

“Wake up! Wake up! KATHERINE WAKE UP!”

My eyes flew open. What was happening? I saw my mom, sweaty and panicked, shaking my shoulders.

“Katherine. We have to go. NOW. Come on. I’ve already packed our clothes and some food and water.” My mom sounded terrified. Like it was the end of the world.

“Where are we going? What’s going on?” I asked.

“I’ll explain later. For now, let’s just say, we’re in deep danger,” she said.

We got in the car and drove away. After an hour of sitting in the car, I couldn’t hold the question in any longer. “Mom, can you tell me what happened now?”

She replied, “Okay, honey. Don’t freak out too much. We should be safe now. Anyways, you remember how dad and I got divorced two years ago? And I told you it was because his job required him to be far away from home. Well, that’s not entirely true.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your dad is not who he appears to be. He seemed so sweet and loving, but it was all just an act. He’s a criminal, Katherine. He kills people and murders them when he doesn’t get what he wants.”

“No, that can’t be true,” I argued. “Dad is too sweet to be such a crook.”

“No honey, it was all just an act. He never loved me. He only married me for my money. When I found out about this...” she hesitated for a moment. “...habit, of his, I called for a divorce. I didn’t want to be associated with this kind of person. I also called the cops on him. I couldn’t risk that man hurting anyone else. He got so angry with me, he almost killed me. And he would have, if the police hadn’t arrested him in the nick of time. They came in while he was pointing a gun at me, and arrested him immediately. He got away with his old criminal life, though, and was only charged for my accident. He was arrested for two years, and now he’s out. And he wants revenge. We have to go where he will never find us.”

“How do I know if you’re telling the truth?”

“I’m your mother, isn’t that enough proof?” she replied.

“Well, he’s my father. So no,” I answered.

“Okay, fine. He always carries around a silver handgun. On it, is a white sticker with his name on it. *Thomas Gimms*. That’s what he used when he almost murdered me.”

Neither of us talked for a while. Then, my mom voice broke the silence, “Don’t worry, honey. I’ll drive across the world if I have to. I will keep us safe.”

One year later...

“Hi. I lost my phone a week ago, and I was wondering if someone had found it and returned it to the office?” I asked. I really hoped this counselor had my phone.

“We have a few phones, yes. What does yours look like?” she responded.

“iPhone 5 with a blue polka-dot case.”

“Ah, yes. Here we go. Is this yours?” She pulled out my phone from a drawer.

“Yes! Yes! Thank you so much!” I took the phone from her hand and dashed out the door. Finally! Yes! A week ago, I sent a text to my crush, Logan Thorne, which said “I like you”. I didn’t want to, but I lost a bet with my friends. I didn’t think he noticed me at school or even knew I existed, so I had a bit of doubt he would respond. Still, I desperately wanted to see if he replied or not. This was it. The moment I’ve been waiting for all week. I looked at my phone.

I unread message

Could it be Logan? My heart almost skipped a beat. I clicked on the message button on my phone and pulled up my messages.

Unread message from 242-235-3466

I clicked on it.

“Please reply and confirm it’s really you. It’s important. Reply ASAP.”

Who is this person? This is the second time he’s messaged me. It’s so creepy. *Probably just some creep playing a joke*, I told myself. But that wasn’t what I was most concerned about. It was the fact that Logan didn’t respond that bothered me most. Even though I knew he most likely wouldn’t respond, I was still extremely disappointed.

I went home and logged onto my computer, ready to start my homework, when something caught my eye. *One unread message*. I quickly pulled up my chat box and almost screamed when I saw the username who chatted me.

LoganT: Hi Katherine!

It was Logan! It was really him! What should I do? How should I respond? I finally settled for “hi”.

KittyKat742: Hi

LoganT: I saw your text. Sorry I couldn't respond. My mom took my phone before I could type anything, said I was wasting too much time on my phone or something

Kitty Kat742: Oh, it's alright.

LoganT: Listen... I have a confession to make

LoganT: I really like you too. Ever since you moved here last summer, I can't stop thinking about you. I was too embarrassed to tell you, but then I saw your text, and...

I squealed. Logan Thorne has a crush on me? I couldn't believe it!

KittyKat742: Oh really?

LoganT: Yes. But I have a HUGE favor to ask

LoganT: Can you please not tell anyone? My friends are already suspecting this and they're making fun of me. If they found out it was really true, the days of tormenting would never end

KittyKat742: Okay, sure

LoganT: Thanks

Logan and I started chatting everyday for the next two weeks.

The next day, I passed by Logan on my way to first period. I smiled at him, just a slight curl of the lips. He passed by me like he didn't notice me at all. *Wow.* I thought to myself. *He must really be determined to keep this a secret. Not even a smile. Nothing.*

The next month passed by the exact same way. Logan and I chatted every night, but at school, he continued to ignore me. In our chats, we talked about everything we could possibly think of. Future goals, favorite colors, even a couple secrets. He told me he had contemplated suicide before. He said when I moved here, I gave him a reason to live on. I. Love. Him. I know it's only been a little over a month, but I felt so close to him already. I felt like I knew absolutely everything there is to know about him.

