2. No plan

Rory's POV

I didn't know how long I had been driving since the last small stop, but my eyes had been focused on the road for at least eleven hours. Driving almost at full speed until nally I slowed down, checking the rear view mirror every few minutes to be sure he was not following me.

When the adrenaline nally faded and my erratic heart began beating normally, I was beyond exhausted. The constant sobbing, overthinking, and not eating made it hard to stay focused. Still afraid he might catch me at any time, I opened the windows to let in the fresh air, in an attempt to wake myself up. My auburn hair was owing all over my face, and I had to brush it off repeatedly to see the dark and empty road ahead.

When the fuel indicator started to shine red again, the car voice assistant suggested searching for a nearby gas station. I knew I had to rell the tank, so I ignored the woman's voice. I looked around for any signs of a nearby town. Once spotted, I turned right and after a few miles I entered a small town with not many people on the streets due to the late hour.

I stopped at the empty gas station and after relling and paying, I decided to enter a small diner next to the station to ll my growling belly. When I opened the door, the bell rang informing the staff of the new customer incoming. I scanned the area and saw a decent and almost modern looking interior. The place was painted yellow and green with a little bit of a gray touch.

It smelt of fresh coffee and fried burgers. My stomach growled loudly, and it was so obvious that the sales lady over the counter probably heard it too. Blushing, I hung my head low and sat at the farthest booth to avoid any eyes. Although the diner was empty, better safe than sorry. Reaching for money from my pocket, I unfolded it on the table and counted, hoping I could at least afford the coffee. Recounting two times, I was sure I didn't make any mistakes.

$10.50.

Yep, that was all I had. No credit cards, no extra hidden savings, no phone. Only $10.50 after paying for the gas. I sted my hands in anger and defeat at the same time. What was I thinking? Driving away with no plan, no money, and no destination in my head. Engrossed in my misery, I didn't notice the waitress approaching my table until her voice made me look at her.

"Hey sweetie, don't cry. I can get you a big burger and a coffee on the house." she smiled while placing a mug of hot and steaming black liquid in front of me. I thanked her and reached for the cup with one hand while the other wiped away the tears I hadn't known were falling.

My whole life fell apart in an hour. Memories ran through my mind in pictures of the happiness and unconditional love I got. My carefree childhood while I ran through the woods, my laughter when I was tickled until I could barely hold my bladder. My cries at thunder striking near the house in the middle of the rainy night while being held in strong arms providing me with safety. My rst school crush, rst disappointment, rst ght about my life choices.

It was all lies. I guess I didn't really know the man I had spent almost 18 years with. I was pulled out of my thoughts when the waitress, 'Annie' according to her nametag, placed the biggest burger with fries in front of me, smiling like she knew my story. After a sheepish 'thank you', I started to eat with no more words being said.

The dish looked so inviting that I bit into the burger like a lion devouring meat after a week of starvation. Who knew when the next time would be? I was in the middle of my meal when I heard the doorbell ring and a few people came in, laughing and greeting Annie, asking for their usual. Three men and two girls around my age or a bit older came in and took the booth. From ten of the empty booths they had to choose the one next to mine. So much for being alone. They chatted about some regular teenage things that weren't interesting to me at all.

Their laughter lied the entire diner and I felt a little ping of jealousy that I had never experienced that kind of simple thing. I had no real friends to go out with, no sleepovers with girls to talk about boys, no visits to our house. This should have been some kind of warning, but I never felt in danger being with him alone.

I blocked out their chatter and concentrated on my feast. But their constant laughing made my gaze look up and see the backs of the boys' heads, shaking from left to right at something funny. I huffed in irritation at their stress-free lives, while I was at the cross-road of my life. After eating the whole meal, I was full and ready to go. But the question was: Where to go?

I had no plan, no idea where I should head out, no friends to ask for help. Tears appeared in my eyes again at the thought that I was all alone in this shitty situation.

Sudden movement at the corner of my table made me go stiff. A huge guy appeared beside me with bulging biceps and forearms that he placed at the edge of my table. I looked up to see a handsome face with a mischievous smile. I didn't register the words he said, but the intention was clear. He was hunting for a new 'avor of the week' and I was denitely not one of them. Not even close. So I stood up, excused myself and passed him to make my way to the exit, when his next words made my blood boil in anger.

"Another stubborn, stupid bitch." I stopped and turned to face him. He folded his arms in front of his chest, showing his big and toned muscles, smiling like the smug dickhead he was. He sent me a irtatious wink before he blew me a kiss. All of his companions roared with laughter at the situation, but I wasn't laughing. I was pissed. Fisting my hands at my sides, I tried to control the anger that built up inside me and was about to explode.

"If I'm a stupid b***h for not falling for your charms, then you are a f*****g moron to assume you have any." I spat through gritted teeth. The girls gasped in shock at my bluntness, while the guys whistled, indicating the trouble I was in. And honestly, the moment I said those words I knew I was in deep trouble.

The guy was huge, over 6 feet tall, with a lot of muscles that were trying to pop out of his tight red shirt. Compared to him, I was just a little girl barely reaching his chest. His big hand could squeeze the life out of me in a second without any effort.

His face turned red in anger, and everything in the diner fell silent. The air felt heavy all of a sudden and my throat was dry from nervousness. My heart sped up and I could hear it pounding in my ears, while the free burger I just enjoyed threatened to make its way back up. I swallowed the bile and waited. No one dared to move, say anything, or stop him.

