# Krystal Carter



**-Krystal-**

“I’m done,” I exclaimed, leaning on the kitchen counter, “I’m tired of how my life is going, and I know it’s all my fault.”

Lexi chuckled as she tied her blonde hair back, “Kry, you always say that, but you never follow through. Are you going to leave your husband and kids?”

I laughed, “No, of course not.” Walking towards the door, I noticed the photos on Lexi’s wall. I stopped at the one with us in it and wondered how we were best friends. Lexi was stunning with her long blonde hair, perfect curves, and a smile that could light up any room. Then there was me, short, curvy, with messy brown hair. “See you next week, Lexi?”

“Absolutely, love you,” Lexi smiled.

“Love you too,” I replied before leaving.

~

As I drove home, I reflected on my life. I adore my husband and children, but I felt like something was missing. When I arrived on my street, raindrops started hitting the windshield, taking me back to my childhood. I used to watch the rain while sitting in my bedroom, listening to my parents bicker over trivial things. I always wondered what the future held for me. Sometimes, I pictured myself living a luxurious life far away from this place or being famous and wealthy. But I always saw myself as a mother and had already picked out my children’s names. After hesitation, I sighed and stepped out of the car.

As I walked inside, the aroma of roast duck filled the air, and my children rushed to hug me. “Mummy, we missed you,” Anna exclaimed, pulling me in for a hug. I embraced Anna, Sarah, and Lucas, grateful for their warm welcome.

“I missed you too, my darlings,” I said, smiling.

When I headed to the kitchen, I saw Ben and wrapped my arms around his waist, inhaling his scent. However, I detected the smell of cigarettes, and my mood soured.

“Oh! You’ve been smoking again, haven’t you?” I said, moving away from him.

Ben looked at me and admitted, “It was only one,” with a smile.

“I don’t care if it was just one. You promised,” I said, raising my voice in frustration, “a promise is a promise.” I gave him a stern look.

“Okay, you’re right. I’m sorry. I won’t smoke again,” Ben said, walking towards me. He grabbed my hands and hugged me, followed by a quick kiss. “I missed you too, Kry,” he said, grinning and giving me another kiss before returning to cooking.

~

I bid Anna goodnight and kissed her forehead. With a smile, I walked towards the door, turned off the lights, and left the room. I climbed into bed next to Ben, hoping to engage in conversation, but found him fast asleep with his phone on his chest. I sighed and turned away, exiting the bedroom and shutting the door softly.

As I lounged in the living room, I picked up my phone and started scrolling through Facebook. My memories from a vacation with my husband, Ben, caught my eye, and I tapped on the photos. The pictures showed two happy faces of a married couple. Without realizing it, I started scrolling through more of our pictures and videos. Time flew by, and I found myself watching one more video. The sound of laughter and joy filled the silence around me as I watched my husband and me wrapped in each other’s arms, and my heart overflowed with happiness.

Ben asked me, “What are you doing?”

I yelped and jumped out of my seat, “You scared me,” I admitted, clutching my chest and smiling. He asked again, looking angry. I picked at the skin on my fingers and apologized, “I’m sorry. I hope I didn’t wake you. I was just watching some old videos of us.” I looked up at him and saw his disapproving expression.

“Seriously? That’s what woke me up? You’re reliving the past!” he scoffed. Ben snatched the phone from my hand and growled, “Just shut up and go to bed. I can’t be tired for work tomorrow!” He walked back into our bedroom, and I followed behind him, feeling small and scolded like a child. I lay beside him, and my heart sank as the videos played in my head like ghosts haunting me.

~

Opening my eyes, I realized I hadn’t slept well and felt groggy. I got out of bed and saw that Ben was still sleeping peacefully. I headed to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for my family. The aroma of pancakes and bacon filled the house, and soon, Ben joined me in the kitchen. Ben walked over to me and exclaimed, “What a beautiful sight, my lovely wife cooking me breakfast!” He smacked my ass and kissed me on the cheek as if the previous night had never occurred. “What’s the occasion, dear?” he asked, nibbling on the bacon.

“Nothing special,” I responded, grinning as I watched him place his breakfast on the table. While Ben enjoyed his meal, Anna prepared for school, and I got Lucas and Sarah ready for daycare. I stood still, feeling a cold shiver run down my spine. I turned to find Ben staring at me, “what?” I asked.

“Huh?” He shrugged.

“Why are you watching me so intently?”

“Why don’t you do something with your long brown hair? It’s always so messy,” Ben asked. I was shocked; what did he mean? “Or why don’t you show those great tits off?”

“Ben!” I looked at the kids and then back at him.

“What? It’s not like I ever get to see them anymore; you always look run down. Sometimes I can’t believe I have to be seen with you,” Ben said Harshly. I looked down, trying to fight my tears back. “It’s an embarrassment,” Ben confessed.

“Sorry”, I muttered and focused on the children. I could hear my husband Ben leaving for work in a hurry. I sent Anna to catch the school bus while Nancy took Lucas and Sarah to Daycare. I felt puzzled by Ben’s coldness towards me. Standing at the door, I realized that he had forgotten our anniversary. Feeling disheartened, I decided to get dressed and tidy up the house. As I was cleaning, my phone rang, and I rushed to answer it, hoping it was Ben calling to apologize for forgetting. However, it turned out to be Lexi Face-timing me, leaving me disappointed.

“Hey Lex,” I answered, sounding disappointed.

“Hey Kry, how was this morning? Bet you guys had great anniversary sex, didn’t ya?” Lexi said while winking at me.

“No, not really, the asshole forgot. I made him bacon and pancakes, and he asked me why I was making his favourite breakfast; I told him no reason, thinking he was just being silly… but he left without saying anything!” I growled.

Lexi matched my tone as she exclaimed, “What! Surely, he’s fucking with you? He must have something planned for you guys.”

“No, bro… he fucking doesn’t; he forgot. Plus, I caught him smoking again yesterday,” I huffed.

“But he promised he wouldn’t do that again. You know what you should do, don’t you?” Lexi replied.

What’s that?” I asked.

“You should confront him.”

“I will! I will surprise him at work!” I exclaimed, we said our goodbyes and hung up the phone, I didn’t want to share with Lexi how cold Ben was this morning because I knew she didn’t like him and would overreact. Lexi is a non-judgmental and protective friend, but sometimes she’s a pushover. We’re very similar, and after years of friendship, it’s expected. If Ben crosses a line, she’ll call him out, but if someone upsets her, she won’t say much. On the other hand, I’m not afraid to speak my mind.

Our most vital attribute is our friendship. We’re like Ying and Yang, protecting each other. Honestly, the way we met was quite strange. We first encountered each other in high school and only exchanged a few words. I had my own group of friends, and she had hers. Then, unexpectedly, while we were sitting on the school oval, we witnessed the rest of the seventh-grade girls playing soccer. I was unsure of what she was contemplating. She threw a fist full of grass at me, yelling out muncher. I looked so confused. She sat there smiling, thinking she was funny and could give me a nickname. So, I grabbed a handful and threw it back, calling her muncher number two and boom, just like that, two peas in a pod over the years; we got closer and been through hell and back together, but out of all my friends, she’s the one that stuck around.

~

I dropped my kids, Lucas and Sarah, off at daycare and headed to Ben’s workplace. After parking my car, I made my way to his office. As I stepped into the elevator, I was greeted by a stranger who gave me a charming smile. Returning the smile, I went to the back of the elevator and leaned against the wall. The scent of whiskey and sandalwood engulfed me. I looked up at the stranger and noticed his shirt sleeves were rolled up, revealing a few tattoos. Though I couldn’t see them clearly, I admired him from afar. As I glanced at his face, my heart skipped a beat. “Oh my,” I whispered to myself.

As I rode the elevator, I noticed this tall, striking man standing beside me. He appeared to be around 6 feet tall, if not taller. His emerald green eyes were captivating, and a deep scar ran across his left eye. His well-defined jawline and light brown hair made him undeniably attractive. Even his short, well-maintained stubble added to his charm. I couldn’t help but bite my lip and smile as I imagined how easily he could lift me. Suddenly, he spoke up.

“Are you new here?” he asked.

I shook my head and replied, “No, my husband works here.”

He smiled politely and asked, “Who is your husband, if you don’t mind me asking?”

I laughed and said, “His name is Benjamin Carter. We’ve been married for five years.” The man looked surprised and apologized for not knowing Ben was married. We fell into an awkward silence as the elevator continued its ascent.

# Avery Anderson

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**-Avery-**

“Hi there, my name is Avery Anderson.” I extended my hand for a friendly handshake as I introduced myself to the woman in the elevator. She responded with a warm smile and a delicate hand, introducing herself as Krystal Carter. I noticed the simple wedding band on her finger as she tucked a strand of her long brown hair behind her ear.

As the elevator stopped at her floor, she pointed to the office and said, “My stop.”

I replied, “Hope to see you again, Mrs. Carter,” with a smile. As she walked away, the sweet scent of honey and vanilla lingered in the air, filling my senses with a familiar feeling. My heart raced with an inexplicable desire to keep her in the elevator, but I watched silently as she walked down the hall and disappeared when the elevator doors closed. The elevator moved slowly until it finally reached my floor and dinged to signal its arrival. I stepped out and headed for my office door, but one of my assistants stopped me.

“Mr. Anderson, your mother wants to see you,” Lilly informed me. I nodded and replied,

“Thank you, Lilly. I’ll see her soon.” However, Lilly insisted that my mother was quite insistent. I sighed and returned to the elevator, which remained open. I stepped inside and pressed the button for the top floor. I wondered why my mother wanted to see me and headed to her office. Without knocking, I walked in and caught my mother’s stern gaze. I realized I may have interrupted something when I noticed a tall man with grey hair and blue eyes standing beside her. As I approached, I recognized him immediately, “Harold!” I exclaimed, rushing forward to greet him and shake his hand. But he just smiled and pulled me into a warm embrace. Although I knew he was a hugger, I couldn’t help but feel slightly taken back. After we parted, I asked him, “What brings you here?”

But before he could answer, Regina interjected, her tone laced with bitterness, “He came to see you.”

I asked, “Why didn’t you come to my office?”

Harold replied, “I didn’t want to disrespect your mother. Of course, I can’t come to see the great Avery Anderson without first seeing the even greater Regina Anderson.” He bowed his hands down to Regina, treating her like royalty. I tried to hide my smile behind my hand and refocused.

“Thank you for visiting, but is there a reason behind it?” Although I liked Mr. Collins, he always had a purpose for showing up.

Harold chuckled. “You’re intelligent, Avery. I’m sure Regina is proud of you,” Harold said, winking at Regina.

“Yes, indeed,” Regina responded in a monotone voice. “What is it you want, Harold?” she asked, her patience running thin with his games.

“I apologize. I just wanted to check in with you both as your father’s passing anniversary is coming up soon. I understand that it can still be difficult, even after all these years,” Harold explained. Suddenly, I panicked. Had I forgotten the anniversary?

“Oh, I forgot. Is that a problem?” I asked out loud.

“Not at all, my boy. It simply means that you’ve been occupied,” Harold reassured me. I politely smiled at Harold, who was always kind.

“Thank you,” I said, expressing gratitude.

Regina chimed in, “Oh, right? Yes, I forgot too.” Then she quickly added, “Oh well, let’s move on. It’s unfortunate.” I felt enraged at her dismissive attitude.

Harold looked at her and then back at me. “As your dad’s longest friend, I would love to take you on a fishing trip,” he suggested. I was thrilled at the idea of reliving childhood memories.

“A fishing trip? Like the ones my dad used to take me on when I was younger? I would love that!” I exclaimed, ready to accept the offer.

Regina interrupted, “Oh no, sorry! Avery is far too busy with work,” blocking my chance to accept the invitation. “It’s been 20 years, Avery. Don’t you think it’s time to move on?” My mother’s words made me sigh.

“Yes, Mother,” I replied.

Harold, with us, looked at me kindly and nodded in agreement. “Well then, I hope to see you both again soon,” he said as he walked towards the door. Just before he left, he turned to me and said, “Oh, Avery, I’m sorry about Emilia too.” My heart sank as he mentioned her name. My mother despised Emilia’s name just as much as my father’s. I stood there silently, nodding my head. Harold smiled and left the room. Regina Dismissed me and I returned to the confinements of my office.

# The Forgotten Anniversary



**-Krystal-**

I smiled and left, the elevator doors closing behind me. When I looked back, I saw Avery Anderson watching me intently. Guilt crept in as I entertained unfaithful thoughts. I walked towards my husband’s office and noticed Beck sending out emails. “Hi, Beck,” I greeted her with a smile. “I’m here to see Ben quickly.”

Beck replied without looking up from her computer, “Oh, Mrs. Carter. I’m not sure if Benji is in his office, but you’re welcome to go and check.” She smiled weakly. I nodded my thanks and headed towards his office, wondering why she called him Benji when he hated being called that.

I walked to Benjamin’s office; However, he wasn’t there, and I noticed a calendar with today’s date circled and “date” written underneath, replacing our wedding photo that use to sit there. I realized that Lexi was right, and Benjamin must have something planned for us. Feeling relieved, I decided to leave the office. While passing the photocopy machine, I saw Beck flirting with one of Benjamin’s male colleagues and laughed. I couldn’t help but think she flirts with many guys here, given her long legs, tanned skin, brown hair, blue eyes, and great figure.

When I reached the elevator again, I was disappointed that Mr. Avery Anderson was not in the elevator; I leaned against the wall, lost in my thoughts about how he made me feel. Suddenly, Natalia’s Romanian accent interrupted my thoughts.

“Hello, Mrs. Carter. Were you here to have lunch with Ben?” I paused to reflect on my recent encounter with Avery Anderson before responding.

“I had intended to have lunch with him, but it seems he isn’t here.” I glanced at my watch to check the time before speaking, “Hey Natalia, have Ben and Sean finished the Mulgrave Building design yet?”

She responded, “No, we’re all still working on it. I’m in charge of the interior, but I need both to show the plans to Mulgrave.” I couldn’t help but notice Natalia’s low-cut top, but I quickly shifted my focus to admire her beautiful face. She had dark wavy hair, captivating brown eyes, and a stunning hourglass figure, standing tall at 5 foot 8. As soon as the elevator doors opened, I walked out and made my way to my Ford SUV. I got in, started the engine, and drove home.

~

Upon my arrival home, I inserted my keys into the door and unlocked it. I entered expecting to find Ben, but to my dismay, I was once again alone. As I had been occupied with preparing dinner, several hours had passed. All the children were present; Anna diligently completed her homework whilst Lucas and Sarah played. Since Ben had made plans for us to dine out once he returned from work, I resolved to only cook for the children. Despite the arrival of six o’clock, Ben had yet to come home. I summoned Anna, Lucas, and Sarah to partake in their meal. “Mum, where’s dad? He’s usually here for dinner,” Anna asked.

“I’m unsure, sweetheart; perhaps he’s working late,” I responded. As a result, Anna, Sarah, and Lucas completed their dinner.

After bathing Lucas and putting him to bed, I checked the time on my phone: 9:14. I wondered where Ben was as he never worked this late. I sent a quick text to him asking, “Where are you, baby? X” A few seconds later, I received a message on my phone informing me that Ben, Nat, and Becky were stuck working late and not to wait up. I felt disappointed that our plans for the evening had been disrupted and gently tossed my phone onto the bed.

~

The following day, I woke up and checked if Ben was still asleep, he wasn’t. I grumbled as I got out of bed and put on my dressing gown. Then, I headed to the kitchen and found him serving breakfast to the children. “Good morning,” he said with a smile. “I let you sleep in.” I picked up my pace and folded my arms, looking upset.

“Where were you? You were gone all night.”

“I’m sorry, Kry,” he sighed. “I had to work late. But I made you breakfast. Sit down; there’s coffee, too.” Reluctantly, I joined my three children at the table and greeted them with a smile.

“Good morning, my babies,” I said. Anna replied with a mouthful of eggs and bacon, causing me to laugh as I watched grease drip down her chin. Ben brought me breakfast and kissed the top of my head, “I missed you.”