The next day, when I came back from school, the first thing I did was go on my computer to see if Logan had sent me a message. He did! I quickly opened up the chat box.

LoganT: Hey Kat. I would really love for us to finally go on a date together. We've been chatting for so long, but I've never actually talked to you face-to-face. Please meet me at the school at 8:00pm tonight.

My heart was racing. My first date. And with Logan Thorne too! I couldn't believe how well life was, especially after what had happened to me before. I had given up hope on ever finding happiness, but now, Logan had given me new hope.

At 8:00, I was ready in a new baby-blue dress and black sandals. My smile reeked of anxiety and excitement; I probably looked like a fool.

"MOM! I'm going to go on my date now! I'll see you later!"

"Okay honey! Have fun!" she replied.

When I got to the school, everything was quiet. I could hear the crickets chirping around me. Logan was nowhere to be seen. I checked my watch. 8:10. Where could he be? Had he stood me up? Then, suddenly, I heard a car pull up. Oh thank goodness. Logan was here. He was really here. When the car door opened, it wasn't Logan who stepped out, but a stranger with a hooded face. That person walked straight up to me, grabbed my head, and took out a needle.

"Hey! Help! What are—" and I was out.

When I woke up, the first thing I noticed was the coziness of the room. It smelled of clean laundry (which I found completely bizarre), and from what I could see, there were no spiders, no mice, no blood-stained walls, or anything gross and uncomfortable. On the floor next to me was my favorite breakfast combo; orange juice and pancakes with butter and syrup. My stomach growled just at the thought of eating it. I devoured the food in minutes.

When my appetite was fully satisfied, I took out my phone, ready to call for help, only to find there was no cell service. I looked across the empty room and took in my surroundings. Around me were 4 brick walls; on one side was a door. I ran over to the door, but, of course, it was locked. I was completely alone.

How strange, I thought. What kind of a hostage cell is this? I didn't have much experience being kidnapped, but I was pretty sure it didn't include such cozy and delicious service like this.

A couple hours went by, and nobody came in. I started thinking the worst. *What if my kidnapper just left me alone in here to die, and wanted me to have a nice last meal? What if this is my end?* At the thought of this, I started sobbing, truly believing I was about to die. When I was completely out of tears, I just sat there, staring dumbly at the wall in front of me. Suddenly the door opened, and a person walked in.

“DAD?!” I exclaimed. There, standing right in front of me, was my own father, whom I haven’t seen in years. “You were the one who kidnapped me?! Why?! Do you really hate our family so much you have to go secretly torturing us?!” By then, I was furious. I screamed and yelled at my dad, every insult that came into my head, while my dad just stood there and waited until I finished.

“Are you done?” he asked when I finally stopped screaming.

“For now,” I answered, dissatisfaction in my voice.

“Okay, now, let me explain. I don’t know what your mother told you, but I am not the bad one. She is.”

“No she’s not! She protected me from you all these years. You were the one who killed people,” I interrupted.

He chuckled. How could he possibly be laughing at a time like this? Then he spoke. “So that’s what she told you, eh? That’s not true at all. Your mother was the one who killed people. She knew the police were on her tail, so she needed something to throw them off track. She staged accidents to make it look like I was the criminal. The police caught me and sent me to jail. After you guys drove off and left home last year, I was released. I went back to the house and found it abandoned.”

I was so confused. “That doesn’t make any sense. If you didn’t want revenge on mother, then why was she so persistent to leave home?”

“I’m not completely sure, but I’m guessing it was because she didn’t want to risk me turning her in after I got out of jail. Anyways, so after I was released, I returned to our house and found it abandoned. I worried so much about you, Katherine, alone with that witch. I could only imagine the kind of pain she could’ve inflicted upon you. I felt like I was about to fall apart. My own daughter, taken away from me, and by such a monstrous horror. I was about to leave and find a phone to use when I found a map that your mom must have dropped as she was leaving. I followed the map here. I’ve been keeping a close eye on you for a long time, making sure your mom doesn’t harm you. Knowing how dangerous she really was, I never wanted to personally confront you. One day, I was walking, wandering around the city, when I heard your mom on the phone with someone. I overheard them discussing travel plans for March 17th. Tomorrow. After losing you once, I could not bear the pain of losing you again. I tried to warn you. I sent you

texts, but you ignored them. That is why I had to stage this whole thing. The only way I could get you to talk to me is by pretending to be that boy you love.”

“So you’re the 242-235-3466 number who asked me to “confirm” myself?”

“Yes. I wanted to make sure your mother wasn’t reading your phone messages.”

“Wait, how did you even know about Logan?” I asked.

“Do you remember when you lost your phone at school? I saw you drop it on your way home, so I picked it up. Your wallpaper is Logan’s school picture, and you wrote ‘I heart Logan’ on it. It wasn’t hard to deduce that he’s your crush. I returned it back to the school’s lost and found afterwards.”

