

14 - Tentative

Trigger Warning: Mentions of physical abuse

As my medical examination neared, so did the days that blurred together. My routine was fairly the same every day, on those where I had classes I was getting up early and attending, coming home and studying the rest of the day while on the days I didn't have school I was heading to the gym with Dean.

While he was more into weightlifting, I stuck with cardio not really wanting to accomplish anything besides get in my physical activity for the day.

Somedays, I would shamelessly sit beside him and just watch. He wasn't that bulky, and thankfully wasn't a gym addict either. He was kind of like me, only going because it was free and an easy way to get a work out in.

Today, however, was a different day in itself. Currently Dean and I were sitting inside the police station and while he observed the officers, I was bracing myself for the reality that was about to come. I was really doing this—really filing a restraining order against Devon.

It wasn't as if I hadn't gone to the police before, but living in a small town where he had an abundance of connections had made it difficult for me to even file a complaint. I was seen as immoral, untruthful, because they knew him for longer while I was probably some gold digger wanting to get rich off of his family.

His father was the fucking mayor, for Christ sake. Honestly, it was a miracle that I even got out, much less survived on my own in the city.

With a sigh, I turned to look at Dean, noticing he was in his regular stance with arms crossed over his chest as he was assessing everyone.

I had asked him to come with me, knowing I wouldn't be able to be surrounded by police officers on my own.

My right leg bounced nervously as I tugged on the bottom of my shirt. I looked around the station, men and women decked out in uniforms walking around with handfuls of paper, in an attempt to try and calm myself, I played with the ring Dean had given me the other day, swirling it around on my thumb. It was a simple silver band with a circle engraved all around the outside.

"Hey, are you alright?" Dean asked from beside me, and I knew I must've shown some obvious signs of discomfort if he was asking me straight up.

I could only shake my head, not wanting to elaborate anymore than I had to. For some reason, I felt like a criminal with the amount of eyes glancing at me from time to time. Police officers made me uncomfortable. Actually, now that was an understatement.

I hated police officers.

And not in the 'oh I hate them so much they gave me a parking ticket!' type of way, but in 'they can literally kill me and get away with it' type of way.

And in most cases, when it came to claims of abuse and rape, police tended to do nothing about it.

I was thankful that the latter didn't happen to me, sex with Devon only occurred in the first year of our relationship before everything went to shit.

Shaking away those thoughts, I allowed myself to breathe. I didn't mean for it to sound like all police officers were bad, however was I in support of a system created purely from racism? No, definitely not.

And in my personal experience, this white oriented system wasn't always going to help a person of colour in need. Especially one with limited resources who came from a south asian background.

In my moments clouded by thoughts, a police man had come up to me, neutral expression and I forcefully returned it. Every second I spent here, the more anxious I got.

"Hello, are you Miss. Adams?"

I nodded.

"You'll be taken into a separate room for the medical examination so your boyfriend will have to wait out here." When he looked at Dean at the word boyfriend, he smiled, making my stomach drop.

I didn't correct him on that particular term, looking back at Dean nervously. He had stood up too, nodding at the officer before he turned to look at me, giving his full attention. His hands were resting on my shoulders as he leaned down to whisper in my ear.

"I'll be right out here the entire time." He reassured me.

When I continued to hold onto his white t-shirt, afraid of letting go he sat beside me once again, taking a hold of my hands. I didn't quite understand what he was doing until he started to rub his thumb back and forth along the back of it, and the more he did the more I relaxed as he spoke again.

"Sophia, I promise I won't leave you."

"I know that..." I whispered back, nervously. "It's just I'm a brown girl at the police station and I haven't had a good experience with them in the past."

His face finally changed, dawning down what I was trying to say and I stumbled over my words, apologizing.

"I'm sorry, I should have told you sooner I just thought you'd be with me the entire time and—"

"Hey, there's nothing for you to be sorry about. Give me a second, alright?"

He looked up at the man, giving him a fake smile as well. "Just point to the room and she'll be there when she's ready."

"But we don't—"

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were a new police officer."

His demeanour changed. "I'm not. I've been working here for 10 years now."

I stepped closer to Dean, hiding behind him slightly not wanting to get the heat of the conversation if it went sideways. I felt like a child hiding behind their mom, and honestly in the moment I didn't care how scared I looked. I was nervous. I should be allowed to openly express how I feel.

"10 years? So I'm assuming you've worked multiple abuse cases, is that correct?"

He cleared his throat. "Yes that's correct."

"So shouldn't your top priority be making sure the victim is comfortable? I'm not trying to tell you how to do your job and I understand that there are certain protocols that must be followed, however abuse cases are different between people which means they have different comfort levels. I know I shouldn't be talking for Sophia, but if it was alright with you and her would it be possible for me to sit inside?"

