

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

I Heart Paris

Written by Lindsey Kelk

Published by Harper,
an imprint of HarperCollins

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

CHAPTER ONE

New York hadn't even attempted to cool down in the three days that I'd been away. When my friend Erin had suggested we get away to her beach house for a long weekend, I almost threw myself out of her eighteenth-storey office window to get there quicker. But three days beside the seaside only made it harder to be back in the sticky city. I'd only walked two blocks to the subway and my heel had slipped into the melting, sludgy tarmac between the paving slabs three times already. Ick. It almost made me long for a wet summer Saturday in Wimbledon. Almost.

In this cloying heat, the only way I could cope was to wear as little clothing as possible whenever I had to be outside, and spend as much time worshipping at the altar of the air-conditioning unit as humanly possible. Today's survival ensemble was pretty much nothing more than a really long pale pink vest from American Apparel and a bangle. The bangle was to show I had actually put some thought into getting dressed and hadn't just wandered out in my underwear. Back in London, I would never, ever have left the house in something so skimpy, but it was just too

hot to worry about bingo wings. When I left the house, I didn't feel as if I'd forgotten to get dressed. Right now, I was one towelling headband away from the crazy lady that liked to sit outside the twenty-four-hour deli opposite my apartment in her dressing gown and bra.

Once I was safely on the air-conditioned train, I flailed around elegant as ever, hanging from the pole in the centre of the carriage and swapped my shoes for the ever-present flip-flops in my Marc Jacobs satchel. I thought back to the precious moment when the bag had come into my life. I had treasured it more than anything else I'd ever owned, I never put it on the floor, always checked that pens had their lids on, lip glosses weren't leaking and there was no way on God's green earth, I'd have ever put a pair of dirty street shoes in it. Rummaging around for my left flip-flop, I wanted to shed a little tear for the unravelled stitching and the used subway cards, crumpled napkins and dozens of half empty packs of chewing gum that now littered the lining. Classy.

Changing from the Six train onto the L at Union Square, I felt myself begin to smile. The same nervous flutter started to pick up in the pit of my stomach that always attacked me when I stepped onto the train towards Brooklyn. So, maybe there was an upside to being back in the city. Alex. Of course, I wouldn't have the L train flutters nearly as often if I would just move in with him, like he kept asking. According to my friends, it was ridiculous that I was keeping our relationship 'bi-coastal'. I'd spent an awful lot of the weekend trying to explain to uber-Manhattanite Erin, who didn't even venture below 14th street unless she positively had to, that Murray Hill to Williamsburg wasn't exactly bi-coastal. And besides, I just wasn't sure

I was ready to take that step just yet. Yes, I loved Alex, yes, I wanted to spend time with him but did that mean I should shack up with him right away? No.

After I'd shuffled off the train and hauled myself up the stairs to the street, I paused for a moment to let my eyes readjust to the sunlight. As always, Alex was propped up against the corner of Bedford and North 7th, bobbing his head to whatever was coming out of his iPod, his thick black hair pushed back off his face, messed up at the back, as though he'd just got up. Which, given that it was only one in the afternoon, I guessed he probably had. Sticky August weather or not, Alex's wardrobe never changed. Skinny black jeans clung to his legs, his T-shirt was tight to his chest and he was sipping from a steaming cup of coffee.

I shook my head. How could he drink anything hot on a day like this? Just looking at the cup made me break out in a sweat. Just looking at Alex made the flutter in my stomach graduate into a full-body shiver. I ran my ring fingers under each eye, clearing any potential mascara smudges – not even the most waterproof of mascaras could survive ninety-five degrees of New York City heat – and pulled my sunglasses out of my handbag before I started over.

'Hey.' Alex dropped his coffee in the bin beside him and leaned his head down to mine for a kiss. 'How was Erin's?'

'Amazing,' I replied, reaching back up for another slightly longer kiss that made me catch my breath. 'You should come with us next time. Provincetown is beautiful.'

'I'm not really beach people,' he said, catching my hand in his and pulling me down the street. 'And from the look of those shoulders, neither are you.'

‘Oh, I know.’ I shrugged the strap of my bag back on to the narrow strap of my dress, revealing my attractive lobster red skin. ‘I should just stay inside until September.’

