

Chapter 1:

A Time So Far Away Now

“You do this every single time!” I hear my mom scream from the dining room while banging on our new wooden table. We already had to get a new one after Dad broke the last one.

I sigh adjusting my red tie, trying to detangle the fabrics. These school uniforms are so damn tacky. I walk to the left corner of my dimly lit, nearly empty room. “Where did I put my bag?” I mumble moving some papers with my foot in a low-effort search. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot my brown leather bag. Grudgingly I pick it up and left my room.

With my head down I walk past the dining room, right in the middle of their argument. The front door is the only way out of the house, and the only way to the front door is through them.

“I’m going to school,” I say, not to interrupt them but because if I don’t my mother will think I’m ignoring her.

My mother turns to me, “Have a good day at school honey,” she huffs. I know she’s not annoyed at me- I think so at least.

My dad stays silent, his fist clenched in rage from whatever my mom was yelling about, I don’t bother to know anymore. I used to hope I could solve Every problem they had so my sister didn’t have to hear this, but it’s not worth losing my sleep over.

Upon stepping down the concrete stairs that lead onto the sidewalk, I see my sister with a forced smile waiting across the street.

“Hey!” She calls, waving. I’m guessing she knew they were about to start arguing again and decided outside.

I wave back, and begin to cross the street. This road is barely busy so I don’t bother to look both ways.

“WATCH OUT!”

Her echoing voice causes me to jolt back onto the sidewalk, stumbling a bit. A speeding truck passes by, so close I could feel the pressure of the air around me. The adrenaline is now pumping through my veins, and my heartbeat accelerating

My sister came running over to me with tears in her eyes, "Oh my god, are you okay?" She asks frantically, breathing heavily.

I straightened my back and ran my fingers through my chocolate-colored hair strands in an attempt to fix it. "Yeah," I exhale, turning to her "I'm fine" I reassure patting her on the head.

"Next time look both ways, idiot" She snuffles with a shaky voice as she wipes her watery eyes with the sleeve of her uniform. Her uniform is just a bit different from mine, she had a skirt instead of pants and a bow instead of a tie but other than that the colors are the same.

I nod my head in agreement, keeping a careful eye on the traffic as footsteps fill the silence of our brief walk. As we made it near her school, she turned to me with a half smile.

"Please be careful," she prays quietly before walking off to the entrance of her school.

I look at my watch realizing I hadn't taken it off since yesterday, but I'm not late yet. I slip my hands into the pockets of my pants and while still occasionally glancing at the road I begin the walk to my high school.

I see the familiar stone entrance gates of my high school as students are still entering the building. it looks like I'm just in time. I join the crowd of students walking on the brown cobblestone path and head into the halls of the school.

"There he is!" A voice exclaims. That was the raspy voice of Reyn, a tall guy who I, unfortunately, hang out with along with Jasper and Nolan. The last to that make up our sad excuse for a friend group.

I turn over to face them with no sort of smile or expression of relief. I only hang out with them because they're low-maintenance people who don't expect anything from me. And ENSso I can at least say I have some type of friends.

"C'mon man, no hello?" Jasper asks, leaning against my locker, as he crosses his arms.

“Hello,” I respond indifferently, turning away from him and walking to our classroom as they trailed behind me.

Just before we arrive at the classroom doors, I felt a pull on my shoulder.

“What?” I ask as I turn to face Nolan, who wants me to turn around for some reason.

Nolan and Reyn were chuckling, “Hey, look at that pig over there.” Nolan points at a short guy who is somewhat rounder than him, Nolan being a large guy himself but he claims it was all muscle.

I spare a glance over at the kid they were pointing and laughing at. “Okay? What about him?” I ask pretending I didn’t know what they were about to do.

“Just watch.” Reyn laughs before trotting over to the guy and dragging him by the arm over to the three of us, who were standing and watching.

“D-do you need something from me?” The guy stutters, I can see his hands start to sweat as he glances around trying not to make eye contact.

Jasper looks over at the three of us as he cringes “Bro, why the hell do you sound like that?” Jasper asks, pushing the short student onto the ground.

