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## Chapter 1

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Allison woke with a deep ache between her thighs. Her bare body stretched outwards as she welcomed the soreness that accompanied the rest of her petite physique. Remembering last night's endeavors with John, which had also seeped into the early morning hours of today, made Allison smile. Her body tingled from head to toe as a surge of bliss ignited a fire deep within. The bright light leaking from behind John's simple curtain said it was about mid-morning. She shied away from the day and rolled towards the bedroom door pulling the faded sheet up over her pounding head. Her smile faltered as she realized, under the makeshift fort, her mouth felt like sandpaper and smelt of last night's alcohol binge. Wrapping the single sheet tighter around her pulsating body, Allison rolled out of the queen size bed and planted her bare feet onto the cold wood floor. As she stood, her head spun wildly and a roll of nausea started to build. In desperate search for water and Ibuprofen, she made her way towards John's kitchen. On the way, she noticed how drab and empty John's apartment appeared to be. Allison knew single men didn't decorate much, but this was almost

vacant. There were no shades of color or photos on the walls and the furniture was bare to none. Not even a glass occupied space in the kitchen cabinets.

Eventually Allison gave up on the Ibuprofen and with her hand she cupped large amounts of room temperature water from the faucet into her dry mouth. She tiptoed back into the bathroom and relieved her swollen bladder. Turning her head from side to side in search of toilet paper, she became shamefully aware there was none of that either. After a quick wash with water, she dragged herself back to John's bed. Rubbing the pain from behind her eyes, she tried to recall what had actually happened last night. She did remember seeing John earlier this morning before the sun rose. Allison giggled at how she had watched John make his way to the bathroom and what a perfect ass he had. But soon after, she must have passed out again. Coming back to John's apartment last night, totally plastered, was probably not the best idea she had ever had. *It wasn't my true intention.* But as soon as she laid eyes on John at Angie's party last night, she would have been an idiot not to go home with him.

Allison smiled again as she recalled the amazing sex she and John had last night. Running her hands over a nauseated stomach, she couldn't help but think how special John had made her feel. In the twenty-four years of Allison's life, no one had ever done that. Her parents had practically ignored her while she was growing up, leaving toys and techno objects to supply endless hours of distraction. Now she finally understood why sex was so important in a relationship, her last boyfriend did the deed with ultimate humility and left her very disappointed. She never wanted to let go of this special feeling John gave her, it made her feel so alive and wanted. Allison knew this was just a one-night stand in John's eyes since he had already left before she even woke. This did place shame on her but she would never regret what they had shared. She

peeled herself out of John's bed and found her clothes piled onto a folded chair in the corner of the room. She got dressed fairly quickly and took one last look around the dull apartment for any leftover items. Grabbing her black clutch off the nightstand, she headed out the front door.

Allison's friendly smile led her into the morning sun with thoughts swirling around lust and courage. It was stupid for Allison to have gone back to a stranger's apartment last night, being drunk and all, but it was not the worst decision she had ever made. Her body had never felt so sore yet so wonderful. With every step her inner core screamed for John to return. She was going to have to ask her best friend Angie for his number when she got home. *But what if he doesn't want me to call? If he did he would have given it to me before he left this morning, right?* Her smile vacated her face immediately. She stopped walking and felt a hint of remorse and then there it was, the inevitable Walk of Shame. *Fuck Me!* Allison lifted her head and finally looked at her surroundings. That's when she noticed how eerily still it seemed outside. The air seemed fresher and cleaner, no exhaust fumes and no garbage smell from the lined-up trash cans. She glanced up and down the street, *where are those trashcans?* She was having a hard time remembering exactly how she got to John's place but quickly blamed it on Angie pushing too much alcohol on them last night. She looked at the street signs above and noticed how different they looked and how unfamiliar the names were. Allison was not going to win today as her stomach turned severely nauseous with no substance to soak up the left over alcohol. She started to walk faster in the direction that should have been the right way. The surroundings looked similar to her Scranton, Pennsylvania but her brain screamed *this is not your Scranton, Pennsylvania!*