“I missed you too,” I replied while beginning to eat. When I finished my meal, Ben got up and clapped his hands.

“Okay, Anna, it’s time for school!” I observed Anna dart out the door and run down the driveway towards the bus while Nancy arrived to take Sarah and Lucas to the park.

I was in the kitchen taking my dishes to the sink when Ben approached me from behind, placed his hands on my waist and started lifting my shirt. I forcefully pushed him away and turned to confront him. Ben dropped his head, sighed, and stepped out as I asked, “Are we not going to talk about where you were last night?”

“Jesus fucking Christ, Krystal! I told you I was at work,” he yelled, raising his hands to his head.

“You’ve never had to work that long before, Ben!”

“Seriously, Krystal, why can’t you leave well enough alone?” Ben grabbed his briefcase and started for the door. I ran after him raising my voice.

“BECAUSE I KNOW WHEN YOU’RE FUCKING LYING TO ME BENJAMIN CARTER”. I stopped in my tracks and just looked at Ben; I went quiet and said softly, “By the way, Happy Anniversary for yesterday.” I turned and walked into my bedroom, leaving Ben in the doorway.

“Shit,” he whispered while bringing up his head and continued walking.

~

“Hey, Lexi. Thank you for meeting me,” I said, smiling as I sipped my coffee.

“No problem, Kry,” Lexi replied warmly.

“How are things between you and Ben this morning?” Lexi asked.

“Not good,” I groaned, rubbing my forehead. “He didn’t come home last night, and this morning he acted like nothing happened. When I confronted him, we got into an argument.”

“That doesn’t sound good, Kry,” Lexi replied sympathetically as I took another sip. “Did he explain why he was absent all night?” I nodded in affirmation.

“He said he was working all through the night,” I replied, with a hint of scepticism.

“That’s hard to believe,” I added, rolling my eyes.

“No one can work all night, Kry.”

“I completely agree,” I responded, louder than intended. “Besides, I visited his office yesterday,” I continued., “and guess what I found? On his calendar, he had yesterday’s date circled with the date written on it.” Lexi displayed excitement as she asked,

“You did?” The realization sunk in, and Lexi spat out her coffee. “Wait, what?” She coughed and spluttered, wiping her face with a napkin I had handed her.

“Yep.”

“But if he was not with you, then.” A sudden realization was on Lexi’s face. “Oh,” Lexi said, trying to contain her anger. “That little FUCKER! He’s out there cheating!” Lexi scrunched up the napkin in her hand.

“I think he is.” I nodded in agreement. “Tomorrow, when he goes to work, I’m going to follow him and see where he goes”, I said as I leaned in, whispering to Lexi.

Lexi smiled excitedly and whispered, “What will you do if you find him cheating?”

“I don’t know yet”, I started laughing.

“Wait, why are we whispering?” Lexi threw her head back, laughing.

“I have no idea,” Lexi and I sat, sipping our drinks. Lexi finished her drink and looked at me; I was sitting there with an empty cup, twirling my straw around the inside.

“You know, Kry, my work is looking for a new photographer; I think you should come in and apply,” Lexi smiled through her teeth. “You’d be perfect for it.”

“Thank you, Lexi, but I must figure out my marriage first,” I said, giving a small, polite smile.

“Pfft, fuck him, Krystal; you’ve put him first for too long, and look what he’s doing or could be doing; you know where I work,” I stood up as Lexi approached me, and she leaned in to give me a gentle kiss on the cheek. “If you decide to, come see me, you know where to find me,” she said. “Love you.”

I nodded in agreement and replied, “Love you too.” I watched as Lexi walked away and got into her sleek Audi sports car.

I stared at the empty cup, lost in thoughts of how I met Benjamin.

# Living In The Past



**-Krystal-**

***(11 years earlier)***

I sat on the beach, reflecting on my life while watching the waves crashing and hearing the sound of kids playing in the distance. A gentle breeze rustled through my hair as I inhaled the ocean’s scent.

Lexi sat down next to me, beaming with excitement. “Krystal, this is incredible! I feel so relaxed and free,” she exclaimed. I smiled back at her.

“Yes, this is so relaxing, we’ve graduated from school, and now we have the freedom to do whatever we want,” I replied warmly. Lexi laughed and placed her hands on my shoulders.

“Do you have any plans for the beach party tonight?” Lexi asked.

I shrugged “not really.”

“I can’t wait to party!” Lexi said excited, I laid back on the sand, taking in the sounds of the beach. Suddenly, Lexi interrupted me, “Come on, we have to buy new clothes for the party.”

I laughed, “Don’t our bathing suits suffice for a beach party?”

Lexi smiled, “Well, we have to look good.” She grabbed my arm, and we headed to the city stores to find something fun to wear.

~

While at the store, I observed Lexi repeatedly trying on various bikinis and outfits. I became tired and bored. Eventually, Lexi emerged from the changing rooms and tossed a bikini in my direction. Weary, I asked her, “Why is this so important to you?” Rising from the seat.

She reminded me, “I always have to look my best, and so do you!” Lexi said, shoving me into the changing room. As Lexi called out, I closed the curtain behind me and pretended to try on the bikini. “How’s it fitting?”

“Great,” I lied. Suddenly, the curtains flung open, and Lex appeared with her arms folded. Startled, I shrieked and instinctively covered myself, even though I was fully dressed.

Lex chuckled loudly and asked, “What are you doing?” while pointing at me. I glanced down and noticed I was dressed entirely, although I was trying to cover up discreetly. I chuckled to myself.

“It was a reaction,” I admit.

Lexi eyed me and said, “I knew you weren’t trying it on.”

I rolled my eyes and replied, “It will fit, and I’ll wear it later.” Then I giggled.

“Why don’t you like girly things?” Lexi repeated.

“We’ve talked about this,” I replied. “It’s just not my thing like it is for you.”

Lex nodded, “After we’re done here, let’s get an iced coffee.” She turned her back and headed for the cashier. I grabbed the bikini from the hook and followed behind her.

“I second that!”

While waiting in line to pay, a girl ran out of the changing room crying and covering herself with a top after a bone-chilling shrill. Everyone in the store rushed over to see what happened. As we saw a boy running out with his jeans halfway down and a cap covering his face, my eyes almost popped out. “He was watching me!” the girl cried, tears streaming down her face. We turned to see the boy running away; his face was hidden.

“What the actual?” Lex exclaimed.

“Was he?” I asked.

Lexi nodded, “watching her dress.”

I shivered and whispered, “What a creep!” The cashier called security, who then called the police. We waited to report what we witnessed. “Officer, it happened so fast. She screamed in the changing room, and he ran out,” I explained. The officers nodded and thanked me.

“Wow,” Lexi said, standing next to me.

“What?” I turned to look at her.

“It is lucky that you didn’t undress. That creep exited the changing room you were in.” My heart was pounding. Was that creep watching me through the small hole in the room? I cautiously walked over to take a peek. My anxiety saved me once again. Without my fear, I would have missed that completely, I would have gotten undressed in front of that creep; that could have been me. My thoughts were interrupted.

“Kry, come on! I need my coffee now!” she exclaimed. I nodded and followed her outside.

# Living In The Past 2

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**-Benjamin-**

**(Past)**

“Wow, she wanted to give you, her number? Why did you turn her down?” asked Tim, grinning.

“She was stunning!” added Jake, nodding in agreement.

I shrugged and replied, “She’s just not my type. I prefer a challenge.”

Tim laughed and asked, “Since when?” I shrugged again.

As the night progressed, my friends Jake, Tim, and I had more drinks. Suddenly, Jake nudged me with his shoulder and gestured towards two girls. “Hey, check them out,” he said with a nod.

One had blonde hair and blue eyes with a petite frame and small breasts, wearing a white and black bikini, and the other had an oval-shaped face with penetrating hazel eyes and a cute button nose, long brown hair falling to her ass with big breasts and wearing just a black bikini.

“I’ve already called dibs on the brunette. She seems like she’d be a blast to hang out with. Which one are you interested in?” Jake smiled as he gazed at the girl.

“I want the blonde,” said Tim, licking his lips.

I shook my head and chuckled. “Sure, go ahead and have fun, boys.” I observed as Tim and Jake approached the girls. Tim was hitting it off with the blonde while Jake conversed with the brown-haired girl. I watched as she crossed her arms and began fidgeting. I whispered to Jake that she wasn’t interested, but he didn’t hear me as he was already beside her. He casually placed his arm around her shoulder, but she immediately stiffened and attempted to remove his arm. I watched as Jake laughed and tried to kiss the girl who wasn’t interested. She struggled to push him away, so I intervened and approached them.

I firmly took hold of Jake’s shoulder and stated, “She’s not interested.”

The girl with brown hair quietly mouthed, “Thank you.”

I chuckled and suggested, “Let’s find a girl that suits you.” Then, I guided him back to our seats by his shoulders.

“Why the fuck did you have to get involved?” Jake snapped, his face inches from mine as he gritted his teeth.

I calmly told my friend, “Don’t worry, there are plenty of girls around here.” I then grabbed two more beers from the cooler and handed one to Jake. I opened mine and took a sip from the bottle.

Jake laughed and took a quick drink, too. He agreed, “You’re right, that bitch looks like a stuck-up cow anyways,” and rolled his eyes. Suddenly, a woman with black hair approached us. She wore a tiny bikini that barely covered anything and looked me up and down.

“Do you want to have some fun?” She smiled at me.

I bring my beer to my mouth and take a big sip. “No, thank you.” I place my hand on Jake’s shoulder and continue, “But he does.” Jake looks at me and then back at the girl. She looks like she’s already had too much “fun.” His eyes light up, and he shows his teeth while licking his lips.

“Sure, I’m up for it.” A wicked grin spreads across his face. He looks at me, winks, and heads over to the girl, wrapping his arm around her shoulder and walking off into the dark distance.

I was sitting there for ages, getting bored and unable to locate my friends. Tim had left with the blonde girl he met earlier, and Jake had disappeared with the black-haired girl who seemed to be high. I decided to grab another beer from the cooler, opened it, and drank it in one go. Just as I was about to leave, a brown-haired girl approached me. I nodded at her, and she sat beside me on the rock. “Hey,” she said sweetly, “I just wanted to thank you for earlier.” She sounded sincere, and I shrugged my shoulders in response.

“I understand. Jake can be a bit difficult at times, but he’s a good person overall,” I chuckled. I was pleasantly surprised when she laughed and noticed her smile was lovely. It seemed rare, but when she did, it was breathtaking. I ran my fingers through my hair and turned to her, watching her grab two bottles from the cooler. As she drew closer, I noticed the tattoos on her skin, including one of a vine with flowers growing along her ribs. She handed me one of the bottles after standing up. After twisting off the cap, I took another drink and glanced at her. Her hair was now tied back in a braid.

“I’m Krystal,” she introduced herself, offering her hand.

I shook it gently and replied, “I’m Benjamin, but my friends call me Ben,” with a smile.

“Not Benji?” she asked, giggling and covering her mouth.

I widened my eyes and laughed, responding, “NOOO, definitely not. I hate being called that.” We both chuckled.

We chatted briefly, and I asked her, “So, what brought you to this beach party?” As she answered, I found myself watching her lips move.

“My friend Lexi, who you met before and disappeared with our mutual friend, got invited to this party.”

“His name is Tim, in case you forgot,” I laughed.

“I wasn’t too keen on coming, but Lexi convinced me that we needed to unwind after just graduating.” She pulled at the band around her wrist as she talked. I finished my beer and asked if she wanted another, but she declined.

I took another sip from my bottle and asked her, “Why did you keep pushing Jake away? Was it because you weren’t interested or already had a boyfriend?” I waited for what felt like a long time for her response.

I observed her smile and push a strand of hair behind her ear before she laughed. “I don’t have a boyfriend,” she said, grinning and looking directly at me. As we stood face to face, her breathing became heavy, and I felt drawn closer to her despite my efforts to resist. It was clear that we had a mutual attraction.

“Dude! You’re such a cock block!” I heard Jake say, and I turned abruptly to face him, pulling away from Krystal.

“What did you say?” I demanded, glaring at him.

“If you wanted the stuck-up bitch, all you had to do was ask,” Jake chuckled, punching me in the shoulder.

I swung my arm without hesitation, and Jake fell to the ground. I didn’t know what happened. Krystal gasped from behind me, and I looked down at Jake, clutching his face. “What the fuck, Ben!” he yelled as he got back up.

“I’m sorry, man. I don’t know what happened,” I said, looking back at Krystal, but she had already left with her blonde friend. Tim approached us, and I knew he would start questioning me.

“Ben! What the hell, dude? What did you do?” he demanded, inspecting Jake’s face.

“Well, he needs to learn to watch his mouth,” I stated firmly, running my hand through my hair. Jake was my friend, but he could be irritating at times. I shook my fist, grabbed my drink, and finished it. “I’m sorry, Jake. I don’t know what happened,” I said as I walked away from the beach.

# Snap Back To Reality



**-Krystal-**

**(*Past*)**

“Hey Kry, are you still planning to come with me to the movies tonight?” Lexi asked as she got dressed.

I shrugged and replied, “I’m not sure, Lex. I don’t feel like going out tonight. I think I might stay at home and read a book or finish watching my TV series.” Suddenly, I felt someone tugging on the covers.

*Thud!*

As I lay on the floor, I exclaimed, “Ouch!” while sitting up and rubbing my back. “What was that for?” I grumbled to Lexi.

“You’re coming with me, Krystal,” she replied, tossing a black dress in my direction.

I stood up and asked, “Don’t you have any other colours in your wardrobe?” Lexi assured me she did, but that black looked good on me. She instructed me to shower and prepare as she would return in an hour. The hot water felt fantastic on my skin, and once I finished showering, I put on the black dress Lexi had chosen for me. I questioned the need for the clothing out loud before settling down to read. However, before I could immerse myself in the book, Lexi abruptly entered the room, greeting me with a casual

“Sup!” She inspected me from head to toe, asking, “Are you ready for the movie? Yes, Kry, you look hot tonight. He’s going to go crazy over you!”

“Wait, who is going to go crazy about me?” I asked her, turning around. Just then, the door opened, and a man with sandy brown hair and brown eyes walked in. I spotted Tim from the other night, but my surprise grew when a taller man entered behind him. He donned a rugged flannel shirt with black jeans featuring a few rips. His brown hair appeared tousled as though he had just run his hand through it, and his deep blue eyes were unforgettable. Our eyes locked, and I felt a powerful urge to speak. “Ben?” I whispered, quickly covering my mouth.

“Hey Krystal,” he said, giving me a quick wave with a warm smile.

“What are you doing here?” I must have looked stupid because he looked at me like a fool.

“Um… our double date?” He laughed. He started walking over to me, and I put my hands up to stop him.

“What do you mean our double date?” I heard a giggle from the other room when I looked back and saw Lexi.

“Whoops… didn’t I tell you it was a double date tonight?” she said, covering her mouth and laughing, “must have slipped my mind, oh well,” she said while shrugging and walking over to Tim, wrapping herself under his shoulder, and then walking out the door together.

I looked back at Ben. He reached for the back of his head, thinking something had landed on him that needed to be brushed away, and his shirt rose, exposing his skin underneath. The muscles peeking out under his shirt caught my eye.

He lowered his arm and gestured to the door, “Guess we should be going then?” He said, smiling. How could I say no? I reached out and put my arm in his, and we walked to the movies together.

~

Lexi and Tim disappeared after the movies, but Ben walked me back to my apartment. I smiled and asked, “Would you like to come in?” He nodded, and I stepped aside to welcome him in. “Would you like a beer?” I asked as I closed the door and walked to the fridge.

“Yes, please,” he responded, nodding as he settled onto the couch. I took two beers and gave one to my companion. I sat beside him, opened my bottle and took a big gulp.

Trying to start a conversation, I asked, “Did you enjoy the movie?”

