

## Song 32

### Song 32 ♪ Supermassive A\*\* Hole

That was not the kind of thing I expected to hear at a party full of white people. Yet, it had never really happened at parties in my barrio. Although a few of those had turned out rowdier than was acceptable, it seemed like nobody had given enough of a damn to call the cops. Years of living among people who didn't have all their papers, skirted a fine line between what was legal and not, or simply had skin that was considered too dark to be innocent, had trained me to keep my head and hair under the radar. I had a lot more riding on being well behaved than probably anybody else in this room. Except Quinn.

He and I looked at each other, the same type of horror written on his face.

I jumped to action. I grabbed Ash's hand and tugged at him. Thank goodness he followed without resisting. I screamed for Leti and DeAndre and was glad when they appeared with Addy. I looked around me and saw that Ayrton was just behind us, with Link and Madison. That was all the people I cared about together.

Good.

But then there was a stream of people stumbling over each other to make it out of the single door at the entrance of the house. Just behind where we'd been playing there was a huge window. "Follow me," I told them.

They dashed to it behind me. We pulled it open and jumped out of it, falling on the other side onto the grass in a single heap. I saw a couple run by us, a tall dark haired boy pushing a redhead girl in front of him, as if he didn't dare lose sight of her for a second.

I felt somebody pull me up and saw DeAndre. If we got caught, he could also lose his promising modeling career.

"We have to get the hell out of dodge," he said.

"What about your instruments?" Addy asked, eyes wide like she couldn't believe what was happening.

"We're more important," Ashton said. He grabbed my hand, even though his eyes were trained on DeAndre's face. "I'll take care of her."

My friend's lips pulled back into a snarl. "I'm sure you will, white boy. You're invisible to the cops."

I gasped.

"Okay, we don't have time for this shit." Leti pushed them away from each other. "We need to fucking run."

So run we did, straight out into the street. I clenched my hand tight around Ashton's and was glad that he didn't let me go. We all veered left, away from the house following Ayr. He'd parked the van by himself a few feet away and loaded the instruments into the house. I tried to focus on his back as he ran ahead of us, not on the instruments we'd left behind that surely cost more money than what my ma made in a year, or on what could happen.

We almost crashed into each other, braking into a halt. A scream escaped my throat as Ayrton narrowly avoided being ran over by a patrol car that suddenly appeared in front of us, blocking our path.

In a panic, Ayrton turned around, screaming at us to run, but we were blocked on the other side by a policeman in a motorcycle.

The latter screamed at us, "Freeze right there. Put your hands up in the air!"

Oh shit.

I froze and seemed unable to follow instructions. I just couldn't believe this was happening. He repeated his demand and I was only able to comply when Ashton let my hand go and whispered at me to do as he said.

My heart broke as I saw Quinn and DeAndre ahead of me, their hands raised higher than the rest of us, their large, muscled limbs trembling as their hearts pumped terror directly into their veins. I prayed for us, prayed true like I had never.

Hindsight was 20/20, and in retrospective I could see that we were so lucky that all that happened was that we got patted down and bundled into police cars. It could've been so much worse. Especially for the boys.

It felt like ages ago when we got tested for alcohol, got processed and locked in a cell with a few other kids from the party who did look like they'd taken copious amounts of something. I was crying by that point like my eyes were faucets that were broken and wouldn't close on the stream. I was sure I was going to get kicked out of school. I was sure that with this on my record I'd never be admitted to a decent college, never get a well paying job. A short moment of bliss, of freedom, of doing the only thing I was really good at, had just ruined my entire fucking life.

I felt arms come around me, and when I realized it was Ashton I pushed him away and didn't dare to look at him.

"Leave her alone, you stupid, privileged asshole."

My body stiffened. Slowly I looked up. Ashton looked like he'd been punched by DeAndre's words, even though he stood three paces away on the opposite corner of the cell, which was now full of as much tension as it was of people.

"What the fuck," Ashton said, not really as a question. "What's your problem, dude?"

"My problem is you. You're the reason we're all here," DeAndre said.

I shook my head a few times, trying in vain to grasp at the reasons why this was happening.

"You're the one who planned this gig with a college frat," he continued, pointing at Ashton. "You made this happen."

"Are you saying I called the cops on us?" Ashton snorted. "And what? Get myself in as much trouble as you're in?"

"Ash, stop," I said, getting in between them. I cringed at the hurt on his face. "Shut up, please."

"Why?" he asked so lightly. "Are you on his side?"

"On this, yeah." I sniffed, but it didn't stop my tears from falling as any attempt for the past hour. "You don't have anywhere near as much to lose from this as we do. Your dad will come and rescue you with all his money and power, and we don't have that. Our futures—" My voice broke for a second, but I pushed on. "Our futures might just be fucked because of tonight."

