

Book 1 Chapter 16

VERITY

I turned into the lane and drove. I was supposed to be here about three hours ago but needed help nding the place. I had to ring Sandy to nd out where to go. It took a while, but I managed to nd the right road.

I noticed the sign for the motel and turned the corner.

I drove further up and found the motel, with a bar nearby.

Sandy explained that the place was just outside a small town, a pit stop for most people, before continuing their journey.

I felt relieved as I stopped the car and turned the engine off.

I glanced out of the windscreen and sighed.

The area around the motel and bar was large enough to t another building; even the car park was massive.

I quickly grabbed my bag, leaving the rest of my stuff till I knew where I would be staying, and climbed out of the car.

I stood rooted to the spot as I headed toward the motel.

As I approached the motel oce, there was no one around, and I even tried ringing the bell, but there was no one. I stepped outside the motel and glanced toward the bar.

I might try over there.

I headed toward the bar and entered the door as a bell rang.

"I'll be with you in a moment," a woman shouted from somewhere.

I felt eyes on me.

I glanced around the bar, and three men stared back. All of them seemed to be over sixty, but their faces looked blank.

I felt a shiver run over me.

I looked toward the bar, where I spotted movement.

I walked over and took the stool in the corner.

One of the men was by the bar; his grey eyes were on me.

I gave him a small smile, trying to be friendly, but he huffed and mumbled something under his breath, but I couldn't hear what.

Some movement could be heard behind a door, but a woman stepped out and looked around till her eyes landed on me.

A smile appeared.

"Verity," she asked with a questioning look, and all I could do was nod.

The woman stepped closer and smiled.

"I thought so," she said, moving closer and sticking her hand out to me to take. I shook her hand and kept my eyes on her but said nothing.

"Nice to meet you, sweetheart," she said. "Peggy, Sandy told me all about you. I will take you to the motel and get you settled in a few moments, but we have to wait till my husband comes back, if that's okay?"

"Yeah," I said.

Peggy smiled.

"I bet you're hungry," she said, and right on cue, my stomach growled.

I wrapped my arms around myself and felt my cheeks ush slightly.

Peggy smiled and placed her hand on my arm.

"It's okay, sweetheart," she said. "I have made some stew. I will get you a bowl."

I smiled as she left.

I waited a few minutes, and Peggy returned with a bowl in her hands. She placed it in front of me and smiled.

"Here," she said. "You eat up, and I will nish what I need to do before Bow comes in."

I nodded and ate.

The stew was the best thing, next to Carlton's sandwiches. I ate the sandwiches when I got lost. I was planning on saving them for when I got here and eat them in my room, but when it started to get over two hours late, I began to get more hungry.

Everyone was staring at me, but I didn't bother looking up.

After the last spoonful, I placed the spoon back in the bowl and licked my lips.

"Thank you," I said, looking toward Peggy. "That was delicious."

Peggy grinned.

"My pleasure, dear," she said. "Now, shall we..." but she was cut off by the door opening and someone grunting coming through.

"Damn, stupid truck," growled a man as I turned to look over at him.

The man looked like a lumberjack. He walked further into the bar but stopped when he stared at me.

A slow grin spread across his face.

I felt at ease with him, somehow.

The man came closer and held out his hand to me, "You must be Verity," he said as I took his hand and shook. "I'm Bow, Peggy's husband. Welcome to the place. I hope you enjoy it here."

I was about to say something when I heard a stool scrape across the oor and the man from the bar glaring at us.

I felt my heart leap out of my chest.

"Damn, human," he muttered as he stoked off.

What was his problem?

What the hell was human about?

I watched the man leave but felt eyes on me. I looked back and found Bow staring. "Don't mind him," he said, letting go of my hand. "He will come around once he gets to know you."

I stared at him but didn't say anything.

What was he on about?

I watched as Bow walked behind the bar, grabbed Peggy, and kissed her.

I had to look away, as I felt like they needed privacy.

Peggy giggled, "Don't mind this old fool," she said, making me turn to look at them and smile. "He is always like this."

I listened to Peggy explain the rules of living in the motel.

No loud music.

