

CHAPTER 16: TRUST NO ONE

“Hey mom, I’m headed to the store for some last minute items that I’m going to be needing.” I inform my mother as she loads the dishwasher.

“Okay, honey. Don’t worry about forgetting anything, you can always buy it when you get there or we can send it. We will be shipping out your boxes tomorrow, and they are supposed to be at your new apartment a day or two after you arrive.” Shutting the dishwasher door, my mom turns to face me, “Are you sure you want to leave so soon? You have plenty of time before your summer classes start, it’s only January.”

This has been my mom ever since I told her my plans, she’s trying to keep me as long as she can, “Mom, I told you that I wanted to find a job and try and build up a little nest egg before classes begin and I’ll have to cut my work hours back.”

She walks over to me and grabs my face, “When did you grow up? Where is my little Ella bear?” I can see her eyes misting over, so I break free before she has us both in tears.

“It’s called life mom,” I chuckle, grabbing my car keys off the hook by the back door, “I’ll be back in a bit.” She waves me away with a smirk, and I take it as my cue to leave.

My flight to Connecticut leaves tomorrow afternoon and there are a few things that I still need before leaving. My parents are proud that I chose Yale to continue my education, but they aren’t happy that I’ll be so far away. They only agreed to let me go as long as I promised to come back every holiday break and that I call at least three to four times a week. I didn’t mind agreeing to those terms; I’d agree to anything as long as they let me go.

While in the store, I’m trying to go through the list in my head, making sure I’m not forgetting anything, when I bump into one of the last people that I want to see. Yep, Kaylee Simpson. I swear, she’s the one that follows me around just waiting for a chance to run into me and then blame me for being careless. Rolling my eyes, I wait for the cursing and name calling to begin, but she surprises me.

“Oh, sorry Ella, my bad. I didn’t see you there.” She apologizes as she looks over the items in my cart, “Are you going on a trip?! haven’t seen you in school lately, I hope everything is okay!”

The fakeness in her voice is so obvious that it makes me want to puke, but instead, I play along with her little game to see where this is going, “You haven’t seen me in school because I’ve already graduated, and to answer your other question, yes. I’m starting summer classes at the college I’m going to and want to head over early to find a job.” I’m not planning on sharing where I’m going with anybody from this town.

“Oh! I didn’t realize that you finished early, congratulations,” she gives me a fake smile, “Well, I better be going. Best of luck to you, Ella.” Something passes over her expression that I can’t quite understand, but I shrug it off. I’m leaving tomorrow, so there is no sense in trying to figure her out.

After finding the last item needed, I head to the front to check out. The cashier has a gentle smile and asks how I’m doing. I don’t understand why everybody can’t be as kind as this woman. We carry on a bit of conversation as she scans my items in, and then I pay her, and head out to my car.

After loading my car up, I head for home, but as I drive by all the local hangouts, I can't help but become a little sad. I haven't hung out at any of them since I was sixteen; I missed so much. I pray that things are different once I move. My thoughts wander to Mason, and I realize that I haven't talked to him since coming back from break, when I informed him that I could no longer tutor him. I didn't trust Jace not to go after him if I disobeyed his order, so it was easier to just stay away. That really upset me, because for once, I was starting to feel somewhat normal again, by having a friend to talk to.

I'm coming up to a small stretch of road that curves sharply, so I slow down, but just as I start taking the curve, the car behind me turns on their bright lights, and another car coming from the opposite direction has their brights on, both blinding me. I try to watch the road as best I can, but just as the road begins to straighten out, my tires hit the shoulder, causing me to lose control. I'm able to come to a stop safely, but not without popping a tire in the process.

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"Seriously? Who drives with their brights on?" I ask out loud and then curse the car that was behind me for turning theirs on. I'm shaking like a leaf as I open the door and get out, so I can observe what kind of damage my car is in.

It's too dark to see much, so I turn my flashlight on my cellphone on as I walk around my car. When I get to the passenger side, I notice the back tire is flat, so I squat down and examine it closer. It is completely torn up. Sighing heavily, I go to my trunk and move everything aside, so I can get to my spare. I'm so glad my dad taught me how to change a tire!

I'm trying to get the bolt unscrewed to pull it from the trunk when I hear a car pull up behind me. I turn around, but the car's headlights are blinding me, and even using my hand to shield it, I still can't see the person that gets out of the car.

"Looks like you can use a hand." A familiar voice calls out, but I can't place who it belongs to.

Another person gets out of the same car, "You're lucky that all you got was a flat tire, it could have been worse."

