

Chapter 13: Window seat.

I got dressed for work. I put on my jeans and I put the money I had in my bag. I deliberately left my phone on my pillow for what I was about to do.

He could trace me with the phone and I didn't want to be found.

My plan was clear and even though it wasn't England it was still considered a safe haven compared to this place. I had come to terms with a decision last night when Mateo left my room.

I couldn't sleep knowing what I was going to do today. It was short notice and I would never just leave on a dime without proper preparation but it felt like the walls were closing in on me the longer I stayed here.

I left my room to see Alvaro leaning against the wall, opposite my door. I ignored him and carried on walking to the stairs. "Jane," he called and I walked faster. "I didn't expect things to go that way yesterday," he tried to explain.

"You didn't expect to get caught," I said and he went silent.

"Jane please, just let me explain why."

I stopped turning around to face him. "I don't trust you, Alvaro," I said and his face fell. "Living here is like living in a house with a ticking time bomb. I don't know when it's going to explode."

"Jane..." He reached out to touch me and I took a step back.

"I don't have time for this, I have to drop Mateo off at school and go to work." He clenched his jaw and nodded, running a hand through his hair.

I turned my back on him and left the house. I had just asked him for one

thing and he couldn't even give me that.

Mateo was already in the car and so was Carlos. I slid into the driver's seat. "Everything okay?" Mat asked, looking at my face.

I put on my seatbelt. "Yeah, why wouldn't it be." He pointed at the house and I looked up to see Alvaro standing outside.

I ground my teeth looking at him. Every time I looked at him I felt angry wondering if everything he told me a lie just so that I would give him what he wanted. It made me feel sick that I fell for his sweet guy routine.

I started the car and drove out of the gates of the estate for what I hoped would be the last time. My plan was clear, I had enough money for a plane ticket to Texas.

My grandmother lived there. My grandfather passed ten years ago and she always got excited when we visited. My mother rarely visited her so I was hoping she would be happy that I did.

Texas would have to do for now. Until I saved enough money to put an ocean between me and Alvaro. The way I felt now was as if I could run to the farthest end of the earth to get away from him.

What made me feel worse was that I felt like an idiot. I actually started to like him and there was a part of me that wasn't thinking about running every so often. I was getting a bad case of Stockholm syndrome and I was glad he snapped me out of it.

Because there were more important things to take care of and I was losing focus on what was important.

"Jane you going to miss the turn," Mateo said and I slowed down as I came to the junction.

"What did you two fight about?" Mateo asked and I remained silent.

"It's nothing, kiddo. I promise."

I drove through the school gates and stopped the car at the roundabout. "Don't worry about picking me up," Mateo said, putting his bag on his shoulders, "Julia will give me a ride," he got out of the car.

"Mat," I said and he looked back at me.

"Have a great day at school. I love you."

He grinned. "I love you too, Jane," he said and my heart melted.

He turned away and jogged up to the school doors. I saw him catch up with Julia and she smiled at him. He would be okay. Julia was a sweet and responsible girl. She was great for him and I knew he would be taken care of.

A car honked from behind me to move and I pulled out of the roundabout, driving away from the school.

I still needed to figure out a way to get away from Carlos. He wasn't just going to let me out of his sight.

I thought about the back door in the store room of Ebonies. If I used that door I would come out in an alleyway. I could walk to the next street and take a bus to the station and from the bus station I could take another bus to the airport.

It seemed simple enough but my hands began to sweat. Reeling in my chicken nerves, I took in deep breaths. My heart was pounding in my ears and my ears were ringing.

I parked the car in my usual spot and got out. Carlos followed me and my hands shook as I went into my bag to get my keys to the store.

The keys fell from my hands and Carlos bent to pick them up. He eyed me up and down. There was an expression on his face I couldn't read. "Are you okay, Mrs Castillo?" He asked. "You are looking very pale."

I plastered a smile on my face. "Yeah, butterfingers and I'm just feeling cold," I hugged my jacket closer to my body.

He handed me the keys and I opened the store. I couldn't just leave right away I needed to make sure Carlos got comfortable in his position by the door.

I moved around the store, cleaning and rearranging things as I often did. Carlos got settled into his chair and I heard violent video game noises come from his phone.

It was time.

He was distracted.

I went into the back room and took out my keys. I locked the storeroom door and went to the back door. The door handle was stuck. I moved the handle around, trying to be as quiet as the door allowed me to be.

"Come on, please, please, please," I begged and it finally gave, budging open. I slipped out the back door and locked that door as well.

It would slow him down if he came that way to look for me. He would have to go around the street to catch up with me.

I looked down the street and I saw the bus coming my way. I picked my

hand up signalling the bus and the driver stopped on the side of the curb.

