

## Confessions

She was laying in the hammock in the back yard when she heard the footsteps approaching. Ollie climbed on, causing it to sway and almost tipping them both in before she wrapped her frame completely around Lark.

"Are you okay?"

"No. What the hell was that all about?" she stared at the stars in the sky. "Why did Max jump him?"

"You were crying, Lark." Ollie whispered playing with her hair. "He always got pissed off when someone made you cry. He's been this way for as long as we've known you. Your tears are probably one of the only things to make Max snap."

"He could get in trouble."

"Riggs told him to get the f\*\*k out of there and I called in a favor with a friend."

"A friend?" Lark chuckled, "the same friend you called last night in the car?"

"No. The person I called last night was one of mine. He is my version of a Riggs. When we were at the bar, there was a guy there who tried twice to drug your drink. My guy made him disappear. Can't have guys like him in the clubs."

"Jesus, Ollie." When Ollie shrugged beside her, she sighed, "Douglas can't disappear."

"No but my friend in Houston will make sure he knows if he talks about what happens, he will."

"How do you know these people?"

"Grandpa Gael introduced me to a family from South America a few years back. The son just took over the family's business endeavors. I made a call to him today and let him know we were sending Douglas back to Houston in a bus with a medical team and I needed him to keep his mouth shut. He said he'd handle it."

"In a bus?"

"Ambulance." Ollie chuckled at Lark's question. "More concerned about the mode of transport than the status of your ex."

"You said there was a medical team."

Ollie giggled, "we're rubbing off."

"No. I am worried about him. I saw how hard Max was punching his face. There was a lot of blood and I think I heard Fallon say something about nding a tooth and questioning if the tooth fairy would take it if she left it under her pillow."

"Your sister is weird," Ollie deadpanned.

"Right. My sister is weird. Your sister refuses to bathe."

"You missed it earlier. Your mom told my mom and they, along with Nana Prue, cornered her in the yard, got her down to her underwear and hosed her off. They then dumped a bucket over her full of soapy water. I guess as soon as your mother suggested she was probably using toys on herself in the bedroom and then joining the dinner table without washing, my mother freaked." Ollie was laughing in earnest now. "Mori is pissed at Fallon for putting the thoughts in their heads."

"It is gross, Ollie."

"I know. We were weird kids but not that weird."

"She's nineteen. At her age, I am certain neither of us were doing such things."

"I wouldn't know. You weren't here at nineteen."

She elbowed Ollie, "you know why."

"He took you away from me," Ollie admitted quietly. "It hurt me when you left, and I know why, and I understood why but it still hurt."

"We've talked about this a hundred times Ollie. When I went to Houston you were already there. We spent six years together in Houston. You left me two years ago and I don't bring it up every other conversation."

"I guess." Ollie pouted and pursed her lips. "I get it. I just wish it hadn't been Max to chase you away."

"Why? Is this where you tell me you were in love with me?"

"F\*\*k off," Ollie snickered and punched her arm. "As if. I'd sooner f\*\*k Max." She made a gagging sound. "I might swing all the way around, but brothers and sisters are not even close to my wheel of wonders."

Lark laughed loudly at Ollie's words.

"I only meant, if it was anyone other than Max, I could have gotten them killed so you could come home."

"Going away for four years was good for me, Ollie. I learned to stand on my own two feet. Mississippi wasn't so far away. You visited me a couple of times. Then we both went to Houston. I even stayed a year with Grandpa Gael and you while I was in my rst year of law school."

"It was the best year," Ollie bolted upright. "Do you remember when he gave us hell for wearing jeans and you and I dressed my grandma up in a pantsuit? He was so angry."

Lark nodded, "do you remember when he insisted, we both learn how to shoot guns?"

"You're a natural."

"He cried when you moved out you know Ollie. It might have been in his shower when he was all alone, but Gael adores you."

"He packed up the entire Moreno estate to buy one near me. I'm his favorite."

"You may as well be the only." Lark corrected. "He's leaving everything to you when he dies."

"He's not allowed to die. I already told him if he does, I'm going to nd the devil and renegotiate the deal they made."

She smiled as she hugged Ollie back down to her.

"Can I ask a question, Lark?"

"Sure."

