

Prologue

Jordan

I was born privileged. My father, Merrick Fillmore, was a ruthless venture capitalist that preyed on young, naïve college graduates who harvested brilliant business ideas. He would proposition money-hungry men and women with the funding they needed to make their dreams a reality. Little did they know they were selling their souls to the devil himself. All of my father's business transactions were legitimate on each contract these poor suckers signed. It wasn't his fault they signed without reading the fine print. Nothing he did was illegal—just evil.

Vivian, the woman whom I referred to as Mother, was my father's eye candy. She was only an accessory to his custom-tailored suits and tuxedos. She had the classic beauty, elegance, and most importantly, the aristocratic upbringing a man like Merrick would marry for status, not love. Her only job was to be at my dad's beckon call.

Needless to say, our small family was not known to be affectionate. The only true affection I received growing up was from my nanny, Hannah. It didn't take a genius to figure out I was Hannah's daughter. The older I got, the more I began to resemble her while showing zero signs of Vivian's pristine bloodline. When you're told a woman with silk-like raven hair and skin like a porcelain doll is your mother, it's a bit disconcerting to look into the mirror to see my father's olive complexion while my thick sandy-blonde hair, deep blue eyes, facial features, and athletic frame, mimic all that is Hannah.

I eventually found out the truth about Merrick, Vivian, and Hannah. My dad had an affair with Hannah while she was his personal assistant, resulting in a pregnancy. In an effort to keep her and his child close, my *parents* concocted a story that Vivian couldn't bear children so Hannah was propositioned to be their surrogate. Whoever bought that bullshit lie needed to get their heads examined. This day and age, it is a standard way of life to cheat on your spouse. At least that's how I saw it.

Shortly after my fifteenth birthday Merrick had a heart attack that took him from us unexpectedly. I was grateful that Hannah was there for me after my father's passing. She was the comforting support system I needed. Sadly, I lost Hannah to breast cancer not too long after my dad. Loneliness and depression began to take hold of me. All I had left was Vivian, the woman who barely acknowledged my existence, and for a lack of a better word, friends who were too wrapped up in their own lives to give two fucks about me. It was after Hannah died that Vivian had my therapist put me on prescription medication for anxiety and depression. I guess you could say that's where my drug addiction began.

As if things weren't already bad, my *mother* didn't know how to be single. Even though she had enough money to live three wealthy lifetimes, she was used to being someone's property. That's when the revolving door of suitors began. The men that frequented the house were only after one thing; my father's money; that is until Armen Montgomery walked into our lives.

Armen promised Vivian the world and she accepted it. He was a handsome real estate investor that was born into money. That made him the first suitor who didn't need my dad's money. Armen was doting, caring and loving. He made us a family, at least for a little while.



It was a warm, late summer evening before my senior year of high school. Max, my boyfriend for just over a year and I, were driving up the tree lined, gravel driveway to my colonial style home. We had spent a perfect day at the beach with a group of our friends. I knew what he was going to ask the second his Range Rover stopped in front of my house. Just like any other day, the question is asked, "Babe, do you want me to come in with you?"

I did my best not to roll my eyes at what the true meaning behind that question was. "It's late, Max, and I'm tired." I quickly added a yawn to the end of my sentence for good measure.

He glanced over at the three unfamiliar vehicles parked near the six-car garage that replicated the style of the home it sat next to. Vivian had gone out of town which meant Armen had brought his business meeting home. This wasn't an uncommon ritual even when my mother was home.

Max's attention quickly returned back to me, his molten chocolate eyes giving away his horny teenage intentions, with a shimmer of hope that I would change my mind.

"Seriously babe, I'm tired and I am going straight up to bed—to sleep," I repeated, with emphasis on the last two words. After swinging the vehicle door open, I leaned over the center console to kiss his pouty lips goodbye and then quickly jumped out of the SUV. I snagged my bag off of the floor, asking Max to text me when he got home before closing the door in effort to avoid verbal begging. I swear his begging was the only unattractive thing about him. If he could stop that one little annoyance, he would be absolutely perfect.

