

FALLING FOR THE ENEMY Chapter 3 - CHAPTER THREE: RUN FOR YOUR DEAR LIFE

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Silence.

That's all there was as Maria sat alone in the room of the deceased.

Cold, maddening silence.

Her heart was beneath a thin layer of frost, what once drummed wildly with so much love and determination was now at a standstill. She couldn't even hear its beat, not to mention feel it. She wasn't sure she could feel anything.

Her eyes remained wide and unmoved as she stared at the plain ash wall in front of her. If she was being true to herself, she was used to this type of quietness. Her mother would usually be asleep at this time, her sickness made her weak which meant she required a lot more sleep than Maria did.

So that left Maria alone. With her thoughts and fantasies, of course.

On many occasions, she'd find herself imagining how great it would be if she had a normal family. A sibling or two to whom she could bond or argue, a father that would treat her like a princess and protect her from the harm of the outside world. A mother that wasn't sick.

In her little world, she'd imagine going on a road trip with them, the car would be filled with chatter and their singing. Or spending a holiday in the Bahamas and booking hotel rooms while flirting with hot guys at the beach. Or even something as common as a nice relaxing dinner after school. It's funny how the events an average family would consider normal were nothing but a fairy tale to her.

Her eyes went to a picture of Maria and Ashley a few years ago that hung loosely on the wall beside the dressing mirror. The picture was taken on her first day of high school, Ashley had baked her a bit of 'good luck! Have a great first day at high school cake for her. The memory of the long dissertation that had been squeezed on top of the chocolate cake almost brought a smile to Maria's face.

Despite her fatal ailment, her mother would never stop smiling. Even though she got paler, her glow and vibrant nature were still there. She had always brought peace, happiness, and tranquillity to those fortunate enough to meet her.

Despite her age, she attracted many men, both young and old. Maria wanted to laugh as she tried to recall the number of men that had come to their home asking for her hand in marriage. But for reasons unknown to Maria, Ashley would always decline them.

Maria would wonder if it had anything to do with her father. Her mother barely spoke of him and oddly enough, Maria never asked. The only information she was certain of was that the man was dead. But Ashley never seemed to miss him or give any indication her heart belonged to someone else.

Ashley Henshaw was a mystery, indeed. But a gem nonetheless.

A gem that was gone forever.

Maria may not have had the most ideal family, but her mother certainly did everything possible to make sure she got a good childhood filled with laughter and fun. Maria was filled with both gratitude and regret. If only she could have done more.....

Tears threatened to fall at the thought but she wouldn't let them. She was tired of crying, tired of repeatedly getting hurt.

She lifted the steaming hot cup of coffee to her lips, gulping it down carelessly as the liquid set her throat ablaze, which resulted in her gasping and coughing haphazardly. She wanted so badly to get her hands on some whiskey, but with all the strange events happening recently she knew it was better to remain as sober as possible.

Speaking of strange events.....

As if the universe was mocking her, something weird had caught her eye. Peeking into the front yard through her mother's window, Maria saw something that made her uncertain whether she had imagined it or not. It appeared as though a figure went into their backyard, but the movement was too quick to be sure.

Unease settled within her stomach. She contemplated checking whether or not her safety was being threatened or calling 911.

Jane.

Yes, she'd call her. She fiddled through the sheets in a desperate search for her phone but all to no avail. She searched the chair, the dressing mirror, and the nightstand but her phone was nowhere to be seen. That was when she remembered dropping it on the kitchen counter while she made her coffee.

Shit!

She wanted to slap herself so badly. She had been so lost in her thoughts that she forgot about the possibility of her life being in danger. How could she be so careless? On a normal day, Maria was always with her phone. It only showed how bad her luck was at this point. To make things worse, neither she nor her mother was athletic. So there wasn't any ideal baseball bat hanging around that she could use to protect herself.

What do I do? What do I do? She thought to herself as she panicked.

Her mind surfed any possible way of getting out of this, she grabbed her skull before pulling her hair in frustration. Her heart seemed to have come back to life as it drummed wildly as if threatening to burst out of her rib cage.

