

# The Finer Points of Becoming Machine

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## CHAPTER 1

# 'Can you feel, now?'

'Call 911. I did something really stupid,' are the last words I remember saying clearly. Whatever pills I had swallowed had begun to make me loopy, or maybe it was the bottle of Puerto Rican rum I had washed it down with, or hell, maybe it was from the blood loss as my arms streamed ribbons of ruby red. Either way though, the night takes on a nightmarish quality that leaves all but the major details hazy to me.

The day had started out normal enough. I woke up, and sighed in exhaustion at still breathing. I had gotten dressed in my usual outfit, black combat boots, black pants,

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black shirt, black sweater, heavy eyeliner. The vacant look in my eyes comes naturally now; I don't have to put that on anymore. I am sixteen years old. I am that weird kid in your class you whisper about and make fun of because she dresses in black and the few friends that she does have also dress in black and listen to depressing music while smoking cigarettes in the bathroom at lunch time.

My name is Emma, but that isn't important. This could be your story, the kid down the street's story, and in a way I wish it was; but it's not. It's mine, and mine alone to tell.

It was a fairly non-eventful day. Get on bus. Go to school. Ditch most of my classes. Smoke cigarettes. Get on bus, go back home. December 16<sup>th</sup>. The only reason I remember the day is because this is the day that shit hit the fan and I was forced to start dealing with all the crap in my head – or spend more time in a padded room than anyone should ever have to.

I had an older boyfriend named Donnie. He was a 21-year-old musician with bleached blond hair and beautiful features and looked *just* like the lead singer of my favorite band, which is probably the entire reason I loved him in the first place.

Anyways, school ends and he doesn't meet me like he was supposed to. A phone call a few hours later manages to tear my heart in two. 'You've got too many problems Emma. I'm sorry, I think we shouldn't be together any more.'

Looking back, it wasn't so much him that broke me. It was the fact that I poured what was left of my love and humanity into him and he, like everyone else in my life, hurt me. When I called my mom for condolence, she simply said, 'I'm sorry you're hurting,' but her voice told me the exact opposite. She didn't care either. Something bad and dark inside me clicks.

You see, I am the product of an abusive home, where violence, guilt and lies are a way of life. I grew up watching my mother

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get beaten black and blue, and eventually that happened to me as well. But I'll get to that a little later.

Anyways, after years of stuffing it in, hiding it, drowning myself in booze and drugs and sex in the vain attempt to forget the past, I had finally reached a breaking point. I was going to kill myself.

I put my favourite song on repeat, grabbed a butcher knife, emptied the medicine cabinet and crawled into the bathtub with a bottle of rum. 'One way or another, this is going to end,' I had told myself. I had scrawled the requisite suicide note but I couldn't think of anything to say, so all I said was that I was sorry.

I steel myself for this. Take a deep breath. Go. Slice ruby lines into porcelain skin. Swallow this bottle of pills. Chase it with rum. Repeat until finished. I don't know what made me get out of the tub and tell my grandma and little sister to call 911. But I did. And everything gets hazy after that.

Flashing lights and sirens. Emergency medical team working on me. And I was laughing, can you imagine? Laughing at the whole situation. It wasn't anywhere *near* funny, but somehow, it was all I could do.

Fade out.

Fade in to an ambulance and being strapped to a stretcher. I can feel my mascara running down my face. I think I am afraid, but I'm not entirely sure I can feel any more. My body is bones and skin and blood right now. I am wet and cold. I try to hold on to this paramedic's clothing, to feel something so I know that I am still here.

Fade out.

Fade into intravenous lines and tubes being pushed down my throat, and that's when I black out, hoping oblivion has finally agreed to take me.

I wake up and have no goddamned clue where I am. The lights are too bright, the

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walls were obviously once painted white, but time and dirt have turned them dingy and sallow looking. I try to sit up and realise that I am strapped to a stretcher. A slow moan comes out of my throat when it dawns on me that I am not dreaming. Things start to flash back to me, the phone call with Donnie and then my mother, the pills, the knife, the bath, the ambulance ride.

I notice a fat, middle-aged man dressed in a black uniform. He's not paying attention to me, though it's my guess that he's supposed to. I twist my arms, even though the leather straps dig into my cuts and reopen them, until I get a hand free. I am beyond feeling pain now. I undo the buckles quietly, slowly. He's chattering away with some pretty female nurse who couldn't care less about him but is trying not to be rude and tell him straight out to piss off.

I am in the emergency room of a hospital and look for signs to the waiting room. My feet hit the floor, and Jesus, could it have *been* any colder in there? It's the dead of winter and it doesn't feel like



the heat is on in this dirty, overcrowded hospital building.

I make my way to the entrance of the waiting room. I look through the bulletproof glass in the door and see my mother. I try to open it, but the door is locked. She is crying and hunched over, my stepfather is holding her as her body is wracked with sobs. I put my bloody and bandaged hand on the glass. She looks up and sees me and runs to the glass, slipping from my stepfather's embrace. About this time I hear the fat security guard asking people 'Where is that girl who was just in this bed?' and I figure I have about five seconds when I hear the footsteps coming behind me. I do not look behind me, I know what is coming and I just want to be near my mom, even if she hates me after what I've done tonight. I start to cry when she starts to cry and she puts her hand to the glass too.

She says one word in the form of a question, and if I could have felt anything at that moment, it would have broken my heart. 'Why?' I cannot hear her, maybe I

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didn't want to or maybe it was the bulletproof glass and the locked door, and all I can say is that I'm sorry before security guards drag me away.

I am held down by a combination of nurses and security guards and strapped down to this bed again, in this alien room, cold and praying that this is all some horrible nightmare, just like the rest of my life has been.

A nurse comes and sticks a needle hard into my damaged arms. I remember thinking to myself 'She didn't have to be so damned rough. I mean shit, obviously I am *not* having a good day...', but the thought disappears. I am fading into black, and the last thought in my head before the dark claims me are the words 'Can you feel, now?'