He replied, “Yeah, it was okay. I’m glad it wasn’t a chick flick,” and chuckled. I laughed and took another sip. Then, I got up and walked to the kitchen counter to put my bottle down. As I begin to turn around to continue our conversation, I noticed something.

I felt something behind me breathing heavily on my neck, and then it hit me. Ben had followed me over. He touched my neck and pushed my hair to one side; his breath was hot. I tried to turn, but he grabbed one of my wrists and held it down on the counter. “Fuck, you smell so good”, he growled inches from my neck. Hearing him like that made me feel dominated; he moved his hand from my wrists and placed it on my waist. His heat radiated off him onto me; I felt his soft lips against my neck. I let out a little moan, “Do you like that?” He asked, then continued kissing my neck; I wrapped my hand around the back of his head, grabbing a fistful of his hair. I felt him reach his hand up and run his fingers across my very erect nipple and give it a quick pull. My breathing quickened, and I could feel his erection pulsing behind me, pushing into my back. He gave another tug on my nipple, and I moaned again. Before I knew it, he had spun me around and lifted me onto the counter. I locked my legs around his hips as he pulled my hair back, feeling his way down my neck with his mouth; he got lower towards my chest, pulling down my dress to reveal my breasts. As he nipped at my breast, he slid his hand down on my thigh, moving closer and closer to my warmth. Within a few minutes, he was stoking my nerves through my panties.

“Oh fuck,” I moaned. He started kissing me harder and biting my lower lip.

“I want you,” he hissed, looking me in the eyes. “NOW!” he demanded. I lifted my arms, allowing him to lift my dress up and over my head. He threw it to the ground and grabbed me again, unclasping my bra and tossing it off. He lifted me onto him and carried me into my bedroom, throwing me on the bed; I landed and put my arms above my head, letting him capture every inch of it. Ben kneeled on the bed and tugged at my panties.

I raised my hips in a gesture to allow him to remove them; in a swift pull, he had them off and on the floor. He leaned down and cupped both my breasts in his hands, pinching my nipples. I let out a low moan as he kissed my lips. He trailed kisses down my neck and to my breasts, taking one at a time, then continued trailing down until he found my centre. He pushed his two fingers into me, “fuck, you are so wet, Kry.” I moaned louder, and then I felt his mouth swirling around me, bringing me to my peak. I rolled my head back with my eyes closed. I could feel it building; I heard him remove his jeans and feel his body against mine. He lined himself up with my entrance, and with a quick, swift move, he was inside me. “Oh, fuck Krystal, you feel so fucking tight!” He shouted. He started to move, and we both started to move rhythmically together. As he moaned louder, so did I. “Come for me, Krystal, I want to feel you come around my cock” I reached my climax and came undone all around him. A few more movements and he came undone in me.

(***Present)***

*CRASH*

I glanced in the direction of a loud noise and saw a waiter picking up broken glass and apologizing for the mess he made. I checked the time on my phone and realized it was already 3:06. I had been lost in thought for hours and needed to rush home before my kids arrived. I quickly grabbed my phone, put it in my pocket, and grabbed my car keys. As I started my Ford, a song I recognized played on the radio, but I turned it off to focus on the road ahead and getting home as fast as possible.

# Husband & Wife

****

**-Benjamin-**

“Come inside, kids. Playtime is over, and it’s time to start your homework,” I opened the door to our house, entered, closed it, and threw my keys on the hallway table. Unbelievable! She fucking forgot about our children. What was she doing?

I untied my tie and carried Lucas to his room for a nap.

Upon entering the living room, I heard the sound of the front door opening and closing. Shortly after, Krystal came running in.

“I’m sorry!” She quickly checked on all the kids and saw that Anna was doing her homework, Sarah was playing, and Lucas was asleep. Krystal then joined me in the living room. She pushed her hair back behind her ear and apologized.

“Where were you, Krystal?” I asked, my tone betraying anger.

She stood up and crossed her arms, aware of my mood. She admitted, “I was running late from having coffee with Lexi.” I raised my voice, squeezing my hand into a fist by my side. Before she could respond,

I interrupted her. “I had to leave work early to pick up your kids because you were running late having coffee with that whore!” I said, gesturing towards the door as if Lexi was present. Her arms hung limply at her sides, and her mouth gaped in surprise. She made me furious; she knows my job is vital, and I shouldn’t have to deal with this! I observed as she shut her mouth and approached me. She stood near me, silent, only locking eyes with me. “Krystal, I’m being serious. I shouldn’t have to leave my job early to care for the kids. It’s your responsibility. They are your priority. And if Lexi is too much of a distraction, then maybe it’s best to avoid spending time with her,” I stated, observing her.

Her gaze dropped to the ground before slowly lifting back up. “Fuck you.”

I pretended not to hear her and asked, “What?” as I looked into her eyes.

“I said Fuck you, Benjamin!” Krystal pushed me, causing me to stumble, but I regained my balance. She repeated her question, “My job? My job? My children?” each time getting louder.

I responded, “Yes, you heard me,” while crossing my arms.

Krystal laughed, turned away momentarily, and then faced me again, “they are OUR children, BENJAMIN! Not just yours or mine, but OURS! And my job is a photographer and Lexi was offering me a job. Don’t you fucking dare tell me I can’t be friends with her!” Krystal’s voice grew louder as she emphasized certain words. I tried to speak, but she interrupted me. “I am not your possession!” Krystal exclaimed, pushing her finger into my chest with each word. She stormed into Sarah’s room and closed the door behind her, signalling the end of our argument and her victory. However, I didn’t see it that way. I grabbed my keys and left, slamming the front door behind me, unconcerned about waking Lucas. It wasn’t my problem anymore; Krystal could deal with it. I got into my car and sped away.

All I heard was screeching tires, so I slowed down and focused. Despite this, my rage persisted. Who did she think she was? Krystal is my wife; she always has been and always will be. I can vividly recall the first time I laid eyes on her. She was breathtakingly beautiful, and I remember smiling as I watched her basking on the beach all those years ago. The way the sunlight reflected off her body was mesmerizing, and I was drawn to her hazel eyes. There was a hint of pain behind them, or maybe I wanted to cause her pain. All I remember was telling myself that I had to meet her. My heart almost broke when I saw Lexi pulling her away, but that wouldn’t stop me. I overheard that whore mentioning her plans to attend a beach party that night and how she needed to go to town to try on some outfits. This news filled me with excitement, but at the same time, it made me feel uneasy as it triggered some negative thoughts that I usually keep to myself. All of a sudden, I found myself arriving at my office building. It dawned on me that my brain had been on autopilot as I had no recollection of where I was driving, yet I ended up at my destination. Despite my disdain for this place, it serves as my haven. I derive satisfaction from being familiar with what lies within its walls.

~

Upon returning to my office, Becky greeted me at the reception desk. When she noticed my arrival, she stood up and approached me with a smile, pulling me into a friendly embrace. I embraced her with a firm hold, feeling the warmth of her body against mine. However, I made a mental note to release her soon, so I gently pulled away, ensuring my actions were swift but not abrupt.

“Benji! I didn’t expect you to be back so soon!” she exclaimed excitedly.

I replied, “I came here to escape because Krystal was being a bitch.” Becky was shocked, and a sinister idea popped into my head. Suddenly, an image flashed before me. Before my eyes, a picture of Becky bound and gagged with a tear-stained face; closing my eyes, I shook my head, and the thoughts disappeared.

“Benji, are you alright?” Becky asked me. With my eyes closed, I remained still. After a few moments, I felt her hand on mine, which caused me to become tense. When I opened my eyes, I saw that Becky had taken my hand and was looking at me intently. “Do you need any assistance?” she asked in a suggestive tone, which caught my attention.

# What Did You Do?



**-Krystal-**

I noticed him rushing out of the gates recklessly. Lucas was crying, so I comforted him until he fell back asleep. I sang to my baby, and he dozed off. Afterwards, I assisted Anna with her homework. She was sitting at her desk, her hair tied in a ponytail, wearing comfortable pyjamas and holding her head in her hands.

“I don’t understand this, Mum,” Anna expressed.

I chuckled a bit as I approached her. “Let me take a look.” She moved aside so I could see her math assignment. I offered to help but got stuck. I observed as she solved problems, keeping an eye on the time. I stood up and said, “I’m going to start cooking dinner,” brushing my hand over her ponytail.

My daughter’s cheerful grin greeted me as she replied, “Okay, Mum.” I kissed her head and headed to the kitchen.

~

I was lying in bed reading when I tried to call Benjamin. It rang twice, and on the third attempt, it went straight to voicemail. I felt frustrated and let out a hiss. After a few minutes, I tapped my phone screen to text him. “Hey, are you coming home tonight, or did you return to work? I’m sorry things got heated today. I don’t know what happened to us. I want to talk and work something out. I love you. xoxo.” I hit send and placed my phone on the nightstand. An hour has passed, and my phone hasn’t made any sound. I checked to see if it was on silent mode, and when I opened my messages, I saw my last message, It’s hard to believe he saw it half an hour ago, but he didn’t respond.

I reached my limit and decided to call Ben at his workplace. I quickly located his work number in my contacts and dialled it. After a few rings, I heard Becky’s familiar voice on the other end.

“Hi Becky, it’s Krystal Carter,” I said.

“Oh, hi Krystal,” she replied politely.

“Ben hasn’t come home or responded to my calls or messages. Can you check if he’s there?” I asked Becky.

I heard her smile as she responded, “Yes, he’s here and in a very busy meeting, which is why he hasn’t answered you. I’m not sure when the meeting will end,” I acknowledged her response.

“Thank you, Becky. At least I know he’s safe. I’ll talk to you later.”

“No problem. Goodbye, Krystal,” Becky said before hanging up.

I spent some time looking at photos of my family, then decided to call the babysitter. “Hey Nancy, sorry to bother you. Would you be able to come over and watch the kids for a bit? Thank you, I’ll see you soon.” After hanging up the phone, I dressed in one of my black dresses, black heels, and hoop earrings. I curled my hair and put on some makeup to boost my confidence. I hadn’t put much effort into my appearance lately, and I wondered if that was affecting things between me and Ben. When Nancy arrived, I told her she could let herself in.

“You look amazing, Mrs. C! Are you going on a date with Mr. C?” she asked.

I smiled and thanked her but shook my head. “No, I’m just surprising him.” I grabbed my keys from the hallway table and headed to my car.

~

I arrived at the office and took the elevator to Ben’s floor. I hope to see my husband and move past our recent arguments. Exiting the elevator, I noticed the office was dimly lit, and Becky was not at the reception desk. I checked my phone and realized it was already 10:20, and Becky had probably left for the day. I remembered Ben was in an important meeting and headed to the conference room. I knocked on the door, waiting for someone to answer. So, I opened the door and entered the room.

“Hello?” I asked, scanning the empty room. It appeared as if it had not been in use for some time. I placed my hand on the door frame and walked over to the large screen on the wall, which was typically used for telecommute meetings. However, it was not emitting any heat. As I exited the meeting room, I heard some noise from Ben’s office. Excitedly, I approached it but abruptly stopped upon hearing what sounded like male and female moans.

I stood motionless outside Ben’s office, eavesdropping on the conversation. My nerves were in knots, and my stomach churned. I could feel my heart racing and pounding in my head. Deep down, I already knew the outcome, didn’t I? Despite my hesitation, I eventually cautiously opened the door to his office. As I stepped inside, I closed my eyes but quickly opened them again.

# Caught In The Act



**-Krystal-**

I stood there watching in disbelief as my mouth dropped to the ground. I instinctively tried to catch it but ended up covering my mouth instead. There he was, there she was, there they were. Ben sat in his chair while a brown-haired girl kneeled before him. His head was pushed back, resting on the top of his chair with his eyes shut.

She was kneeling in front of him in nothing; her hair was dangling down the back of her, and her head was motioning up and down. I stood there frozen, unable to scream or look away as I watched them.

Suddenly, Becky’s voice broke through my trance, “Mm, you like that, Benji?” He still hadn’t opened his eyes, and my heart was about to burst.

“Mm yeah baby… that feels so fucking good,” he answered, pulling her further down on him. Tears swelled up in my eyes, blurring my vision. I wiped them away and cleared my throat.

Her head stopped moving, and Ben’s eyes flicked open and landed on me. He pushed Becky off him and tugged his pants back up. He shouted my name, reaching out to me. I stepped back.

“I knew you were up to something! I didn’t want to believe it,” I said. Becky put her clothes back on and shifted to look at me. She wiped my husband away from her mouth. As she went to say something, I felt so much anger and hatred boil that I raised my fist and punched her right in her pretty face. She fell to the ground, shielding her face.

“Fuck!” I heard her say as she sat on the floor, holding her nose with blood dribbling onto her shirt.

“KRYSTAL!” Benjamin shouted at me. No fucking way, nope, not this time; I grabbed my wedding band off my finger and threw it at him.

“Maybe you can give it to her, find somewhere else to live!” I cried, turning and heading to the end of the office for the elevator.

I heard footsteps behind me; he was following me, “Krystal, knock this shit off now. You are acting like a child,” he said, grabbing my arm and stopping me from leaving.

“I don’t give a fuck,” I announced, pushing him back and making him let go of me. “You and me are done. Goodbye,” I said as the elevator doors opened, and I walked inside, pushing the button for the ground floor and the button to close the doors. The last thing I saw was him looking at me like I had just killed someone he loved. Maybe I did, maybe I killed the Krystal he thought he knew, but I’m not going to be one of those wives who lets her husband control her and then cheat on her. I got to the parking lot and went back over to my car. I started the car and looked around and then drove off, driving home.

# Krystal Callie



**-Krystal-**

It has been eight months since I discovered Ben was cheating on me with Becky. Despite sending him divorce papers, he refuses to sign them, making me feel like I’m the villain for catching him in the act. Recently, Lexi informed me that he has been involved with multiple women and has lost interest in our kids. Sadly, they haven’t seen him in six months, and it’s hard for me to keep them from falling apart when their father isn’t around. However, thanks to Lexi’s encouragement and support, I have started prioritising my well-being and rekindled my love for photography.

I sometimes feel like I’m being watched, but I can’t tell if it’s just paranoia or a genuine concern due to my past experiences with Ben. He threatened me by saying I would regret leaving him, but I believe it’s just a way for him to control me. As I lay in bed, contemplating sleeping a bit longer, Lexi barged into my room, pulling open the blackout curtains and blinding me with a stream of light. “Get up bitch, we have work to do!” she exclaimed, urging me to start my day.

“Good morning, Lex!” I groaned, shielding my eyes with my hands and burying my face into my pillow.

“Time to get up,” Lexi said, smacking my behind. I jolted upright and chuckled.

“Alright, alright. I’m up,” I said, holding up my hands in surrender. I headed to my closet and selected my professional attire: a white shirt, black slacks, and a black blazer. I slipped on my black heels and tied my hair into a ponytail. As I went to the kitchen, I saw Lexi indulging in a strawberry pop tart. I gestured to her for one, and she tossed me one before handing me a cup of coffee. She grabbed her car keys and headed for the front door, with me trailing behind her.

“How are you feeling today, Kry?” Lexi greeted me with her usual smile as we headed to work. She always checked on me in the morning to ensure I was doing okay, especially after my tough time eight months ago. Although it could get annoying, I appreciated her concern. I thought about the kids and how they needed me more than ever.

I replied with a polite smile, “I’m fine, thank you, Lexi. I’m happy and healthy. You don’t need to keep checking on me.”

Lexi insisted, “But you’re my best friend, and I must make sure you’re okay. I love you.”

I laughed and sipped my coffee, replying, “I love you too.”

Suddenly, Lexi’s phone rang, and she picked it up quickly. After a brief conversation, she ended the call and tossed her phone in the centre console.

“Everything okay, Lex?” I asked, bringing my coffee cup to my lips, about to take another sip.

“Yeah, everything is fine.” She gave me a warm, reassuring smile. I nodded and took a sip.

I couldn’t help but notice the enormous water fountain out front surrounded by beautiful, slender people and a few intimidating-looking men dressed in black standing near a limousine. Lexi parked the car, set the handbrake, and looked at me.