‘Hmm.’ Alex squeezed my hand. ‘That’s not going to play exactly into my plans, but I’m not entirely against the idea.’

There was that shiver again.

‘And what plans are these?’ I asked as we walked up the block to Alex’s apartment. His place was only five minutes from the subway, but in this heat, they were five minutes too many.

‘So the band has been asked to play a festival,’ he said, forcing his hand into the skin-tight pocket of his jeans, feeling around for a key that wasn’t there.

‘Really? That’s great,’ I dipped my hand into the tiny pocket inside my bag and produced my key to Alex’s flat as we reached the door. He took it from me with a heart-stopping grin. It was sickening how much I fancied him. It was like, I’d see him every day and after a while I stopped seeing him. And then, out of nowhere, I’d just get a sidelong glance at him and the wind would be completely knocked out of me, as if I were seeing him for the first time.

‘See? This is why I need you to move in,’ he slid his hand around my waist and pulled me in for another, deeper kiss as we staggered sideways into the apartment building. My skin prickled with goosebumps from the shock of the air conditioning.

‘Or you could just remember to take your key out with you,’ I whispered, pulling away with stinging lips. Must remember to buy lip balm with a higher SPF. ‘Tell me about this festival.’

‘Tell me you missed me this weekend,’ he whispered back, running his finger over my bottom lip.

I paused, looking down at my flip-flops for a second. It was moments like this that made me feel like a complete idiot for not running back to Manhattan, throwing all my belongings in a bag and pitching up at the apartment in Brooklyn in a heartbeat.

‘Of course I missed you,’ I took the key from his hand and opened the apartment door. ‘Did you cry yourself to sleep every night?’

‘I cry myself to sleep every night you’re not here,’ he shot me a grin and walked over to the fridge, producing two icy beers. ‘But since you won’t move in, I’ve had to find a way through it.’

I dropped my bag onto one of his knackered old sofas (better for it than the floor) and took the beer. This was the perfect time to have The Conversation. To say, I really do want to move in with you, but I’m ever so slightly shit-scared. But I didn’t.

Alex vanished into his bedroom and I didn’t follow. Instead I looked around the apartment. The tiny open-plan kitchen, littered with take-out boxes and empty coffee cups. Two huge, squishy sofas faced the huge floor-to-ceiling windows with all of Manhattan laid out in front of us, sparkling in the sunlight. It didn’t look sweaty, hateful and oppressive from in here. It looked beautiful. And whenever I got bored of looking at the New York City skyline, if that was in fact possible, there was always the massive flat screen TV shoved in the corner, with the DVR already set to record all my favourite shows.

Was I being completely ridiculous? What was the worst that would happen? I’d move in, there would be fewer takeaway cartons in the kitchen, more products in the bathroom. We’d go to bed together every night, wake up together every morning, go out, come home, watch TV, cook, shop, clean, moan, bitch, stop

having sex, stop talking, start cheating and end up hating each other.

Wow. I followed my bag down on to the sofa. Now that was not a healthy internal reaction to the idea of moving in with my lovely, lovely boyfriend.

‘So, the festival,’ Alex called from the bedroom. ‘It’s pretty cool, we’ve played it before, but they’ve asked us to come back and play again, it’s like the second headline slot.’

‘That’s amazing,’ I yelled back, trying to wipe those horrible thoughts out of my stupid head. ‘So when is it? Next summer?’

‘Uh, it’s kind of next weekend.’ He appeared in the doorway. ‘Yeah, it’s not that amazing. Someone else dropped out and we were first runner-up.’

‘But still,’ I let myself be distracted by the biceps peeping out of his T-shirt as he stretched against the door frame. ‘It’s better than a slap around the face. Is it in the city?’

‘That’s the other thing,’ he let go of the door and came over to the sofa, ‘it’s in Paris. France.’

‘Paris, France?’

‘Paris, France.’

‘Is there another Paris?’

‘Paris, Texas?’

‘All right smart arse.’ I rubbed my forehead. ‘So you’re going to Paris next weekend?’ At least that would buy me another couple of weeks to try and get over this whole moving in nonsense.

