

AFTER A WHILE...



OH MY GOD... I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN I COULDN'T REACH HER!

*YOU SAVED HER. THAT'S WHAT MATTERS.
I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT COULD'VE
HAPPENED IF YOU HADN'T GOTTEN THERE.*

*I SHOULD'VE BEEN FASTER... IF I'D
GOTTEN THERE SOONER, MAYBE I COULD'VE
STOPPED HIM BEFORE IT GOT THAT FAR.*

*BUT THAT BASTARD GOT AWAY FROM MY
HANDS! AND HE'S STILL OUT THERE. WHAT
IF HE'LL COME AFTER HER AGAIN?*

UHM, BUT DON'T YOU THINK WE SHOULD GO TO THE POLICE TOO?

HMM, THAT COULD BE THE CASE. OTHERWISE, IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE FOR MIA TO BE THERE ALONE AT THIS HOUR.

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT IT TOO. I SENT SOME GUYS WHO WORK FOR MY DAD OVER THERE. THEY'RE CHECKING THE SECURITY CAMERAS IN THE AREA. I'M SURE THAT CREEP WILL BE CAUGHT ON CAMERA!

YEAH, BUT I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD TALK TO MIA FIRST. WHAT IF HE'S BLACKMAILING HER OR SOMETHING?



ALRIGHT... BUT PROMISE ME, IF ANYTHING COMES UP OR YOU NEED HELP, YOU'LL CALL ME RIGHT AWAY, OKAY?

YOU'VE DONE MORE THAN ENOUGH... LEAVE THE REST TO ME. I'LL HANDLE EVERYTHING FROM HERE. IT'S GETTING PRETTY LATE, AND YOU SHOULD HEAD HOME. YOUR SISTER AND UNCLE MUST BE GETTING WORRIED BY NOW.

SURE, I'LL!



HOW STUPID AM I... I SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE THERE ALONE IN THE FIRST PLACE. I SHOULD'VE REALIZED I'M NOT THE MAN I USED TO BE... I'M JUST A POWERLESS GIRL NOW! FIRST, I GAVE HIM A HANDJOB, AND THEN I EVEN AGREED TO A BLOWJOB.

I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE BUT TO DO WHATEVER HE WANTED. BUT HOW DID JACK KNOW I WAS THERE? IF HE HADN'T COME IN TIME, THAT GUY WOULD'VE ALREADY FORCED HIS HIS FILTHY..



UGH, I CAN'T SHAKE THE MEMORY OF HIS DIRTY DICK BRUSHING MY LIPS! I WAS SO CLOSE TO JUST OPENING MY MOUTH AND TAKING IT.



WAIT... HE STILL HAS MY PHOTOS! WHAT IF HE'S ALREADY SENT THEM TO SOMEONE AT SCHOOL? IT WOULDN'T EVEN TAKE A MINUTE FOR THEM TO SPREAD THROUGH ALL THE SCHOOL GROUPS!

AND WHAT IF HE SENT THEM TO EMMA AS WELL...



WHAT DID YOU FUCKED UP?
DO YOU EVEN CARE TO EXPLAIN ME
WHAT'S EXACTLY GOING ON? WHAT WERE
YOU DOING THERE AT THIS HOUR?

SHIT... I FUCKED UP EVERYTHING UP!

I'M SORRY, CLARA. I SHOULD'VE
TOLD YOU EVERYTHING EARLIER...
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.



IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU JUST EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO ME. MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU, LIKE I ALWAYS DO.

YES, I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING... BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW.

15 MINUTES LATER...

ACTUALLY... TH-THERE'S THIS GIRL AT SCHOOL WHO DO THE SAME THING, SO I-I THOUGHT I COULD ALSO SELL SOME PICS TO ARRANGE MONEY FOR THAT FILE...

I DIDN'T THINK IT THROUGH AT THE TIME... NOW I'M SACRED WHAT WILL I DO IF EMMA SEES THOSE PICTURES?

WHAT... WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU COME UP WITH THE RIDICULOUS IDEA OF SELLING YOUR FEET PICS?

