8 - Tears

The nap didn't help.

Though, the oxycodone did which was a plus. I could walk and turn without aching all over, and I knew I couldn't miss class today or else I would have to ask Dean for notes. I needed to keep my distance, wanting him to hate me for pushing him into a friendship I was eventually going to leave.

Fucking Dean, I shook my head. If I knew having a friend would put them on my mind 24/7 I wouldn't have talked to him.

Don't act like you don't like it.

Whatever. I ran a brush through my hair to tame the events of the last few days, staring at the mirror when the glint of a necklace caught my eye. I paused, reaching up to take a hold of it. It was Dean's. The chain was silver and thin, not enough to bulk up your neck and with a blush, I left it on before walking out the door and to my first lecture of the day. Luckily, I only had two classes to attend and would be back home in the safety of my dorm room before I knew it.

Taking a seat in the back, I opened my laptop, studying the look of it. It was noticeably second hand and old, not like it was a bad thing. It works perfectly well and I was grateful I even had the money to buy it, since my last one was smashed to pieces.

I lost all my money the day before I moved here. He had called the airline himself on behalf of me and cancelled the ticket, freezing my cards and transferring all the money to himself. Since he was the sole moneymaker in our house he could easily do whatever he wanted. Any money I had made from working odd jobs was taken out in cash and stashed in places I knew he wouldn't think to look. I was lucky enough that all my credits transferred from my old school to here, so I only needed a loan for the last semester of university before I could start looking for a job at some clerkship.

Luckily, since I was strapped for cash, I had gotten a phone call back yesterday for a part-time job at some restaurant. Hopefully the tips would sustain me enough to pay for my fees, OSAP only lending a small hand with my loan.

This is why you never get with rich guys. The more money they possess, the more power they have over you. No one really thinks of financial abuse unless it happens to them, and when it does you're stuck with nowhere to go to. Especially if you're like me, someone who was isolated and alone with no home but his to return to.

I find that time goes quicker the less you look at a clock. Three hours could seem like three minutes sometimes, and I hoped my active avoidance of looking at the time would make this class go by quicker. It was interesting but my head hurt and all I wanted to do was sleep.

When the class ended I stood, gathering my things and exiting through the designated doors. I had a ten minute break before my final lecture and then I got to go home. My schedule was evenly spread, which I was grateful for. I had all of my classes on Monday, Tuesday and one class on Wednesday and the rest of the week was free for me to catch up on missing work.

My stomach growled, understandable since I forgot to eat something this morning, and so I walked over to the wedding machines stationed in the corner. I was starving but the options in the machine didn't look too appetising either. Scanning my options, I internally gasped.

Three dollars for a fucking granola bar? Give me a break.

Reluctantly, I patted my jeans to get out my wallet before cursing myself to death. Of course I had forgotten it, I was in such a rush this morning that I didn't think. Sighing, I turned around getting ready to head over to my other lecture and stopped once a weakly smiled Alex stared back at me with a five dollar bill in hand.

"Truce?"

I frowned. "Your boyfriend beat me up."

She winced, a regretful look on her face. "Ex...and I didn't tell him to."

"Fair," I muttered, swiping the bill before getting a granola bar and a water bottle. Might as well hydrate since I had also forgotten my water bottle at home. Bending down to pick up the items, I turned to leave when I saw her following me. Stopping, I raised my eyebrows in question.

"I'm in your next lecture too," She said shyly, fidgeting with the necklace around her neck.

"Oh," I sighed, walking again.

"I really am sorry, Sophia." She struggled to catch up with my speed walking, her tone full of regret. "He was always vocal but I never thought he'd go that far."

"Yeah? Tell someone who cares." I knew it wasn't her fault her sleazy ex was an asshole. But between the texts and needing to get rid of Dean, I couldn't afford to endanger someone else for my mistakes. Acting like an asshole would hopefully do the trick.

"Don't be like that," I could hear the disappointment dripping from her words. She really was trying and the thought made me mad. I couldn't be responsible for anyone else, I needed to look out for me.

"Like what? I'm not being like anything."

"Sophia, I'm really sorry," She said. "I promise I dealt with it accordingly. He won't give you any shit anymore"

We were outside of the class now, we still had five minutes to spare so I turned and glared at her, finally getting a good look. She was black, her hair coily pulled back with what seemed to be a silk lined headband. She was wearing a white tank top, a black mini skirt followed by a leather jacket and loafers.

"I really don't give a fuck." I sighed, rubbing a hand over my face. She seemed really sweet and hitting her with these harsh replies was killing me. It wasn't like me to do. "You don't even know me...I don't understand why you're trying so hard."

