.*) I just find it strange how Mickey, your *ex boyfriend*, dyed his hair blonde recently as a dare from his dumb friends, and now today, you've all of a sudden decided to go blonde, too.

BETHANY: (*Surprised.*) Oh. Um, that's...a coincidence?

(*AVA gives BETHANY a disbelieving look.*)

BETHANY: (*Amusedly*) Okay, look, I know it seems weird and stalker-ish when you put it like that, but I *swear*, I didn't dye my hair to match his because I have hidden feelings left for him. (*Smirking.*) Why do you even care so much?

AVA: (*Stiffens.*) No reason. I just...I don't get why you date such horrible guys.

BETHANY: (*Slightly offended.*) Um, none of the guys I've dated were horrible?

AVA: (*Raises an eyebrow at BETHANY, knowingly.*) The one that poured his gatorade on you after you said you hated football?

BETHANY: (*Shrugs.*) Understandable, seeing as he was the captain of his team and they had just won the game.

AVA: The one that cut you with his braces when he kissed you?

BETHANY: (*Rubs neck sheepishly.*) He's probably gotten better since they're off now.

AVA: The one that asked you at Erik Lee's party if he could just, (*Air quotations.*) 'Stick it in for five seconds'-

BETHANY: (*Embarrassed.*) Okay! Okay, that one was gross. But that doesn't even matter anymore, all those relationships were just learning experiences, you know? You gotta go through some people before college.

AVA: (*Makes a disgusted face.*) I don't want to just 'go through some people'. I want a real relationship. With someone who isn't...cheap.

BETHANY: (*Beat.*) Your naivety is nauseating.

AVA: (*Teasingly.*) Yeah, okay, Oompa Loompa. (*Tugs at a strand of BETHANY's hair.*)

BETHANY: Really? You're really gonna go there? (*Jokingly.*) And I thought we were friends.

(AVA slowly lets go of BETHANY's hair, disappointed, and gets off her bed, turns around, and mindlessly adjusts her pajamas. BETHANY realizes she said something wrong.)

BETHANY: *(Unsure.)* Um-

AVA: *(Turns quickly to face BETHANY.)* What's it like? Being with all those guys?

BETHANY: *(Caught off guard.)* Oh, hah, I don't know. *(Disgusted.)* Wet?

AVA: *(Exasperated.)* Is that really the best you can do?

BETHANY: *(Hands up, placating.)* Okay, okay. Well, usually when I get a guy, it's like a sense of accomplishment. Like, 'wow, I scored this one'. And then when it all goes down, it's just kinda...gross. And there's not much there. Connection-wise, I mean. It's pretty disgusting, honestly. Your prude ass would *not* enjoy it.

AVA: *(Offended.)* What do you mean, *prude*?

BETHANY: *(Raises eyebrow.)* I mean, Miss 'Never-Had-a-Boyfriend', you wouldn't want some guy slobbering all over you.

(AVA stares at BETHANY for a beat. Then, she sits back down next to her friend.)

AVA: *(Softly.)* Is there really no connection at all? You feel nothing? *(Beat.)* Nothing with Mickey?

(The girls stare at each other for an intense moment.)

BETHANY: *(Hushed.)* Yeah. Yeah, I felt nothing with Mickey. *(Clears throat)* That's why I broke up with him. I breakup with all my guys.

AVA: *(Beat.)* At school, people talk. About you and the guys you've dated. That you dump them all, yet end up being friends with them after. And how you're never *real* with them. I just don't get that.

BETHANY: *(Fidgets.)* It's because it doesn't mean anything to them. They don't care about me and vice versa. It's a mutual thing to just hook up for fun. Then once we do, they wanna be my friend for giving them that experience. That's just how it works.

AVA: *(Stares.)* I've always been your friend.

BETHANY: *(Gives a small smile.)* I know. You're my best friend. But you don't need my affection to be that.

AVA: (*Blinks at BETHANY, then awkwardly shifts on the bed.*) Right. But do you prefer things to go that way? With guys?

BETHANY: (*Grins broadly at AVA.*) Honestly, Ava? I have a feeling I'm gonna be over boys for a *very* long time.

AVA: (*Beat.*) I wonder why the Oompa Loompas are orange. Are they that color in the book? Or just the movie-

BETHANY: (*Interrupts, offended*) Do you really hate the color?

AVA: (*Grins softly.*) No. No, I don't. It kinda suits you, oddly enough.