“Are you ready?” she asked, nodding.

“Absolutely,” I replied with a smile, trying my best not to show my nerves.

I cleared my throat and opened the door before closing it behind me. I approached the boot and waved my hand underneath it to activate the automatic opener. As it opened, I leaned in, retrieved my camera bags, and slung the straps over my shoulder before closing the boot. Lexi was already outside and had called over to one of the people. She looked back to ensure I was out of the boot, and once I was, she used her key to lock and beep her car. Adjusting the straps on my shoulder, I followed Lexi, who was walking ahead of me. When I reached her, she was speaking with one of the head operators. After a quick introduction, I smiled politely, but they looked at me like I wasn’t supposed to be there. I didn’t bother to learn his name since his attitude annoyed me. Lexi turned back to me and gave me a pep talk.

“You got this Kry. Give ‘em hell,” she said, smiling. I nodded, took a quick breath, and proceeded to work. I directed the models on where they needed to be, how to pose, and where to place their hands and feet. Despite the head guy rolling his eyes, I remained focused and in control as the photographer and thoroughly enjoyed the shoot.

Once I finished, I retrieved my laptop from my bag and inserted the SD card into the slot. The desktop background displayed a photo of my three beautiful children, but I quickly accessed the SD card file and began browsing through the pictures. “These are amazing!” exclaimed Lexi in excitement. I continued browsing, inserted my USB drive into the port, transferred the images, and stumbled upon a photo that perfectly captured what we needed to sell for their business. Lexi called for the boss, and he was pleasantly surprised by my photo.

“These are good,” he remarked, stroking his chin. “Give me a moment,” he said, holding his finger before dashing off.

“That was so much fun, Lexi!” I exclaimed with a smile, noticing her face light up in response. My attention returned to the image on the screen, and my heart swelled with pride, Ben was wrong... I was capable of this. I detected a familiar scent as I gazed at my artwork... a blend of whiskey and sandalwood.

A voice behind me exclaimed, “Wow, these are exactly what we’re looking for.” As I turned around, my smile faded, and my heart raced, I knew who was there. It was a beautiful six-foot-four giant with mesmerizing green eyes. I introduced myself as Krystal, and he responded with a smile, “How could I forget Mrs. Carter?” I blushed as he remembered my name.

I replied, “I’m in the process of being Krystal Callie,” feeling foolish about revealing my name change. He smiled more expansively, and I sensed he was suppressing a laugh. I tried to focus on the work and suggested, “I like this one the most. I feel like it is what your company is looking for to sell.” He agreed and stepped back. I promised to edit and send him the rest of the photos. Our fingers touched as I held out the USB, and I felt warmth, my breathing became shallow, he took the USB, and I quickly turned back to my laptop, trying to ignore the sensations he stirred in me.

I looked up and saw him standing before me, he cleared his throat and asked, “Why are you changing your last name?” I put the straps of my bag on my shoulders, looked back down for a moment, then stood up and faced him.

“I left Ben,” I confessed. “I’m waiting for him to sign the divorce papers.”

He sympathized, saying, “I’m sorry to hear that… I assume you found out about Natalia?” I was shocked, and my jaw dropped. “I’m sorry, did you not know?” His expression went from sincere to shocked.

I chuckled, “Oh, I knew about Becky.” My voice faltered as I spoke louder, “But Natalia too?” I tilted my head to the side, and he nodded.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “At least you left him,” he added. I shook my head and laughed.

“Thank God I did. He wasn’t the man I fell in love with,” I said. At that moment, it dawned on me that I was conversing with a stranger as if we had been friends for ages.

I felt like he was scrutinizing every inch of me. Why do I always manage to say the wrong thing? It seems like a never-ending curse. Whenever I’m anxious, I tend to fidget. I cleared my throat and said, “Ah, forget it. I’ll make changes to these here.” I took out a card from my pocket and handed it to him. “If you’re interested, you can check out the rest on the USB and let me know if you want more work done.”

He smiled warmly and said, “Thank you, Miss Callie.” He took the card and nodded.

“Goodbye, Mr. Anderson.”

I got back into Lexi’s car, hoping she didn’t notice, and she drove away from the parking lot.

Lexi spoke up immediately upon reaching the intersection. “So?” she asked.

I needed clarification. “So what?” I inquired, giving her a puzzled look.

“Are you kidding me? Are you really going to act like that didn’t just happen?” Lexi pointed back to the parking lot.

I chuckled and gazed out the window, nonchalantly shrugging my shoulders. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I stated.

“Okay,” Lexi sighed and resumed driving us home. I climbed back into the car, hoping she didn’t notice anything strange, and we left the parking lot behind.

~

I walked inside the house and headed straight to my office. After placing my laptop on the desk, I turned it on and opened the photos I had taken earlier in the day. I scrolled through them to choose the best ones, although I already had one in mind. While editing the photos, I sorted them into the folder for my ridiculously hot male client. It was an appropriate name for him. Once I finished, I started preparing dinner before Nancy brought the kids home from school and daycare. Nancy has been a tremendous help with the kids, and I thought about doing something special for her. As dinner cooked, I sat down with a book and heard Lexi making a noise from the other room, probably due to work.

When Anna, Sarah, and Lucas returned home, I greeted them with warm hugs and asked about their day. I then asked Anna to start her homework while I gave Lucas a quick bath. Once finished, I prepared a delicious dinner for everyone and called out to the kids and Lexi. Taco Tuesday was a hit, so I invited Nancy to stay and enjoy the meal. After dinner, I got up to do the dishes, and Lexi kindly offered to help. “You know, I think he wants to get to know you,” Lexi said while drying the dishes.

“I can assure you, Lex, it was merely a business arrangement,” I explained as I withdrew my hands from the sink full of water to dry them. “Anyway, if you’ll excuse me, I need to take a shower,” I added with a chuckle as I went to the bathroom. After stepping into the shower, I switched on the hot water and removed my hair tie, allowing my hair to cascade down around my chest. As I gazed at my reflection in the mirror, I pondered, “Perhaps it’s time for a new haircut?” Hoping for a response from myself. I shrugged, then walked over to take a shower. The hot water hitting my skin and the top of my head left me in awe. “Oh my God,” I moaned, washing the soap all over myself.

I thought about him as I rubbed the wet cloth over my breast. He looked at me with his big emerald green eyes, the scar on his face defying, and with an appetite that I could only satisfy. I closed my eyes and ran my hands down my body. I couldn’t stop thinking about him and how he made me feel today seeing him look over my body the way he did. I hadn’t felt that in years.

My hand continued going south as I reached the top of myself.

My mouth dropped open, “Mummy, Mummy, can you tuck me in? Please?” I was interrupted by Sarah’s voice coming from the other side of the door.

“Of course, sweetie. I’ll be right there,” I replied, turning off the shower and wrapping a towel around myself. Sarah’s big blue eyes and blonde hair greeted me as I opened the door.

“Mummy!” she exclaimed, reaching out to hug me. I lifted her and carried her to her bed, where she crawled under the covers.

“Which story tonight, my darling?” I asked with a smile.

“Fox and Socks!” she giggled. I grabbed the book and sat beside her, reading Dr. Seuss’s Fox in Socks to her. After a few pages, she fell asleep, and I kissed her forehead before turning off the light and checking on her siblings to ensure they were sleeping soundly. They were.

~

“I’m not surprised to see you in here,” I said to Lexi as I entered my room and closed the door behind me.

“Well, your room has the bigger TV, and we’re hanging out tonight,” Lexi responded. I chuckled and put on an oversized shirt to wear to bed before settling in next to Lexi.

“Really?” I asked, amused.

“Absolutely! You did great on your first day as a working mum, so we’re going to celebrate,” she exclaimed, pouring us a glass of wine. We sipped our drinks and chatted while watching a movie on TV, “Oh, Kry, don’t forget to send photos to Mr. green eyes,” Lexi reminded me as she took a big bite of her chocolate bar. I quickly grabbed my laptop and emailed Avery about some of my work. However, Lexi distracted me with a massive scream while watching a horror movie on TV. With my task completed, I put the subject as “Mr. Anderson, hope these are to your liking and hope to hear from you soon.” After shutting my computer, I placed it on my bedside table and cuddled up with Lexi, enjoying our movie time together. It was a nice moment.

~

After a few hours of sleep, I was awakened by the sound of my phone. I noticed that I had received a message from an unknown number. I quickly entered my passcode and unlocked my phone. “Oh no,” I gasped, covering my mouth.

Lexi paused her movie and asked, “What happened?” I glanced at Lexi, my hand still covering my mouth.

Slowly, I lowered my hand and confessed, “I sent him the wrong photo.”

Confused, she asked, “What do you mean?”

I dropped my phone onto the bed and hid my face in my hands, “Oh God, what do I do now?!” I yelled; my voice muffled by my hand.

Suddenly, Lexi grabbed the phone and began laughing. “Oh gosh, Kry, when did you take that?!” she exclaimed. I lifted my head to see that Lexi was examining the photo. Quickly, I seized the phone and looked at the image he had sent me.

Written underneath was, “This one is my favourite, by far.” I blushed as soon as I read what he wrote.

Looking back at Lexi, who was still waiting for an answer, I said, “It was from the other week when I was working on boudoir photos and thought I would try one of myself.” Embarrassed, I added, “I can’t believe I did this! Of course, I had to go and ruin my first job back.” I threw the phone back down and buried my face under the blanket.

“I don’t think you’ve ruined it, Kry. He seemed to like it. Damn! I even like it,” Lexi replied, looking back at the photo.

# My Favourite By Far

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-**Avery-**

While going through my work emails at my computer desk, I came across an email from Krystal Callie with the subject line, “Mr. Anderson, hope these are to your liking and hope to be hearing from you soon.”

Intrigued, I clicked on it and found photos she had taken for my business. While scrolling through them, I noticed an image unrelated to my business that stood out, one shot that I liked very fucking much. I click on the image to zoom in. It’s her, sitting on a chair wearing only a long white shirt. The sleeves are rolled up, and the buttons are undone, exposing her breast with one leg resting on the chair seat, revealing her black-laced underwear, “Holy shit,” I said out loud. Sitting at my desk, I was mesmerized by the captivating image of a woman who had grown increasingly self-assured over the past few months. My dick pushed against my zipper. As I continued to search, my hand instinctively unzipped my jeans. My erection sprung out, and I started pulling myself. I am captivated by a woman who makes me feel emotions I have never experienced. My mind is consumed with thoughts of what I want to do with her, but for now, I am content with looking at a photo of her until I can be near her. I pulled and pulled harder, groaning louder until finally I was finished; I took a tissue from my desk before quickly showering to remove any evidence that I was jerking off to a woman I’d only met twice.

~

After showering, I picked up my phone and saved Krystal’s photo from my emails. Then, I located Krystal’s phone number from her email and typed it in. Next, I selected the image of her sitting on a chair, wrote a message saying, “This one is my favourite,” and sent it to her.

After waiting a few seconds, I realized I still had not received a response. Panic started, “What if she thinks I’m a creep?” I shook my head, trying to remain optimistic. Perhaps she sent the photo to grab my attention. My phone buzzed in my pocket as I was leaving for my study. I quickly retrieved it and saw a message from her.

She wrote, “I believe that photo was mistakenly sent, sir. It’s part of a private collection.” I couldn’t help but laugh at her response. Even though it was an error, I now possess that photo. Wait? What if it was meant for someone else?

I fucking hoping not; Without thinking, I replied to her message with, “Thanks for letting me know. Has the private collection already been sold, or can I purchase the entire album?”

After sending the message, I placed my phone on the coffee table and waited for a response. A few minutes later, my phone buzzed, causing the table to vibrate.

I picked it up and saw her reply, “No, it hasn’t been sold. This collection is exclusive, and only a select few are allowed to view it. Consider yourself lucky, sir.”

I chuckled at her response. I responded by saying, “It’s a deal. Kindly transfer the remaining photos and I will pay you $50,000.”

After sending the message, she replied after a few seconds, “I apologize, sir. If you want the remaining photos, you’ll have to collect them personally. Goodnight, Avery.”

When I read that she used my first name, my heart warmed. I want to learn everything about her. I know her ex-husband is a complete and utter dickhead. I always disliked Benjamin. He frequently recounted tales of his spouse but portrayed Krystal as submissive and utterly devoted to him. Glancing at the clock, I noticed it was already half past twelve. I stood up, picked up my phone, went to my bedroom, crawled into bed, and dozed off.

# A Promise Is A Promise



**-Krystal-**

After my embarrassing blunder with Avery, a few days have passed, but I still can’t believe I sent him the wrong photos. Part of me feels mortified, while the other part wonders if it was intentional. Perhaps I was subconsciously seeking his attention, and this was my way of doing it. I shake my head to clear my thoughts and focus on getting my kids ready for school and daycare. I retrieve their bags from their designated spots, hand them to Anna and Sarah, and place Lucas’s backpack on his back. “Please be good at school today, Anna. Listen to your teacher and follow instructions,” I say, kissing each of their cheeks quickly before handing them over to Nancy.

“I want to see Dad!” Anna protests, her arms folded.

“I know, baby,” I reply, gently stroking her hair. “I’ll contact him and try to arrange a visit, okay?”

“Promise?” Anna asks.

“I promise to contact him, but I can’t guarantee what your dad will say,” I assure her with a warm hug. Watching them drive away, I enter the house and close the door. For the first time in a while, I am alone. While I enjoy solitude, it feels strange not to have a child clinging to me or Lexi, thinking I might break. I decided to check my phone and message him. Waiting for his reply, I turned my attention to editing one of my client’s photos.

~

I was in the middle of editing when I heard a loud banging at the front door. Startled, I got up from my desk and hurried to answer it, wondering who it could be. Surprisingly, I found Ben holding a bouquet of red roses. I felt my heart racing and my mind racing with questions. Why was he here? What did he want? Trying to compose myself, I asked, “Ben, what brings you here?” in confusion.

He greeted me with a smile and handed me a bouquet of roses. “I got your message,” he said. “I know how much you love roses.” I took a whiff of the flowers and thanked him but quickly reminded him that I had messaged him about seeing the kids.

“I understand,” he replied, leaning against a brick wall. “But just imagine how happy our kids would be if we were together again.” He reached out to hold my hand, but there was no longer a flutter in my stomach. Instead, anger burned hot within me.

“No,” I yelled, pulling my hand away and throwing the roses on the ground. “I messaged you about the kids, not about us getting back together. You cheated on me with Becky and Natalia.” I crossed my arms, seething with fury.

“How did you find out about Natalia?” he asked, looking at me as if I had no right to know.

“It’s irrelevant. I contacted you for the sake of your children, not for myself.”

“Stop it. The past is in the past,” he retorted, pushing away from the wall and attempting to approach me. He lifted his hand and brushed a strand of hair from my face. “Let’s be together again. We can start anew,” he murmured as he leaned in. His warm breath on my face made me want to strike him, which is precisely what I did. Without thinking, I brought one knee up and kneed him right in the balls, bringing him down to the ground and clutching his manhood between his hands. “YOU FUCKING BITCH!” he yelled.

“If you want to see your children, please contact my lawyer, and we can arrange a plan. Until then, please stay away from me,” I declared firmly before reaching for the door and stepping inside. Once inside, I closed the door behind me and could hear the grunts of frustration from outside.

I thought he had left until there was a loud bang on the door a few seconds later.

“OPEN UP YOU STUPID BITCH, you can’t do this to me!” He roared as he continued banging on the door; I pressed my body against it to keep it shut.

“Please leave, Ben!” I begged. Everything became silent until I heard a faint slithering sound.

“Krystal, you’re going to regret this. I can assure you of that,” he hissed before leaving. I stood there, holding the door, trying to catch my breath and process what had happened. How could he think that I wanted him back? And did he mean what he said? I shook my whole body, attempting to shake off the feeling of him on me. All I knew was that I was finished with Ben Carter.