Twenty minutes later Allison all but gave up. Her head was pounding like a jackhammer, several times her stomach

wanted to empty the contents of last night's binge, and her feet began to ache from her ridiculous choice of footwear. Calling for a cab was the best idea she'd had all morning, they would be able to get her home a lot quicker. She reached for her cell phone in her purse but came up empty handed. Checking in her jacket pockets, she only found her champagne colored lip gloss. *Did I leave it at John's apartment?* She then slapped her forehead, closed her eyes and wished she hadn't had that one-night stand with John after all. Allison looked up and down the vacant streets, too aware of how peculiar the surroundings were. *Where are all the cars and people? It was Sunday morning for crying out loud.* Allison decided to go back to John's apartment, find her phone or use his phone to call a cab.

When Allison turned around to go back the way she had come, she became lost almost immediately. The street signs were all renamed, none of them making sense. This was becoming too weird to figure out and frankly, she was becoming a little scared. *How the hell am I supposed to find my way back to John's?* With high anxiety, she continued to walk in the same direction in hopes that eventually when she got home she could call Angie and get John's number to retrieve her phone. If it was even there. For now, she would look for a business or a gas station that could possibly help her get a taxi or Uber. But as she walked onwards, nothing appeared. The streets were so strangely deserted, not even a car was parked in the street. Allison turned around slowly, taking in all that was different. Her last memory this morning was of John getting out of bed to use the bathroom. *Did he come back to bed or did he leave?*

She continued to walk another fifteen minutes while her thoughts scrambled for an explanation. She was about to throw in the towel when finally up ahead on the street corner to the right, she saw a tan-colored, two-story brick building that had a sign above the main door that read "*B's Grocery*".

On the door was a smaller sign that read “*Closed*” but she saw the main light was on inside. She ran towards the store, hoping someone inside could help her. As she took the three cement stairs up to the front door she quickly saw movement inside. She knocked eagerly on the metal barred door and waited.

An older Asian man came to the door waving his finger and shouted, “We close till noon. You know the rules.” He started to walk away but Allison stopped him, shouting towards the barred glass door.

“Please sir, I need some help! Do you have a phone I could use? I am a little lost!” she pleaded.

The petite old man shook his head, “No. No phone here, you know the rules. Go now before you activate alarm.” He walked away from the door, out of sight.

Allison turned and slumped on to the top cement step. With her elbow on her knee, she placed her left palm under her chin and started to question her mind: *Rules, what rules? What alarm? What was going on around here? Where the hell is everyone?*

She stood with anger and rebelliously walked back into the street. Running out of options and not a soul in sight to help her, she started her hike down the middle of the road. Out of the blue, a siren instantly deafened Allison’s ears. She covered them quickly, looking around and then into the sky. The alarm projected an air raid effect like a bomb was about to hit the city. Before she could think, what looked like police cars, but more innovative, screeched down the middle of the street purposefully trying to hit her. She started to back herself out of the street and onto the sidewalk but the police vehicles blocked her in from every direction.

A loud voice came across an intercom, “Get down on the ground, violator; put your hands behind your head!”

Allison wasn’t sure if they were talking to her, *this had to be*

*a mistake.* So she kept her ears covered as the siren screamed on. Before she realized what was actually happening, an electric surge pulled her small body involuntarily to the ground. She dropped hard onto the pavement hitting her head swiftly on impact. Wet warmth trickled down the side of her temple and the pain became deep as her body violently vibrated on the road. When the voltage finally stopped flowing through her muscles, she looked up to barely see several men with black helmets and unrecognizable facemasks gathering around. They yanked her now fragile body from the street, rushing her into the back of the vehicle. Allison slipped in and out of consciousness for only short moments before total darkness consumed her.