No parties.

Basically, everything that I don't do.

"So," she said, "Sandy mentioned you were running from a man. Is that true?"

I felt my heart ache, even though his name wasn't mentioned. I kept the radio on, singing along to all the songs and ensuring I didn't think about him - Axel.

I nodded. I was too scared to talk, just in case I cried.

Peggy nodded, and a sad look appeared.

"Well," she said, "we will keep you safe."

I stared as Bow moved behind her, but his eyes lingered on me.

I honestly thought I caught him sning the air, but I might have been mistaken; who would do that?

"Thanks," I muttered, but as soon as the word escaped my lips, so did a yawn.

Peggy sighed, and a slow smile appeared again.

"You must be tired," she said. "You have been driving a long time. I will show you to your room."

I nodded.

"Bow, baby," she said. "Come with us so you can carry Verity's bags."

"No," I blurted as I shook my head.

"It's okay," I said. "I will leave it till tomorrow. I have most of my belongings anyway."

Peggy nodded.

"Okay, if you are sure," she said.

"Yeah, thank you, though," I said.

Peggy looked at Bow, but there were no words exchanged.

After a few seconds, Peggy sighed.

"Let's get you into your room," she said as she moved around and came before me. "I picked the best room I could for you. It's out of sight, so you won't hear all the noise coming from here, and it is bigger than most of the rooms we have to offer."

I nodded.

I got off the stool and headed to the door, following Peggy.

I gave Bow a wave, and he waved back with a smile, but something was clearly written on his face.

Peggy walked outside and headed toward the motel, away from the oce area. We went around the back as she led us to what looked like a little cabin.

I frowned.

"I thought I was staying in one of the rooms," I said, looking back at the motel.

Peggy stopped and smiled.

"I thought I place you in one of the cabins we had made recently," she said. "I had to say that you were staying in the motel as one of the men in the bar wants to have one of these places, and I have told him that they aren't for sale."

I turned around and stared at her but took in the cabin as Peggy talked. I started walking, realizing that Peggy was moving toward it.

"Sandy told me that you may want to work," she said, making me look over at her as we stopped in front of the cabin.

I gave her a small smile.

"I would," I said. "But I don't know what my plans are."

Peggy beamed.

"We don't mind helping people who need it," she said, "You can work in the motel or bar or even both if you want. We are always looking for people to help us, but we don't get any takers unless it is in the small town."

"I would love to work either," I said. "I will start with one for now, but if you need me for the other, I don't mind helping."

Peggy grinned.

"Now," she said, "I had a call from Sandy; she will be here soon. You may be sharing with her. I believe she said she wanted a change of pace. Carlton is a good guy, but working in that cafe does drive people crazy."

The thought of Sandy coming to stay only made me feel happy, but I wondered what changed her mind and want to return.

At least I will have a friend.

"I will let you get yourself settled," she said. "If you need us, the extension on the phone to our place is three, four, nine. Ring the number, and we can help."

I nodded.

"Thank you for this," I said. "I appreciate it."

Peggy came up to me and smiled, and pulled me into a hug. She pulled back and smiled.

"Tomorrow, we can wait for Sandy to come, and we can all go to the store in the town," she said. "We can walk there if the weather holds up."

I smiled.

Peggy handed me the keys and walked away, calling out. "Ring if you need anything," she shouted as she headed back around the motel.

I watched as she turned the corner and looked back at the cabin.

The cabin was small, but it would do for me.

I placed the key in the lock and opened the door. The smell of wood lled my nose as I stepped inside.

I found the light switch by the front door and scanned around.

The cabin looked more significant on the inside than on the outside. Five doors darted around the place, but there was a lounge section and a small kitchenette.

I closed the door behind me and placed my bag on the counter.

This place was going to be my new home. Well, for now.

I felt safe, and there was nothing to worry about; no one knew where I was. Not even Axel.

"I can do this," I muttered, "A new beginning."

And that is what is a new beginning for me.

I was starting fresh, and I wouldn't waste any more time waiting for Axel.

The mere thought of him hurt, but I needed to forget about him.

I needed to move on; this was the rst step, being away from him.