# Time To Be Bold

****

**-Avery-**

It has been a week since I last saw Krystal and received her flavourful image. I have glanced at her photo a few times since thinking about what I’d love to do to her body. I will put a stop to this immediately. Krystal Callie is different from the type of woman I should waste my time on. I must redirect my attention and find someone else to occupy my mind. This is necessary to move forward. Right now, my work is my main priority. I am determined to transform an established company into something more significant, and I will not let anything distract me from that goal. My mother has asked me for some ideas by the end of the week, but so far, I’m coming up empty. I was browsing old company photos at my computer desk when I heard a knock at the door. Glancing up, I saw someone standing outside. “Please come in,” I said with a slightly frustrated tone. Lisa appeared around the corner and apologized, slipping through the doorway.

“Your mother asked me to deliver these to you,” she said, approaching my computer and handing me some paper. I stood up from my chair, walked around the desk to grab the documents from her, and placed them on my desk.

“They are important, sir,” Lisa said softly.

“I bet they are,” I said, looking Lisa up and down. I needed a distraction from Krystal. Could she be my distraction? She wasn’t as attractive as Krystal, but she would do. If I fuck my mother’s assistant, she’ll get pissed with me. I can do two things at once. Lisa seemed uncomfortable when I asked her, “Do you have to leave now?”

She said, “Yes, sir. Your mother doesn’t want me to be late,” and nodded while avoiding eye contact. I couldn’t help but notice her long, skinny legs. She had a tiny tight ass and small round breasts, her black hair tied into a bun. She wore an unattractive outfit: a white button-up shirt with a yellow bow tie and a long brown skirt. She reminded me of a librarian. Fuck it, she’ll do.

“Good,” I said, pulling her closer by the back of her neck. “If you objectify, please leave,” I demanded in a firm tone. To my disbelief, she responded with a smile and casually released her hair, allowing it to hang loosely on her neck. I tightened my grip on the back of her neck and pushed her over onto my desk, bending her over it. I lifted her skirt with my other hand and pulled her underwear down. I reached around the front to find she was already soaking wet. What was with my mother’s assistants? It seems they always want what they can’t have. I pushed on her head, pinning her over the desk, and undone my zip and button on the top of my slacks with my other hand; my cock sprang to life. As I pushed closer to her, I found her entrance, and within a few seconds, I was deep in her. She felt so good, but at that moment, all I thought about was Krystal and if she felt so much better than this. I pushed in and out, creating a rhythm while Lisa moaned. Hearing her didn’t help; I muffled the sound of her moans by covering her mouth with my hand. I got closer and closer to my climax until I heard high heels on the Vinyl white floor behind me.

I quickly pulled myself free of Lisa and pushed my cock back inside my pants, turning around to face the consequences in her stale grey eyes.

“Hello, Mother. What brings you here?” I asked as I hastily zipped up my pants and faced her. She was outfitted in an all-white suit and had been staring at my assistant’s ass as she bent over my desk.

“Lisa,” Regina said in a measured tone. I glanced at Lisa, who quickly straightened up and smoothed down her skirt to appear presentable.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. ...”

“Don’t worry about it. You’re fired,” Regina interjected, leaving Lisa incredulous and me.

“Hold on, that’s not fair. I started it. Leave Lisa out of this,” I protested, gesturing towards her and leaning back against my desk.

“Lisa, please leave. You are no longer employed here,” Regina commanded sharply, glaring at me. Lisa shuffled out of the room and shut the door behind her, leaving Regina to step closer and clasp her hands together.

“Avery, you should know better. How many assistants do I have to go through before you stop sleeping with all of them?”

I chuckled and replied, “Maybe if you hired a male assistant, I would stop.” I sat at my desk, holding a glass of whiskey. Suddenly, my mother’s voice interrupted my thoughts.

“Avery Ezekiel Anderson!” she scolded me, using the same tone she always had.

I couldn’t resist teasing her and asked, “What, Regina?” Her silence suggested I had hit a nerve, she hated it when I used her first name. I took another sip of whiskey and placed the glass back on the wooden desk. When I turned around, my mother stood before me; before I knew it, her hand was headed towards my face.

*SLAP*

Her hand hit my face, bringing back memories from my childhood. I straightened myself up and rubbed my jaw. “Avery Anderson, you may be grown up, but don’t forget who you’re dealing with. You will always show me respect. Do you understand?” She scolded me again.

I nodded and replied, “Yes, Ma’am.”

“Good,” she said, stepping back. “Now it’s time to get down to business. Tell me what you have planned. Our “Client” is becoming impatient,” Regina said, rubbing her hands together.

“Honestly, I don’t have anything yet. I thought I had until the end of the week?”

“So did I, but he wants to move up the date. If we don’t come up with something soon, he’ll pull out altogether. We can’t let that happen,” she urged me to think of something.

“I do have one idea,” I said, holding up my index finger. I walked over to my desk, opened a drawer, and pulled out the photos and my notes. “Here,” I said, handing them to Regina. She looked through them, nodding as she examined each and read what I had written down.

Regina said, “This could work. I’ll arrange a meeting with the client and you’ll be there. I’ll keep in touch,” as she headed towards the door.

I heard the echo of her shoes on the floor as she closed the door and left. I exhaled a sigh of relief. “Fucking bitch,” I said, rubbing my face and then sitting back at my desk and starting working again.

~

While I was at my apartment, my phone began to buzz in my back pocket. I answered it and said, “This is Avery Anderson.”

Regina was on the other end and said, “Good, you’re not busy. Meet me at Lenny’s Palace. We have some business to handle.” After she hung up, I locked my phone, sighed, and went to the elevator. Once inside, I pressed the button to take me to the parking garage. I waited patiently until the elevator arrived at my destination. I used the button on my keys to unlock my car and heard it beep. I walked over to find my 69 V8 Chevrolet Chevelle, modified to my liking, in all its beauty. The car was painted black, and it was my pride and joy.

I opened the car door, got inside, and turned the key. The engine came to life as I shifted into first gear, pressed the accelerator, and drove out of the parking lot. Turning the first corner, I thought I saw Krystal walking down the street with a child on her hip. But I couldn’t be sure, as my mind had been preoccupied with thoughts of her. When I reached the first exit, I went for my phone and said, “Call Krystal.” My phone lit up, and I heard the dial tone through my car speakers.

Krystal answered, “Hello?” My mind went blank. “Hello?” she answered again.

“Hello, Miss Callie. I’m still waiting on those photos,” I said, keeping a smile on my face.

“Avery? I told you those photos are of a private collection,” she replied through the phone, her voice betraying a smile.

“I know, but I thought I would try my luck,” I said, beaming at the phone before returning to the road.

“What do you mean?” Krystal asked.

I took a deep breath. “You, me, dinner. Tonight!” I asserted.

“Is that supposed to be a question?” Krystal asked with a little laugh.

“Not at all, it’s a statement. I’ll pick you up at eight. Send me your address, please?” I said confidently, my smile growing more prominent. A few minutes passed, and the phone went quiet. I looked at the phone and then back at the road before turning right into Lenny’s Palace parking lot. I sat in the car and waited for her answer.

Krystal agreed, “Sure, I’ll send you my address and see you at eight tonight.”

I felt excited and mentally celebrated. “Great, see you tonight!” I said before hanging up the phone. Krystal said goodbye, and I replied before putting my phone in my pocket. Looking at myself in the rear-view mirror, I smiled, exited the car, approached the front door, and knocked.

~

Here I am, in a horrible place with a horrible woman, at least I can leave this place; my mother, on the other hand, I’m stuck with.

Lenny’s Palace smells like desperation and sweat. Standing in a strip club with my mother, our family is always fun to work with. Regina is explaining to Lenny how everything will go down, how his girls are working differently, and how everyone will run the drugs for our family. If anyone buys, we need to know and take the profits.

“Please, Mrs. Anderson, we don’t want any trouble, but some girls won’t agree to sleeping with our clients or giving them drugs.” I looked at Lenny; he was a skinny guy who looked run down and had a big chain around his neck. It was almost as big as the nose on his face; just looking at him made me want to punch him. he just had one of those faces, you know?

“Make them, Lenny,” Regina said sternly.

“I won’t compromise their morals,” Lenny stated firmly as he stood up. “You can’t force me to do so. This club is mine!” His voice grew louder. Regina glanced at me and nodded. In that instant, I understood what needed to be done. I grabbed Lenny by the back of his neck, threw him to the ground, and started punching him left and right. The little bastard kept wriggling and asking me to stop, so I did. I looked at him.

“What’s the answer going to be?” I questioned, lying there with his hands up to his face.

“Please, I can’t make them.” I rolled my eyes, pulled my gun from my jacket, and pointed at his face.

“I don’t think you understand, Lenny, you don’t have a fucking choice.”

“Of course. I’ll do it. If they don’t fall in line, they’re fired,” Lenny said, crying cowardly.

Regina got up and said, “Good boy, Avery. We’re finished. Let’s go, baby.” I punched him again so he understood me.

“We’ll be back at the start of every month. Don’t piss us off,” I spat at him and walked out of the club behind my mother.

Regina attempted to praise me, saying, “Good boy for doing what needed to be done,” but I couldn’t help feeling bitter.

“Are we finished now?” I asked. Regina confirmed that we were, and I rolled my eyes before going to the car. I started the engine and turned up the music as I returned to my apartment.

~﻿﻿

Once back at my apartment, I walked into my ensuite and looked at myself in the mirror; I looked down at the blood on my hands. “Fuck,” I shouted, quickly running the hot water and grabbing the soap to wash the blood off. I looked back to the mirror, ran my soaking wet hands into my hair, and stared at myself. I hate that I’m her child, the son of a King Pin of the Central. Or should I say, Queen Pin? She owns all the Central and all the drugs she has running; I hate that I must bend to her will. This is not who I am, but after hearing dad wanting out of the life and finding out how he got out, it’s like I’m either in or dead. I pushed that thought to the back of my mind; there was no time to think about that—other pressing matters, like my date with an attractive woman tonight. I walked over to the shower, turned on the faucet, and jumped in under the water. And once done, I turned off the water, wrapped a towel around my waist, and left the bathroom. I rummaged through my closet to pick out an outfit for dinner tonight. After a few attempts, I settled on a white button-up shirt, grey suit pants, and a grey vest to go over it. I rolled up my sleeves and put on my black shoes. Walking to the mirror, I tossed my jacket on the bed and adjusted my tie. After one last glance, I grabbed my coat, exited my apartment, and headed to the elevator for the underground.

~

After receiving Krystal’s address from her while I was at Lenny’s, I entered it into my phone and started driving. It didn’t take long to arrive at her lovely house with brown bricks and a cute little white fence. As I pulled into the driveway, I noticed a Ford SUV belonging to Krystal. However, I also saw a Dodge Challenger parked behind it and wondered whose car it was. Nevertheless, I walked up to the front doorstep and knocked on the door. After a few minutes, I heard footsteps approaching from the other side, and then the door opened to reveal two little faces, a boy and a girl with blonde hair and blue eyes, smiling up at me. “Who are you?” asked the little girl, pointing at me.

“I’m Avery. Am I at the right house?” I responded.

“I don’t know, but look, my tooth fell out,” the little girl said, pointing to the gap in her mouth. I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Yes, I can see that. I guess the tooth fairy will come to you,” I said, which left the little girl in awe. However, the boy ran off crying after my remark. Shortly after, a younger-looking woman greeted me and introduced herself as Nancy. She welcomed me inside and informed me that Mrs. C would be with me soon.

I noticed family photos hanging on the wall as I entered the house. I proceeded to the lounge room, where I patiently waited for Krystal.

Suddenly, a voice startled me from behind, “Who are you?” I turned around to find a young girl with long brown hair who appeared to be about ten years old.

“Hello there, my name is Avery Anderson,” I warmly introduced myself.

“Are you my mother’s friend?” she inquired.

“Yes, I am,” I replied, smiling. She shrugged and walked away to her room. I checked the time on my watch and saw that it was 8:15.

A sweet voice interrupted my thoughts, “Are we boring you, Mr. Anderson?” I saw Krystal standing behind me, wearing a stunning black spaghetti strap dress with a leg split. Her hair was styled in an elegant bun.

“You look absolutely amazing,” I gushed. She giggled in response, blushing slightly.

“Thank you. You look…” she trailed off, noticing my outfit.

“Since you liked it so much the first time, I thought it was only fitting,” I explained, grinning. “Shall we go?” I asked.

“Of course, let me say goodbye to the kids,” she replied, heading towards their room. After giving them all a quick kiss, she joined me in the lounge room. “Let’s go,” she said, beaming.

# The Dinner



**-Krystal-**

“I’ll have the steak with vegetables on the side,” Avery said to the waiter, handing him his menu. “Also, could we please have your finest bottle of red wine?”

“Certainly, sir,” the waiter replied, nodding and walking away.

As he left, Avery turned to me and smiled. “I feel like I should address the elephant in the room,” he said.

“What’s that?” I asked, feeling slightly nervous.

“Do you have kids?” he asked.

I looked into his deep green eyes and nodded. “Yes, I have three. Is that a problem?” I asked, worried about his reaction.

“No, not at all,” he said with a smile, and I felt relief wash over me.

“So, how’s the divorce going?” Avery asked, sipping the whiskey the waiter had already served him. I chuckled a little.

“He still refuses to sign the papers, and the other day…” I stopped, wondering if I should tell him what happened with Ben.

“The other day what?” he asked eagerly.

“I sent Ben a message because Anna wanted to see him, and he took it as me wanting him back, and he came over,” I said, sipping my water.

“And do you want him back?” Avery asked, and I paused, unsure how to respond.

Our waiter returned with the bottle of red wine and presented it to Avery. “Yes, thank you,” Avery replied, glancing at the waiter before returning to me. The waiter poured each of us a glass of wine, left the bottle on the table, and then returned to the kitchen. I picked up my wine glass and took a sip.

“I don’t want him back. I just wrote to him because his daughter misses him,” I explained as I placed my glass on the table.

Avery nodded in understanding, “why do I feel like you haven’t said the full story?” He smiled a little, and I returned it.

“How can you read me so well?” I whispered. “But no, you’re right. He brought roses, which I didn’t like, and he tried to kiss me when I refused to take him back. He became angry when I pushed him away and started banging on my door, threatening to make me pay.” I grabbed my glass to calm myself and noticed Avery clenching his fist under the table.

After a few minutes, he looked back at me and said, “I’m sorry he acted that way. He sounds like a complete jerk.”

“He never used to be,” I replied, taking another sip. Avery gave a subtle side eye, “what was that?” I asked.

“The way he was around the office, he’d definitely been a jerk since he was born” Avery laughed, “but If he ever behaves like that again, please don’t hesitate to call me,” he added, sipping his whiskey.”

~

“Are you all finished?” asked the waiter.

“Yes, thank you so much for the wonderful meal,” I responded warmly.

“Thank you,” the waiter replied as he cleared our plates and returned to the kitchen. I looked over at Avery and smiled. “Thank you for coming out with me tonight. I had a great time,” I said gratefully.

“You’re welcome. Are you doing, okay?” Avery asked, noticing my distracted thoughts.

“Yeah, just lost in my own head,” I laughed.

“It’s still early. Would you like to come back to my place for a nightcap?” Avery asked, raising an eyebrow.

I felt my heart racing at the invitation. This was it. Do I dare accept?

# Best Night Of My Life

****

**-Avery-**

As I patiently awaited her response, she locked her hazel eyes with mine and bit her lip. Fuck, I want to taste her in every way. I started to tap my fingers across the table, “So?” I asked, arcing an eyebrow, “What do you say?” I was becoming impatient; I needed to know what she wanted to do. She brought her index finger up and bit at her nail.

“Sure, why not?” she said, smiling. At that moment, my cock twitched at the thought of having her in my apartment.

“Shall we leave now?” I asked and stood up, beckoning the waiter to bring the bill. He hurried over, and I settled it. As we exited the restaurant, I offered my arm to Krystal, and she took it, walking alongside me. The valet attendant returned my car, handing me the keys.