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*Going to another one of Angie's parties was not on Allison's priority list tonight. It was just another Saturday night, the same boring people at the same boring places. Same shit, different pile. Allison was bored with her current life. She had no man, mainly because all the good ones were taken or gay. Her job at the bar was getting to be old news, full of unattractive repetitive customers. Her friends did the same art exhibits each month, the same restaurants every weekend and the same boring clubs on Friday nights. Boring, boring and boring. But being that Angie was Allison's best friend, she felt she could dedicate at least five minutes of her presence to yet another one of Angie's Saturday night shindigs. She would have a quick drink and be back at her own apartment just in time for a rerun of her favorite TV series on another mind-numbing Saturday night.*

*Allison dug through the pile of clothing on her small, carpeted bedroom floor. She was in search of her favorite rustic-orange jean jacket which would look perfect with the light-blue camisole shirt. On the dig, she discovered her long-lost, short, chiffon, cream-colored skirt, bingo. Her new wedge sandals would complete this awesome ensemble. She added extra curls to her already long wavy blonde hair and a touch of mascara*

*and champagne lip gloss. She took one last look in the bathroom mirror to fix any curls out of place. Allison smiled as she turned side to side, admiring how cute she looked and then grabbed a quick selfie. Thank heavens for tall wedge heels; they did make her look somewhat taller. Her five-foot, four-inch short stature was her least favorite thing about herself. Her mother and grandmother had been petite also. But living in a time when supermodels were six feet tall made Allison feel belittled, pun intended. Allison lifted her head high as she was always taught to do, blew a kiss into the mirror, grabbed her small black clutch and walked out the front door.*

*Angie only lived a few blocks from Allison but the wedge heels made it seem like miles. As she approached the apartment, she could hear the bass leaking from the windows above. She climbed the stairs to the fourth floor and now wished she had never worn the stupid wedges. My feet will punish me tomorrow, she knew. Allison didn't bother to knock, that wasn't in the BFF code of ethics. She pushed the door open and stepped inside, greeted heavily with a lot of people flooding Angie's small apartment. A high-pitched scream caught Allison's attention immediately as she caught sight of her BFF pushing her way through the crowd.*

*"You're here! You're here!" Angie screamed above the loud music, wrapping her arms tightly around Allison's neck. The petite, longhaired brunette wore a black, strapless, one-piece pantsuit with black stilettos, appearing taller than she actually was. This was one of many reasons why they were best friends, height requirement: check. Allison all but fell to the ground as she tried to steady herself.*

*"Yes, yes I am here. I said I would come, didn't I?"*

*"All right, young lady, let's get you a shot and a drink of choice."*

*Allison pulled herself out of Angie's grip and straightened out her jacket. Following Angie through the crowd towards the kitchen was really quite difficult. At one point, Allison stopped and turned her head to the side as she waited for "comers and goers" to wade through the crowd. She took that opportunity to fluff out some of the loose curls that Angie had flattened during their "death grip" hug. As she turned her head the opposite way, running her slim fingers gingerly through the*

*curls, her eyes caught sight of something very delicious. Allison's quick look about exploded into an obvious gawk. Sitting on a stool, not even six feet from her, was probably one of the most gorgeous human beings she had ever had the joy of laying eyes on. And he is looking right at me!*

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Allison awoke with a slap to the face. Her head already ached with severe pain and the smack amplified the pressure. She tried to open her eyes to see what the hell was going on but the lights were extremely bright. After trying to filter the amount of light coming in, she inched her eyes open a little at a time, but another slap soon followed the first.

“Wake the fuck up!” screamed a very deep angry voice.

“Stop it! I am trying!” she shouted back with a hint of emotion attached at the end.

“Well try harder, my dear.” The voice eased up this time when the man replied. He must have been right in front of her but he was nothing but a blur to her pitiful vision.

“Where am I?” she asked with a raspy voice.

“You’re at the Police Post, my dear. Now what I want to know is, where are you from?” His voice was becoming hostile.

