

## Chapter 2-Graduation Day

(Asher)

I stared up at the stage. The feeling of tears pricking the back of my eyes made me let out a deep shuddering breath, prompting Emery to squeeze my hand tightly..then I made the mistake of looking over at her..and that's when I lost it.

Tears were streaming down her beautiful face as we saw our daughter lined up with her other classmates on stage.

"It's okay baby." I whispered, my arm wrapping around Emery's shoulders before pulling her into my side.

Ronan was looking at her worriedly as Dylan held her other hand tightly. They were such mama boys..and I loved it. I loved seeing how close our family was..Their mom was the center of our world and Millie is right there next to her.

I wasn't ready to lose my little girl yet..I wasn't ready for her to leave me.

It's not fair! She wasn't supposed to grow up this fast..and honestly, she was the best f\*\*\*\*g kid I have ever met..no sneaking out..no lying..always willing to go anywhere with me whenever I asked. She was my princess..we even had daddy-daughter days still..

"Oh look at her Asher, she looks like a real woman." My mom whispered from behind us, making me frown. No way..she is denitely not a woman..she is still just a kid..at least to me she is.

I glanced to my left, seeing Carson and Jackie looking up at their two sons proudly and I had to thank God they went through high-school with Mil..I know how teenage boys are..I WAS a teenage boy once..and I didn't want Millie to experience that type of situation. Luca and Jax made sure she didn't. They are just as protective over her as the rest of us..

I know it might be past trauma from what happened to my wife..I just have this fear that some type of psycho is going to become interested in Millie just like Ethan was with Emery..and it scares the s\*\*t out of me.. When she was taken back then, that was the scariest day of my life..and I will never let a psycho like that go after Millie.

If I learned anything from Ethan, it's that you can't take that type of stuff lightly. So every dance, or school event..I had either Jax or Luca take Millie..and they didn't seem to mind. They loved her, like a sister of course..

Emery says I'm too protective over her..but I would rather keep her safe and sheltered than the alternative. My little girl is too special..if I could choose her future husband for her..I would..really. But of course, that would be crazy..at least that's what my wife says.

I can't believe how far we have come..Ronan is already twenty-one and about to graduate college next year..he followed in my footsteps and joined the college basketball team at Washington State University.

That's where Millie will be attending next year as well. I wished she decided to stay closer but how can I tell her no when her brother already went there?

Emery is doing much better with all of this than I am..but after having the kids..I changed..I became a freaking ball of emotions who cries way more than I would like to admit.

Especially after what happened with Emery.

I still remember it so clearly..when we rst found the lump..

We were actually in the shower and I was washing her body very thoroughly. Allen had the kids and we had a few hours to ourselves.

I felt a lump on the side of her breast, making my brow furrow as I couldn't stop examining it.

We made an appointment the very next day and that's when they did a scan..

A few weeks later we were sat down in the doctor's oce..cancer..breast cancer to be exact. It was stage three and two masses had been found, one in each breast.

She was so f\*\*\*\*g young..and I was shocked.

They decided to do a few rounds of chemo and that seemed to be the worst f\*\*\*\*g part of it. Emery still jokes today that the chemo was harder on me than it was on her..but I can't imagine that being true.

My wife was a survivor though...through and through she was the strongest woman I had ever met. I knew after that we had to move back..life is too f\*\*\*\*g short and this right here..all of our family and friends..this is where we needed to be.

I cherish every day..no..every f\*\*\*\*g second with my wife because I know what it feels like to think I could possibly lose her.

Then she got pregnant again, we didn't think it would happen and once she told me, I was over the moon.

After having Dylan, Emery wasn't able to conceive again so she calls him her little miracle boy..a gift we will cherish forever.

Now she has been cancer-free for thirteen years and I am beyond grateful..I do regular breast examinations on her as well..just to be safe of course..

"Dad, Millie is coming up next." Ronan informed me as I pulled my eyes away from Emery.

I glanced back to the stage just as the announcer called our daughter's name, making our whole row burst into cheers as she walked across the stage.

Her adorable face was lled with the brightest smile as I felt my heart swell with emotion and pride while snapping a few pictures.

"Woo! Go Mil!!" Dylan shouted while jumping up and down excitedly. I think he might just miss her more than me..if that's possible. But Dylan was even more protective than me sometimes..he really is my mini me..

I saw Millie's gray eyes scan the crowd before landing on us as I waved my hand excitedly. Yeah..we weren't hard to spot..considering I was 6'7 and her brother a few inches taller.

Dylan is already 5'4 and he is only nine. He just barely beats his mom and sister in height.

Millie's cheeks warmed as she was handed her diploma before turning and waving once more and walking off towards her other classmates.

"She looks so cute." Jack laughed, making me nod in agreement as his daughter Bonnie stood next to him, taking some pictures.

"Dad, I believe you mean beautiful, Millie isn't a little girl anymore." Penny, his eldest chimed in. She is almost a year older than Ronan and gave her dad a run for his money.

Let's just say whatever s\*\*t he put me through for Em..it came back to bite him in the ass..because Penny was ten times worse than Emery and gave him a few heart attacks throughout the years. She loves to push her dad's buttons..and I love it too.

After the rest of Millie's graduating class walked the stage, we were now heading down towards where they all waited for their families to take pictures.

I couldn't help but notice all the boys who came up to Millie, asking to take a photo with her when Luca and Jax quickly stood beside her, making me breathe a little easier.

Ronan pushed past me, his arms looping around his sister's waist before lifting her in the air and spinning her around.

"Ro! I missed you!" She rushed out while giggling and hugging him back tightly.

Ronan was going to stay for the summer with us before helping Millie move to her new dorm. He and his best friend Adrian shared an apartment but Millie wanted to get the full college experience and go the dorm route. I offered to buy her an apartment but of course, my daughter declined.

"Move, my turn." Dylan grumbled while elbowing his brother in the ribs and making him wince.

"Punk." Ronan grumbled playfully while placing Millie down.

After Dylan gave her a hug, I pulled her in next. My arms engulfed my daughter as I tried my hardest not to break down.

"I love you, Daddy." She breathed, making me bite the inside of my cheek as I kissed the top of her head quickly.

"I love you too baby girl." I whispered, making her nuzzle into my shirt as Emery soon joined us.

Then before I knew it the boys joined in too.

"Okay, come on, give my granddaughter some room to breathe." Allen joked while holding his arms out and letting Millie run into him.

"Grandpa!" She rushed out as Jack and his family came up next.

"Okay, let's go before we get stuck in trac, our reservation is in an hour." He stated while I took Emery's hand before gripping it tightly.

"I can't believe our little girl just graduated high school. Only one kid left to go." She whispered to me as I smiled sadly..

"Maybe we can hold Dylan back a few years..prolong the process." I teased, prompting Emery to slap me on the chest and scold me before I bent down, kissing my wife gently.

"I will meet you guys there! Penny is going to drive me!" Millie suddenly shouted as I pulled away and watched her run off..

I guess this really is happening..she really has grown up in the blink of an eye.