“Here you are, sir,” he said. I opened the door for Krystal, and she thanked me before getting in. After she settled in, I closed the door and walked to the driver’s side.

After arriving at my apartment, I parked in the underground car park. We proceeded to the elevator and made our way upstairs. The elevator ride was different this time since it was just the two of us. I couldn’t help but feel aroused just by looking at her. When the elevator dinged, we stepped out into my apartment.

“Wow, this is really nice,” Krystal exclaimed, “much better than my little house,” she added.

“I actually like your little house,” I replied, shrugging.

She smiled in response. “Thank you.”

I walked over to the kitchen and asked, “What would you like?”

“Just a glass of wine, please,” she said while admiring the wall artwork.

“This one is beautiful,” she said, pointing at a painting.

I handed her a glass and asked, “You think so?”

“Mmm, yes,” she nodded, taking a sip.

“Thank you, I actually painted it,” I said, she looked at me in amazement, “is it really that shocking?” I asked, laughing.

“Oh no,” she said, staring at the painting and then back at me. She went quiet, trying to find the right words to say, “you’re not only handsome but talented too,” she chuckled. A strand of hair fell in front of her face, and I gently tucked it behind her ear. She took a deep breath and took a sip of her drink. I composed myself and headed towards my bedroom. I could hear her footsteps trailing behind me. As I entered my room, I untied my tie and tossed it onto the mirror followed by my jacket. Sitting on my bed, I ran my hand through my hair, giving it a tousled appearance.

“You have a lovely room,” she remarked, glancing around before focusing on me.

I pulled out my phone from my pocket and found her photo, “so, when will I receive the rest of my photos?” I inquired, turning my phone towards her to show her the picture of herself.

“Oh, my goodness!” She exclaimed, blushing and becoming flustered. She covered her face with her hands in embarrassment. I walked over to her and gently pulled her hands away.

“You have nothing to be embarrassed about,” I reassure her.

She playfully hits my stomach and responds, “Yeah, right.” I look her in the eyes, then bring my hand up to her bun and undo the clip to let her dark brown hair fall past her breasts.

“Fuck you are beautiful,” I looked into her soft brown eyes and leaned in to kiss her.

# Best Night Of My Life 2



**-Krystal-**

His lips on mine felt magnificent; I couldn’t believe that he was kissing me. I placed my hands on the side of his face, feeling his stubble prick my fingers, and I opened my mouth a little bit more to welcome his tongue into mine. I could feel him wrap his arms around my body, slowly moving his hand up to grasp the base of my neck; I could feel our kiss deepening and us getting lost. Holy fuck! I could feel him. His shaft was rock hard and pressing up against my stomach. He picked me up, and I wrapped my legs around his waist, tightening my grip on his side. He kept kissing me, and then his lips left mine only to find the nape in my neck and started kissing down slowly. I pushed my head back and closed my eyes, moaning. “Oh god.” He moved quickly and pushed me up against the wall, pinning me between him and it. Grabbing my dress’s base and lifting it, I raised my arms, allowing him to pull it off. I looked at him to find him already looking at me. I started to feel self-conscious and pulled my arms down to cover myself. He let out an aggressive growl, pinning my hands.

“Don’t ever do that again,” he ordered. His eyes were now dark with desire. He kissed my neck, trailing down to my collarbone, and stopped once he reached my cleavage; he let go of my hands, allowing me to place my arms around his neck. I felt a hand on my lower back. Avery had unlatched my bra. I slid my bra down one arm at a time; he continued his trail of kisses down and then swirled his tongue around my nipple, lightly biting and moving on to the next. Each time I felt the sting of his teeth, I shifted on him, feeling his erection. With another swift motion, he picked me up and walked over to the bed, slowly bending and placing me on the bed. I was lying there topless with nothing but my black panties on; I lifted one hand above my head and started biting my index nail on the other. I watched as he stood there, studying me.

“Do you want me?” he asked in a low, husky voice.

I nodded while biting my nails and whispered, “Yes.” As soon as he got the answer, he started to undress himself; he unbuttoned his shirt and slid it off, letting it drop to the floor. He did the same with his pants and briefs, allowing me to see him in all his glory. He was magnificent. Never in my wildest dreams could I picture how amazing he would look. I crawled onto my knees, kneeling before him, and started leaving light kisses on his chest and trailed my way down to his hips; I heard a slight groan. I quickly looked up at him, taking in his hungry emerald green eyes, and at that moment, I wanted to feed his hunger. I kissed his chest again and trailed back down to his hips, but I didn’t stop this time. I kept going and pulled him into my mouth, and as soon as I did, I heard a loud moan from him. Hearing him made me feel so hot. I started sucking, twirling my tongue around his shaft as I went up and sucked the tip and then ran my tongue back down and started to suck all over again. I felt him grab my head and thrust and moan even more. Holy fuck, this was enticing.

# Best Night Of My Life 3

****

**-Avery-**

“Fuck, Krystal,” I moaned, moving her head in rhythm with me. My cock in her mouth felt amazing. I didn’t want to stop her; she just kept going harder, making me slam my cock into the back of her throat. With every movement, I could feel myself being pushed closer to my climax; with one more move, I grabbed her head and stilled myself, letting my finale take over. I groaned. Krystal slowly sat up, wiping her mouth; I was bent over the bed, trying to catch my breath. “Holy hell,” I gasped for breath.

“You’re welcome,” Krystal said with a smile as she fled the bed. I grabbed her hand and playfully pulled her back onto the bed.

“Where the fuck do you think you’re going?” I asked, leaning over her.

“I don’t know, I thought we were done,” she answered innocently. How could a girl look this innocent and cute but suck dick like a master? I must know, I thought.

Looking down at her and admiring her body, she had fantastic breasts, big and perky; I kept looking and noticed that she also had a few stretch marks. She also had a Vine tattoo on her ribs. I observed her attempt to conceal herself once she knew where I was looking.

I pushed her hands away.

“Don’t,” I said and then grabbed her lace underwear, ripping them off her, making her let out a small yelp. She crossed her legs to try and hide herself even more; I started kissing her breasts again, one at a time.

“Avery,” she moaned. I kissed down further, knocking her knees apart with my hands and slowly touching her. I started teasing her, slowly dipping a finger in, circling it around and then pulling it back out, “Christ Avery,” she groaned. Good, I was getting under her skin. She looked down at me, and I made direct eye contact with her while placing that finger in my mouth, tasting her. She covered her face and pushed her head back. I positioned myself between her thighs and kissed her when she wasn’t looking. She jolted at my touch, but I kept going. I needed to have her in my mouth, and I trailed down further until I reached her centre and started licking. She cried out, covering her mouth as I continued tormenting her. I slid my finger inside while I licked and sucked at her. She moaned even louder. “Fuck Avery.” My name has never sounded so good. I could feel her clenching and trying to pull away, which could only mean one thing: she was close, and I was determined to make her mine. I kept licking and pushed in another finger and circled them inside her. She stilled and let out another moan, and I felt her. She grasped the blanket under her and tilted her head back further. She was mine at that moment. As soon as she finished climaxing, I picked her up and placed her on top of me. Grabbing my cock, and pushing myself into her, she cried out again as I entered her. Holy shit, she was so fucking tight.

She wrapped her legs around my back, and we found rhythm together. We got lost in each other; we were at the peak of climaxing again. I pulled her hair as she ran her nails into my back. I couldn’t help but grab tighter, and with my last thrust, I finished again, making her come undone on top of me simultaneously. We both lay there trying to catch our breaths. I pulled her close, draped my arm over her, and soon she fell asleep.

I was frozen by this beautiful woman sleeping on me. I’ve never let them fall asleep with me; it’s usually a quick booty call to get rid of them. I don’t form attachments anymore. I made a conscious decision to stop doing so. I can’t go down that road. Krystal was sound asleep in my arms, her lengthy hair covering her face. I needed to be careful with her. If Regina found out, she would stop it like she did last time. Krystal stirred in her sleep, so I pulled her closer, kissed her forehead, and slept.

# The Morning After



**-Krystal-**

As I woke up, I felt a warm sunlight stream on my back. I turned and saw the sun shining brightly through the windows. However, I realized that Avery was no longer there. Disappointed, I thought it might be time to pack up and leave.

I got up and searched for my dress. Eventually, I spotted it lying on the floor next to the wall near the wardrobe. While I was getting dressed, Avery entered the room carrying two cups of coffee. The moment he walked in, the room seemed to light up.

“Good morning,” Avery greeted me with a gentle smile. “Did you sleep well?”

I nodded in response, “yes, your bed is incredibly comfortable.” I returned with a quick smile and proceeded to put on my dress.

“You know, you don’t have to do all this,” Avery said with a smirk.

“Do what?” I asked innocently, pretending not to know what he meant. He walked closer to me and handed me a cup of coffee.

“I’ve made breakfast for us and you can take a shower in my ensuite,” he gestured towards the bathroom.

“Thank you.” I gratefully accepted the coffee and headed into the ensuite. Once there, I located his impressive glass walk-in shower and placed my coffee on the counter. After turning on the hot water, I stepped inside and was immediately impressed by the large square shower head on the ceiling. The moment the water hit my back, I felt like I was in paradise.

After showering, I searched for toothpaste but couldn’t find it, so I used my finger as a toothbrush. I looked for my cup, but it was gone. I assumed he had gotten rid of it, but I didn’t dwell on it. I headed to his bedroom, where I found my dress on his bed. I put it on, threw my hair in a messy bun, and went to the dining room. As I walked to the kitchen, I took note of the light grey walls and white hardwood floorboards. His kitchen was spacious and had a breakfast bar with an archway leading to the dining room. He was already seated at a long glass table with various breakfast foods.

“Sorry,” he said with a smile, “I didn’t know what you liked for breakfast.” I pulled up a chair and helped myself to bacon, eggs, strawberries, and orange juice. The eggs were deliciously seasoned perfectly.

“This is amazing,” I said with a mouthful. Avery chuckled.

“Thank you. I’m glad you like my cooking.”

“I can’t recall the last time I had food this good.”

“I tasted something better last night,” he smirked. I choked on my food at his words.

I reached for the orange juice to wash down the food remnants in my mouth. Avery was engrossed in his food and phone, but I couldn’t shake off the thought of whether this was a one-time thing. I didn’t want him to think I was clingy like other girls.

I finished my breakfast and got up, “I should go now; Nancy needs to leave soon,” I said with a smile, heading towards the elevator. The button seemed to take forever to respond, but eventually, it dinged. Just as I was about to step inside, Avery caught up with me.

“Krystal.”

causing me to turn and face him. He grabbed my hand and pulled me towards him, kissing me passionately. He had something to say, and this was how he communicated it. When he finally let go, I took a breath and nodded at him before entering the elevator and pressing the button for the ground floor.

~

While driving home, I had a feeling that someone was following me. I kept checking my rear-view mirror and noticed a black SUV behind me. I attempted to identify the car by slowing down, but it wasn’t easy to make out. I tried to lose the vehicle by speeding up and taking different turns, but the SUV kept following me. When I arrived at my house, I exited my car and walked towards my door. Suddenly, I heard tires screeching to a halt, followed by a car door opening but not closing. Someone grabbed my head and pushed me to the ground as I reached my doorstep. I let out a small yelp.

“Have fun last night, did you? You little whore,” he said through hissed teeth, grabbing me by my throat, lifting me and pushing me up against the brick wall, scraping my face against it. “You leave our kids at home all night so you can be a slut,” he breathed into my ear.

“Nancy was here, and it wasn’t like that, Ben,” I cried. He pushed on my head hard and then spun me around to face him. His eyes were bloodshot, and he hadn’t shaved his face for a few days; his breath smelt of booze. I turned my head sideways to look to see if anyone was coming to help.

“Are you going to stand here and lie to me, Krystal?” He spat.

I closed my eyes and let the hot tears hit my face. “Please, Ben, our kids are…”

“Are with Nancy, I know!” He said, cutting me off, “I came by to see our kids, and what did I find last night? You looking like a whore leaving with him,” he added. He tightened his grip around my throat, “So instead of seeing our kids, I decided to see what you and Mr. fuck Boy were up to. So, I followed you.” My mouth dropped open, and I turned to look at him.

“What?” I asked, shocked.

“You heard me; I know all about dinner, and I know all about you staying with him,” he said, looking at me. My body felt so heavy and like I couldn’t move it. Benjamin had pushed against me, slowly choking me, and no one knew why he had followed me. He can’t seriously be that unstable? “I saw how you left this morning, how happy you were with him,” he said, pushing himself harder, bringing his face closer to mine. “Bet you loved the attention, didn’t you?” I just stopped talking. He wouldn’t believe anything I said, and it would make him mad. “I bet you loved how he touched you,” Ben snarled, lifting his other hand and bringing it to my chest. “Did he make you wet? Did he make you cum?” Gliding his fingers down to my breast and grabbing one. My whole body jerked as soon as he did it, and I tried pushing him off me; he pushed harder, and I was stuck between him and the brick wall. “Enough, you had your fun, and now it ends. You are mine,” he proclaimed and placed his mouth on mine forcefully, trying to kiss me.

I waited until his lip was between my teeth and bit down, “Ouch! You fucking slut!” Ben yelled, reaching for his lip and releasing me. Nancy must have heard the commotion as she opened the door.

“Excuse me, Mrs. C? Is everything alright with you and Mr. C?” Nancy asked, noticing Ben holding onto his lip. I hurriedly closed and locked the door to prevent the children from hearing any commotion. Nancy looked at me expectantly, but I couldn’t bring myself to explain the situation. To maintain my composure, I nodded and retreated to my bedroom, locking the door to avoid further disturbance.

I sat looking at myself in my mirror. Ben scraped my face, and it was bleeding from where he had pushed me into the wall; my throat was red with marks around it. How could the man I was with for eleven years be like this? I thought all I knew was I needed a shower; I needed to get the feel of Ben off me.

After my shower, I walked out to find my children watching a movie. I sat down with them and cuddled up to Sarah and Lucas. Anna noticed the mark on my face. “Are you okay, mum?” She asked. I smiled at her to ease her worries.

“Don’t worry, I’m okay, baby. I just tripped last night,” I said reassuringly.

Anna, however, spoke bitterly, “Probably had too much to drink.” A tear formed in the corner of my eye, but I quickly wiped it away. I knew she was upset that I didn’t take her father back, but I couldn’t tell her what kind of person he was. It wasn’t fair for her or anyone else to think of him as the bad guy. I pushed away my negative thoughts and continued watching the movie with the children.

~

Several days have gone by. Anna, Sarah, and Lucas were having breakfast when the sound of the front door opening interrupted them. “Good morning, beautiful family,” the kids looked up from their breakfast.

“Morning, Aunty Wexi,” Sarah called back. Lexi entered the living room, removing her sunglasses. She was dressed in all-black, with Doc Martens and a takeaway coffee cup in her hand. Lexi gave all the kids a quick hug before walking over to me and giving me a quick hug.

“Morning babe,” she greeted, handing me a coffee cup. I replied, taking it and sipping.

“You remembered my order?” I asked her with a smile.

“Yeah, of course, latte with skim milk. It’s not hard,” she said, eyeing me.

“What?” I prayed that she couldn’t see the marks underneath my makeup. She just stood there pointing a finger at me.

“You look different.”

“Oh yeah, I put makeup on today and decided to try to look better,” I joked.

“Ah, okay,” she said, smiling, accepting my lie and taking her coffee. Anna walked over, put her plate in the sink, and looked at Lexi.

“She’s lying; she’s just trying to hide that she got drunk, fell over, and hurt herself.”

“What?” Lexi asked, looking at Anna and then back at me.

“Yeah, with her new boyfriend,” Anna said sourly before returning to her room.

“Anna,” I called after her.

“What new boyfriend?” Lexi asked eagerly. Damn it, Anna. I know she’s angry, but throwing me under the bus to Lexi is just mean. I rolled my eyes, smiled, and leaned against the kitchen counter.