“Yeah, you sound like a choking pig,” Nolan adds, making Reyn and Jasper laugh.

“Sorr-” The student starts to speak, wiping the dirt from the ground off his uniform.

“Hey, would you even feel a kick with all that fat on you?” Reyn questions out loud with a malicious, dare I say, evil look.

The shorter student’s face of confusion quickly forms into one of fear. Before they could answer Reyn’s question, which I don’t think he was supposed to, he was kicked in the stomach causing him to tumble to the other side of the hallway.

Clutching his torso in pain, the student groans, his face sweaty. Jasper and Reyn are laughing like they’re watching some stand-up comedy. I don’t understand how anyone can find this entertaining. Watching some random being in pain is just pathetic honestly.

I can feel Nolan watching and waiting for my reaction. I don't know what he expects though. If he thinks I'm going to jump in and try and defend this guy like some sort of hero main character, he's mistaken. He'll survive anyway. Plus, it builds character.

I didn't bother telling a teacher or anything, but I'm sure someone must've reported us already. I went into the classroom like I originally intended to before being stopped, and the three of them followed behind again.

The rest of the school day went by with nothing notable happening, and even if something did happen, I sure wasn't paying any attention to it. Just as I was preparing to leave, an angry voice could be heard through the intercom speakers. "Reyn, Jasper, Nolan, and Onyx. Please come to the Main office. Immediately."

I knew they would get in trouble, but why am I being called to the office?

Jasper groans "Ugh what now?" He asked as if he hadn't bullied a student right in the middle of the halls this morning.

"Let's go," I said, already walking toward the office, knowing the sooner this was over, the better.

All four of us step into the office where there were cubicles for all the teachers, and the scent of coffee overflowed within the room. The teachers' lecture began but I didn't hear a single thing. I couldn't care less whether they called my parents or gave me detention so I wasn't listening.

"Mann, that's bullshit" Reyn growled kicking a nearby trash can as we walk out of the school gates. I genuinely don't know what he thought was going to happen but he needs to learn to stop kicking things.

"It's not that bad," Jasper began snickering. " We could just get someone else to do it" He concluded like the genius he is. That was sarcasm by the way.

As a punishment we have to clean the school every day, starting tomorrow. Which gives me a good reason to come home late. We took the usual way, a cut through an alleyway.

"Let's stop here for a bit," Reyn insisted leaning on the moss cover walls reaching into his pockets.

"Smoke break?" Nolan asked, offering Reyn a lighter knowing he probably forgot his again.

Reyn takes a cigarette pack out of his pocket and takes the lighter Nolan offers in trade handing him the pack of cigarettes. They pass it around each taking turns taking a cigarette out and lighting it.

"Want one?" Jasper asked.

"Nah, I'm good" I respond.

Reyn held out the pack of cigarettes, smiling coaxingly. "Come on, just try one."

"I'm fine, really." I wave the smoke out of my face, doing my best not to seem awkward or uncomfortable.

"Aw, come on." Reyn pushed a little harder. "Just try one. It won't hurt."

I finally gave in, I would deny it again but they'll just keep asking if I do, reluctantly I take a cigarette out of the package and Jasper lights it up for me. I could've done it myself though.

As I inhaled I could feel my throat and lungs burning up as if I was swallowing fire. Each breath was like a harsh wave of fiery smoke crashing right into my face. I tried my best to keep my throat from coughing and to stop it from burning but the cigarette seemed to have a mind of its own.

I throw it on the ground and step on it, "Never doing that again" I comment under my breath.

They all laugh, "What? Can't handle it?" Nolan teases.

"Just don't want to," I reply, leaving them to smoke with each other and beginning my walk back to my house.

Dragging my feet on the pavement, I make sure to take the smallest steps. I dread coming back to this house, calling it a home would be a blatant lie. A home is supposed to be a happy, understanding, and warm place. I'm scared to even open the door every time I arrive.

It's been a long time since I had a fond memory with my parents...