She was scared, there was no doubting that. But she refused to let her emotions get the best of her. She refused to give up so easily. She decided it was best to calm her racing heart and look for a weapon, she was wasting time panicking.

Searching her mother's wardrobe with frantic and fidgeting hands, she was able to get ahold of the crowbar she'd normally use to yank open the attic or stuck drawers.

It was perfect!

She grabbed her newfound weapon in a tight grip before exiting the room as quietly as possible. She wore nothing but an oversized t-shirt with shorts, so in case worse came to worse, she could easily run.

But then again, she might as well just be overreacting. She had gone days without a good night's sleep and she hadn't exactly seen anything that indicated her being endangered. Perhaps she was becoming delusional.

Regardless of her thoughts, she needed to get her phone. She descended the stairs as slowly as possible, careful not to make a sound. The crowbar raised high and ready to swing at any spotted movement.

The strain put on both her eyes and ears was enough to give anyone a migraine, she needed to be on full alert. Her eyes didn't miss a single corner as she approached the kitchen. They fell on the phone which laid cold and untouched atop the counter. Exactly where she left it.

Knowing better than to let go of her only form of defense, she left the crowbar in the possession of her left hand, before she quickly unlocked her phone. She struggled with the decision of whether to call 911 or her best friend.

No, if there was a threat in her home, calling Jane would make her come here and that would only put her in danger. She needed to call the police. But then again, what if there was no threat? She didn't have any solid evidence to prove she was at risk, this could all be in her head after all. She'd hate to come off as crazy....

Maria's eyes went toward their kitchen window which showcased the whole backyard. Not a man or sign of danger in sight. With her crowbar in her left hand and phone in her right, she stalked closer to the window to get a better look, fear gripped her heart tighter with each step she took.

She was not sure how, but it felt as though the house had become even quieter, she couldn't even hear her breathing. As though there was no sign of life for miles. Not a single...

"Got you."

There was barely time for her to part her lips to release a scream before a well-covered hand clamped down on her mouth, the force was so strong it was sure to leave some damage to her jaw. Her assaulter was a giant, she could tell by the spot her head rested on, his muscular chest. And it just so happened that her assaulter had a companion, the other man wasted no time in yanking the crowbar from her grasp and flinging it somewhere across the room.

Maria's fingers worked before her brain could operate as she tried to dial Jane's number. Even if it was just a ring, if Jane saw it she'd be aware something was wrong. Unfortunately, that too was too slow as her assaulter grabbed the cell from her hand. To her complete horror, she watched as he crushed the phone in his meaty fists, leaving no hope of calling for help.

No no no!

Her assaulter's partner had grabbed both her hands in a firm grip as he began tying her wrists together with a rough rope. But Maria would rather be damned than go down without a fight.

She made sure to put in as much force in her upcoming action, she bit into the glove of her assaulter with all her might, making sure that her teeth had gone through and made contact with his skin before tearing out a fat chunk of flesh, the metallic scarlet blood gushing into her mouth.

Her assaulter released a yell of pain as he let go of Maria to attend to his wounds. The second man, still in shock at what just happened received a swift, hard knee between his legs causing his grip on Maria's wrists to loosen before landing on his knees. She leaped away from him completely, throwing the rope that luckily had not been knotted away.

Just as she was about to break off into a full sprint, her ankle was grabbed and she tumbled to the floor. She wasted no time in regaining herself as she pulled open a nearby drawer and to her luck was able to grab hold of a knife. Without thinking, she slammed the knife into his wrist, pinning it to the floor. A scream of agony resonated from his throat as Maria took the opportunity to bolt for the front door.

Her first assaulter chased after her but just before she could get ahold of the handle, she grabbed a nearby vase and threw it at his head with all her might. The glass shattered on his face as he crumpled to the ground, clutching his possibly cracked skull with his injured hand.

Swinging the front door open, the cold, midnight wind hit her exposed legs as she dashed out the front yard and into the empty street. The moon was high up in the sky, watching as the young girl ran for her dear life.

Her bare feet slammed repeatedly against the pavement, using her arms to propel herself forward as she urged herself faster to the only other safe place she knew.