Feeling bad for not inviting Max in, I turned to blow my obviously sulking boyfriend a kiss before going inside. The weak smile I received in return for my caring gesture evoked the eye roll I held back earlier. "Boys," I muttered under my breath before entering the house.

It didn't take long before the sound of male voices filled the silence. Their deep voices rang out from the library that was off to the right of the front entrance. Cigar smoke made its way from the opened doors, encasing me with a spicy scent. From what I could make out, the gentlemen were talking animatedly about sports which could only mean one thing; they were done with business for the night and moved onto indulging their pallets with one of Armen's expensive bottles of scotch that paired nicely with the hand-rolled Cuban cigars.

"Lezleigh, is that you?" Armen's voice echoed out through the quiet foyer.

To be polite I made my way over to the double walnut doors that lead into the library, peeping my head in to find my stepdad standing by the bar refilling his snifter while three

other men in tailored suits were occupying the large, high-back antique leather chairs by the fireplace. This was by far my favorite room in the house. It was my reading haven when the house was empty and I wanted a cozy place to read while being surrounded by hundreds of literary geniuses that sat prominently on the built-in wooden shelves. The smell of the freshly polished wood and the leather of the chairs only added to the whole reading experience.

“Yep, just me. I’m headed to bed. You gentlemen have a great evening,” I answered with a quick flash of a smile and quickly headed up the two flights of stairs that took me to my third-floor bedroom in the west wing of the house. I couldn’t quite make out what the men had said upon my retreat as I learned a long time ago to tune out any of my step-father’s business acquaintances. The one thing I could be sure of, it was most likely inappropriate.

Ever since I grew out of the gangly teenager stage and began to look more like a young woman, the men Armen would bring around always stared at me like I was a piece of meat. Again, it was another reason to ignore them.

As I cleared the last step and began my trek down the hallway, I couldn’t help the sadness I felt when I passed Hannah’s old room. She was my biological mother and even after the truth came out about her and Merrick’s affair, I still wasn’t permitted to call her *Mom*, not even in the privacy of our home. Now she was gone and I would never get to tell her how much I loved her.

From the time I was old enough to understand, Hannah had always told me to be a strong, independent woman who didn’t need to depend on a man for happiness because in the end, it could ruin me. I could see it in her eyes that she was referring to her relationship with my father. My heart broke a little more with that memory.

After my quick shower, I finished my evening ritual of brushing my teeth and changing into my boyshorts and tank top in preparation for bed. Before climbing into bed, I took one of my anti-depressant medications. The medication seemed to help the lingering sadness when I would have memories of Hannah or my dad.

Just as I snuggled comfortably into my plush, king size, four-poster bed, my phone chimed, lighting up with a picture of Max and I at the beach earlier in the summer. He had on a baseball cap that shaded his eyes from the bright sun, but his impeccable smile was beaming as his chin rested upon my shoulder for what was probably our millionth selfie.

Max: Home, babe. I wish I was in ur bed :(

Me: Glad ur home. I’ll c u 2morrow

Max: Nite. <3 u.

Me: Sweet dreams. <3 u.

I don't know how long I had been asleep, but I was awakened suddenly by four sets of hands gripping at each of my limbs. I had always been a light sleeper so I was more surprised that I had no warning when *they* entered my room. The stench of cigar and liquor alone should have been enough to warn me.

"What are you doing," I screamed while trying to wriggle out of their clutches.

"Don't fight this, LJ. It will only hurt more if you do," Armen's slurred voice whispered by my ear. Dread surfaced when I found it nearly impossible to speak.

"What does that even mean?" I finally croaked out, still fighting to break free from the hands that held me in place.

