



Emotionally Charged

By Selina A. Fenech

Complete summary including spoilers.

Olivia Mirawi has always fantasized about being a hero, so when an earthquake hits her hometown of Bellscroft, she heads off to the shelter at the high school to volunteer, overcome with a desire for adventure.

She becomes so engrossed in helping at the shelter that she misses her last bus home, so it seems she'll have to stay at the school overnight. When she remembers that she was supposed to go check on her mom's shop, she sneaks out, daydreaming about how she doesn't want to live her life in

half-measures—she wants real affluence, excitement, and romance.

When Olivia finds four boys looting her mom's shop, she yells at them to go away, but they begin to harass her, and Olivia realizes this isn't one of her fantasies, especially when she gets kicked in the head—but not before she is able to stab one of the boys and break his hand, much to her own surprise.

But then a handsome young blond man who looks like a model shows up and saves her from her assailants. He introduces himself as Jake. What's more, Jake tells her that she has special superpowers, evidenced by her fast healing and the way she handled herself in the fight.

It turns out that Olivia is an empath, which explains why she's always been able to read others' feelings, on top of feeling stronger or full of energy when others are scared. Enamored with this new situation, Olivia agrees to leave town with Jake and his fellow empaths, Emma, Donny, and Jamie.

Her new friends take her to their mansion, complete with a service staff, gardener, and cook. Olivia panics—what made her get on that plane without thinking anything through? Surely her parents will be worried sick. Somehow, though, she finds herself under the powerful influence of Jake, and when the team gets a call about a new job, they head off, leaving her alone in a strange town.

She goes for a walk and stumbles upon two guys beating up a third. She soaks up their emotions which provides her with unnatural strength, and she challenges them—but sirens of a firetruck nearby scare them off.

The boy is angry at Olivia for getting involved, and Olivia is surprised to find that she cannot read his emotions the way she can with other people.

Later, the empath crew returns from their job, and Olivia tries to convince them that she needs to call her parents. Jake—whom she's beginning to feel infatuated with—goes to her hometown to reassure her parents that she is fine, then returns with a new phone for her. Olivia spends most of the week crushing on Jake and adjusting to her new situation as super-powered empath, until the team finally gets a call about a good first job for her.

They attend a warehouse fire where Olivia soaks up the excess emotions flowing off the firefighters. When she sees a firefighter in danger, she rushes to the man's aid and saves his life—but Jake drags her away and scolds her for making a scene. They can't risk their powers becoming known.

Olivia is devastated by her failure, but privately feels that she did the right thing saving the man's life.

The next day, Emma wakes up Olivia and tells her to meet the rest of the team in the formal lounge. Thinking maybe this is her official initiation to the team, Olivia excitedly prepares herself. Just as she hoped, when she arrives, they announce that they want her on the team—but she must look the part, which means it's makeover time.

At first, Olivia thinks they're joking when they suggest cosmetic surgery. Then she realizes this explains why they all look so beautiful—and she berates herself for ever thinking someone like Jake could be attracted to her as is. The team explains that when people are physically attracted to them, they receive power from that emotion, allowing them to persuade others' actions, like hypnotism.

It hits Olivia: would such a power make someone open to the suggestion of leaving home with a group of strangers in the middle of the night? Has she been manipulated this whole time?

They ask her what she's willing to do to be a part of the team. Olivia panics and tells them she'll do anything, because it seems this is her chance to finally be the hero of the story just like she has always dreamed.

Later, Olivia goes on a shopping spree, hoping a new wardrobe might allow her to forego cosmetic surgery. That's when she runs into the same grey-eyed boy who she'd saved from the beating in the alley. Like before, she still can't get an emotional read on him. The boy introduces himself as Dean, and compliments her appearance, which makes Olivia feel better about herself after all the criticism from the others.

The team comes to pick Olivia up, and Jake announces they're doing a fundraising activity for the team: going to the bank. When Emma passes out wigs, Olivia realizes they're not going to the bank to withdraw money; they're going to rob it.

Olivia is full of doubt but they assure her she'll be fine—and she's afraid of what they might do if she doesn't cooperate. She agrees to help them, secretly hoping she can bow out gracefully afterwards and go home, back to her normal life.

Jake flirts with the bank teller and uses his powers to make her give him money—but suddenly, it seems that everyone's powers inexplicably stop working. To compensate for the sudden loss of their powers, Jake's brother, Jamie, pulls a gun out of his pocket and shoots a man in the leg.

As their powers begin to kick back in, Olivia notices Dean, and Jake notices her focus. He announces that they have a "blocker"—someone who shuts away their feelings so hard that it breaks something inside of them and messes with the team's empath powers. He says they'll have to get rid of Dean for good because he's sabotaging their mission.

Jake shoots an old woman. Afraid of Jake's intentions, Olivia screams at Dean to run, but Jake presses his gun against her head. When he pulls the trigger, Dean shoves her out of the way just in time but gets shot in the arm in the process.

Dean's shock at getting shot seems to reactivate Olivia's powers. She hits Jake, throws Dean over her shoulder using her enhanced strength, and makes a run for it.