Allison finally got her eyes to obey and she looked about the intensely lit room. There were three other men in the small, silver, metallic room, all dressed in what appeared to be some type of black ultra-modern uniform. The angry one speaking was in business attire.

“I... I am from here, Scranton, Pennsylvania,” she answered timidly.

“Oh really? Well, my dear, it doesn’t look like you’re from here. I mean, you don’t seem to be following any of the rules from here and you sure as hell don’t dress like you’re from around here. But maybe you’re just a Non-Follower of some



sort, a new breed. Or maybe, the correct question I should be asking is what *year* are you from?"

He made it perfectly clear he was being condescending. Allison blinked a couple of times and looked at all the men with confusion. This big glass of dick in front of her was right, something had been off since she had left John's apartment this morning. She whispered to the irate man, "2020?"

"I am sorry, my dear, could you repeat that? My ears are sensitive these days."

She saw him leaning forward with his hand close to his left ear. She cleared her throat and spoke louder, "2020."

He leaned back into his chair and smiled. "Ah yes, that's what I thought." He placed his elbows onto his knees and strategically shaped his fingers into an enormous temple. Without making eye contact, he immobilized Allison with fear. "You know, Kitten, every once in a while your kind sneaks into the present and I have to come and clean house." His voice was obviously annoyed and Allison started to tear up. He frowned at her. "Now, now, my dear, don't start that. We have rules here and you, Kitten, are not following any of them right now." She watched as the man stood from his chair and grew taller with every word.

With trembling lips, Allison asked, "I don't understand, where am I then? What year is it? How did I get here?"

The commanding man walked slowly towards Allison, his face no longer hidden by the dark. He was a middle-aged man, probably in his early forties but something was very striking about him. Well, normally she would have found him attractive but there was something menacing about his air. She could see the evil within him. His jet-black hair was slicked back with a 1920's flair and his eyes held darkness like he was born without a soul. The olive-colored skin matched perfectly with his pencil-thin, black mustache that stretched low under his too perfect nose. But his height alarmed her the most,

standing at five-foot-four she had always felt small, but the man before her was well over six and a half feet and it made her feel defenseless. He leaned down, too close for comfort, making her pull back instinctively.

“Now, do tell me, my dear, what is your name?” His voice was almost an unnatural whisper. His eyes searched her face and hair as if he had never seen anything like it before. The unwelcomed feeling she was experiencing made her feel like a gazelle in a lion’s den.

“A-Allison,” she stuttered while searching his soulless eyes.

He straightened himself out quickly, as if he too were in a trance. Clearing his throat while pulling his gray suit jacket down into place he explained, “Well A-Allison, my name is Mr. Rocco Black. You have already had the pleasure of meeting my acquaintances the Police Assailants. I run this show here in Scranton; I am also a very important politician in Washington DC, but enough about me. As for you, my dear, I don’t really care what you do for a living or who you really are. But what I do know is you are now a trespasser and I don’t take kindly to having intruders in my city.” He placed his forefinger on his chin. “So here we are in a predicament of what I should do with you?”

He walked around her, bending down close behind her right ear. He whispered softly, sending warm breaths across her sensitive skin, “As I see it A-Allison, someone from here brought you into my world. Why? That’s to be determined, but I have a feeling the Non-Followers are behind this and that’s because they don’t like to follow the rules here either.” He flicked Allison’s hair, which made her involuntarily jump in the chair. “So what should I do with such a beautiful young lady from the old era?” He continued his walk around and tapped his chin ever so lightly.

Allison’s body began to quiver. She was so terrified at this moment, she couldn’t tell if she was just dreaming or if this

was really happening to her? She closed her eyes tightly and tried to wake herself up. But then she felt him behind her again as goose bumps ran along the base of her neck.

“You’re not dreaming, Allison, this is all too real.”

Allison’s eyes opened and were hit with disappointment.

Black continued, “Now tell me, Allison, what was the last thing you remember before you ended up here, in my city?”