"I hate when people are mad at me," She admitted, looking down. She shifted her weight from one foot to the next, her stance visibly uncomfortable as she engaged with me.

I had to laugh at that, finding it funny. "And I hate getting beat up but the world isn't fair."

"Hey, what's going on, Sophia?" I heard Dean ask, stalking towards me, making me sigh. Two people who were talking with me. Two more people who could get hurt. Two more lives I would have to feel the guilt of.

I turned to him with a hand pressed against my forehead, tired. "Nothing Dean," I glanced at Alex. "Nothing at all."

He looked between the two of us, questions lingering but he seemed to let them go as he nodded. "Okay...let's go inside, Sophia. Class is about to start and you don't want more material to catch up on."

"Sophia, wait!" Alex grabbed my arm, making Dean's expression go stoic. She slipped a piece of paper in my hold and I held it, not giving it another glance.

"I don't know who the fuck you are, but get your hands off of her." He said slowly. His reaction made me internally grain, realising that he probably overheard our conversation and figured out that it was Alex's boyfriend who manhandled me the night of the party.

"Who the fuck are you? Her keeper?" Alex returned his hard expression.

"Alex, it's fine. I forgive you, okay? Now I have to go so...goodbye." I tugged on the door, walking in and back to the last seat in the row. There was a door right beside it in case I needed a quick escape. Minutes passed and Dean came in, face neutral as he sat down beside me.

"Wanna tell me what just happened?" He said casually, slipping out his laptop.

"Unless I get to complete my plan, nope." I said, twisting open the water bottle and taking a large sip.

"That stupid fucking plan," I heard him mumble under his breath.

I stared straight ahead, knowing if I looked at Dean I would spill. The lecture went by and the dull pain was starting to come back, which meant I needed to make it back to my dorm and apply another layer of numbing cream or down another pill. I slipped out the piece of paper Alex gave me, noticing it was her number. As much as I wanted to throw it away, I couldn't. So instead, I slipped it inside my pocket for safe keeping.

Finally, it was over and I collected my items before walking out, wanting to get home before the pain was unbearable. As I ventured ahead, I could hear Dean yell for me. I gritted my teeth in frustration, the ache gradually growing with every minute but I'd feel like an ass if I didn't wait for Dean. Staying away from him was going to be difficult, it seemed.

"Why the fuck are you in such a hurry today? You didn't even stop when I called you this morning. Are you avoiding me?" Dean inquired and I began to walk again, ignoring him.

"So what? I do something to piss you off and now you're giving me the silent treatment? What the fuck happened this morning, Sophia? What's going on?"

"I'm not avoiding you," I lied. "I must have not heard you this morning, I'm sorry."

"Sophia, what's going on? Was it that girl from earlier? Did she say something to you before class?" When I didn't reply, he tugged my arm to a stop.

"Sophia?" He said softly. "Look at me."

I shut my eyes for a moment, my heart constricting in my chest before I tilted my head, looking at him.

"What happened?" He searched my eyes, hoping to find an answer there.

"Nothing," I mumbled. "I'm just tired, sorry. I haven't been sleeping well lately. I'm not mad at you, I promise."

"Okay," He nodded, not believing me. "I promise you can tell me if I did something that made you uncomfortable. You're allowed to have boundaries."

Once again, flashes of the past ran over my eyes before I shook my head slightly, smiling weakly at him. "It wasn't anything you did, believe me. I've just got shit going on."

"Alright," He nodded again. "Is it okay if I walk you back to your dorm?"

"Yeah, that's fine. Let's go." I gestured to walk and we did.

The longer we walked in silence, the more guilt gnawed at my heart. I felt terrible but this was the only way. The pain in my body grew exponentially and I knew it was due to me running down the stairs this morning. Fuck me.

By the time we were at my door I was clutching my torso tightly, gritting my teeth trying my hardest to breathe through it.

"Thanks for walking me back," I said, breathlessly, unlocking my door and moving inside of it to shield my body from his line of sight. Before Dean could say anything, I smiled at him as convincingly as I could muster.

"Goodnight Dean."

"But it isn't nigh-" I slammed the door, cutting him off before sagging to the floor.

I curled myself up in a ball for a while, breathing heavily as I shut my eyes. I needed to gain back the energy to move around, and with all the walking I've done today it seemed like it would take hours which I didn't have.

Fight this. You've done it before.

Yeah but it was worse this time. I felt like I was being stabbed a thousand times over.