Once they reach safety, Dean demands to know if Olivia was with the bank robbers, which makes her feel more confused about her situation; she just wants to be a hero. She knows that if she's not with Jake, she's against him—and that he'll come after her.

Dean invites her to come with him, since she has nowhere else to go.

At Dean's trailer park home, Olivia treats his gunshot wound as she explains everything about empath powers and how they'd called Dean a blocker, though Dean doesn't seem to know what any of this means. On the news, video footage connects the bank robbery with the warehouse fire and an alleged "terrorist cell." That's when it dawns on Olivia: Jake and his crew are creating disasters so that they can take advantage of heightened emotions for looting.

She wonders if Dean could learn how to shut down the empaths—and realizes she'd give up her superhero fantasy for everyone to be safe again.

The next morning, Olivia introduces Dean to her plan to use his blocking abilities to put a stop to Jake, Donny, Emma, and Jamie. Meanwhile, she finds that not only does Dean seem to lack emotion, but he also seems uncomfortable discussing emotions in general.

Thinking that surprising him might evoke an emotional response, Olivia kisses him. It seems to work in allowing her to read him, but his guarded sadness threatens to overwhelm her.

Olivia continues to live at Dean's house as they practice their powers together. He can't go to work because they're afraid Jake will track him down, so they sneak into town where Olivia sells a necklace in order to buy themselves food and first aid supplies. Back at the house, Dean's father arrives, and Olivia learns that he has been an alcoholic since Dean's mother died. Dean admits that his mom taught him what heroes are—and that heroes die. Olivia realizes he wants to save her from a hero's fate.

Olivia and Dean continue to practice their powers until one morning, Olivia wakes up and feels nothing; it seems that Dean has succeeded in shutting down her empath powers, and she feels like a normal person for the first time in her life.

They set in motion their plan to put a stop to Jake and his team's cons. She calls Jake and pretends to offer him Dean's location in exchange for a second chance on the team.

Dean remains hidden while Olivia meets Jake, Jamie, Donny, and Emma in a park. When the team quickly realizes that a blocker is nearby, Jake threatens Olivia with a gun. Worried for her safety, Dean emerges from hiding and Jake immediately shoots him.

Horried, Olivia holds Dean in her arms, and he apologizes for being afraid of having feelings for her. The warmth of his finally opened emotions unlocks Olivia's powers again, and she fights Jake off—all the while realizing that during her time staying with Dean, she'd begun to fall in love with him.

She fights for her life and Dean's, wanting to prove to him that heroes don't have to die. Emma flees the scene. In a moment of emotional devastation, Olivia strips Jake, Jamie, and Donny of their powers, then falls.

When she awakes, Olivia finds herself in the hospital with enhanced powers. The doctor tells her they've identified the bank robbers, but the cops are confused about her and Dean's involvement. On top of that, she learns that Jake, Jamie, and Donny are completely catatonic.

Olivia agonizes over the fact that she may have taken lives. She also seems to have absorbed their powers, adding them to her own, which makes everything amplified.

She leaves her room to find Dean, who is in bad shape but still alive. This time, his coldness is gone and she just feels soothing warmth. She kisses him for real this time.

Olivia's parents show up, confused why they had been so willing to accept a stranger's explanation about her disappearance. Olivia tells them she fell in with the wrong crowd, but that she and Dean saved each other.

Later, she makes a strange discovery: with her amplified senses, everything is too overwhelming without Dean at her side to help block the sensations. Terry, a cop friend of her parents, asks her a lot of questions, but she can't tell him the full truth. She spends her nights trying to sleep in the chair in Dean's room.

In the morning, she awakens to find the nurse wheeling her away from Dean. Without him by her side, all the emotions in the hospital overwhelm Olivia and she loses control, which leads to her having a seizure.

Dean leaves his room to find her and she realizes how dependent on him she is now. Olivia is moved to a private room beside his so that his presence can continue to temper her senses. She and Dean discuss whether to tell the detective the truth, but Olivia has already embellished the story. They realize they're screwed.

The detective returns to question Olivia. He has footage of her at the bank, which shows her clearly trying to protect the people there. Olivia continues with her story that she had made friends with Jake and his team but hadn't known they were criminals until too late. He then shows her hospital footage of Emma watching them in their beds, which makes Olivia wonder if they should be concerned for their safety.

During their time in the hospital, Dean rehabilitates and Olivia tests her range, discovering that she cannot be very far from Dean without risking another seizure. She wonders if maybe Dean could block her again, permanently, to make the amplified senses go away, but he worries about Emma coming back and finding Olivia defenseless without her powers.

On the day that Olivia is supposed to be discharged, she is forced to tell everything to her parents in order to explain why she cannot leave hospital until Dean does.

A couple weeks later, Dean and Olivia are discharged together, but before they leave, Olivia goes to check on Jake, Jamie, and Donny. In their room, a doctor is going over paperwork with a man and a woman who Olivia assumes are detectives.

They return home with Olivia's parents, who give Dean permission to live with them for a little while.

Olivia knows that everything will be a different now. She started out with such romantic, selfish notions of heroism, but now she has a new understanding of what being a hero truly means.

If she has the power to make a difference—fight injustice—doesn't the world deserve that?
The only thing Olivia knows for certain: she'll never be normal again.



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