I couldn't make out any faces in the dark room, but each voice I heard in the shadows was distinctly different. One had a southern drawl, maybe Texas or Louisiana. Another voice whispered and I picked up on the East Coast New York or Jersey slang. The last stranger had a foreign accent, maybe Australian, but it was hard to tell with the thundering sound of my heart pounding. At least I thought it was my heart.

Terrified, my fear kicked into another gear. I continued to thrash around in effort to break free, but sadly I was no match for these strong men. I exerted myself with my failed attempts to break free. I began to feel what I could only assume were each man's neckties being secured around both of my ankles and wrists; then tied to my bed posts. The tears had begun to stream down my heated cheeks. All I could think about is how I should have let Max stay the night. Never in my life did I think I would be raped let alone raped in my own home, in my own bedroom, by grown men; one being my step-father.

"She's a sweet lil thing, ain't she, Armen?" the man with the southern accent remarked as I felt what I could only assume was his hand running down the length of my arm, stopping to grope my left breast. His hand massaged over the thin layer of my tank top before finding its way under the fabric. His scotch-laden breath wafted over my face sending a chilled tingling sensation down my spine.

"Please don't," I whimpered through the lump in my throat, silently praying one of these men would come to their senses and help me. Deep down I knew that wasn't going to happen. They were drunk and horny. My panicked state won't sway them from the task at hand.

Another hand had begun to ascend my right leg, moving its way slowly up my shin to my thigh. My skin was crawling from the feel of the rough, callused, unwanted touch on my soft skin.

"She's smooth as silk, Arthur. Run your hand up her other leg," said the East Coaster. Arthur's hand didn't even start on my lower leg; instead he immediately found the bare skin of my thigh. He rubbed his hand up my inner thigh, stopping at the hem of my shorts, and then descended just above my knee, gripping it tightly as if he were trying to reign in his control.

"You weren't kidding, Christian," replied the man with what I could now tell was an Aussie accent. My attackers were saying one another's names, letting me know who is touching me. The only one I still didn't know yet was the southerner's name.

"Armen, please let me go," I begged once more.

“Sh, Lezleigh,” Once again, Armen’s voice was by my ear, his nose runs down the curve of my neck then back up, the smell of the alcohol he had been drinking filled the miniscule space between us. My eyes were screwed shut as hopelessness filled my mind. I didn’t know what else I could do. There was nothing more I could say that would stop this nightmare from happening, so I mentally shut down.

“That’s a good girl,” Armen praised me; mistaking my attempt to disconnect as a sign of compliance. His hand found its way under my tank, groping at the breast the southerner had been ignoring.

“I want inside this sweetness, Armen,” chimed the man with the southern drawl.

“You will get your turn, Henry,” Armen snapped in a heated tone. “I get my dick wet before any of you fuckers, do you understand? If you have a problem with that, then get the fuck out of my house.”

My body shook from the uncontrollable crying and before I could catch my breath four sets of hands ripped away the only barrier I had, shredding the fabric like it were a simple piece of paper.

“Fuck me, she’s perfection,” Christian grumbled through his blatant aroused state. I could feel his erection through his slacks rubbing against my thigh.

It took everything I had to keep my eyes shut, which heightened my sense of sound. I heard the leather of a belt being unbuckled and the sounds of a zipper being dragged down, immediately followed by the swish of pants dropping to the floor. The dip of the bed between my legs made me well aware that Armen was positioning himself to take me.

This was the moment I realized I had one last chance to fight. Fear overwhelmed my entire being; I began to writhe frantically against the ties that bound me, thrashing wildly against the bed in the desperation that one of my flailing limbs would connect with one of these monsters, but as quickly as I began to fight, the tighter the restraints got, exhausting me, draining what little strength I had left.

“Please, stop Armen. I won’t say anything. I swear it,” I plead one last time.

After a few seconds in what I believed was the darkest pit of hell, I finally felt my body shut down. I welcomed the darkness that had been threatening to overcome me. I was aware of everything, yet nothing at the same time. How was that even possible?