BETHANY: (*Shocked.*) Orange? *Orange* suits me?

AVA: (*Laughs.*) Yeah. (*Beat.*) So, what was the fight about?

BETHANY: (*Distracted by looking at AVA.*) What fight?

AVA: You know, with your parents?

BETHANY: Oh, *that* fight.

AVA: (*Sarcastically.*) Yes. Care to explain?

BETHANY: (*Uncomfortably looks away.*) Well, my hair made them mad is all. So they kicked me out.

AVA: (*Upset.*) What? Your parents kicked you out 'cause of your *hair*? Isn't that a little extreme?

BETHANY: I mean, I'm not complaining. Now I can just hang with you and it'll be chill.

AVA: (*Mad.*) No. No, nothing's 'chill', Beth. You can't just kick a kid out for *dying their hair*, that's- (*Beat.*) Should I ask my mom to call them, to talk to them?

BETHANY: (*Insistent.*) No, please, don't. I already got you involved enough by coming over. Besides, I can fight my own battles.

AVA: (*Extremely upset.*) Sometimes, I really don't think you can. You act like you're independent, but you know what? You're just as fake as your dyed hair. You act like you wanna be with all these guys, but really, you just do it for your ego. You piss off your parents and pretend to not care about their approval when, guess what, you do. And you say you'll come see my first leading role but you don't even show up opening night- (*Breaks off into a cry.*)

(BETHANY pulls AVA into a hug.)

BETHANY: *(Heartbroken.)* You're right.

AVA: *(Pulls away to look at BETHANY.)* What?

BETHANY: You're right. I'm a total fraud. I hurt everyone around me because I *do* want their approval, and I *do* hurt those boys so that I can feel better about myself, especially when I can get them to be my friends afterwards. And I hurt you because...because-
(Cuts herself off.)

AVA: Why did you dye your hair?

BETHANY: *(Croaks.)* Why?

AVA: *(Slower than before.)* Why did you dye your hair?

BETHANY: *(Beat.)* You have blonde hair.

(AVA freezes, staring at BETHANY in shock, finally understanding.)

BETHANY: *(Sighs.)* You have the most beautiful, platinum hair. I remember meeting you in middle school. This girl sat in front of me in English and I wanted so badly to just...cut off all that hair I was *forced* to stare at everyday, and I didn't know why. It was like I wanted to have it for myself, like I was jealous. But I also wanted to hold onto the strands forever. Just to keep with me. *(Beat.)* But I tapped you on the shoulder and asked to borrow a pencil instead.

BETHANY: *(Grabs AVA's hand.)* My parents didn't kick me out of the house because of my terrible dye job, okay? They kicked me out because when they asked why the hell I did it, I said it was because I knew I could never have the blonde girl, so I might as well be the blonde girl. *(Lets go of AVA's hand.)* So there. Are you happy, now?

(AVA pulls BETHANY in for a brief kiss and then pulls back immediately.)

BETHANY: *(Shocked.)* Why did you do that?

AVA: Did you feel a connection?

BETHANY: *(Beat.)* I've always felt a connection.

AVA: *(Smiles, then becomes serious.)* Not with Mickey?

BETHANY: *(Laughs and rolls eyes.)* No, not with bottle-blonde Mickey, okay?

AVA: *(Grins.)* Okay.

(A knock on AVA's door has the girls jump and break their moment.)

MOTHER: Ava? Are you still up?

AVA: *(Nervously.)* Um, yeah, sorry, Mom. I guess I'm still just excited from opening night.

MOTHER: What was all the talking, then?

AVA: *(Dismissive.)* Just practicing lines out loud! You can go back to sleep, I'm fine!

(MOTHER leaves.)

BETHANY: *(Breathes out her nerves.)* Well, that was close.

AVA: I'm going to have to tell her at some point. Especially if this is a recurring thing.

BETHANY: What, us dating?

AVA: *(Wide-eyed.)* What?

BETHANY: *(Embarrassed.)* What? *(Awkwardly laughs.)* Oh, you meant me sleeping over. Yeah, we can deal with that and my parents tomorrow.

(BETHANY goes under the covers of AVA's bed, pulling the sheet over her face to hide her embarrassment. AVA climbs in next to her, grinning in amusement at her covered form.)

AVA: *(Softly.)* You know, I always wondered what it'd be like to be a brunette. Like you.

(Black out.)