SERIOUSLY? ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW UNSAFE THOSE PLATFORMS ARE? I'VE HEARD HACKING INTO THOSE ACCOUNTS ISN'T THAT HARD... YOU'RE LUCKY THAT YOUR EMAIL ID AND PASSWORD WERE LOGGED INTO MY PHONE. AND I WAS ABLE TO TRACK YOUR LAST LOCATION AND GET JACK THERE IN TIME.

HMM, I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO EXPLAIN ANYTHING TO HER...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HE MUST HAVE SENT THOSE TO EVERYONE BY NOW...

HUH, JUST TWO?

DUMBASS! GETTING A STUDENT'S PERSONAL INFO FROM SCHOOL ISN'T THAT EASY. AS SOON AS JACK TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED, I SENT SOME OF MY DAD'S GUYS TO THAT SPOT. THEY FOUND THAT BASTARD'S PHONE THERE, WHICH HE PROBABLY LEFT BEHIND IN A RUSH. THEY FOUND ONLY TWO FEET PICTURES ON IT.

YEAH, HE COULDN'T EVEN AFFORD TO SPEND MORE COINS TO BUY ADDITIONAL PICTURES TO BLACKMAIL YOU, SO HOW COULD HE PAY OFF THE SCHOOL GUARDS?

SO YOU MEAN HE WAS LYING...
BUT THEN HOW DOES HE KNOW
YOUR AND EMMA'S NAMES?


HE KNOWS WHERE WE LIVE AND
WHERE I GO TO SCHOOL... WHAT IF
HE TRIES SOMETHING NOW?

I-I JUST THOUGHT IF I BROUGHT
THE FILE MYSELF WITHOUT YOUR HELP,
YOU WOULD REDUCE MY PUNISHMENT.

WHEN THEY CHECKED THE NEARBY
SECURITY CAMERAS, THEY CAUGHT A GLIMPSE
OF HIS FACE WHILE HE WAS RUNNING AWAY HALF-
NAKED. IT TURNS OUT HE WAS SPOTTED ON OUR
SOCIETY'S CAMERAS A FEW DAYS AGO...

HE PROBABLY TRACKED OUR
HOME'S LOCATION FROM YOUR PHONE
NUMBER AND ASKED AROUND IN NEIGHBORS,
WHICH IS LIKELY HOW HE FOUND OUT
MY AND EMMA'S NAMES...

JUST RELAX, I'VE ALREADY TOLD MY DAD'S
GUYS TO TRACK HIM DOWN, AND DON'T WORRY,
THEY'LL CATCH HIM SOON. ARGH... I JUST DON'T
GET HOW YOU KEEP GETTING YOURSELF
INTO THESE SITUATIONS!



DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW BIG OF A RESPONSIBILITY YOU ARE FOR ME? MY MIND ALWAYS ROAM AROUND HOW I WOULD FACE EMMA IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU. I PROMISED HER I'D KEEP YOU SAFE.

SO, YOU'RE SAYING ALL OF THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF ME? HA! YOU'RE NOT WRONG... MY PUNISHMENTS PUSHED YOU THIS FAR. I'M SORRY... I WAS JUST BEING STRICT BECAUSE I WANTED TO KEEP YOU SAFE.

STUPID ME... I EVEN STARTED TO SEE YOU AS PART OF MY FAMILY, ASSUMING YOU FELT THE SAME WAY ABOUT ME AS A SISTER. BUT IT SEEMS I WAS WRONG. YOU NEVER TREATED ME AS SUCH AND ALWAYS HID THINGS FROM ME.

YOU'RE MISINTERPRETING MY WORDS... I WASN'T BLAMING YOU. WAIT... ARE YOU CRYING?

I'M REALLY SORRY... I DIDN'T INTEND TO HURT YOU. PLEASE, STOP CRYING.

WHY WOULD I CRY? IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE REALLY MY SISTER OR ANYTHING... HAHA, I EVEN SHARED MY BED WITH YOU. HAHA, WHO EVEN DOES THAT...