I shifted into a crawl, moving towards my closet once again to take out the supplies. With every move I cried out, letting a few tears go because no one was around to see me fall apart. I felt pathetic, trying to build myself back up every time I was pushed down.

Keep going!

I couldn't. Everything became blurry, I felt myself choking on a sob as I extended my hand to the handle, missing entirely. My head spun, my arms heavy as I fell forward in a heap.

I'll do it when I wake up, I thought. Yeah. That sounded like a good plan.

My phone dinged with a text, my hands shaking to slip my phone out but failing as it landed with a thump on the floor.

Seriously? Fuck my life.

I gave myself time before I picked it up, taking out the scrap piece of paper I was given and dialling the number on it, holding my breath hoping she'd pick up. She seemed really guilty this morning, willing to do anything to help and I knew she wouldn't tell a soul if I asked. Besides, when she was done she could easily move on guilt free knowing she helped me and that was it.

"Hello?" I heard her shuffling around. "Hello? Who is this?" I realised I was silent and so I spoke, not expecting my voice to come out sounding that pain ridden.

"Alex," I called, shutting my eyes tight. I never leaned on anyone for help but I knew if I didn't at this moment I could seriously injure myself.

"Sophia? Oh my god, what happened? Where are you?"

"Can you come here? I need you." I rattled off my dorm number.

"I'm coming," She said frantically. I heard the sound of her opening a door, letting me know she was on her way. I let the phone fall from my grasp, closing my eyes as I waited for her to come and help.

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"Sophia?" I heard someone ask hesitantly before gasping at the sight of me. Alex walked in, shutting my door before rushing over to me with a concerned look.

"What the fuck?" She cried out, rolling me onto my back making me let out a groan. The movement was too fast for me to keep up and I wheezed, clutching harder to my stomach.

"Just help me, please. Enough with the questions." I coughed out, knowing I sounded rude but in my state, I couldn't give less of a fuck. It wasn't like she'd remain my friend after this anyway.

She nodded, looking over to where I was pointing and opened the closet door. Pulling out my first aid kid, she crawled over to me stripping off her jacket getting ready to tend.

Before she could lift my shirt, I gave her a stern look. "Don't tell anyone about this. Not a fucking word, Alex. You owe me. Promise me," I gritted out.

"I promise," She looked genuine and I almost cried. Her voice was so gentle and sweet and I wanted to take back my harsh tone immediately. She wasn't liable for her ex's actions in any way and me making her feel like she was, was killing me on the inside. I let her pull up my shirt, gritting my teeth as she gasped at the sight.

"Sophia..." She whispered, her tone breaking as her eyes scanned over my torso. "My ex didn't do all of this. Did...did that dude I saw you with today do this?"

"What? Dean? No, what the fuck? Why would you say that?"

"You don't have to lie for him," She gave me a sad look. "I promise to help you get away from him. He won't get away with this."

I groaned, the misunderstanding hurting my head. "Stop saying that! He didn't do it. Why do you keep saying that?"

"I don't know. Maybe because your body is fucking black and blue and he was insanely protective over you earlier." Alex deadpanned, her eyes not leaving my body.

"He's my friend and I promise he didn't do anything. I didn't call you to interrogate me, I called you to fix up what your boyfriend broke."

"Ex," She murmured, but complied, prying open the kit and taking out a few things. "And my ex didn't do all this.We should really go to the hospital, Sophia. It seems bad."

"No hospitals."

Alex used the pads of her fingers to feel my body, pressing down making tears leak out the corner of my eyes. Once again, she was nothing but gentle and the thought alone had me wanting to sob.

"They're definitely bruised," Her head tilted up to look at me, sadness in her eyes. "But I don't know for sure. Are you sure you don't want to go to a hospital?"

"No fucking hospitals. Just do something," I breathed out. "Do something before I pass out again." I laughed.

"You think this is fucking funny?"

"No, but I'd rather be laughing than sobbing."

She swallowed, her hands tugging up the material of my shirt even further as she worked on rubbing the cream over my stomach and my chest. I sighed, relaxing knowing I'd feel better in a bit.

"There's oxycodone in my side table drawer. Could you please get me one?"

"Why the fuck do you have oxy?"

"The same reason people take molly," I shot back. "Please, just get me it."

She was about to oppose though giving me another once over, she sighed, moving to the table. Alex pulled out the orange pill bottle, taking out one before she moved back towards me. "Can you dry swallow or do I have to get you water?"

"There should be a water bottle in my bag."

Taking it out, she put the pill in my mouth before shifting so her hand was under my head, supporting it enough to help me drink the water. After finishing what was left, she wiped my mouth with my shirt to catch any straw droplets and slowly lowered my head back over to the floor.

