

The Runaway Road



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Her hands were clinched together so tight her fingers lost all their color. Janie didn't want to be here, but she had no choice. She instigated this divorce, and now, she had to see it through. Today was the final hearing and she would walk out a single woman—a free woman. The freedom didn't matter that much to Janie because she would still have two holes in her heart. One once filled by her son Todd, and the other filled by her about to be ex-husband Mark. Sometimes, she still wished Mark had died in that car crash along with their son.

The slight brush of her lawyer's sleeve against her blouse told her to look up and pay attention.

"Mrs. Davenport, are you satisfied with this agreement?"

Her voice was confident and cold. "Yes, your honor." She lowered her gaze back to her hands. No tears slid down her cheeks and no lump closed off her throat. There were no tears left to shed. She was a dried out nothingness covered by a hardened shell of anger and disgust.

The gavel dropped and Janie snapped to attention. It was over. A chapter in her life closed.

She felt two gentle hands warm hers, and sad brown eyes met her gaze. "We're done. You are once again Janie Mason. I wish you the very best."

With her head held high, she plastered a smile on her face. "Thanks for all you've done." She pulled her hands away and headed for the elevator.

Standing in front of the tomato red elevator doors was torture. They served as a reminder of the day Todd died, a reminder of the blood that seemed to endlessly flow from Mark's body.

Blood that should never been replaced—at least in her mind.

Before the doors could split open, a sad, deep voice behind her said, "Jay."

Janie took in a deep breath and forced it out fast. The last person she wanted to speak to this moment was standing behind her. She refused to be cornered by Mark. Thankfully, the elevator doors opened and she darted inside. In a quick move, she pressed both the down button and the close door button. Arrogance filled her smug soul with the quick thinking of an escape route, but her relief was short

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lived.

Mark's large hand stopped the doors from closing and slipped inside. "Did you think you could get rid of me that easily?"

His hot breath felt like a furnace blast to her cold heart. She spun on her heels and stared at him. The man who at one time was fastidious about his appearance was now haggard and disheveled. He was only a semblance of the man she had married. The sparkling, denim blue eyes that once mesmerized her were dull, and that wavy black hair had lost its shine. The smell of liquor emanated from his body. These past eighteen months had taken a tremendous toll on him.

On everybody.

Janie crossed her arms. "'Bout time to have another drink? Don't want to lose your buzz, do you?"

Mark closed his eyes. "If there's anything you want in the house, it's yours. Just name it. I'll even give you the house, my truck, anything."

The hairs on the back of Janie's neck stood straight. She had heard him recite these same lines for six months. Bile swirled in her mouth like venom. "This is all settled. I want nothing more from you."

Mark reached out and gently, touched her arm. "If you ever need anything, anything at all, tell me, and it's yours."

She flinched and backed away. "Don't touch me! Never touch me again! The only thing I'd want from you is my son, and you can't give him back to me. It's your fault he's dead. You should have been the one who died in that crash, not Todd. I hate you." The elevator doors slid open, and Janie bolted out. She ran down the hallway and burst through the outer doors.

Once in the safety of the only possession she owned outside of her clothes, she breathed a sigh of relief. Her life was now hers to do as she pleased. She was free of Mark, marriage, and as soon as she could hit the city limits, she'd be free of this Podunk town. There was a world out there to explore.

A world where Janie could pretend her pain never existed.

A world far away from Bliss, Texas.

Janie began driving with no particular destination in mind, but for some reason, she headed north.

The last glimpse she had of Bliss was from her rearview mirror just before the sun's reflection cast a brilliant shimmer that blotted Bliss from her vision—but not her heart.

(Note: "The Runaway Road" is number two in The Road Series.)