"Look! Look!" A young kid called with a bright smile, confidently holding up a drawn picture, of three figures that were supposed to be him, his mom, and his dad.

"Oh wow! You're so talented Onyx" His mother praised picking him up, "Let's go show Daddy the beautiful drawing you made!" She hummed walking to the living room with her son in her arms.

"Honey, look at this picture Onyx drew" She laughed, placing him down as he waddled toward his father, his arms falling as he did causing the flimsy paper to rip.

Little Onyx's eyes began to water as he looked at the torn paper, both his parents rushed over to comfort their crying son.

"It's alright, don't cry" His mother scooped him up again.

"But.." He hiccuped trying to get his sentence out "I wanted daddy to see the picture" cried 5-year-old Onyx.

"It's okay, how about we draw another one?" His dad reasoned while grabbing a blank piece of paper and some crayons.

All three of them sat on the living room floor, scribbling away on the blank piece of paper. In the end, they had indeed created their own family portrait, their own unique memories of a happier time.

A time that seemed so far away now.

I stop reminiscing as I could see the front door of my house. Grabbing the cold metal door knob I twist the door open and walk into the dining room.

"What have you been doing this whole time then?!" My dad yells, his face red with anger as he stands across from my mom, only a table in between them.

"I don't know? Maybe taking care of the damn kids, and working!" She argues. "You sit around drinking and bringing girls over but can't keep a fucking job!" Mom continues to rage.

I stand motionless at the front of the dining room, not knowing where to walk. All around me, the sound of yelling and screaming filled the air. I hear the faint cries of my sister without hesitation, I rush toward my sister's room.

Nearly bursting through the white wooden doors, huddled up in the corner of her room. Her head is on her knees as she covers her ears with her hands. She looks up, her face damp with tears. Jumping onto her feet she runs over to me, hugging me as she cries even harder.

"They..." She struggles to breathe over her sobbing her bottom-lip trembling "They broke my vase" I tried to make out what she said through her sniveling. I gently wrapped my arms around her, how dare either of them say they're taking care of us when she's in here like this?

"What took you so long?" She asks, wailing still, her brunette hair strands messily over her face.

"I'm sorry," I reply simply as she let go of our hug. I close my eyes and let out a breath, trying to control my anger. Both of these so-called parents are good for nothing if they just spend the whole day arguing in the godforsaken dining room. Did they even eat?

"Here," I picked up the pink headphones lying on her desk, putting them over her ears. Turning on her favorite song. "Don't listen to their nonsense, okay?" I tried to console her in some type of way.

She nodded, wiping her tears away, "Oh, I love this song!" She chuckles, moving the hair off her forehead.

I turn away from her, heading through those white doors again shutting them behind me. Angrily stomping to the dining room they still yell back and forth as if that's solving anything.

"You got fired three times in a row! What do you mean you're working harder than me? For what? The girl at the club?" My mother fumed, waving her hands in the air.

"Maybe if you'd doll yourself up more I wouldn't have to go to the club" My dad retorts, loudly plopping himself back into his chair.

“Maybe if both of you would shut up for once, you would’ve heard your daughter crying in her room while you guys yell about the same things,” I interrupt with an angered voice.

They both aggressively turned to me, with expressions of anger and shock. They probably didn’t even realize I came back from school.

“What did you just say, young boy?” My mother asks, with a raised eyebrow.

“Who the hell do you think you’re talking to?” My useless dad adds, slowly walking toward me.

“Your ears have probably gotten worse with all this screaming 24/7, “ I roll my eyes, “Do you guys not notice the effect this is having on me and Eva?”

I was about to continue my enraged rant when I feel a sharp burning feeling on my right cheek.

“Don’t you dare talk back to me like that,” The rough voice of my dad demands as if he had any say in what I do now?

I look up at him holding back my fist, “You get called out for your actions and the first thing you do is slap me?” I scoff.

Evaline peeks out of her room, “O-onyx?” I glance at her as she slowly runs toward Onyx!”