"Should..." She paused. "Should I move you to your bed?"

"Yeah," I sighed. "Wait a few minutes so the pill can kick in."

"Alright," She breathed out, relaxing beside me. Her eyes kept glancing over my abdomen, questons flickering in her head and I could feel the weight of it beside me but tried my best to ignore it. The less she knew, the better.

A few moments passed before she talked again.

"What the fuck happened to you?" Alex said slowly.

"Your boyfriend."

"Sophia," She gave me a stern look. "That's not what I'm talking about and you know it."

"Like you care," I turned away, chest pinching.

"I do care! Me coming here is caring! Me taking care of you is fucking caring!"

I chose to ignore her words, not believing what she was saying. No one ever cares. And when they say they do, they're lying. That might have been cynical for me to say, but it was often true. Especially with what I had to deal with back where I used to live.

"How was your childhood?" I said after a while, restless of the quiet.

"It was nice. I mean, I had my dad and a couple of friends. Once I broke my arm playing the monkey bars but it was fine because I got to eat popsicles for a week straight before getting sick of them," I heard her laugh softly. "I remember my dad staying home from work worried out of his mind."

"Did you have a good relationship with your dad?" I turned my head slightly so she couldn't see my face. Alex was staring ahead of her in a daze, probably taken back to that time. She looked so peaceful, forgetting my state and I was grateful she was no longer thinking about me.

"The best," She smiled. "Being a single father was hard but he made it work."

"Even though I don't like you, I'm glad you were close with your father." I whispered. "I'm glad that you had someone in your life like him."

"What about you? How was your childhood?"

I shook my head. "I'd rather not."

She frowned. "You can say whatever you want to me. I'm listening, I understand that what I had was a huge privilege in comparison to others."

"I don't wanna talk about me anymore," I softly spoke. "I just wanna hear about you and your good times with your dad."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Well," She started up again, shifting so she was laying beside me staring at the ceiling. It was white and smooth, a few stains which was understandable since this was a dorm room. "My favourite memory of us is when I was sixteen." She stopped, fixing her shirt so it wasn't uncomfortable. "I used to get really bad depressive episodes when I was younger, they would last from a week up to a month. They started when I was thirteen. This one week I was completely drained. I refused to go to school, I could barely get up, much less eat. Well, it had been a total of eight days when I finally cracked and broke down." Her voice fell to a murmur. "I never really cried during these episodes but this one was the worst I'd ever experienced. Almost like my chest was caving in on itself."

I hummed, signalling to her that I was listening and that she should keep going and so she did, continuing on with her memory.

"My dad heard and came rushing in, cradling me like I was a baby. And in the moment, I needed that. To be taken care of like a child. I let him hold me as I cried on him. He didn't say much, he just rocked me back and forth and took it all until I was done."

I held in my tears as I heard her voice crack, my chest hurting as I pictured her and her dad, the memory she seemed to cherish the most.

"Growing up, I never had a mom and so moments like that were kind of hard for a single parent to handle. Though I think he was amazing at it. That day, he let me cry, rubbing my back to let me know he was there. When I was done he spoon fed me dinner and told me he was always there for me. And when I started to cry all over again, he didn't get mad. I just..." She wiped under her eyes. "That day made me realize how much I appreciated him." She whispered. "He knew I needed someone and was there. He showed me he was there in every way possible."

"Do you miss him?" I asked on a broken whisper, my voice hoarse. I didn't care that she could hear me now. She's seen the worst of me already, it didn't matter anymore.

"Everyday," She smiled, hastily wiping away her fallen tears. "Every fucking day."

"I hate this," I broke, my body shaking with sobs. Alex moved to sit up against the wall, pulling my head into her lap as she ran her hand through my hair in alarm. I don't think she was expecting this to be my reaction to her memory.

"Why?" She whispered, looking down at me.

"Somedays, I wish I had that." I shook my head. "I wish I had an ounce of that." My tears were heavily running down my face and I didn't bother to wipe them away. "I didn't deserve any of this," I cried, hands over my face in a poor attempt to muffle my sounds.

"You didn't," She murmured, not having a clue what I was talking about but validating me anyway.

"Why the fuck did this happen to me?" I knew Alex was confused but didn't bother to question me, letting me spill my emotions. "Why the fuck does this keep happening to me?!" I felt nothing but exhaustion, removing my hands from my face and using my sleeves to wipe away at the stream under my eyes.

"You're okay," Alex whispers down to me. "I'm here, you're okay."

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