‘We’re going to Paris next weekend,’ he corrected. ‘You’ll come right? I figure I can’t leave you alone in the city after what happened in LA.’

‘Nothing happened in LA.’ I slapped his thigh. It didn’t matter how many jokes he made about my ill-fated work trip to LA, I still wasn’t OK with it. As much fun as an

all-expenses paid trip to Hollywood to interview an up-and-coming Brit actor who turned out to be gay and tried to convince me to be his professional beard might sound, it almost cost me my job, my work permit and Alex. So I thought it perfectly understandable that I might still be a little bit sore about it.

‘OK, OK.’ Alex grabbed my hands to hold off the attack. ‘So how about you look at it like a romantic trip to Paris. We’ve never taken a trip before.’

‘True.’ I nodded, letting him slide his hands up from my wrists to interlink his fingers with mine. ‘And I have always wanted to go to Paris.’

‘You’ve never been?’ he asked, looking surprised. I shook my head. ‘But it’s so close to the UK.’

‘I missed the GCSE trip after I fell down a pothole on the geography field trip,’ I admitted. ‘Not my finest moment.’

‘I don’t know what a pothole is, but it sounds like something you would do.’ He kissed me lightly on the lips. ‘You know I love you even though you’re a walking disaster zone, right?’

‘Thanks.’ I couldn’t really be offended, it was true. I’d already broken two glasses in a week. ‘Won’t Paris be super expensive though? I’m still broke from LA.’

Broke, but beautifully dressed, I thought, just not today.

‘You don’t need to worry about anything.’ Alex started to plait a section of my hair. ‘I’m hardly gonna ask you to come away with me and then expect you to pay for it.’

‘But I want to.’ I frowned. ‘I don’t want you to have to pay for everything. You know I’m really not that girl.’

‘I thought every girl was the “let my boyfriend take me to Paris for the weekend” kind of a girl,’ Alex said,

pulling my hair. 'Or is this just an excuse for you to weasel out of the trip the same way you're trying to weasel out of moving in with me?'

'I'm not weaseling out of anything,' I pulled the loose plait out of his hands. 'I do want to go to Paris, I just don't want you to have to pay for me to go to Paris. I'll find a way to make it work. And if it's next weekend, we'll be away for your birthday. Your big three-oh.'

Alex's thirtieth birthday had been looming on the horizon for months and, while he was pretending to be super cool about it, the official line was that I wasn't allowed to 'make a big deal out of nothing', which I had translated from boy-speak to mean 'if I don't acknowledge it, it won't actually happen'. Typical boy-logic that could be applied to many, many of his actions.

'Yeah, well, who doesn't want to be in Paris for their birthday?' he shrugged. 'The record company want us to play a couple of warm-up shows, the festival is on Sunday, but I'll keep Friday night free so we can do dinner or something. What could we do in New York that we can't do just as good in Paris? Or even better?'

He kissed me lightly on the lips and waited for a response. Sneaky tactics, he knew I wasn't at my full mental capacity when there was kissing involved.

'I don't know, I told you, I've never been to Paris,' I managed to get in, between kisses. 'When would we leave?'

'Monday?'

Untangling his hands from my hair, I pulled away slightly trying to remember what day it was. That was the problem with working from home, I had absolutely no sense of time. 'Today's Tuesday, there's too much to organize with work and the flat and, really, Alex, it's only six days.'

‘It turns me on when you are so smart.’ He persisted with the kissing, moving on to my neck and pushing me backwards against the sofa. ‘There’s nothing to freak out about, Angela. You pack a bag, you tell work that you’re blogging from Paris for a week, you leave Vanessa in the apartment, we go to Paris. And if you’re gonna go all feminazi on me paying for your flight, you can make it my birthday present. Seriously, how many times do I have to tell you to stop over-thinking everything?’

‘At least once more,’ I said, giving up. I reached my arms up around his neck and shifted around on to the sofa as his hand moved up my thigh and under the thin cotton of my dress-slash-vest. ‘So you say you missed me this weekend.’

I felt his breath against my ear, giving me an altogether different case of goosebumps.

‘Like you wouldn’t believe.’