

Chapter one

Olivia

I SLIDE MY HAND OVER THE PICTURES and stare at the boxes scattered in the living room. I'm not even halfway done. Moving out of Philadelphia was something I've always wanted, just like opening my own Grab and Go café. I love people and I love coffee. So, this is my dream and I think Hendersonville in North Carolina is the perfect place to start. Going somewhere smaller and quieter after high school was one of my top priorities. However, even after high school nothing happened. My mother got sick due to her heart disease and as her only child, I had to take care of her. Eventually, I moved back in with my mom right after high school. She hadn't been working for at least four years, so I found myself covering most of her hospital bills. I loved my mom, so I didn't mind taking care of her like that, but it took a lot of my time. I didn't leave any room for college friends, or relationships. It has been lonely with just me and my mom, but I never stopped caring for her until the end.

She died one year ago.

My dad left before I was even born. I know nothing about him. My mom didn't want to tell me anything.

And now I'm finally moving out of the apartment my mom used to live in. It took me about a year to take care of the funeral and sort through her things. And at the same time grieving.

Crying has never been my way of expressing emotions. Instead, anger takes over, and it's not just any anger; it's the kind that leads to smashing things. I think I broke all my mom's vases including her favorite crockery in the midst of it all. I tried working on my temper, I tried therapy and various medications, but they just made me sleepy, and therapy seemed to make things worse. So now I'm just working on it myself, trying to find a way to calm myself down whenever I feel some kind of rage coming up.

I stumbled across old pictures of my mom and I and I had been staring at them for a while. I blink and look back at the mess I created. I run my hand through my hair. It'll take me a while before everything is packed in boxes, but if I work hard enough it'll be done by the end of tomorrow. I smile at the photos and put them in the little envelope I had found them in. I place

them on top of the albums inside the box and close it. I grab my marker and write down memories on top. I get off the floor and lift the box.

Suddenly, there's a knock on the window, startling me. I yelp, and the box slips from my hands. Photos spread across the floor.

"Fuck." I say and look at my hand. I broke one of my nails. An annoyed groan leaves my mouth and I walk to the door to see who the fuck made one of the best days of my life the fucking worse.

I open the door.

"Hey babe." Noah says happily with a bright smile on his face.

I glare at him and feel the blood drip down my finger.

He looks at it. "Oh shit, what happened to you?"

"You happened." I say and slam the door closed in front of his face, but Noah places his foot between the door and the door frame.

"I'm sorry, but how am I the cause of this?"

I ignore him and walk to the sink in the kitchen. "Motherfucker." I hiss as the water pours on my finger.

"Can I help with something?" Noah asks as he leans against the counter and looks at my finger with the most horrified expression.

I sniff. "No, I think I'm good."

He nods slowly and pushes his glasses back up his nose with his index finger. "Can I help carry the boxes? I mean your finger is a little—"

"My finger is fine." I snap at him and then sigh. "I'm sorry."

He pushes his lips together. "Don't worry, you're probably exhausted. I'll give you a hand, alright?"

Noah is the best friend everyone should have. He's my ride-or-die. He has the ability to always know exactly what I need and stays calm whenever I yell at him. He doesn't deserve that, I don't deserve him, but I'm glad he stays by my side. People always think we're a couple because sometimes we act like that. They're convinced a girl and a boy can't be best friends, but we prove them otherwise.

I hear Noah laugh from the living room. "Shit Olivia, I can't believe you still have those."

I turn off the sink and quickly put a band-aid around the tip of my finger. It's a little too tight, but I decide to check what he's talking about first. Noah is sitting cross-legged, next to the tilted box with pictures. He looks up with a smile as I enter the living room he lifts two polaroid photos with us on it together. I sit down next to him and take one. Noah and I are drinking a milkshake in front of the Ferris wheel. I remember it well because it was taken on the day we met. Two years ago, Indy—our other friend at that time—had taken the photo at a moment we both weren't expecting her to

take one, so Noah is half blinking and I'm looking back at the Ferris wheel. It's also the place where I got angry at him for the first time. I went with a few other friends to the fair but got lost. I always panic whenever I get lost, because I don't know how to find the people I'm with.

I have a mild case of prosopagnosia—also known as face blindness. I don't have any issues recognizing facial expressions, but I can't remember or picture the faces of people I know. For me pictures help, I always write down the names of the people in the photo so I can look back at it later. My doctor says it's the reason I have anger issues because I'm so anxious all the time. But I don't think that's it. I learned to recognize people by their clothes, hairstyle or voice or height. It doesn't make me that anxious anymore, unless I'm in a crowded place where I lose the people I came with. When that happens, everyone looks the same. I decided to calm down in the Ferris wheel and when it was almost my turn two people decided to jump the queue. Of course I couldn't keep my cool.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" I said a little too loud.

A boy with glasses and orange hair looked back at me. He was wearing a plain brown shirt under a moss-green cardigan. He put his hands in the pocket of his oversized jeans. "I'm sorry?" The boy said.

"It's my turn." I said. "You cut the line."

"It's just one spot, we have to leave soon and..."

"I don't fucking care." I pushed them both aside as a new leg started.

I sat down and groaned. People were such a pain and especially now I already felt so-

The boy from a second ago took the place in front of me. The girl with the pencil skirt sat down next to him. I looked down.

"Babe," she said. "We could've just taken the next one."

Exactly.

"I know," he answered, and I felt his eyes poking through my head. "But I feel like she's not doing well and not just because we cut the line."

I frowned. *What does he think he knows...*

"Always so compassionate." The girl chuckled.

They were definitely my thirteenth reason and that wasn't a good thing considering I'm in a Ferris wheel.

"Are you alright?" He finally asked.

"No..." I said and I don't know why I answered.

"Sorry for cutting the line and getting into a cart with you."

Yeah... he says that now... I rolled my eyes and finally looked up.

They both stared at me. I hate when people stare, it makes me feel very self-conscious and think I have something on my face.