Her voice quivered as she tried to appear brave. “I should have a lawyer present I believe; it’s my right as an American citizen.” She wasn’t sure what was happening or what was going to happen, but she felt legal advice might be sensible. Mr. Black’s laugh was loud and raw, it pierced her ears and another tear ran down her pale cheek.

“Oh my, you old-timers are all the same. I don’t laugh often but when I find one of you... it just brings out the best in me.” He wiped at his eye, mocking a tear. He seemed very proud of himself for making a helpless woman squirm. “My dear, there are no lawyers in this day and age, there is no need. Everyone must follow the rules here and if they don’t, there is only one outcome...” He leaned his large physique closer to her, bringing them eye to eye. The forged smile ran down his pointy chin and with a murderous look he shouted, “Death!”

Allison shrieked away cowardly, his very presence made her courage fail.

Black stood up, pulling down his jacket along the way, continuing his walk about. “Now tell me, what was the last memory you had before arriving in my time? Don’t make me ask again, Allison. I am a very impatient man, as you can see. I would hate for that beautiful face of yours to receive a permanent change.” His voice returned to an eerie, false calm.

Allison huddled into herself for a moment than looked into the depth of his eyes and began to speak. “I was at a party last night; I met a guy, went to his apartment and woke up thinking I was still in the year 2020. The man I was with

wasn't there when I awoke this morning, so I don't even know if he really exists or if I was drugged. Please, I just want to go home." She began to cry again. Another slap assaulted her face, hushing her up quickly.

"We have rules here, Allison." He taunted her, "That's enough of that blubbing!" He rolled his eyes at her as if the very sight of a woman crying appalled him. "Now you met a guy, what was his name?" he asked calmly.

"J-John," she whimpered with trembling lips.

"Of course!" He threw his hands up in the air. "It's always John. Why not Bill or Tom? Why is it always John?"

Allison was confused, but apparently she was not the first person to have met John.

"Where is this 'John's' apartment, Kitten?" he asked eagerly.

"I-I am not sure, I left in a hurry this morning but when I looked up I was outside on the corner of L something and H street, I think. But I could have remembered it wrong." Allison wanted to kick herself in the ass. *Now why couldn't I have remembered that hours ago while trying to find my way back to John's apartment?*

She heard Mr. Black bark orders to the policemen and all three took off out the door. Allison could suddenly feel the restraints cutting into her skin. It might have been Allison's imagination but it seemed every time Mr. Black became distressed, the restraints would grip tighter and tighter around her small wrists.

With a sharp turn towards Allison, Mr. Black began to speak again, "Allison, let me start by saying what a pleasure it was to have met such a beautiful young lady, you truly are a sight for sore eyes." His large masculine hand lightly caressed the top of Allison's head, as if need and curiosity were aiding him. A slight moan escaped his lips, and just like that his hand retracted.

“Our time here is done but I will promise you this, after my men have searched the area for this so called ‘John’s’ apartment, and nothing is found due to the fact you are probably lying and truly are from the NFA, I will torture you severely. Then I will kill you, do we have an understanding?”

Allison nodded quickly, she did not want to die but a fast kill seemed a better option than a torturous one. Mr. Black hit a buzzer and two other policemen came in with protective helmets holding unusual weapons. The men picked her up from the chair and her arms fell to her side. Staring down at her hands, Allison thought to herself, *what happened to the wrist restraints?* They dragged her from the room and down a long, darkened hallway with bright sunlight shining from up ahead. At first, she thought they were taking her back outside which would have been very welcoming. But all they did was transport her past an enormous, open room which displayed several large windows reaching the thirty plus foot ceiling. Several people busied themselves around their desks and the accompanying offices. She felt at ease though, for the first time, seeing normal people again. The only drawback was not one person looked her way or seemed to notice her at all.