The police officer waited awkwardly before nodding, clearing his throat before pointing to a room. "Once your girlfriend is comfortable, she can go in there and they'll tell her what to do."

He didn't even look at me, staring straight ahead into Dean's eyes before turning away.

I shook slightly, shaking my head in regret. "We shouldn't have come, let's just—"

"I'm going with you inside."

"Dean," I sighed, looking down. "It's useless. He didn't even look at me like he looked at you. I don't want to give myself false hope again."

"Sophia," Dean cupped my hands in his, making me release the fabric of his shirt, "if you still want to, you should try and get that restraining order. Even if it doesn't go through, at least you have it on file with a full examination."

With that reasoning, I complied, which set off another question for Dean.

"Do you want me to go inside with you? I promise I won't get mad if you say no. This is another boundary that you are allowed to set. Whatever you pick, I'll be right there giving you my support."

I looked down, already knowing my answer. "You'll stay with me the entire time?"

"The entire time."

I let out a breath of air. "Okay," I nodded. "I'm ready."

With that we walked over to the door the previous officer had directed us at, raising my fist and knocking. It seemed to be made of thick metal, the almost black door pulling open as two women officers stood on the other side.

"Hello, are you Sophia?"

I nodded.

"Alright, Sophia come on in. I'm officer Naomi. And who is this?" She asked, gesturing to the paperwork.

"He's my friend. Would it be possible for him to join us? It would make me feel more comfortable."

The same officer smiled at me, full of warmth already easing my nerves down a notch. The police station where I used to live only had male officers, and so this was already ten times better.

"Alright, sit down there and officer Layla will explain what we will be doing today. If at any point during the examination you feel like it is too much to handle, or you want to stop, please let us know. This goes solely based on your comfort level, Sophia."

I nodded, looking at Dean as he grabbed my hand, squeezing once before being led to a chair to the corner. With a sigh, I sat down on the uncomfortable chair, sitting as officer Layla slid over a form for me to fill out.

"This is just so we have all of your medical information on file." Layla explained, gesturing to the paperwork.

She slid over a pen as well and I got to writing, filling out the basic information sheet. Once I was finished, I handed it back over to her and she smiled, thanking me. My leg was bouncing up and down as I gripped onto my arms, scratching at the skin.

"Naomi is going to start taking your photos now. Undress to your comfort level, Sophia. You're doing so well, I promise."

That last bit of reassurance had me nodding my head. I felt like if I spoke, I would start bawling and I just wanted this over with. With shaky hands I stood up, lifting my top up and over my body as I focused on a blank point to the wall adjacent to me.

From my peripheral vision I saw that Naomi was getting her camera ready, adjusting the lens as I continued stripping. I also noticed Dean, his body straightening as the weight of his gaze fell across my back. He had never seen that side properly before, and I could tell by the sharp intake of his breath that he didn't expect what he saw.

Suddenly feeling self conscious, I hugged my arms around myself to produce some bit of self comfort, standing only in my underwear surrounded by three people whose eyes were on you wasn't exactly the best feeling in the world.

Layla had guided me towards a wall lined with white paper, standing me in the middle of it and I finally noticed that both she and Naomi had put on some gloves.

Gently adjusting my stance, Layla sent me another smile, her voice low as she spoke to me. "You're safe here, Sophia. Just a little bit longer and we're finally done, alright?"

I finally managed to send her back a weak smile, hoping she didn't take offence to how forceful it was. I just couldn't feel so good. My eyes which I should smile right now, starting to stand in this cold room completely exposed, I still had him. He met my gaze, eyes not leaving mine as he sent me a reassuring expression.

"You're doing so well, Sophia." I heard Dean murmur behind me.

I heard the sounds of the camera flashing, my eyes widening closed as I willed myself to breathe through the process. I was almost done, I kept telling myself. It was almost over.

My body was gently turned so she could take pictures of my back, and I was now able to face Dean. I let my eyes fall open, the tears streaming down my cheeks silently as he gave me a pained expression.

His eyes held mine, even throughout the blurriness as I waited for it to all be over. Despite not feeling any pain, the act alone of reshaping my past was brutal.

"You're done." One of them called out behind me, my mind too messed up to orientate who. I wiped at my eyes, nodding at them as I turned back around. Layla was collecting the papers with a smile before exiting as Naomi walked over to me, keeping eye contact.

"You did extremely well, Sophia. I'll let you change back, alright? If you need anything, don't hesitate to call for me. I'm with you every step of the way."