I NEVER KNEW CLARA HAD SUCH A SOFT SIDE!
THOSE PUNISHMENTS WEREN'T FOR FUN; SHE WAS
JUST TRYING TO BE A RESPONSIBLE OLDER SISTER TO
KEEP ME FROM GOING DOWN THE WRONG PATH. I CAN
REALLY SEE HOW DEEPLY SHE CARES!

I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER THE LAST TIME SHE CALLED
ME ANDREW! ALL THIS TIME, I'VE JUST BEEN MIA TO HER.
DOES SHE REALLY SEES ME AS FAMILY? YEAH, OTHERWISE
WHY DOES SHE LET OTHER MAN SLEEP NEXT TO HER EVERY
NIGHT... SHE EVEN INTRODUCE ME TO HER AUNT.

I HATE SEEING HER LIKE THIS! I HAVE TO
SHOW HER I CARE TOO! I NEED TO BE THE
SISTER SHE TRULY DESERVES, AT LEAST
FOR AS LONG AS I'M HERE.


SHUT UP! I CAN'T JUST SIT HERE AND WATCH YOU CRY. IT'S BETTER IF YOU STOP NOW.

WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU HOLDING MY HANDS? LET GO OF ME!

YOU JUST WANTED TO BE FREE FROM MY PUNISHMENTS, DIDN'T YOU? DON'T WORRY, I'LL GIVE YOU THE KEYS. YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT FROM NOW ON--I WON'T EVEN SAY A WORD! SO STOP PRETENDING LIKE YOU CARE...

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THOSE FUCKING KEYS... JUST KEEP THEM. I JUST CAN'T BEAR TO SEE MY SISTER CRY LIKE THIS. PLEASE STOP NOW!

DID YOU JUST CALL ME "SISTER"... YOU REALLY MEAN IT?



I... I REALLY MEAN IT! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE... NO ONE HAS EVER DONE AS MUCH FOR ME AS YOU HAVE. I SWEAR I WON'T HIDE ANYTHING FROM YOU NOW. JUST GIVE ME ONE MORE CHANCE...

ALRIGHT, I TRUST YOU... NOW COME HERE AND GIVE ME A HUG.



NEXT MORNING...

YOU WANT HIM TO COME OVER?
WOW, THAT'S NOT A BAD PLAN, BUT YOU DO
KNOW ABOUT THE 80% ATTENDANCE RULE, RIGHT?
YOU'VE ALREADY USED UP ALL YOUR LEAVE. IF WE
WASTE HIS TOO, WHAT WILL WE DO WHEN WE
REALLY NEED IT?

YEAH, HE LEFT JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
AND HIS PHONE'S HAVING SOME NETWORK PROBLEM,
SO HE LEFT IT WITH ME TO GET IT REPAIRED.

HMM, RIGHT... I SHOULD PROBABLY WAIT.
OH, AND BY THE WAY, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL HIM,
BUT HIS PHONE'S NOT REACHABLE. HAHA... IT'S BEEN
TWO DAYS SINCE I LAST TALKED TO HIM. HAS HE
ALREADY LEFT FOR SCHOOL?

OH, OKAY! I SHOULD GET GOING
TO THE OFFICE NOW. TALK LATER, BYE!

HANG UP



HERE'S MY PHONE! I'VE DELETED THAT ACCOUNT AND REMOVED EVERYTHING, AS YOU SAID.

GOOD! YOU SHOULDN'T USE THIS NUMBER ANYMORE, OR HE COULD TRACK YOUR LOCATION AGAIN. I'LL GET YOU A NEW ONE, AND IF EMMA ASKS WHY YOU CHANGED IT, JUST COME UP WITH SOME EXCUSE. SHE WAS REALLY EXCITED TO CALL YOU OVER THERE... BUT YOU DO UNDERSTAND WHY I DENIED HER, RIGHT?