He took a step back, dropping his face in his hands. Ayrton glared at me for the first time since I'd met him. I hadn't thought he'd be capable of hostility.

He said, "Clearly you don't know our father very well."

It was silent again that I shuddered, realizing that I was in the middle of an argument that no one was going to win. I walked over to Leti and Addy and sat between them, facing Madison as she rubbed Quinn's back. We stayed like that for what felt like an hour, watching as the cops brought more people from the party into the precinct. I didn't understand why a college party had been such a big deal for them until I caught whiff of the words drug bust and underage drinking at the same time. I hugged my knees against my chest and cried into the fabric of my jeans.

Tonight was a nightmare.

"There you are."

I vaguely recognized the voice in the back of my head. I looked up to find the Winters boys' father stand just outside the cell with a couple of men. One of them carried a suitcase and I assumed it was the family lawyer.

His eyes were cold as they swept over all of us. They didn't light up in recognition as he saw me. Instead, they posed on his sons with burning intensity. Both boys squared up in front of him, blocking him from our view.

"Father," Ashton said, his voice so deep and dark that it raised goosebumps on my skin. "What are you doing here?"

"Saving the family name from further ruin," the older man said. "It's not enough that your brother comes out as gay and puts shame on our family's Christian values, but now you drag him and you into jail? And here I had hope on you, Ashton."

Ayrton laughed. "Somehow we're worse than you being a lap dog to politicians more corrupt even than you? Or than our drunk mother?"

My eyes widened.

I didn't know these things. Ashton never said anything.

The Senator snapped. "Shut up, I'm not talking to you."

The lawyer cleared his throat. "Um, excuse me, sir. This is not the best place to have this kind of discussion."

The Senator looked around at the many eyes on him and adjusted his tie. "Right."

"Well, I have good news." The lawyer pushed his glasses up his nose. "I checked with the law enforcement and none of you have been pressed any charges, since your tests have come out clean. We've made sure your records will stay clear; after all it isn't illegal to attend a party while being a minor, as long as there is no consumption of alcohol or illicit substances. You just need to be picked up by your legal guardians."

We all looked at each other, wondering if we were hearing straight. Quinn, especially, was reluctant to believe it.

"How's this possible? I thought we were in trouble," he said.

The Senator looked him up and down. "Not this time, Montgomery. Although this could become a pattern."

Everybody jumped out of their skin as I started laughing. I slowly made my way up, my chest bubbling with dark amusement. I stood in between his sons and looked up at his face.

"We meet again, sir," I said, smiling even though I didn't mean it. "I'm sure you're expecting us to fall over our faces in gratitude for your help, and don't get me wrong, I am thankful — for your lawyer, you?" I tilted my head with a frown. "You've disappointed me. I thought a man like you was supposed to be a servant of the people, not a bully to his own flesh and blood. Or that you'd dare imply that we'll keep getting in trouble. Why?" I asked him, narrowing my eyes. "Because we're not in the same social circles as you? Or is it something else?"

I felt a hand on my shoulder. Ashton's.

I grabbed it and pulled it down so that I could hold it in mine. The Senator's eyes caught the action.

"Young lady," the man positively growled. "I don't appreciate being spoken to in this matter. Especially after I'm here to help you, all of you."

I smiled wider. "And I'll be sure keep that in mind when I become your constituent in less than a year, sir."

Ashton squeezed my hand.

With one last glance at his sons, the Senator turned around and barked at the men around us to hold all of us until the morning. So that we'd learn our lesson, he said. Although I didn't know what that was supposed to mean.

I took a deep breath and said, "Your dad's a dick, guys."

The twins said in unison, "Yeah."

"Okay," Link piped in for the first time since we'd been apprehended, without any of his usual fuckery. "We won't have any criminal records thanks to your dick of a dad. Great. But who's calling their parents? Because I don't know if you've noticed, but my parents live in Korea, and a stint in jail isn't precisely in their long list of things for me to do."

We all looked at each other.

"I don't know about you," I said. "But if my ma catches wind of this I'll be a goner."

"Same," Leti said. "My mama will kill me with her chancla."

DeAndre lifted his hands. "Don't look at me. My dad enjoys a good belt whipping."

Madison tossed her hair back. "My parents are in Paris right now."

Of course.

Addy sighed. "Mine in the Seychelles trying to save their marriage."

That pretty much left Quinn.

"Y'all," he said in a panic. "My mom is a black woman, do you not know what that means?"

We all found out well after midnight. Quinn's mom signed us all out and spent a solid half hour screaming us deaf. Even the cops who got us in this mess in the first place, seemed to suffer from a decent amount of pity.

And then Quinn's mom said something that made us all freeze. "You think I'm bad? Just you wait until the school finds out where you spent your Friday night after curfew."

We were pretty much fucked.

SONG OF THE DAY: Muse - Supermassive Black Hole