This was it.

The doors swung open and I got into the bus. I chose to sit in the middle seat rather than next to a window where I could be easily spotted. I had to think properly. Alvaro was a smart man and the moment he knew I was gone there would be people looking for me. It's why I needed to be on a plane as quickly as possible.

My palms were still sweaty. The bus drove all around doing all its stops and I kept praying under my breath. It felt like my bones were going to jump out of my skin.

If he caught me I knew what was going to happen. He would keep me under strict lock and key. I could kiss every inch of freedom—he gave me before— goodbye.

Finally, the bus returned to the station. Some people got off at the station and I stopped to talk to the driver.

"Excuse me," I said and the man looked up at me. "Which bus goes to the airport?" I asked.

"It's the bus parked in lot number three," he said politely.

"Thank you."

We were currently parked in lot eight and I jogged to lot three. The bus was already filled and I took a seat next to a boy that could be no older than Mateo. "Hi," I smiled at him.

"Hey," he greeted.

Thinking of Mateo made me want to turn back. I made promises to him. I steeled myself and put a hand on my stomach, remembering why I had to do this but it felt like I was making a horrible mistake. Mateo would never forgive me for this.

The bus started to move and I wiped my cheeks, realising they were wet with tears. "Do you know the time?" I asked the boy.

"9:30," he said.

After what felt like the longest bus ride in my history of taking the bus. The bus pulled up at the airport. I walked with the crowd into the airport and I saw on the screen that the next flight to Dallas Texas was at twelve.

I proceeded to the line and gave the lady behind the counter my passport. "One-way ticket to Dallas Texas," I said and she punched in the details on her computer.

I placed the cash on the counter and my flight ended up being cheaper because I used my fly miles. I would still have a little bit of money left over.

The lady took my cash and handed me a ticket. I went and sat down with the other people waiting for their flight.

The wait was killing me because Carlos had to realize I was missing by now and he must have told Alvaro. I was afraid Alvaro would walk into the airport at any minute.

I began tapping my foot nervously.

Finally, the flight was boarding and I gave the ticket agent my ticket. I had no bags so I could easily board the plane after going through the

metal detectors.

I rushed to get on the plane. I had a window seat and this I could enjoy without worrying about being spotted from the sky.

It was only when the plane took off that I felt at ease. I rest back in my seat letting out a harsh breath. I was free.

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The plane landed at Dallas Love Field airport and I had called for a cab to take me to my grandmother's ranch. The last time I was here I was twenty-one. I stepped out of the airport and took in a huge breath of Southern air.

"Are you Jane?" A cab driver asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Well welcome to Texas, ma'am. He looked around me. "No bags?" He asked.

"Nope," I said.

"Alright then," he said getting into the cab. "Where we going?" He asked when I got into the back seat.

"Do you know where the old dairy farm used to be?" I asked.

"Yeah..." He looked like he was thinking about it.

"You can drop me off there."

"Yes, ma'am."

I was starting to feel sleepy during the cab drive. I couldn't sleep on the plane. My nerves weren't allowing it. I don't think I'd ever be able to sleep again until I was on a different continent.

I had to get my story straight on what I would tell my nana. She would have questions. My stomach would soon grow and she would know I was pregnant.

I was hoping I wouldn't stay here long but time was not on my side.

The cab driver stopped outside by the old dairy ranch. It was opposite my grandmother's place. "Thank you." I gave the driver what was due and he drove off.

The ranch was slowly deteriorating. The fence was broken and the barn looked like it was standing on a feeble foundation that would give the next time there was a heavy wind.

The paint on the house was fading and the grass in the yard was overgrown. The porch was missing a step and I had to stretch my leg hoping I didn't fall through the first step.

The porch creaked as I walked up to the door. Nana could no longer keep this place up due to her age. She sold all the animals and allowed a small business to use a few acres of her land as a plantation.

I walked up to the door and knocked. "I'm coming," I heard her call. The door soon creaked open and my grandmother stood in front of me. "My heavens," she pulled me in a hug, "what are you doing here?" She sounded excited. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming? I would have cooked."

I smiled down at her. She was a short stumpy, cute old woman that

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looked a lot like a cabbage patch doll with her freckles and deep dimples.

"I'm sorry for the short notice, nana. But I had some work to do here and thought I'd surprise you." First lie.

"No problem, sweet pea," she beamed, "it gets so lonely here. I offered your mom and dad to come and take over this place and they both refused, they said it was an unwise investment.

She looked behind me. "Sweetheart, where is your luggage?" She asked.

I looked behind me too, trying to buy myself some time to think. "Um, the airport lost it. They said they'd call when it turns up."