YEAH, IT WOULDN'T BE SAFE FOR ME TO GO THERE RIGHT NOW. IF THAT BLACKMAILER FOLLOWED ME AND FOUND OUT WHERE EMMA LIVES, THINGS COULD GET WORSE.

BUT DON'T YOU THINK WE'RE NOT EVEN SAFE HERE EITHER? I MEAN, HE KNOWS WHERE I LIVE... WHAT IF HE TRIES TO DO SOMETHING HERE?

WITH AUNT? UMM, DID YOU TELL HER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?

BUT HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO KEEP HIDING FROM HIM?

I'VE ALREADY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT... HOW ABOUT YOU GO STAY WITH AUNT FOR A FEW DAYS?

NO, DON'T WORRY, I DIDN'T TELL HER ANYTHING. I JUST SAID YOU'VE BEEN MISSING HER AND WANT TO SPEND SOME TIME THERE. SHE WAS REALLY HAPPY! YOU'LL BE MUCH SAFER THERE; YOU KNOW HOW TIGHT THE SECURITY IS AROUND AUNT'S HOUSE. THAT CREEP WON'T DARE MESS WITH YOU THERE.



UM, OKAY, BUT WILL YOU DROP ME OFF AT SCHOOL TODAY, RIGHT? I-I DON'T WANT TO GO ALONE.

NOT FOR TOO LONG. WE FOUND OUT THAT THERE ARE ALREADY SEVERAL CASES AGAINST HIM. THE POLICE ARE ALREADY AFTER HIM, AND ONCE THEY CATCH HIM, HE WON'T BE OUT FOR A LONG TIME.

AWW, ARE YOU SCARED... IT'S ALRIGHT, GIRL. I ALREADY CALLED JACK EARLIER. HE'S COMING TO PICK YOU UP.

SERIOUSLY, DO YOU BELIEVE HE'D ACTUALLY DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT? AT LEAST SHOW SOME GRATITUDE FOR WHAT HE DID YESTERDAY... JUST THINK ABOUT WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED IF HE HADN'T ARRIVED IN TIME. NOW HURRY AND GRAB YOUR BAG... HE'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE!

HUH... WHY HIM? YOU KNOW, I-I DIDN'T MENTION IT BEFORE, BUT HE'S THE ONE WHO SPIKED MY DRINK AT THE PARTY!

AFTER SOMETIMES...




ARGH... SURE, HE SAVED ME YESTERDAY,
BUT HE'S NO BETTER THAN THAT BLACKMAILER.
I CAN'T FORGET THAT HE TRIED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF ME WHEN I WAS UNCONSCIOUS.



FUCK, I CAN'T JUST IGNORE HIM WHILE I'M IN HIS CAR. LET'S SEE WHAT HE WANTS TO EXPLAIN...

MIA, I KNOW YOU'RE STILL ANGRY AT ME ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT, I'M NOT EXPECTING YOU TO THANK ME FOR WHAT I DID YESTERDAY OR TO FORGET WHAT I DID IN THE PAST, BUT CAN YOU PLEASE HEAR ME OUT JUST THIS ONCE?

ALRIGHT, I'M LISTENING...



I KNOW YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO BELIEVE HALF OF WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY, BUT I SWEAR I WASN'T THE ONE WHO SPIKED YOUR DRINK. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THERE WAS ANYTHING IN IT. THAT DAY, ALICE AND JULIE BLAMED ME TOO, AND TO PROVE I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT, I ACTUALLY DRANK THE LEFTOVER JUICE. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP CLEAR MY NAME.

BUT THEN, WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO DROP YOU OFF, EVERYTHING SPIRALED. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED, BUT I FOUND MYSELF IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU WERE... WELL, LICKING MY FINGER. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO REACT, AND HONESTLY, I LOST CONTROL. I'M NOT SAYING YOU INITIATED ANYTHING--YOU WERE COMPLETELY UNCONSCIOUS, AND TRUST ME, I WASN'T THINKING STRAIGHT EITHER.

