

## Chapter 3

\*Three years later\*

Alyssa

"Open this fucking door, Alyssa!" Isaac barks, banging on the bedroom door with a force that rattles the hinges. With my heart pounding, I scoop up Zuri from her crib, and slip on the small pair of noise-cancelling headphones over her tiny ears.

"I'm so sorry, sweetheart. Mommy's going to get us out of here," I whisper, my voice trembling as I brush my cheek against hers, drawing comfort from her innocent warmth.

I warned him. I warned him that the first time he ever hit me in front of our daughter that, it would be over. But he didn't listen. Tonight, he hit me so hard that I almost fell on top of her while she was sitting on the floor.

That was the last fucking straw.

I've endured his anger and frustration time and time again, but I can't allow Zuri to grow up thinking this is okay. Even if she's only seven months old and might not remember it, I never wanted her to see that.

I'm sorry, babe. I promise it will never happen again.

I brought you some flowers, Tylenol, and an ice pack. I love you.

What will our daughter think if you take her away from her father who loves her?

If you leave me, there's nowhere you can hide that I can't find you. I swear, I'll kill all of us.

I'm so tired of the empty apologies. The love bombing. The endless cycle of makeup and breakup, over and over and fucking over again.

My daughter deserves better.

I deserve better.

Isaac continues to pound the door, his fists colliding with it repeatedly until I hear the wood splinter. "I swear to God, Alyssa. Open this goddamn door or I'll make sure you won't be able to walk for a week!" he roars, his voice growing louder, his hits harder, even more determined to break through and punish me.

My heart races, each beat like a drum echoing in my ear. I sling the diaper bag, packed with the few personal belongings Isaac didn't buy, over my shoulder and yank open the window.

Our house is only one story, so the drop isn't far. Clutching Zuri tightly to my chest, I climb out the window and sprint across the yard, moving so quickly that my bare feet barely touch the ground.

The spare key feels like a lead weight in my pocket as I round the corner of the house, heading towards my car parked in the driveway. I fumble with the key, my hands trembling as I shove it into the lock and pull the handle, climbing into the front seat and locking the door behind me.

Frantically, I scramble to the back seat to buckle Zuri into her car seat. Her hazel eyes stare back at me with innocent wonder, completely unaware of the danger surrounding us.

"I'm sorry to wake you, my sweet girl. We're going to go visit Uncle Gray for a little while," I whisper, plastering a smile on my face as I buckle her into place.

None of my family or friends know about Zuri. They don't even know I was pregnant. I haven't been in contact with anyone since she was born. Isaac made sure of that, isolating me from everyone I care about, constantly drilling into my head that I was nothing without him.

And maybe I'm not. But I promise to whoever created this fucked up world that if I make it out of here alive tonight, I will strive to be better. To be the mom my little girl deserves.

I slide back into the driver's seat, my hands still shaking as I stick the key into the ignition, finally managing to start the ignition. As the car roars to life, Isaac's furious face appears at the window, his bloody fist hammering against the glass.

I jump, while Zuri begins to cry. "I'll kill you, Alyssa! I'll kill you and bury your ass in the fucking backyard!" he roars. Each pound of his fists reverberate through the car, sending fear and apprehension coursing through me.

He'll actually do it. This is the angriest I've ever seen him, and I know he'll take it too far this time. I'll be dead, and there'll be no one to stop him from hurting Zuri.

No. We have to leave.

I grip the steering wheel tightly, my knuckles white. "Move, Isaac!" I shout back. "I'll roll you over if you don't move the fuck out of my way!"

I swear, I will.

He doesn't budge, his blue eyes wild with rage. I press the gas pedal, inching the car backwards. He steps away just in time to avoid his foot being ran over, and I speed away.

I drive for a while, constantly wiping my eyes to keep my vision clear. Zuri has finally calmed down and fallen back asleep, but I know we're not in the clear. Isaac is likely tracking my car right now, and if I don't ditch it soon, he'll find us. I can't let that happen.

I pull over on the side of the road, my breath coming out in ragged gasps. I quickly locate my phone, knowing I'll have to ditch it too. Isaac has always tracked me when I go out of the house, even to go down the street to the store. If I'm even two minutes late, I get my driving privileges in my own car revoked for the rest of the month.

Barely able to hold the phone in my shaking hands, I try to call Gray, but it goes straight to voicemail. I try two more times before leaving a voicemail, he'll likely not listen to. "Grayson, please call me back when you get a chance," I say, trying to keep my voice my voice steady, though my heart is racing like a horse, and it feels like my chest is going to explode.

I glance back at Zuri, who's still peacefully sleeping. "We're going to be okay," I whisper, more to myself than her. "I'll keep us safe."

But what the hell am I going to do? I'm running out of time. He'll find us and drag us back to that hellhole. I've only called the police on him once, but since Isaac has rich parents, they paid his way out of it somehow. I know he'd only do it again, and this time, he'd kill me instead of beating me.

Another person comes to mind—someone I never thought I would have to speak again to in my life, but he's the only other number I can recall off the top of my head. I know he'd help me if I asked, and he lives just twenty minutes from here.

Reluctantly, I dial his number, hoping that he hasn't changed it. There are only a few people that have his personal number, but for some reason, he gave it to me a few months after I started dating Isaac.

He picks up on the first ring, and feeling the clock ticking, I rush out in desperation, "King, Gray won't answer his phone. Please. I need your help."

## Comments (1)