He balls up his fist again, but my mother stops him. “You don’t know what’s going on, what I’ve been doing for you but you have the goddamn nerve to come in here and talk down on me?” She scolds with a look of disbelief.

“Mom- No Onyx didn’t mean that” She frantically looks between me and our parents. “Right Onyx?” She looks up at me, her trembling hand gripping my sleeve.

I look away from her and scoff “You don’t do shit” I mutter, just look at this situation, what type of caring parents would make their children act like this? None that I’ve seen.

“Since you think we do so little for you,” She grabs my arm dragging me to the front door, I feel Evaline’s grip from my sleeve fade. “Leave this house, and don’t come back” She slams the door behind me as I am pushed out of it, stumbling over my own feet.

“ONYX!” Evaline shouts from the front door, without even looking at her I could see the tears in her eyes. I’m too caught up in my emotions to even say anything to her, let alone look back.

I stuffed my hands into the pockets of my pants, grumbling and kicking rocks as I walked. I wasn’t even looking at where I was going, in the end, I walked the familiar route to my high school.

The gates are closed but I just climbed over them. Looks like I’ll be sleeping in the school for a while. This wouldn’t be the first time I’ve snuck into school and slept in the nurse’s office. Back when my parent’s problems first started I did this almost every night.

I land on the ground with a loud thump and dust kicking up. I look up into the sky, it smells like it’s going to rain tonight. An earthy and humid smell, it’s not pleasant but it’s bearable.

As I make my way into the school halls the rhythmic sound of rain hitting the windows around me slowly becomes an ambient sound. I wonder about these unlit high school halls, looking for the nurse’s offices.

Having found the nurse’s office, I lay in my dirty cigarette-smelling school uniform on one of the many beds. The sound of the rain was the only thing keeping me sane. I’ve never loved the rain more. Instead of focusing on my damning thoughts, I’ll slowly fall asleep to the gentle rain.

I woke up to the sound of the bell ringing, sitting up and looking around. Seems like the nurse didn’t see me. Sighing I scratch my head. What’s the point of even going to class?

But if I sit on this bed all day, I’m going to end up plotting a murder. I lifted myself off the bed, silently walking out of the office and trying to make it seem like I had just arrived by walking in the direction of the rest of the students who were walking.

Considering I woke up to the bell ringing, I’m guessing I’m late for class.

“Yo!” I heard someone call, I look around till I found the hazel-eyed face of Jasper.

I wave back at him, I’m really not in the mood to speak with this guy.

“I didn’t see you at the gates, how did you get all the way up here?” He asks with a confused look while walking to my side.

“Got here early,” I answer, trying to shut down any further conversation as quickly as possible.

“We’re hanging out at Reyns place tonight, you coming?” He asks again, nudging my arm.

Why not, it’s like I got anywhere to go tonight anyway. “Mhm,” I reply as we both walk into our homeroom.

And just like yesterday, the day continued without anything notable happening. But one thing I did notice was an inescapable bad feeling I have.

“How’d you get him to come, Jasper?” Nolan ask, as they walked ahead. I’m usually the one in front but today I have a good reason to be the one trailing behind.

Their voices muffled as I begin to drown in my thoughts. What if mom never comes to look for me? Maybe she really doesn’t care what happens to me considering the past years. How’s Eva reacting to this? By now she would’ve noticed that I didn’t walk her to school today. Did she hear what happened last night? Did my words have any effect on them or was all that just for nothing?

I had prepared to say so much just to get shut down in an instant. I touch my cheek feeling a sting, I definitely have a bruise right there now. Weren’t we supposed to clean the school today? Knowing them they probably really did get someone else to do it for us.

Honestly, I imagined running away and being kicked out numerous of times. But this feels way worse than I imagined. I knew they weren’t the best of parents but I always liked to think they still had some type of love for their kids. Though that love is probably very little.

“God damn, just how far away is your house Reyn?” Jasper groans “Feels like we’ve been walking for hours, you do this every day?” He asks in disbelief.

“Stop whining, we’re almost there” Reyn rolls his eyes.