She nodded. "Well come in," she said and I walked in to see that the house was clean. Nana may have been too old to keep up the appearance outside but she still tried on the inside.

Her house was very old-fashioned and I meant that in a good way. She had brown suede sofas with doilies on them and there was a big brown coffee table I used to play with my toy on when I was a kid.

There was an old television set sitting in the front of the room. Nana never believed in technology so she never bothered with upgrading anything. She had all our family pictures hanging up on the wall.

And I felt at home just looking at everything.

The house smelled of pine and a hint of grass. The breeze coming from the open windows was refreshing and I could feel the last of my nerves and negative thoughts slip. "What would you like for dinner, sweet pea?" She called from the kitchen.

"Nana you don't have to cook for me."

She came into the living room and took a hold of my hand, pulling me into the kitchen. "Nonsense you're my grandchild. I barely get to see you and Jason." I sat down at the kitchen table. "Speaking of which how is he?" she asked.

"He's good, he got a job in Brazil," I shouldn't have said that but it just came out.

She went over to the fridge and got a jug of iced tea. She got a glass from the cupboard. I loved my grandmother's kitchen. It was classic, with wooden countertops and lots of windows to look out into the fields.

It used to be a sight when she had horses but now the view consisted of overgrown grass and dried-up crops.

She slammed the glass down hard on the table and I jumped.

She picked up my hand. "You're married?" She asked looking at the ring on my finger.

I forgot to take it off. I wasn't even thinking about the ring. I felt my voice get stuck in my throat as my grandmother looked over me. "No, no. This is fake. It's something we sell back at the store and it looks real doesn't it?" I tried to play it off hoping she would believe me. 1

"Yeah it does," she chuckled. "Of course, you're not married. I would have gotten an invitation." She waved her hand dismissing the thought and moving to go over to the bread tin.

I slid the ring off my finger and put it into my bag. For some reason, I felt guilty for doing that. I had to remind myself it's not like we were married because of mutual respect and love. He married me for his own selfish reasons and I had nothing to feel guilty about.

"So there is no special man in your life at all, sweetheart?" She inquired, placing a tray raisin scones in front of me.

I took a sip of the sweet pineapple ice tea as I shook my head. My grandmother went over to the freezer and grabbed a chicken. "Honey you ain't getting any younger. But anyway it's a good thing you're home. My friend Janice's grandson is about your age I could introduce you and if things go well you two can settle down here."

I choked on my iced tea. That was the last thing I wanted. "Um nana, I do have someone in my life..." She was going to find out sooner or later. I didn't know how long I'd be here. I'd rather start telling her something so she wouldn't get suspicious down the line.

"I'm pregnant," I said.

My grandmother turned around so fast. She had a serious look on her face as she came over and pulled up a chair next to me. "Do you know who the father is?" She asked and for some reason, I wanted to laugh.

"Of course I do, nana." I smiled.

"Well, are you two going to get married?" She demanded to know.

"Um yeah, just after I finish my work here and leave." I could make up some lie that I didn't want to get married later on.

"Do your parents know?" She asked and I shook my head.

"Mom doesn't really seem to have time whenever I call her."

My grandmother's bottom lip quivered. "Oh sweetheart," she cooed, running her hand over my hair and pulling me into a hug. "A girl should

have her mother in times like this," she said, "I'm just sorry your mother turned out to be such a hard ass."

I laughed and she continued petting my hair. "So tell me more about your baby daddy," she said and a blush tinted my cheeks.

"He's rugged and he's handsome," I admitted and I could feel my cheeks getting hotter. "He can seem like a real brute sometimes but he has a soft side for the people he cares about. He does things sometimes that I don't understand. He doesn't say much most of the time so it's hard for me to know what he's thinking. He is also very unpredictable to me."

She placed a hand over mine. "Sweetheart, let me tell you something. All men are like that in the beginning. They want to be all mysterious to keep you interested. Take your grandpa, for example, I couldn't read that man but when we got married I couldn't get him to shut up at times. He was just a chatterbox but he was a sweet man. Very hardworking."

Alvaro was nothing like any man I'd ever met before.

"Well, he does work hard to support his family. He loves his grandfather and Mateo." Thinking about Mateo was starting to make my eyes tear.

"Wait this man already has a kid?" She questioned.

"He adopted him."

My grandmother's jaw dropped. "Honey that man is a saint. It takes a special kind of person to adopt someone else's kid."

She was right and wrong at the same time because he wasn't a saint and nor was he all sinner. He was something in between. "I can't wait to meet him," my grandmother said and I felt uneasiness creep into my bones.



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I smiled hiding my protest with her request as I proceeded to take a bite out of the scone. I hadn't eaten anything from the morning and I was starving.

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