I freeze in my place, recognizing the second voice, "Uh, thank you, but I'm good. I can change the tire myself, but thanks for the offer." I reach my hand into my trunk and pull out the tire iron.

"Oh, don't be like that, let us help a damsel in distress!" A third voice pipes in, totally confusing me.

Trying to shield my eyes again, I call out, "Mason, is that you?"

Nobody answers me, and I really start to worry. The second voice belonged to Toby, I just know it, and now that I think about it, the first one was Brandon's, but why is Mason with them? I glance up and down the road, hoping a car comes by, but I know this isn't a very busy road, but a girl can hope, can't she?

All I can see are three figures walking toward me slowly, but the blinding light is making it impossible for me to see their faces, not that I really need to, because I'd recognize their voices anywhere. What I want to know is what are they wanting? Surely, Mason won't let them bully me, will he?

"I'm really thankful that you stopped but I know what I'm doing. I don't want to keep you from whatever your plans are for tonight." I giggle nervously.

"No worries there, Ella. We are right where we are supposed to be." Brandon chuckles.

"Huh?"

"Yeah," Toby speaks up, "You are a big part of our plans for tonight."

go to run and lock myself in my car, so I can call for help, but they are quick as two of the three grab each arm, making me drop the tire iron, and drags me closer to the tree line, away from the lights of the two vehicles. I struggle to get out of their grip, but they only tighten it as they drag me further. There is whistling coming from behind us, as if we are going for a happy stroll, but I can't think about that at the moment. I try kicking out at them, but they just move out of the way. I then try something different, and stop fighting all together, causing me to be deadweight, but then one grabs my upper body, while the other grabs my lower half.

I try screaming, but something gets shoved into my mouth, and I realize that it was Mason that gagged me. All hope leaves me at this point, and the tears begin to flow. Suddenly, we stop and my legs drop to the ground, but whoever has hold of my upper body secures their hold as the other two step in front of me.

"We heard you were going to be leaving us, Ella, so we wanted to throw you a going away party." Brandon muses.

So, that's what Kaylee was up to! She was the only one who knew that I was leaving. That was quick, she must have called them right away, or she was already with them, which means...I glance around, but it's too dark to see anything.

A sting burns my face as one of them slaps me, "Since you like it rough, we figured we would have a little fun," Brandon says before another slap stings the other cheek, "Oh, but you like your ass spanked, don't you?"

I start kicking wildly when he tries unbuttoning my jeans, but another set of hands grab hold of them, helping his friend to get the job done. I'm full out crying while they laugh and pull off my pants and underwear. They next pull off my coat and tear my shirt down the middle, exposing my bra.

"Damn, Ella. I never realized you were hiding all this under your clothing!" It's Mason that grunts out the words.

"I told you she had a smoking body!" Toby states, "Had you given me another minute or so, I would have had her naked before you came into the restroom pretending to be her hero."

I stare at Mason's silhouette in horror, as Toby's words sink in. Mason never wanted to be my friend; he was using me! Jace was

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right all along; Mason is a piece of shit! I shriek as one of them grab my nipples through my bra and pinch them hard, before Toby turns me around, showing the others my back side.

“Mm, feel this peach, Brandon says as he squeezes my butt cheeks, “Wish there was more light, so I can get a good look.”

*Just get on with hitting her, if that’s what you’re going to do! We don’t have all night, and we all need to take our turn with the little slut!” Toby lectures his friend.

Toby’s words scare the shit out of me. They won’t actually do what I think they’re going to do, will they? I begin to put more effort in trying to break free. My arms hurt from being held so tightly, but it doesn’t matter, even if I have to break bones to get free, I will do whatever it takes.

A hand comes down onto my butt, and doesn’t let up. It’s not how Jace does it, this is out of enjoyment, for their entertainment. My bra is pulled down, and fingers are yanking on my nipples at the same time the hand repeatedly comes down on my backside.

“I don’t think that’s how Jace does it,” Toby snickers, “He’s more strategic.”

“Fuck, Jace! He thinks he can keep her all to himself while we get nothing. Who does he think he is?” Brandon pants as he takes a break from beating me.

I’m suddenly flipped around and slammed onto the ground, my butt burning with the hard impact. I try getting up to run, but I’m back handed, hard, three times in a row. I become dazed and I can feel my body being jostled around. My legs are spread wide and I feel someone kneel between them while hearing a zipper come down. My two arms are grabbed and pinned as I feel a hand fondle me below.

“What the fuck is taking so long?” I hear a nasally voice and jerk,” I said to fuck her up not rape her! She would probably like it too much.”