“I went out to dinner with Avery,” I said, smiling. Lexi’s smile widened, and she hopped to sit on the kitchen counter.

“Oh, do tell!” she squealed. I took a sip of my coffee.

“He called me a few days ago and asked if we were having dinner that night, and we did.”

“And?” Lexi asked.

“And what?” I smiled.

“Did you guys…?” she trailed off.

I shook my head. “No, Lexi. Nothing happened,” I said, smirking. Just then, Anna returned from her room and grabbed her bag.

“She didn’t come home that night, though. She must have gotten too drunk to drive,” she hissed at me.

I had had enough and looked at Anna sternly. “Enough, Anna!” I said firmly. Anna stared back at me, clearly angry with me for not taking her father back. “I get it. You’re mad at me for not taking your dad back. The truth is, he and I don’t work; we haven’t for years. But I love you, and he loves you,” I explained.

Anna scoffed. “Yeah, right.”

“Anna, I’m serious,” I continued, crossing my arms. “I understand that you’re angry, but I’ve had enough of this attitude. If you don’t stop, you will be punished.” She stomped her feet and stormed out the front door. I grabbed Sarah and Lucas and walked them out to Nancy, who was waiting outside.

“How are you feeling today?” Nancy asked me.

“I’m fine, thank you, Nancy,” I replied with a smile.

“Did you sort out everything that happened with Mr. C the other day?” she asked once the kids were in the car.

I shook my head. “Not yet, but I will. Don’t worry about me, Nancy, I’ll be fine.”

“But he hurt you,” she said quietly. I raised my index finger to my mouth to signal her to be quiet.

“Shh, I will sort it out. Just ensure you don’t pass the kids off to him, okay?” I spoke.

She nodded, “of course. Have a good day,” Nancy said and waved goodbye. When she was out of sight, I turned to see Lexi standing there with her arms crossed.

“He hurt you?” she asked, raising her voice. I let out a sigh and walked back inside, “what did she mean by he hurt you?” Lexi asked as she sat beside me on the couch. I knew that I had to tell her the truth now. Otherwise, she wouldn’t stop asking questions. If I hadn’t disclosed what had happened, she might have confronted Ben herself, and I don’t want him to hurt her.

“Alright, I didn’t get drunk and hurt myself; I let Anna think that so she doesn’t know the truth about her dad.”

“So, what’s the truth?” Lex asked, looking at me with her piercing blue eyes.

I sighed long and replied, “the truth is, I went to dinner with Avery, and we had a great time.” Lex nodded, indicating that she was listening. “Afterwards, he invited me to his place, and I accepted.” She continued nodding as I explained myself, “we did have sex.”

“I knew it!” she exclaimed; I chuckled a little. “But what does that have to do with Ben?” she asked.

“Well, the following morning, when I returned home, I noticed someone was following me. And when I got out of the car, it turned out to be Ben. He attacked me, pushing me into the wall. He told me that he came over to see the kids while Avery picked me up, but instead, he followed us and stayed until I left.”

“So, he stalked you?”

I nodded “Yes,” I replied.

“And he pushed you?”

I nodded again, “yeah,” she placed her coffee on the table and asked if he had done anything else. “Yeah, he grabbed me by my throat, choking me, and told me that I was his and that I and Avery must stop.” Lex pursed her lips, taking in what I had said. I didn’t mention him touching me. She was already pissed. She didn’t need to know anymore; else she would probably kill him.

“I’m going to kill him,” she warned, standing up and heading to the front door. I jumped up and ran in front of her.

“Woah, Lex, you can’t do anything!”

“Why not?”

“He’s the kid’s father. I must deal with this in a way that won’t hurt them.”

“Fuck him, Kry, he hurt you.”

I nodded. “Yes, but if Anna finds out what happened, it will break her; I must find a way to deal with him but protect them all at the same time.” I said, reasoning with her. Lex stood there and sighed.

“Fine, but if that ass-hole shows up again, I will kick his ass.”

“Alright,” she hugged me and marched towards the door, “where are you going?” Surprised by her sudden change in demeanour.

“To get my stuff. I’m staying here with you until this jerk is out of our lives,” she declared, firmly shutting the front door behind her.

# The Man Who Was Fucking My Wife

**-**

**Benjamin-**

It has been days, yet the intense anger lingers within me from that slut going out and being with him. All I want to do is cut his head off and stuff it in a bag to play kickball with. “Hey Benji, do you have the paperwork to go to the head boss?” Becky asked as she stood at my desk. I look at her, and all I recall is Krystal walking in on me with Becky down on her knees, sucking me off. Mm, Becky on her knees sounds good right now.

“Sure, they’re right here,” I replied, reaching for the building blueprints and handing them over to Becky.

“Thank you,” she said, smiling and turning towards the door, “these will make Mr. Anderson very happy,” she added as she headed for the elevator. Suddenly, I froze.

Mr Anderson? Could it be the same person? As Becky was about to leave with the building plans, I quickly exited my desk and ran towards her.

“Wait, Becky!” I called out.

She turned around and smiled at me, “yes?” she asked.

“Who did you say those documents were for?” I inquired.

“They’re for Mr. Anderson. He works for Perspective Building Co., and he and his mother own the company and many others,” she replied.

I nodded and said, “you know what, let me take the plans up to him.”

Becky was puzzled and asked, “why?’

I explained, “because I just realized that if he has any questions about the building plans, it might be difficult for you to explain. We want to make a good impression on the boss, right?” My argument convinced her.

“You’re right,” she said, handing me the papers. I smiled, took them, and pressed the button for the top floor. As the elevator doors closed, I couldn’t help but feel a sense of excitement. Becky sure knows how to give head, but fuck, she can be stupid.

The elevator doors opened, revealing a spacious office with white tiles and walls. A brunette woman sat at a deep black metal desk in the centre of the room. I approached her with a charming smile and said, “Hi, I have the building plans for Mr. Anderson.” Without looking up, she pointed to the large double doors.

“Right through those doors.”

“Thanks,” I replied and made my way to the doors.

I knocked and heard a faint “come in” from inside. Stepping in, I took in the room’s vastness and saw Mr. Anderson sitting behind his desk. I got closer and closer until I was standing right in front of the man who was fucking my wife.

“Just put the paperwork there,” Avery said while tapping the top right of his desk. I ignored him.

“My boss wanted me to deliver it to you personally,” I said, attempting to gain his attention.

Again, He tapped the top right of his desk, and I stood there, silent, hands behind my back, scrunching the blueprints together, not saying a word.

“If you want to keep your fucking job, put the blueprints there and leave!” Avery demanded. Upon seeing him, I couldn’t fathom why she would like him.

I dropped the paperwork on his desk and leaned in, whispering, “Did you like how she tasted?” I stood up straight and looked down at him. He froze. I was aware that it would catch his interest. This prick needed to know who he was dealing with and who Krystal fucking belonged to. He smirked and stood up slowly, towering over me. Avery’s height was surprising. But it didn’t unravel me. All I needed was for him to hit me, and I could sue, and I could tell Krystal he fucking hit me.

He leaned over his desk, placed both arms on it, and licked his lips. “Mm, I can still taste her,” he said, raising an eyebrow.

That bastard, I tightened my jaw and shoved my hands into my pockets. “Stay the fuck away from her,” I barked at him.

“Or what?” He challenged.

“I suggest you ask Krystal,” I said with a smirk, “after all, she returned to me once she was done with you. And you know what? Her mouth was on mine the other day. Looks like you couldn’t please her,” I added, watching as he clenched his hands in frustration. It was clear he needed to know that Krystal belonged to me. “Stay the fuck away from her,” I repeated my message to him, then turned my back and left his office.

# What Else Did He Do?

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**-Avery-**

What a piece of shit! I thought as I watched that smug bastard Ben leave my office. I’m not convinced anyone would bat an eye if he were to disappear. However, the office is constantly monitored, so if I were to act out and Regina heard, she would investigate why I was upset over a one-night stand. I could fire him or misplace his plans. Yeah, fuck it, and him too! I crumpled up his work, threw it in the trash, and set it ablaze.

“Fuck with me, and you’ll get burnt,” I watched the flames consume Ben’s building plans.

After hearing Ben’s words, I couldn’t concentrate on work. I needed to know if Krystal kissed him.

~

After work, I met up with my best friend, Lyndon. He stood tall at 6’2”, with short brown hair and a muscular build that resembled a brick wall. A freckle just under his right eye added character to his brown eyes. Although born in England, he moved here as a teenager. Whenever something went wrong, Lyndon was always there to lend a helping hand. “You should have just kicked his ass, mate,” Lyndon said, drinking his beer.

“I couldn’t create a scene because of Regina,” I said, swirling my drink.

“How is Regina?” he asked, winking.

“Fuck off,” I shoved him.

“You know she wants my dick, man,” he said, laughing; I laughed with him.

“But seriously, man, what should I do?”

“Bro, go over and ask her, what’s the worst that could happen? You get rejected?” He said.

“Okay, but you are coming with me, so if I do, I get to kick your ass,” I said jokingly.

“Agreed,” he said, nodding.

“Let’s go.” We both got up and left the money for the barman, walked to my car, and got in. I drove to Krystal’s house, and my heart was racing there. What if she did go back to Ben? Why would she, though?

As I approached Krystal’s house, I noticed a silver Audi TT RS parked behind her Ford. Feeling a bit nervous, I took a deep breath. “You’ll be fine, mate,” Lyndon said, touching my shoulders, “go for it.”

I nodded and got out of my car. Walking up to Krystal’s front door, I knocked. I heard some movement inside and waited patiently.

“I swear to god, Ben, I will bloody kill you!” The door was pulled open aggressively, revealing the same blonde-haired girl who was with Krystal during the photoshoot. “Oh, you’re not Ben,” she said with a smile.

“No, why? Is Krystal expecting Ben?” I asked.

“No, she’s not,” replied Lexi, looking me up and down.

I smiled politely and asked, “and who may you be?”

“I’m Lexi,” she replied with a smile, “Krystal, door!” she yelled, standing beside the door.

“Who is it, Lex?” I heard Krystal ask as she approached the front door.

Krystal saw me standing there, wearing my blue denim jeans with rips and my comfy white top and leather jacket. “Hey,” she greeted me with a sweet smile.

“I’ll leave you two to it,” Lexi said, nodding and walking back into the kid’s area.

I asked her, “How are you?” like a clueless person.

She seemed puzzled and asked, “What are you doing here?”

I responded, “well, I didn’t hear from you, so I thought I’d check in.”

“You could have called,” she stated.

I started to worry if she was angry with me, “I’m sorry…” I muttered.

She reassured me, “No, it’s fine. I just thought you were someone else.” She looked behind me at my car, which made me wonder who she was expecting. Fuck, Ben was right. They are back together. I shook my head in anger and looked down.

Then, I looked back up at her and asked with gritted teeth, “So, you’re with him?”

She looked surprised and asked, “who?”

I snapped at her, “Ben! You are back with Ben!” and started walking back to my car. I shook my head angrily and looked down, then back up at her. How could she be such a bloody idiot and go back to him? My subconscious gave me a sharp retort, “they have kids dickhead.” I shook my head and kept walking.

“Wait! Avery!” Krystal called out, running after me and finally grabbing me by my arm. I turned to look at her and noticed that she had tears in her eyes.

“Is it true?” I looked at her and asked.

“Is what true?” She repeated her question, and I realized she didn’t know what was happening. I sighed and prepared to explain the situation to her.

“Ben dropped off paperwork at my office and mentioned that you asked him to come around here after leaving my apartment that day.” I halted; the idea of her with another man was unbearable. I gazed into her hazel eyes.

She asked, “and what?”

I replied through gritted teeth, “You guys kissed and made up.”

She brought her hands to her mouth, “Avery, I didn’t think he would tell you.” I backed away, raising my voice.

“So it’s true!”

As I looked at her, tears streamed down her face. Eventually, she lowered her gaze and whispered, “No, it’s not true.” I stood there, breathing heavily, trying to process everything.

“Then why did he say you guys kissed?” I questioned her.

She looked at me tearfully and said, “He kissed me,” while looking away. “I didn’t kiss him,” she whispered.

I couldn’t understand what this girl was trying to say. It was at that moment that my subconscious suddenly awakened “dickhead, look at her. Look closer at her this time.” So, I stood there, scrutinizing every detail of Krystal’s appearance. She avoided eye contact and wiped her face, revealing a small scratch. What the actual fuck! My eyes nearly popped out of my head when I saw the bruising around her neck. “Benjamin!” I growled in frustration, clenching my fists tightly. She began sobbing and nodded her head in response.

“What else did he do to you?” I asked, scanning her for any other signs of harm.

She shook her head in response. “No,” she said and I turned to leave. Krystal called out after me, “Avery, please don’t go!” But it was too late. I got into the car and drove back to the office, knowing Ben would still be there.

Lyndon asked me with concern, “what are you planning to do, man? You know what would happen if she found out,” and I knew exactly who he was talking about.

I focused on the road and replied, “Screw Regina. I don’t plan on confronting him at the office.”

“So, are you going to follow him, bro?” Lyndon asked.

I nodded firmly and said, “Yes, he is going to pay.”

When we arrived at our office, we sat in the car out front, waiting for that dickhead to come out. Lyndon was next to me, laughing. I turned to him.

I asked him what was so funny.

He looked at me and replied, “How can a boy whose mother is a Queen Pin have any morals?”

To which I responded, “I live by a code. It’s simple: no kids and no innocents. Krystal has kids, and she’s innocent. That fucker deserves a cruel death,” I said, looking back to the front of the office building.

My phone began to ring, I sent it to voicemail when Krystal’s name appeared on my phone.

“She’s going to hate you,” I heard Lyndon say.

“You think?” I growled possessively, “he tried to force himself onto her. She’s mine.”

Lyndon leaned back and stared at me. I felt his intense gaze on the back of my head as I gazed at the massive building, “what’s wrong?” I asked.

“Nothing,” he replied, “It’s just been a while since I’ve heard you talk like that since.”

“Emilia,” I interjected, cutting him off mid-sentence. I didn’t want to discuss it further, so my response clarified it.

# Feeling Pretty Good

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**-Benjamin-**

“Goodbye, Becky. I’ll see you tomorrow,” I said, winking at her as I headed for the elevator. I feel pretty good after getting under that jerk’s skin. He must loathe Krystal, and once he’s out of the way, I can move back home.

I arrived at the underground parking lot and got into my SUV. I turned up the music and rolled down my window. After giving my pass to the attendant to exit, I started on my way home. As I took a right turn at the intersection, I noticed a black Chevelle seemed to be following me. I took the next left, and the car followed suit. It then got dangerously close to my car, and I could see the driver. None other than dickhead Avery himself. “What a fuckwit,” I said aloud to myself; As I was driving, I took the next exit and turned right to go under the bridge. I parked my car, and Avery parked behind me. I got out of the car, but as soon as I did, I couldn’t see him anymore. I saw only his more significant friend sitting in the car.

Suddenly, he pushed me against my car and spun me around to face him. “Hello pretty boy.”

“Fuck you,” he spat, “Krystal told me everything, and you need to keep your filthy hands off her.”

I laughed, “what are you going to do? Are you really going to hurt the father of her kids?”

I could see Avery gritting his teeth, and then he pulled me off the car and threw me onto the ground. “You know. I think I’ll make her scream my name next time I see her.”

“FUCK YOU!” He roared and started kicking me. He pulled me up from the ground and began punching into me first left, then right fist, one after the other.

# Needed To Inflict Pain

****

**-Avery-**

I couldn’t stop, he needed to feel pain, and I needed to inflict that pain.

*Crack*,

I heard his nose break, but I didn’t stop. Blood went everywhere over his face, and my hand connected. I was so distracted by wanting to kill him that I didn’t hear Lyndon get out of the car and try to pry me from him. “Avery! Enough, you’re going to kill him,” he said, pulling me away. I pushed him off me and looked down at the now bloody face distorted by my fists; he was still breathing; that was the main thing.