With that she turned and followed Layla out, and I hung my head, sniffling as I walked over towards my clothes. Dean was right behind me, his steps so gentle like he was scared touching me would set me off.

I held back my sobs, roughly pulling on my jeans and shirt with anger. Here had it suddenly come from? I wasn't sure. I just knew I was extremely upset and all I wanted to do was hit something or scream at the top of my lungs.

"Sophia?" Dean called out, a hand on my shoulder. That touch alone had me falling against him, my head buried in his chest as I started to cry.

He wound his arms around my body, one hand cupping the back of my head while the other rubbed up and down my back. "You did so good, Soph." He whispered, tightening his hold. "So, so good. I'm so fucking proud of you."

"Dean," I could only cry, holding onto his shirt. "Why does it hurt so bad?"

He didn't say anything, only hugging me closer as he pressed a kiss to the top of my head. We stayed standing for what felt like hours, my tears coming to an end as I pulled away, wiping the remaining wetness on my cheeks.

"I'm sorry," I said, my voice hoarse. "I feel like all I ever do now is cry. It's fucking pathetic."

"It isn't." He said back. "You're allowed to feel your emotions, Sophia. So if you wanna laugh, laugh. If you wanna cry, cry. Whatever it is, remember that one isn't better than the other. Crying isn't weak, Soph. It's just an emotion that you're allowed to feel."

Sometimes, it felt like no matter where I went, I was destined to be alone. I felt like no one would ever understand and validate my feelings. Right now though, I realized just how wrong I was.

I nodded along to what he was saying, accepting his stance before asking if we could go. As comfortable as those two officers made it, I was starting to feel so cocooned in here and wanted nothing more than to forget this day ever happened.

Letting Dean take the lead, I followed him out the door, keeping my face down not wanting everyone to see the puddle of spit on my mess. Officer Layla met us once we resurfaced, telling us they would call if they needed any more information or if the restraining order finally went through.

"These sort of things can take weeks, sometimes months to approve." She told us with a sad look in her eyes. "I know it sucks, but if you ever need me here's my card. I'm just a call away."

I took it silently as Dean said thanks, finally being able to leave. Once we were outside, I scrambled over to Dean's car, getting in as he unlocked it.

He silently drove us home, and knowing him questions were still lingering in the air, though Dean wasn't going to ask them until I told him first, understanding that I needed time and space.

While I stared out of the window, gazing upon the houses and trees that passed us by and the busy city people, I finally opened my mouth and started to talk.

"My parents weren't always dead." I started, cracking a small smile as I looked at him. "I guess using that as an ice breaker worked in my favour though, right?"

Dean relaxed at my joke, the corner of his lips curving up in a resemblance of a smile.

"I lived with my dad up until I was eighteen. My mom...she died when I was younger, around six I think. I'm not really sure on the exact date since my father never talked about her as he was cracked. Like he was a shell of the person he used to be." My voice coked on the last few words, Dean picking it up.

"You don't have to tell me if you're not ready." He said softly, shooting me a glance.

"I don't think I ever will be." I admit. "But I want to tell you...if that's alright with you, of course."

He only took one hand off of the steering wheel, reaching across the console and taking my hand in his, giving me a small squeeze. That was answer alone, and so I continued on with my tragic tale.

I feel like as my mom died, any connection I had with my dad diminished. It was like he was only around because of her, and now that she wasn't there was no need to be. I think when I was seven, I finally realized that I had to start taking care of myself because my father had left his parenting role far behind. It started off with him no longer making me lunches, and by the time I was in middle school I was basically a child with adult responsibilities. I never went to play outside, quite antisocial like you are now actually." I pointed at him during the last part, trying to lighten the conversation with another joke.

"Anyway, I went to school, never made friends, came back home, studied, made food, cleaned up the house, basically any and all chores were done by me because my father was out getting drunk. He wasn't abusive or anything...and as much as I disliked him for leaving me behind, I couldn't find it in my heart to hate him."

"Why not?" Dean asked, and while his eyes were focused on the road ahead I knew he was listening to everything I was saying.

"The love of his life was gone." I whispered. "And because I was an extension of her, it was almost as if I was a constant reminder of what he didn't have anymore. I'm not trying to excuse his actions, he was a terrible father. However, the idea that someone you cherished so heavily leaving before you could say a proper goodbye?"

"Yeah..." Dean said, finally understanding my stance on the situation. "That would kill me too."

"Exactly," I sighed, shutting my eyes and leaning against the seat. I felt Dean's thumb rub back and forth along the back of my hand again, and I knew it was his silent way of letting me know I was still here.