*Awe, let us have our fun with her!” Toby pleads.

“I can show all three of you a lot of fun, but if any of you stick your dick in her, you can just forget it! I don’t understand what’s so special about the bitch, that Jace keeps turning me down for her!” I feel her get close to me, and I try opening my eyes. She slaps me hard and then stands up and begins kicking me in the ribs, “You nasty slut! This is what you get for taking what was supposed

to be mine!”

“Damn, girl, calm the fuck down! You said fuck her up, not kill her!” Mason grabs Kaylee around the waist and drags her away, but not before her foot connects with my face.

“Okay, okay, let’s get out of here before somebody stops.” Kaylee sneers, “I hope you liked your going away present, bitch!” she spits on me before walking toward the road.

Both Toby and Brandon kick me where no woman should ever be kicked, before they spit on me as well. Mason is the only one left as he squats beside me before leaving, telling me that he could have been good to me if only I gave him a chance. He doesn’t spit on me like the others, no, he takes the gag from my mouth and spits in my mouth before replacing the gag and walking away.

I don't know how long I lay on the ground but when I finally start feeling the cold seeping through, I try to get up, but I fall back as I cry out in pain. I try feeling around for my phone that I know I had in my hand, up until they tore my coat off, so it's got to be around here somewhere. Looking around, I can only see out of one eye, but I find my coat not too far away. Biting the inside of my cheek, I inch my way over to where it lays, trying hard not to scream in pain. I search the area with my hand until I finally find it.

I'm about to call my parents, but then I think about how they would find me. I can't have them seeing me like this. There is only one person that I can call, and I hope to God that he doesn't land himself in jail when he finds out who my assailants were. My phone lights up and I scroll through my contacts until I find his name, and click on it.

It only rings twice before he answers, "Ella?"

"Jace..." my voice cracks.

"What's wrong, baby?" I hear the concern in his voice, and it breaks me. The tears come again.

"Jace, can you come find me?"

"Where are you, Ella?"

"B-By the t-tree line on the c-curve into t-town." I stutter as I try to explain where I'm at, "Please hurry...I hurt so bad..." I must pass out because I don't remember anything until I hear my name.

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"ELLA. OH MY GOD, ELLA!" Strong arms lift me up, causing pain to slice through my whole body and making me cry out, "Oh shit, I'm so sorry, baby!" Jace gently holds me in his arms as he pulls his phone out, "What the fuck happened? Who did this to you?"

Not really hearing his words, just the sound of his voice, I smile up at him, "You came for me. thank you!"

"Of course I came for you! I will always come for you, Ella!" He holds the phone to his ear, and I hear him telling someone on the other line to send help, "Hold on, Ella, we're going to get you to the hospital. Let me call your parents..."

"NOO..." I gasp because the effort to yell hurt like hell, "not until I'm at the hospital. I don't want them seeing me like this."

I watch as he checks me over and nods in agreement, "Okay, yeah. I'll call them once we get there. I will also make sure they know to clean you up before letting your parents see you." All of a sudden, I hear a choked sob and I glance back up at Jace, "Damn it Ella, who did this to you?"

I close my eye because it hurts too much to keep the one eye open, "Promise you won't do anything that will land you in jail, and I will tell you."

“You can’t make me promise that, baby. Whoever did this needs to pay!”

I try to smile, knowing that would be what he says, “Okay, well at least promise not to kill them. I can’t have you going to death row because of me.”

He nods furiously, “I promise, Ella. I won’t kill anybody, I promise.”

“You were right, you know.”

He looks at me confused, but then says, “I’m right all the time, but what is it I was right about this time?”

“You’re a smartass, do you know that?” | wince at a sharp pain in my ribs.

“Watch it, babe. You will heal at some point, and then you will be sorry for not watching that mouth of yours.”

My hand comes to the chain that is still around my neck, “Always gotta be in Dom mode,” I joke.

“Enough stalling, Ella.”

“You were right about Mason. He was in on everything.”

“What do you mean?”

“He was pretending to be my friend, he was in on the attack in the restroom, and he was here tonight with your two friends – and her.”

“Toby and Brandon were part of this..and fucking Kaylee?”

I nod.

He caresses my cheek, “You’ve been a good girl, Ella baby, rest now. I hear the ambulance coming.”

“Yeah, I think I will rest now...”

I don’t remember anything else after that. My only objective in lasting as long as I did was being able to tell Jace who attacked me tonight. I hope all four of them realize what they unleashed, because when Jace comes for them, they’re not going to know what hit them.