As she looked across the room, eyeing all the individuals not paying an ounce of attention to the tiny woman getting hauled off to God knows where, she caught the eye of a man. This man was very familiar to her and he was staring directly at her. He was tall like Mr. Black but with light brown hair that was shaved into a crew cut yet slightly longer on top. His face was ruggedly handsome with chiseled cheekbones and his eyebrows were a darker shade of brown. His slight five o’clock shadow and slightly crooked nose told Allison he was not new to struggling. His stare bored through her making his dark chocolate eyes seem like a safe haven even around the devil himself.

He was probably in his late twenties or early thirties, but

Allison could not be sure. He wore dark pants that fit snug around his trim waist and a tight black shirt which seemed to be holding on for dear life as his biceps bulged from underneath the short sleeves. Allison almost melted with lust as she walked by but then something snapped in her foggy brain. She looked away and then it finally hit her. *John! John from last night!* Her head snapped back into reality and she watched as he stood motionless. She started to open her mouth but he quickly placed his index finger over his kissable lips, hushing her in silence. She snapped her mouth shut with confusion.

The policemen dragged her past the busy room as she continued to turn her head backwards to keep her eyes on the man who had brought her into this nightmare. All the while, he kept his hushed finger over his mouth shaking his head side to side very slowly. Soon he was out of sight and she was thrown into a small room with walls made out of heavy steel, a jail cell? The doors shut automatically and the loud sound it produced made Allison wince. She slid herself down the opposite wall and stared at her new surroundings: a floating silver bench and metallic toilet.

She bent her head onto her exposed knees and started to sob quietly, it was their rule not to cry and the bruises on her face showed that lesson learned but she could not help herself. Allison was tossed into a different time era, or realm, as far as she could understand. She wasn't dreaming and apparently this was happening. And why hadn't John said anything or helped me? Why had he told me to keep quiet? She had no answers, no help. This was truly the beginning of a serious nightmare. Allison quietly cried herself to sleep and dreamt of the night before.

Allison quickly caught up with Angie in the kitchen as her eyes never left the man on the barstool. She watched as he sipped his glass of caramel colored liquor, noticing how his luscious lips glossed the rim of the glass. As she looked up into his eyes, she gasped as she noticed he was still staring back at her. His face was a blueprint of a demi-god made from ruggedness. It reminded Allison of a cross between an Alaskan mountaineer and an Italian GQ model. His light brown, shaggy hair lay appropriately messy on top of his beautiful head and his five o'clock shadow seemed to have the right amount of growth mixing with his dark sultry eyes. He could make any woman want with great need, she giggled to herself. The tight-fitting, gray t-shirt clung to his biceps and the ripples in his abdomen could be defined as the thin material lay weakly above it. He placed the glass down onto the bar and started to stand, Allison watched as he grew in size. His eyes never left her face and that's when her knees felt weak.

This man was unbelievable; his dark, denim jeans hung from his taut waist but bulged in all the right places. And what was under those snug jeans exploded in Allison's imagination. The room felt suddenly hot as his eyes bored through her body.

"Allison? Hello to Allison!" A hand waved frantically in front of her, snapping her out of the lucid dream like state.

"Wh- What?" she said unconsciously, knowing her face was about three shades of red.

"Drink, what do you want to drink?" Angie's voice seemed irritated, but Allison knew Angie was only playing around with her.

Allison scanned the granite countertop for something not too strong but that would produce a quick buzz. "Hmm... I will have... Jack."

"That sounds good, I will have one too." A deep voice emanated from behind her.

When she turned, she was face to chest with 'him'. She stretched her eyes from his bulging pecs, to his handsome face. She felt the redness drain from her cheeks as they stood in the kitchen facing one another. A mixture of fresh pine soap with a hint of expensive cologne filled Allison's senses. God, he even smelt like heaven.

*"Oh good, John, this is my bestie, Allison. Allison, this is my new friend John. He just got into town today," Angie explained while standing behind Allison with a huge smile occupying her petite face. Allison pushed her hand forward to shake the gorgeous man's hand while feeling very nervous. John shook her hand ever so lightly and when their skin made contact, Allison could feel a surge she had never experienced with anyone before.*