"He had liver poisoning by the time I turned sixteen. It seemed so surreal at the time, though was I really surprised? He was an alcoholic. One who barely ate proper meals and drank his own weight every hour. I tried my best to take care of him while juggling school, but by the time I turned eighteen he had kicked me out and moved back to his home country."

"Shit, Sophia." Dean cursed. "I can't even imagine..." He trailed off, shaking his head.

"It's alright, Dean. It's not like I wasn't already fending for myself. Though, I feel like because of how things were with my family, it was one of the reasons why I stayed with Devon for so long. Despite all the red flags I saw in him at the beginning." I sighed, rubbing my eye.

"Here I was, eighteen and working any and all jobs I could manage in order to keep a roof over my head when this good looking guy comes in the diner I was working at and asks me out." I paused, my smile pitiful. "I had been rejected my entire life and for the first time, I believed he saw me. And it felt good, you know? Having someone look at me like I was their everything."

"It felt good to be wanted." Dean said softly, as if speaking from experience.

I didn't pry, only nodding to what he said. "Exactly. He took care of me in a way I believed was love, but now that I look back on it I realized it was another way for him to control me. He would start off slow, telling me what to wear and what to eat, saying it was all for my benefit. But then as we grew closer, as he moved me in with him and made me quit all jobs so I had no way of earning my own money, he got more extreme. All of a sudden, I wasn't allowed to leave the house without his permission. I wasn't allowed my own bank account or eat before him. I was basically his doll, having to talk and act however he wanted me too."

Dean tensed at what I said, a hesitant look on his faced as he asked me a question slowly, as if he didn't want to trigger me. "Did he ever...?"

"No." I shook my head. Thankfully, it never got to that point where he demanded sex from me. Rather, he would actively go out and cheat on me with girls he'd worked with. Maybe at first it made my heart clench, but as time passed I was glad he wasn't coming to me to fulfill those needs.

Dean relaxed again, giving my hand another squeeze.

"I guess I'm telling you all of this because there's actually something I wanted to talk to you about."

"What is it?"

"I just..." I paused, bracing myself for the heavy conversation and slipping my hand out of his hold. "I want you to know that you don't have to continue whatever's going on between us."

"What are you talking about?"

"This," I gestured between us. "Everything that's going on with me. It's a fuck ton to process, much less deal with, and I know I was being clingy when I told you that you were stuck with me but that wasn't fair to say. You didn't know what you were getting yourself into, and I don't want you to feel like you have to stay. I want get angry you, I promise. So if you want to end it..." I swallowed, finishing off. "I understand."

Dean waited for me to end what I was saying, giving me another glance from his seat in the car.

"Are you done?" He asked.

"Yes...?"

"Good, because I have something to say as well. You're right, I didn't know what I was getting myself into. But does that mean I regret our friendship? Regret my feelings for you? Fuck no. You're permanent, Sophia. I promise you, you are. So whatever happens next, I'm right beside you. Whether as a friend, or something more if that's what you eventually want us to be."

God, he was too much sometimes and it made me wanna kiss the fuck out of him.

"You really mean that?"

"I do."

My smile widened as I leaned across the console, pressing a kiss to his cheek before pulling away. A red tinge started showing up and I realized he was blushing, making me horribly try to hold back a grin.

"More," I said to him, grabbing a hold of his hand again. "I want us to be more."

With that settled, we fell back into comfortable silence, my phone ringing making me ridged again. Slipping it out of my pocket, I realized it was just Alex texting me about hanging out the following day.

"Is everything okay, Sophia?"

"Yeah! Don't worry about it." I put away my phone, no longer feeling that ounce of fear.

"Did you...start your period or something? We can stop by the store to get you what you need."

I bit back a smile, my worries washing away as I turned back to Dean. "No...I didn't start my period. And if I did, I have a diva cup in my bag."

"What the fuck is a diva cup?" His brows were furrowed as he focused on the road, shooting me a quick glance.

"It's a silicon cup that you stick up your...stuck." I finally grinned, looking at him, seeing his face still masked with confusion.

"And it just...collects?"

"Yeah," I burst out laughing, instantly feeling better. "It collects."

"What do you do when it's full?"

"You dump out the blood and just stick it up there again. But I prefer to clean it before I do. It's less messy."

"Christ," He shakes his head. "Does it hurt?" He sounded so genuine that I was even more entertained.

"Nope. It isn't supposed to."

"Why don't you use pads or tampons?"

"Investing in a diva cup is way cheaper than buying a new pack of pads every month. Plus they can last up to ten years which is a bonus."

"Ten years? Shit, I might have to get myself one of those."

"But you don't bleed?"

"Oh yeah...Nevermind then."