I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE HIM, BUT HIS WORDS MAKE IT HARD TO DISMISS. I REMEMBER I LICKED HIS FINGER FIRST, THINKING IT WAS TESSA'S. HE MUST BE RIGHT, HE COULDN'T CONTROL HIMSELF... HE'S A MAN TOO. I DIDN'T HAVE CONTROL WITH TESSA, EITHER.

I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED MYSELF, AND I'M NOT ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS RIGHT NOW. I JUST NEED YOU TO HEAR MY SIDE OF THE STORY.

IF HE HADN'T ARRIVED JUST IN TIME YESTERDAY, THAT CREEP COULD HAVE ALREADY VIOLATED ME IN WAYS I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE. AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE HE MIGHT HAVE FORCED ME TO DO... FORGIVING JACK IS THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR WHAT HE DID.





I FORGIVE YOU.

NO, IT'S NOT OUT OF OBLIGATION.
I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING, AND
I SEE HOW YOU TRIED TO HELP ME. IT'S JUST...
I CAN'T KEEP HOLDING ONTO THE PAST. LET'S
FORGET EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED.

WAIT, ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YOU REALLY FORGIVE ME? UMM, YOU
DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO BECAUSE
OF YESTERDAY, RIGHT?

UM, REALLY? I'M NOT SURE I CAN BELIEVE
IT YET. IF YOU REALLY MEAN IT, THEN...



HUH!

CAN YOU JUST PINKY SWEAR?



PINKY SWEAR? SERIOUSLY? ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE IN HIGH SCHOOL AND NOT STILL IN KINDERGARTEN?


I'VE SEEN ALICE AND JULIA DOING IT BEFORE, AND I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D BELIEVE IN IT TOO. UH, JUST FORGET IT. I KNEW YOU WEREN'T SERIOUS.

PFFT!



SEE! THAT WASN'T THAT HARD!
NOW WE'RE OFFICIALLY GOOD.

WAIT... I WAS JUST KIDDING! HERE YOU GO...
UM, PINKY SWEAR! NOW YOU BELIEVE ME?




YOU'RE JUST MAKING FUN OF ME AGAIN. AREN'T YOU?

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD IT WAS FOR ME TO BORROW BETTY'S CAR. SHE MADE ME PROMISE TO STAY WITHIN THE SPEED LIMIT!

ALRIGHT, PINKY SWEAR DONE! WHAT'S NEXT? SHOULD WE SIGN A FRIENDSHIP CONTRACT WITH GLITTERS PENS NOW?

ME? MAKING FUN OF YOU? HEHE... NO! I'M JUST TRYING TO STAY AWAKE WHILE YOU DRIVE LIKE A TORTOISE ON A LAZY DAY!



OH, IS THAT SO? FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT!
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW THIS TORTOISE CAN
REALLY DRIVE!

HEHE! AT THIS SPEED, I'M SURE
WE'LL ARRIVE AT SCHOOL BY LUNCHTIME!

AND JUST LIKE THAT, TIME FLIES...

FIVE MONTHS LATER...

IT FEELS LIKE THE LAST FEW MONTHS DISAPPEARED IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, AND SOMEHOW, THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND EMMA JUST KEPT GROWING. WE USED TO BE INSEPARABLE, COULDN'T GO A FEW HOURS WITHOUT TALKING. BUT NOW, WE GO WEEKS WITHOUT EVEN A MESSAGE. AND WHEN WE DO TALK, OUR CALLS BARELY LAST TWO MINUTES, LIKE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO SAY.

MEANWHILE, OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, I'VE EVEN STARTED SPENDING MORE TIME AT CLARA'S AUNT'S HOUSE, VISITING ALMOST EVERY WEEK NOW. A FEW DAYS AFTER THAT INCIDENT, THE POLICE MANAGED TO CATCH THE BLACKMAILER. WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO REPORT SEPARATELY, AS IT TURNS OUT HE HAD A LONG LIST OF CHARGES AGAINST HIM, SO HE'S GOING TO BE LOCKED UP FOR QUITE A WHILE. WELL, THAT'S WHAT CLARA TOLD ME.

TO BE CONTINUED...