

Chapter 138: Now or never.

Tess' POV:

When that policeman who didn't say his name to me said he had a message from Alexander, I felt hopeful, even though I knew running away would be absurdly risky. There were too many variables that could go wrong: we could get caught and my sentence could be compounded. Alex could be arrested for helping a prisoner escape, and that wouldn't help either. Oh, and there was also the risk of getting shot, which would be even worse.

While there were all those risks though, the prospect of continuing where I was was pretty daunting as well. I mean, who's crazy that would want to be in jail? Well, not me for sure. So, despite all the risks of this plan and the potential for it to go wrong, I decided to give it the benefit of the doubt. Even though the policeman's face was very strange. It looked like he was giving me Alex's message, but he wasn't quite sure what he was doing. Anyway, at that point, all I could do was wait. And when the time was right, I would have to run as fast as I could.

When you're in jail, you don't have a watch or many

personal items to pass the time, so minutes felt like hours and hours felt like minutes. You completely lose track of time. The only certainty I had was about day and night. That's because my cell had a window to the outside world, and I could see when the day was clear and when the sun went down. But even so, I quickly lost track of time. I slept and woke up at the most unlikely hours and had constant nightmares. But it wasn't just the nightmares that made it worse. Loneliness and lack of perspective also weighed heavily. I needed to talk to someone, but no one visited me. And not even a lot of time has passed since my arrest.

I thought that maybe Alex wasn't visiting me that much because people might be suspicious of the frequent visits, and honestly, I didn't expect anything more from Ethan, because he had said those horrible things to me the moment that he saw me behind bars.

Every now and then a policeman would come and have a few words with the prisoners, some of them would even ask me how I was doing. Some of the cops were kind, and at least they seemed to care, and that was something. However, sometimes there were some police officers who came to talk to us with malicious intent. It could only be some

kind of police abuse, because they made fun of us when they came to talk to us, and it was no easy thing to be in that position.

And that cop who brought me Alex's message never showed up after that furtive encounter.

Things changed the next day, however. At some indeterminate time in that psychological torture, another policeman appeared in the hallway and yelled, "Hey, Astor!"

I stuck my hand out, which was all I could manage to get out of the cell, and said in a monotone, "In here."

I heard his footsteps approach me and then he said to me: "I just came here to let you know that tomorrow will be your custody hearing, so be ready to leave here at 8 am and we'll come get you."

"I'm sorry, sir, but... how am I supposed to know when it's 8 am? There's no clock here!" I exclaimed to him.

"Well, that's not my problem, is it? If you wanted a watch so bad, you wouldn't have shot another person. My suggestion is that you be ready as soon as the sun comes up," he said, and He pulled away laughing at me again.

"Thanks...for nothing," I muttered to him. He didn't answer me anything, but I could hear his sarcastic chuckle as he walked away down the hall.

The custody hearing meant a lot to me. It meant that something was going to change in my status. I didn't have a law background, but I had watched enough movies and series to understand that the custody hearing was a serious thing. It could give me some leeway to answer the charges in freedom or it could send me to a more permanent correction center where I would await my trial.

With all the stress of what would happen to me the next day, I obviously couldn't sleep a minute of that night. Either outcome was possible and I was potentially nervous, and that helped keep me awake for the rest of the night. So we can say that between the moment the sun went down until the time it rose again, a veritable eternity passed.

I would be a liar if I said I hadn't reflected on what happened, because obviously in a cell you have a lot of time to reflect on your own life. However, I would be even more of a liar if I told someone I regretted it, even if it was for the good of my custody hearing. I didn't feel any regrets about it. On the contrary, my only regret was hitting Patricia instead of hitting Hannah's belly. Maybe if I had hit

Hannah in the stomach instead of Patricia, I would have gotten rid of her and her baby, killing two birds with just one stone.

But if I had considered saying anything to that effect I would have been locked in a padded cell. I would only admit it in front of a judge on the day I was crazy. But I can be many things, but insane is not one of them. Some people thought I had a screw loose, but they all had the fault of taking care of other people's business too much.

Finally, the next morning, the policeman who came to pick me up from my cell was the policeman who gave me Alexander's message. The only thing he said to me when he got to the cell was, "Good morning, Miss Astor. Please place your hands here."

I promptly obeyed him and placed my hands on that specific spot where they put handcuffs on prisoners before opening the cell door. The officer put the handcuffs on my wrists, but I didn't hear the traditional click that locked the handcuffs. There were cameras there in the environment, but he was alone.

So the guy said to me, "Act like they're locked."

I just said "ok" in a whisper.

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Then the policeman opened the cell and told me, "Follow me."

Those halls were just like the day I was taken there. Some inmates started messing with me and

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saying, "Oh, there goes our socialite. Tell us, did anyone post your bail, sweetie?" I ignored each of these taunts and concentrated on the task at hand. If my handcuffs were lost, I knew it was now or never.

The policeman approached me and then whispered in my ear: "Don't react. When we reach the police station lobby, you will be handed over to

another policeman to take you to the police car. Listen to me, you will need to punch this policeman as hard as you can to get him to drop you as soon as you reach the alley at the back of the station," the officer told me.

I lowered my head slowly just to give him the sign that I understood and continued silently looking straight ahead.

When I got to the police station courtyard, Deputy Pratt was leaving his desk. When he found me, he said: "Oh, Miss Astor, custody hearing day, isn't it?"

"As if you care, right?" I told him. And then, I turned away. I didn't want to look at his face anymore.

Pratt chuckled and muttered, "Good luck. My work with you probably ends here."

"Yeah, I hope I never see you again," I muttered to him.

And then, he made a sign to the policeman who was in the hall of the police station and said: "Yes, you can take her."

The policeman just put his hand on my shoulder and led me on. That was a good sign. If he was hanging on to me in any way, the whole plan would go down the drain because I only had one

chance.

I looked up and there were no cameras at the back of the station, and further along, I bet there wouldn't be any cameras in the alley either. I smile to myself. Now was the time. So, I gently removed the handcuff from my left wrist and kept it on my right wrist, and we continued walking.

As soon as we arrived at the alley, the policeman looked at the car confused, because the cop who would be my driver was unconscious on top of the steering wheel.

"What the hell..." the cop muttered.

And then, I turned with all the strength I had and punched him in the eye. I also took advantage of the weight of the handcuff that was attached to my wrist and hit his head. That wasn't enough to make him unconscious, but it still made him walk away from me bewildered.

"Ow. What the hell!" he murmured, and I kicked him in the stomach as hard as I could.

Well, the element of surprise is gone. I didn't have any other tricks left, so I started running as fast as I could down the alley. The problem was that the police car with the unconscious policeman was blocking the exit towards the street.

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I started to get desperate, and the cop was about to come and arrest me. I slipped over the hood of the car and kept running. But if I continued on foot, I would soon return from where I left. It was then that I heard the noise of tires screeching next to me.

"Here, Miss Astor," a voice from inside the car told me, and I jumped into the vehicle without a second thought.



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