"What was your breaking point with Max? I know something happened at prom, but I've always been too frightened to ask. Did you confess and he reject you?"

She swallowed the lump in her throat. "Why are you scared to ask?"

"Because if its what happened, I might have to beat him."

"No."

"Then what?"

"Remember when Dylan stood me up?"

"Yes. Max took you as his date."

"He never said date." She corrected quietly. "He said I could go with him. I thought he meant date but the minute we got to the dance, girls surrounded him. I was on my own. Dylan came up to me after laughing saying he didn't think I'd actually show since he'd stood me up. I cried. And Max dragged him into the bathroom and pounded on him. Henri needed to get him out."

"Oh."

"Yes, and I stupidly saw Max's actions as my knight in shining armor. I asked him to meet me on the roof. I was going to tell him, Ollie. I was going to tell him how I felt."

"But you didn't?"

"Nope. See while I was up there waiting on Max to show up, he was busy. I waited thirty minutes for him. I was getting ready to go back when Jackson showed up."

"Quarterback?"

"Yup. He um, he was pretty drunk. Turns out he'd caught his girlfriend and Max in a closet having sex."

"Max left you on the roof to f\*\*k Becky?"

"Yup."

"No wonder you hate him."

"Jackson decided if Max was taking what was his, he was taking what was Max's." She felt Ollie still beside her. "See Max was always making his s\*x jokes and I would always play along and everyone in school thought I was the reason he never actually took a girlfriend. He thought I was Max's secret girlfriend. He tried to convince me I should get back at Max like he was getting back at them. I said no. He insisted."

"Did he —"

"No. Almost. Riggs had been looking for me. I was gone nearly fty minutes by then and he knew where you were and where Max was but not me. He found me on the roof."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Ollie asked quietly.

"I was embarrassed, Ollie. All the self-defence Riggs and Henri taught us over the years, and I let a drunk guy overpower me. They made it go away for me. Mom got me counselling. I went away to school. Got myself put back together."

"You blame Max," Ollie stated.

"Not for Jackson trying to rape me," she waved her hand absentmindedly. "I blame him for not coming when he said he would. He said he'd be ten minutes, but he needed to make sure the punch was spiked. Thirty minutes I waited for him. It was then I knew he didn't care for me. None of the things I imagined in my girly fantasies were even remotely true. It was one more example of how I was always going to play soccer ddle to his v\*\*\*\*a-of-the-day. Like the time he was supposed to pick me up after soccder practice and left me out in the rain for an hour because he was with the captain of the other team. Or" she sighed, "the time he told my dad he'd pick me up from work at the ice cream shack and he never showed up because he was at the drive-in. He forgot, was his excuse. The thing is, he always forgot me, Ollie. He always forgot and I always forgave. I realized that night I was done with the forgiving part. He was a shitty friend, and I ran out of excuses for him when my insistence to keep letting him treat me like I didn't matter put me at risk. I couldn't do it anymore."

"Between him forgetting you and me dragging you into all my plans, you didn't really have the best friends you deserved," Ollie whispered quietly. "We were shitty friends to you Lark. I'm sorry. The night of the prom I was wasted and —"

"Stole the principal's car. I know." She hugged her. "Anything to get your Dad's attention."

"Looking back, it was so obvious what I was doing. My parents were too damn tired to even see it."

"If it makes you feel better, the triplets have no reason for being d\*\*\*s. At least your reason was valid."

They both giggled.

"Ollie, I'm sorry I left you."

"I'm not. Now I know the full story, I'm proud of you Lark. You did what you needed to do to get your head on straight. It's way better a story than why I left Houston."

Lark sat up, "what is your story for leaving Houston? I thought you were just missing your dad!"

"The guy I called today to manage the situation with Douglas? I have it bad for him. Really bad, Lark. He's my Max, except he's a criminal and mindless and head of a syndicate from South America. We were sleeping together, and I thought he loved me too. I kept it hidden because my grandfather wouldn't have approved. Then I found out he was getting married. The weekend I moved back to Houston, he married a girl his family arranged for him for business. Today was the rst day I've reached out to him in two years."

As Ollie's voice caught in her throat, Lark squeezed her tight. Perhaps her best friend truly did understand what she was going through.