

A close-up of a woman's face, looking down and slightly to the right. Her hair is dark and pulled back. The background is a dramatic, stormy sky with dark, swirling clouds and a bright, glowing lightning bolt striking down near her face. The overall mood is intense and emotional.

**The Storm
That Brews
Within**

Ashlee North

The Storm That Brews Within



By Ashlee North



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*This book is dedicated to those who find the journey hard.
May you find freedom, peace, and joy!*

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CHAPTER 1

What Have I Done?

“Oh my God, what have I done? Oh, no! No, no!” she sobbed, with the kind of raw emotion which simply shatters your soul.

She looked down; her eyes widened even more in fear. There was blood! She looked at her fingers, her hands. There was nothing but blood! It was red and sticky. It was salty smelling and was dripping and oozing from every single one of her digits. The smell of it, the look of it, and the feel of it on her was making her nauseous.

Her primal instincts, uncontrolled actions, and her ability to do this at all were terrifying to her. She couldn't imagine how it had come to this! Her breath was coming in ragged gasps, and she was completely shocked at what she was capable of! Her blood was pumping in a crazy, wild rhythm through her veins, making her head pound and her hands shake with pure adrenaline. This wasn't who she was! This wasn't who she wanted to be! What kind of crazed animal had she become?

The blood was running down her arms now, and she was starting to feel like she would pass out from the emotions coursing through her and the sick dizziness in her head. Wave after wave of nausea washed over her. In one moment, she lost her dinner, and in the next, she was empty and dry-retching in the corner of a deserted alley. Trash cans and garbage bags full of rubbish and overflowing, hundreds of empty bottles and newspaper all over the ground, and there she was in the midst of the garbage feeling like a piece of trash herself. She was torn inside from her feelings: regret, misery, anger, disappointment, sheer fury, and boiling hot tears all rolled into one.

As confronting and horrifying as it all was to see herself covered in another person's blood, the red fluids on her body were nothing compared to the amounts pouring from the wound of her victim.

But despite his current state, *victim* wasn't really the word for this man. He was actually the aggressor, the perpetrator, and, in reality, she was the victim. That was the truth of it, but, regardless of the fact of *why* it was, now *he* was the one lying on the ground writhing in pain. Only one or two moments ago he was abusing her—hitting, pushing, pulling, and grabbing—and now here he was, a knife protruding from his chest and a pool of the reddish-brown liquid forming around his body. His face was contorted, and his eyes were becoming duller by the moment. He looked like he was dying, like the life was seeping out of his bones and the light of his life fading away. It looked like she had almost surely killed him. She had never hurt anyone, never felt the need. Surely, her inept stabbing movements with the tiny knife couldn't have done this. She just wanted to make him stop, that's all, and now, in this moment, she didn't know what to do, how to feel, or who she could turn to for help.

It wasn't supposed to end like this. She had *wanted* the motorbike ride, had *wanted* to take him to her bed and have sex with him, but she certainly couldn't cope with his forcing her. She just couldn't handle the panic within her and, although she had been with many men, this one she could not handle! He had seemed so kind, so gentle, and so right for her. His desire

seemed matched with hers, and his tender movements and enjoyment of her portrayed a completely different man than whom he became.

She had a knife. She'd had it in her purse for years. She kept it there for safety, just in case of something like this, but never before had she used it to inflict a wound on anyone. This was different though; he had tried to force her to have sex, but, although she had wanted to earlier, she would never consent while a man was threatening her and hitting her like he had! He had tried to make her do more than she wanted to, tried to have his way against her will, and she just couldn't have that!

She had been giving him all he said he wanted, and when she had almost finished, still kneeling before him on the cold hard cement, he should have been ready to feel contentment, but it was no longer good enough. She had thrilled him, excited him, coaxed him to the very edge, and then when he had almost reached the ultimate pleasure, he became determined to have his way, forcefully and violently demanding what he felt was his undeniable right. He no longer just wanted what she had already given, he wanted the whole act.

He pulled her head back hard and tight by her hair, which was long and loosely hanging about her shoulders, and forced her backward in her pain. He pushed her against the wall of the alley way, holding her there, his forearm and elbow pinning her by the throat. When he loosened his grip on her long locks, he found he had pulled out a large chunk of her hair, but he no longer cared about her happiness, he just sought more of his own. He was grinding his body into hers, hiking up her skirt with his free hand, tearing open her shirt, which was hiding almost nothing already, and grabbing at her breasts like a wild animal, obsessed.

He was a man who had been denied the complete act, which now he resolutely wanted and became even more determined to have all of her. If he had to rape her to get what he wanted, he would. Now that was his intention. No woman had ever said no to him and tonight would be no different. How dare she make promises to make him happy and then not give him all he wanted!

She could take no more of the fear she felt and the foul words coming from his previously kind lips. Earlier his speech had been like honey, but now it was spewing forth like acid. His hands, once soft and kind, now were hateful and cruel, hurting her, bruising her, tearing at her flesh. She just wanted to make him stop! She wanted him to leave her alone, to stop ripping at her clothes, stop trying to pull up her skirt, and stop treating her like she was his possession, his bought-and-paid-for prostitute. She just wanted him to stop hurting her!

She hadn't meant to wound him so badly, and, as the blood drained from his body, she realized she had taken a man's life from him, out of her own fear and dread. As never before in her life, she was afraid for her very soul. She clearly knew right from wrong, and she clearly knew the consequences.

Wrenching the knife from its cavity and tossing it into her handbag, she ran and ran until she could run no further, and then hid behind some bins in another alley and tried to think more clearly. The blood was now congealing a little, drying around the edges a tiny bit, and staining around her fingernails. She found a tap and washed and scrubbed the blood from her hands, her fingers, and her arms. She found a piece of cloth lying on the ground and used it to rub even harder at the redness, until she couldn't tell which was bloodstain and which was just raised and red from her abrasiveness. With the soothing running water rinsing and cleansing her, she managed to still her beating heart and racing mind just a little. She half regained her coherent thought patterns and forced herself into being okay for a while, just so she could make her way home and to relative safety.

By the time she strode out to the main street, she appeared composed and confident—she had, meticulously and thoroughly, washed away the blood—although, inside, in her heart and soul, she was covered in it still. She had retrieved the knife from her bag, washed it too, and then brushed her matted hair, which, habitually, she wore out and untied. She winced at the sore spot on her head where he had pulled her hair so hard while trying to control her.

In order to appear more normal, she had buttoned up her shirt higher than usual, because the last thing she needed was to attract any attention. For all intents and purposes, she looked like any young woman walking down the street, but the very thought of what she had just done was eating away her resolve and ripping her to shreds. She was barely keeping herself together, and as she walked, her carefully masked emotions began to betray her, given away by her cascading tears, which she quickly wiped away with the back of her hand. She just wanted to get home where she could feel whatever feelings she needed to, where she could be alone, and where she could sort this all out in her mind. Shrieking, blaming fingers pointed at her from inside her head, and she was almost undone by the silent sobs wracking her body.

A block or two more and the sirens began. She could hear them getting closer and closer. An ambulance and two police cars passed her as she walked even faster toward the comfort of home. She assumed she knew where the emergency vehicles were going, but she couldn't be totally positive. If she were right, they would attend to the man in the alley, but they would find him dead, and it was by her very own hands. Right now she needed no further accusers, as her own brain was telling her that they would find her surely, that she was done for, that her life was over, and that she was a cold blooded killer!

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