I sat there for a while, taking in everything I just heard. So mom wasn’t the good one? Dad is? The past year has been a lie. Have I really been living with a murderer my whole life?

Out of the corner of my eye, I suddenly saw, behind my dad, a figure that seemed really familiar. “Mom?!” My eyes shifted back to my dad. “What’s she doing here?” I demanded.

My dad kicked the door shut behind him. “Oh that? My friends are just going to put her in her place. She’s going to get what she deserves.”

“You’re killing her! You said you’re not a killer, but you are!”

He didn’t speak. He just stood there, staring at me. The soft, loving eyes he wore a minute ago turned into hard, deadly eyes.

The door burst open and a man came in. My dad wheeled around to face the man, and they started whispering to each other. I saw my dad nod his head, then hand the other man an object. I felt my eyes widen with terror. A tiny gasp escaped my mouth. It was a silver handgun with a white sticker on it. I couldn’t see the words on the sticker from where I was, but I would bet anything it said *Thomas Gimms*.

“She was right. She was always right,” I noted quietly.

“Excuse me?” demanded my father. His tone deadly.

“Mom was right,” I repeated louder, “You are the evil one. You are the danger. Mom is innocent. And now you’re going to kill her.” I ran out the door before he could respond. He grasped my arm in a death grip. I stomped on his foot as hard as I could, but the only result was pain in my foot. He didn’t even let out a wince. I kept fighting, but I couldn’t escape his grip. Suddenly, a scream pierced my ear. Dad smiled. Like he was satisfied. He let go of me, and I ran.

I ran towards the source of that scream. I knew I had reached the correct room when I found a lump in the middle of the floor.

“MOM!!” I cried as I ran toward her. “Are you okay?!” I flipped her over, and found her chest swallowed by her own blood.

“Katherine. Oh, my Katherine. I’m so sorry. I should’ve been more careful. I should have known your father would follow us anywhere to get revenge on me. I’m so sorry I let you down.”

Those were her last words. Words I will remember, forever.

She groaned one last time, then everything was silent. This was when I broke down. I started sobbing and wailing. Salty, steamy tears streamed down my face like a never ending rainstorm. I hugged my mother as I continued to weep, still finding comfort in the lifeless body.

From behind me, a voice rang out. “I wanted to thank you, Katherine, for complying to my plan nicely. I couldn’t have lured your mom here without your help.” It was my dad.

My head jerked in his direction. I felt only hatred in my heart. In an attempt to avenge my mother, I screamed as loud as I could as I ran towards him and whipped my hand across his face. I couldn’t help but release a tiny smile as I saw his face stinging with the red print of my hand.

He grabbed my arm in his death grip again. “Listen.”

“Let go of me!” I screamed. I tried to yank my arm away, but his grip was too strong.

“Listen to me!” he said, much louder this time. “I will not kill you now, because you are my daughter. But do not forget that I’m bigger than you; that I’m stronger than you. Every day of your life, I want you to live in the fear of me. Just because I’m not going to kill you today, doesn’t mean I won’t kill you any other day.”

I was terrified and petrified, unsure of what to do. My life has turned into a hurricane, an endless storm with no chance of escape. My dad must have seen the hope diminish from my eyes, because a wicked smile was creeping up on his face.

Out of nowhere, a voice barked in the silent room. “FREEZE!”

My father turned around, only to face two policemen, both armed with guns.

“Hands up! And let that girl go!” they ordered.

In a deep growl, my father slowly released his grip on me. As soon as he did so, I bolted away and ran for the door. I ran as far as my legs could take me. When I could run no more, I

entered the nearest store and sat down to rest. I took out my phone. One missing call. It was from my mom. The last time I would ever hear her voice.

Katherine? Honey? I'm so sorry I got you into this mess. Your father sent me a live feed of you trapped in that tiny room with him. I'm coming for you. Try to remain calm, I'm coming. I've already contacted the police. They should be coming soon too. I know, very well, that this may be the last night of my life, but I'm okay with that. As long as you're safe. Katherine, I'm sending you this voicemail because there are some things I need to say to you before I pass. I love you, and I need you to know that—. HEY! STOP! Let go of me! Give me my phone ba—" and the line was disconnected.

For the last time that night, I broke down. This time, no sobs or wails, just silent tears. I didn't bother fighting the tears back. I let them stream down my face as I clutched my phone, holding the last thing I have of my mother.

I never went back to my house. After that breakdown, the shopkeeper generously gave me a ride to the police station. I told them my story and they helped place me in an orphanage home.

After that experience, it took me a while to trust anyone, to love anyone, again. Love can make you do crazy things. I missed my old father, the one who sang me to sleep every night as a child. The one who comforted me when I was scared. I let that image of the man I once loved blur my mind, and it cost me the only family I had left. I also let my crush for Logan cloud my senses, letting my guard down. I should have known. He didn't even notice me at school.

In one day, I have gained a father, lost a mother, and lost a father again. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't worry about my father coming back for me. But for now, at least, I am safe. For now, at least, I have a home.