"What the f**k did you say?!" He almost roared, causing everyone to tremble in fear. I didn't know what was going on here, but I felt I had made a huge mistake earlier by opening my mouth. I didn't answer, just stared back at him, hoping to get out of this mess in one piece. He started to walk very slowly in my direction. He looked like a lion ready to pounce on his prey.

My rooted legs didn't let me move, although my brain shouted at me to run the hell out of here. I was denitely going to die now. I prayed to God for a chance to survive and promised to be a good girl, but I guess my fate was sealed.

He was a few feet away when the door bell behind me rang and the whole atmosphere changed again. If I thought it was intense before, the person who entered made it even more intimidating. The hair on my skin stood up and I shivered from the cold creating goosebumps on my arms. All eyes snapped to the person behind me and they all froze.

The moron before me stopped immediately and bowed his head in respect. I felt the presence behind my back, and all my previous reactions in my body intensied. I was so scared to turn around and face the stranger, but his one word put my body into motion.

"Go."

His one word made my legs move and all my body parts knew better than to disobey his order, especially my mouth. His voice was low, deep, and held so much authority that only a fool would stand and argue with him. I didn't look back at the diner. With a pounding heart, I rushed to my car.

With shaky hands, I unlocked the door and got in. Turning the ignition on, I hit the gas pedal with full force. I swirled around, leaving the cloud of dust behind me and hit the road to escape the town and back on the main street into the unknown.

I drove away from the diner like a mad woman, not minding the speed limits or paying attention to my surroundings. The feeling of dread consumed my whole body during another dangerous encounter in less than 24 hours.

"What the f**k was that?" I screamed, turning onto the main road, leaving the town behind me.

My mind was running with questions, while my heart almost jumped out of my chest, pumping wildly with another dose of adrenaline. Wide awake, I continued my furious ride, focused on the empty road ahead. On instinct, I checked the rear view mirror from time to time to see if anyone was following me.

Who was that man? Why did he have such a powerful aura around him? And why did that bulky man stop just at the sight of my savior? I couldn't nd any reasonable answers to any of my questions. I just knew he saved me from whatever that moron was planning to do. I exhaled a huge breath of relief and thanked the Lord one more time for saving my life and prayed for him to lead me to my safe destination, with no more troubles on the way. With no one else around, I had to trust in God.

After almost an hour of driving in a rush, I slowed down and looked back to check my surroundings. Relieved that no one was chasing me, I slowed down. Thankful to have escaped a battle with no possibility to win on my own, I sighed and closed my eyes for a second. The second that changed my plan irrevocably.

Looking at the dashboard, I saw the time 11:59 p.m., 20th of April. When the clock turned midnight, I wished myself a 'Happy Birthday' and smiled. I had turned eighteen and it was the happiest moment to realize that I had nally reached the age of majority, but suddenly I felt strange. I started to sweat and shake. My head spun a bit and an ache formed at the back of my skull, slowly spreading forward, causing me to grimace. The sudden pain that ripped through my body made the car zigzag all across the street.

"What the f**k?!" I yelled when my hands started to shake and the heat creeped up from my palms gripping the steering wheel up to my arms. My skin felt like it was burning in the highest fever of my life. I was out of control of my body, trying to keep myself steady while looking for a safe place to pull over, which was dicult with blurry vision.

When the shaking of my hands turned into the sound of popping, driving was dicult and the pain unbearable. The snapping of the bones in my legs made my foot step on the gas so hard that it almost broke the car's chassis. I was glad I was the only driver on a road surrounded by forest. I was hyperventilating, not knowing what was going on.

While I was trying to calm down and stop the car to avoid an accident, I suddenly heard a faint voice in my head.

'Welcome.'

Who said that? Despite the disturbance of the unknown voice and my overthinking of the situation, I turned the steering wheel to the right, seeing an open space to park.

With little to no time to understand the situation and more questions than answers going through my mind, my right foot pressed on the brakes before I registered the big animal in front of me. The reactions of my body were so natural that everything afterwards felt like an action movie experienced from the front seat. Literally.

The abrupt impact made my hands lift up, crossing above my head, shielding my face from the shards of glass that broke after hitting the obstacle. The airbags blew up as I felt my body being lifted off the seat and ying through the broken front window. My petried scream echoed in the dark night, straining my vocal cords, while my body hurt from the inside.

The unknown change in my bone structure terried me until I heard the same small but sweet voice in my head.

'We're okay.'

Flying out of the car, a few shards scratched my face deeply. Another scream left my mouth that was full of pain and horror. In the short moment that my body was in the air, ying over the hood, I knew this was my end.

I hit the hard surface with a loud thud and more bones breaking, and I felt like my back split in two. I realized that I had just landed on a big tree, a loud cracking noise indicating that my spine had gotten badly injured. I gasped, opening my eyes in pain. My body was still heating up from fever and it felt like I had neverending breaks in my limbs. Suddenly, in a blur, I saw a huge wolf standing in the middle of the road.

His eyes glowed at me from his muzzle, observing my agony carefully for a moment before lifting up his head and howling loudly at the moon. On the verge of blacking out, I saw the animal start to shake, gurgling and letting out heavy steam from his mouth. With the last slow blink of my closing eyes, I saw it shift into a naked man crouching down in front of my car. The front lights were still on, giving this strange moment a magical touch. But my brain refused to be awake anymore and the last thing I heard before death's arms pulled me into the darkness was a scared male's voice.

"Call the Alpha."