Still though, whether they care about us or not, do they expect me to apologize and beg them to let me back in? Was I really talking down on her by pointing out her actions? Plus it wasn't just directed toward her it was directed toward both of them. This is pointless, thinking about it won't do me any good. I just hope Eva is okay.

"Alright, we're here" Reyn opens the black doors to a tall brick mansion, with grey asphalt roof shingles.

You live in this good house yet still act like an insufferable idiot? Beyond the definition of spoiled.

Jasper and Nolan rushed into the house faster than toddlers to a candy store. Being last to walk in I shut the door behind me.

"Where are your parents?" I ask, which isn't something I'd normally do but I just wanted to witness a normal parent-to-child relationship in front of my own eyes.

"Oh, they're away for some type of trip or somethin' " Reyn answers, scratching his head "Can't really remember" He concludes leading the three of us to the living room.

"Holy- this is as big as my whole house!" Nolan exclaims in awe at the size of Reyn's living room.

"For real, how come you didn't invite us over sooner?" Jasper jokes before sitting on the couch.

As they continued to converse about his house, I take it upon myself to look around. They have a shelf of family photos, looks like Reyn has a younger brother he must be somewhere else right now. They're all smiling and laughing in these pictures, some of them are recent too. If only Mom and Dad could go back to how they were. Or maybe me and Eva should've just been born by a better couple instead. A mother that worries for her children, is sad to see them grow up. A dad who takes them out fishing every Sunday and gives them an allowance if they have a good report card.

...

"Onyx what are you doing?" Reyn yelled, "We're trying something exciting over here" He announced, calling me over.

I turn toward them, all sitting around a marble coffee table. "I'm scared of what you guys deem exciting" I sigh sitting on the end furthest away from them.

From underneath the table, he grabs a clear bottle with a broken red seal.

"Bacardi? Bacardi 151?" Nolan reads the labeling out loud.

"Yup," Reyn states proudly, "My dad paid a whole lot to have this made, it's the only one made after 2016" he grinned.

"Damn, you're crazy rich" Jasper says in shock. This is shocking me too, how the hell did he have that made?

Reyn went into a room down the hall and got a transparent orange bottle, what is he planning to do with some pills?

"And we're going to drink it," He places the bottle of pills beside the bottle of alcohol "But not by itself." He laughs before going to get some cups as Nolan and Jasper exchange nervous glances.

Reyn picked up the bottle of pills that read 'Opioid' and crushed them in his hand, the dust fell like sand into the cup, and following that pouring the Bacardi 151 into the same cup.

"Alright! Who's going first?" He asked looking at the three of us. Jasper and Nolan instantly turned to me with a smirk "Onyx!" They said in unison.

Reyn pushed the class cup my way, "Well, go ahead" He leaned forward.

I pushed it back "No, I'm not drinking that" I refused calmly, why would I drink it first? I don't even know what Opioid pills are.

"Drink it!" The three of them urge, pushing the cup my way again. "Just jug it real fast!" They prompt.

"I don't think this is a safe thing to do" I protest, scooting my chair back.

"I've done it multiple times, trust me it's completely safe" Reyn assure me, well if an idiot like him can do it, and more than once at that then it should be fine right..?

I sigh as I lift the glass cup and try to swallow the concoction in one go. The liquid spills out of the corners of my mouth.

Immediately I start violently coughing. I was dipping in and out of consciousness as I fell to the ground. My body goes limp and my head starts ringing, I don't know if that was from me hitting the ground too hard or if it was caused by the drink. I can't control my own breathing, it was fast then slowed to an alarming rate then it speeds back up again. What is going on? What the hell did I just drink?

"Hey? Hey! Onyx?" I hear a voice call but I can't tell who it was.

"What was in the drink?" Someone screams, sounds like they're freaking out whoever was talking.

I look at my hands, and my fingertips are turning a violet-purple. My vision is blurry. I'm remembering things like my past birthdays, Eva being born, Eva crying, Mom and Dad arguing... What is this feeling?

I'm sorry, Evaline, I really.. Didn't mean it.