I knelt beside him, “Next time you go near Krystal, I’ll kill you,” I spat at him, got up and walked over to my car.

“Time for you to disappear, mate,” I heard Lyndon say, giving him a quick tap on the chest and then joining me in the car. Lyndon drove this time as if I couldn’t be trusted behind the wheel. I’d probably just run him down. He’s lucky to be breathing still.

“Where to mate?” Lyndon asked; I just shrugged my shoulders.

“Just drive,” I said, looking out the window.

Lyndon pointed to my phone, which was ringing with Krystal’s name, and said, “You’re in trouble.” I turned and swiped across to answer the call.

“Hello, Avery?” Krystal called out to me.

“Yes?” I replied, looking at the phone.

After deep breathing, she asked, “Just tell me, is he still alive?” I let a few minutes pass before deciding to answer her.

“Unfortunately, yes.” I said, lowering my tone, “but I don’t think you’ll be seeing him again anytime soon. We told him to leave.” Krystal went silent, and my heart started beating rapidly. She must have been so mad at me.

“Come over,” she said.

“What?” I asked, surprised.

“I said come over,” Krystal repeated, she took me by surprise as I didn’t think she’d want me to be near her after I almost killed her ex.

I grinned, “Okay, I’ll be right there,” and hung up.

“Mate.” Lyndon laughed, “She wants you; she fucking wants you,” he said, lighting a cigarette. Lyndon turned the car around and started driving back to Krystal’s.

# Hard Enough To Hurt Him



**-Krystal-**

I heard a knock on the door and asked Lexi to distract the kids while I got Avery inside. I opened the front door to see Avery standing there covered in blood; it was all over his hands and his face, as well as his shirt and pants. I just covered my mouth.

“Are you sure he’s still alive?” Avery nodded.

“Yes, Krystal, I promise he is still alive.”

“Okay, good,” I said and opened the door for Avery to come in, I showed him to the bathroom and let him wash his hands. “I’ll be back in a minute,” I said, walking into the kid’s room to check on them. Inside, Anna showed Lexi how to play a game on the computer, at the same time, Sarah and Lucas were playing with each other.

Lexi came over to me and asked, “Everything okay?”

I nodded. “I think so. He has a lot of blood on him. I think he might need a shower and a change of clothes.”

“Do you want me to take the kids to my place for the night?” Lexi asked.

“Would you mind?”

“Not at all, boo. Watch this,” Lexi said, giving me a little wink before turning to face the kids. “Hey, kiddos, who wants to stay at Aunty Lexi’s tonight?” Lexi raised her hands excitedly, and all three kids jumped at me.

“Pweeze mummy,” Sarah said, squeezing little Lucas’s hand. “We both want to,” she added.

I looked at Anna. “Are you okay staying there tonight?”

“Yes, Mum. I can show her how to play our game,” Anna said, grabbing her clothes to pack.

Lexi and I laughed at each other, got the kids ready, and put them in Lexi’s car. “Call me if anything happens, boo,” Lexi said, hugging me tightly.

“Don’t worry, Lex. I will,” I reassured her.

After waving goodbye to the kids, I returned to the bathroom, where Avery was still attempting to wash off the blood from his hands and clean his clothes using a washcloth. I took the washcloth from him and rinsed it under hot water. I then instructed him to sit on the toilet. As he sat down, I knelt before him and cleaned his hands. Upon closer inspection, I noticed that his knuckles were bleeding, “wow, how hard were you punching?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Hard enough to hurt him,” he whispered, I cleaned the blood off his hands as much as possible, but his clothes, especially his white shirt, were done for, the jeans and jacket I could save.

“This isn’t going to come out,” I said, holding his shirt, I walked over to the walk-in shower and turned the hot water on, “up,” I said, and he repeated what I asked. He stood up; I walked over to him and pulled his jacket off, followed by his shirt over his head. I was met with his rock-hard body and touched his abs. “You need a shower so I can clean your clothes. “I said and then looked up at him, when our eyes met, I could tell what he was thinking by the way he looked at me with his dark, hungry eyes. I was still holding onto his shirt with my right hand, and as I turned to leave, I felt a sense of reluctance to let go. He pulled me back, invading my mouth with his tongue, and I felt myself falling into him. Fuck, even covered in blood, he still had an intoxicating scent that I couldn’t escape. I pulled away and pushed him over to the shower, “in,” I demanded. He nodded, removed his jeans and boxers, and turned to get into the shower in this light I got to see everything correctly. I took his clothes out and put his clothing through the wash, praying that some bleach would help get some of the stains out.

I returned to the shower and got a towel from the cupboard when Avery grabbed me from behind and pulled me into the shower, I shrieked, He let out a laugh.

“You look good wet, Kry,” he said, nudging me.

“I’m soaking wet,” I said, crossing my arms.

“Good, my job is half done,” he laughed, smacking me on the ass.

I feel his hand pulling me back as I try to get out, “where are you running off to now?”

“I’m wet and don’t like the feel of my clothes,” I replied.

“Take them off; problem solved.” He said with a playful smile, toying with me, daring me to join. I couldn’t believe this guy.

“Fine,” I said, returning a smile, and crossed my arms over my body, grabbing the bottom of my shirt and lifting it over my head, then undoing my jeans and taking them off, slipping a leg out at a time.

Avery wiped the water from his face, and his eyes went dark again, “fuck, you are amazing,” he praised hungrily; I could hear the tone, he wanted me, and I wanted him; this time, I wanted control. I unclipped my bra, threw it to the ground, and then pushed my soaking wet body against his. I ran my fingers up and down his chest, getting to the V shape and then running it back up, teasing him. I could hear his low tone growl, and then he reached around to touch my ass.

I held up my index finger, “Tsk! Tsk! No touching,” I said, smiling.

He scoffed, “Too easy”.

I reached out to touch him again but changed my mind and decided to touch myself. I grabbed the soap and ran my hand along my breast, rubbing the soap in and letting out a little moan. I ran my hand down further and pretended to soap myself up as I went. Avery groaned, and I could see his rock-hard erection waiting for me. I put the soap back, touched myself, and moaned softly. I continued until my fingers found where they wanted to be and circled that bundle of nerves, making me moan louder.

“Fuck this.” I heard him growl before pushing me against the wall. His mouth found mine, and I felt his right hand grab my left breast. Then he left a trail of kisses from my mouth and found my nipple. He scraped his teeth across the sensitive nerve; sensation vibrated through me.

“Oh fuck, Avery”, I moaned, Avery spun me around so I could feel his manhood pushed up against me, and I felt his fingers find the front of me and glide into me.

I found myself pushing further back, wanting and needing him to be inside me.

He bent me over and pressed the tip of his cock into me, I moaned out more.

“Fuck, you make me crazy,” Avery growled and thrust his cock into me until he hit my hilt.

Avery withdrew until it was just the tip and pushed into me again, making me call out again.

Avery groaned through clenched teeth, we both got our rhythm, and I felt the urge building up as he pushed himself in and out of me; his fingers found my clit, and he started a circular motion, bringing me closer to my edge. Within a few minutes, I climaxed all around him, which set him in a frenzy, and he finished with me.

# Who The Hell Is Lyndon?



**-Krystal-**

I watched Avery exit the shower and wrapped a towel around his waist. I turned the water off, wrapped a towel around me, and wiped the mirror. I looked at myself. There must be something wrong with you, I thought. My thoughts were interrupted when Avery wrapped his arms around me and snuggled his head into my neck, taking in my scent.

He confessed, “I honestly thought you would hate me.”

After planting a kiss, I replied, “I thought I would, too,” as I ran my fingers through his hair. We were completely lost in each other until my phone interrupted us. The sound of its ringing echoed from the other room, pulling me back to reality. I reluctantly pulled away from Avery, walked out of the now-dark bathroom, and headed to the living room to answer the phone. With a swipe across the screen, I answered the call. A strange man answered the phone when I picked up.

“Hello?”

“Mrs. Carter, this is Dr. Reid. We need you to come down to the hospital. I’m afraid we’ve got some bad news about your husband,” he said.

“Ex-husband,” I corrected him.

“Oh, I’m sorry. We thought. He still had you listed as his emergency contact.”

“What’s happened to him?” I asked, pretending not to know that my new acquaintance had just beaten him up.

“I’m afraid he’s been a victim of assault.” I try my hardest not to scoff as I hear him say victim.

“Oh, that’s terrible! I’ll be there immediately. Goodbye, Doctor.”

I hung up and turned to Avery, standing in the hallway with a concerned expression.

“Who was that?” he asked.

I replied, “It was the hospital. I’m listed as an emergency contact for him and I have to go.”

Avery nodded and said, “Okay, I’ll get dressed and go.”

I walked over to him and placed a hand on his chest. “No, stay. I won’t be long. I promise,” I reassured him and gave him a quick kiss. I rushed to my bedroom to change into fresh clothes, tied my hair into a messy bun, and left for the hospital.

~

When I reached the receptionist’s desk at the office, I asked for Benjamin Carter. It was surprising I was still his emergency contact, but I needed to check on him after what Avery had done. The receptionist kindly directed me towards Ben’s location. I thanked her and made my way over to him.

I stood behind the curtains, attempting to open them, but I always felt Ben’s hand on my throat, making me feel sick. The thought of seeing the man I once called my husband was too much to bear.

I finally gathered all my courage, lifted my left hand onto the curtain, and pulled it back. There he lay in a hospital bed with blood dripping from his broken nose. he had cuts all over him, and his eyes were beyond swollen; he had bruises all around his eyes; one eye was bloodshot, but I couldn’t tell as the other was swollen shut. Holy shit, Avery was not kind. Ben looked at me.

“You,” he snarled, “This is all your fucking fault.”

I looked around to see the doctors and nurses looking at us. I walked in closer, closing the curtain behind me. “Ben, be quiet,” I hushed.

“Fuck you, Krystal! If you kept your fucking legs shut, this wouldn’t have happened,” he shouted. I sighed, crossed my arms, and looked at him.

“No, Ben, if you left me alone and kept your hands to yourself, this never would have happened.”

“You wait. This isn’t the end. Your pretty boy is dead!” He threatened as an older nurse entered the room, looking at Ben and then back at me.

“Is he going to be, okay?” I asked the nurse.

“A few broken ribs, a broken nose, but the rest is bruises and bumps.”

I nodded. “Good, I’ll be leaving now,” I said to the nurse and looked back at Ben.

“Take me off your emergency contacts; we are no longer together,” I said, walking away.

The last thing I heard was Ben screaming, “THIS WON’T BE THE END OF THIS, KRYSTAL!”

I adjusted my handbag, then walked to the car and got in.

~

When I arrived home, I realized I had forgotten Avery inside, as I couldn’t see his car when I pulled up. I wondered if he had left. But on entering the house, I felt relieved when I saw him sitting on the couch, wearing blue jeans and a leather jacket. My heart skipped a beat, and happiness filled me, seeing that he had waited for me. I smiled, walked over, and sat beside him on the couch. He looked down and asked, “How is he doing?”

“He’ll survive,” I answered, “why did you do that to him, though?”

He looked up at me with disdain in his eyes, “he hurt you.”

“Yeah, but you don’t know me that well.”

He looked down, then gazed back at my face. “I know, but I feel different from everyone else when I’m with you; I’ve only ever felt like this with another person,” he revealed, clenching his hands together.

“What happened to her?” I could sense that my question had upset him, perhaps even causing some guilt.

He lowered his gaze and spoke softly, “She died.” As a tear trickled down from the corner of his eye, he frantically wiped it away, but it was too late for him to conceal it. My heart raced with empathy, and I longed to comfort him. I moved closer to him, embracing this towering six-foot-four man in my arms, and gently rocked him to soothe his sorrow.

We sat together for hours, with me holding Avery close until his phone started to buzz. He quickly jumped up, grabbed it and put it on silent. “Sorry about that,” he said, and I shrugged.

“It’s okay. Did you need to answer it?” I asked.

He nodded and replied, “No, it was just Regina.”

“Who’s Regina?” I asked. He sighed and rubbed his eyes like he had a headache.

“Regina is my mother,” he said as if he had trouble getting the word mother out.

“Oh,” I said, smiling. “You should tell her she raised a lovely boy,” I teased. He gave me a quick smile in return.

“Sure,” he said, checking the time. It was already 12:15. “Shit, it’s late. I should get going,” he said, getting off the couch and sliding his hands up his legs.

I stood with him, “You don’t have to,” I stated.

“It’s late. It would help if you got some sleep,” he replied.

“What if I’m not tired?” I asked, raising my eyebrow.

I saw a wicked smile come to his face, “well, Krystal, if you want me to stay too.” he stopped and licked his lips. As he spoke, a wolfish grin spread across his face, and his green eyes, once filled with sadness, were now filled with hunger. “I could entertain you,” he said. I extended my hand to him, inviting him into my bedroom.

~

That night, I slept soundly, feeling at peace while cuddled up in Avery’s arms. It was a new experience; I had never felt this way with Ben. Despite witnessing what he had done to Ben, I allowed Avery to stay in my life. However, I feel safe and protected with Avery, like nothing can hurt me. I snuggled closer to him, taking comfort in his embrace, and after a few minutes, I drifted off to sleep.

~

We were both awoken by a loud noise outside that resembled an explosion. I quickly got up from the bed and saw Avery at the window, peeking through the curtains. He gestured for me to be quiet.

I crawled out of bed to look out the window to find my car on fire.

“What the fuck?” I opened my front door and ran outside, with Avery close behind.

He pulled on my arm, “Don’t get too close!” he yelled.

*BOOM*!

My car went off again and burst into ferocious flames. Avery stood there holding me.

As we were walking, a voice from the shadows said, “Should have known you were here, pretty boy.” We both turned around and saw Ben stepping out of the shadows.

Avery was about to go after him, but I stopped and pulled him back to me.

“Don’t. He’s not worth it.”

Ben then taunted us, “Come on, pretty boy, we can take turns since the kids aren’t here,” and burst out laughing like a maniac.

I witnessed Avery picking up his phone and assumed he was calling the police, but then I overheard him mention the name Lyndon. Who the hell is that? I turned around to check on Ben, but he had already disappeared. I quickly grabbed the front yard hose and sprayed the car. Not long after, I heard the sound of sirens and saw red and blue flashing lights. The vehicle was eventually extinguished, and Avery’s black Chevelle pulled up on the side of the road. I provided my statement to both the firefighters and the police, and once I was done, I walked over to Avery. He was chatting with a brown-haired man a little shorter than him.

“Fuck man, you’re so lucky I took your car. If it was yours and Regina found out, she would be asking all sorts of questions,” I heard the guy say to Avery; he just shifted uncomfortably.

“Yeah, I know; I honestly thought that dickhead would have taken our warning.”

“I’m just glad the kids weren’t here,” I said beside Avery.

“Yeah, how did he know the kids weren’t here?” Avery asked, looking at me and raising an eyebrow.

“Perhaps he was watching me again. I had thought it was a one-time occurrence, but apparently not.” I replied, glancing over at my car.

“Sorry about that, love; I’m Lyndon, by the way,” he said, introducing himself.

“It’s nice to meet you, Lyndon, but I wish my car didn’t have to become a torch just to get to meet you,” I said, smiling, trying to make light of the situation.

“I’ll get it replaced,” Avery said in a cold, stern voice.

“It’s okay, my insurance covers fire.” Avery kept looking into the bushes where Ben had come out of.

“Let’s get inside,” he urged, pushing us towards the door.

We entered the house, and Avery shut the door, securing it behind him. “Everything okay, mate?” Lyndon asked. “You seem a bit worried,” he added. Avery nodded and then put his arm around me, pulling me closer to him.

“If he was watching before, he could still be watching now,” he pointed out.

“That’s true, what do you want me to do?” Lyndon asked.

“Park your car somewhere and have a look around the perimeter, then come back. You can sleep on the couch tonight,” Avery replied. Lyndon agreed and left the room in a hurry.

“Why is he staying here?” I asked, looking confused at Avery. He just kissed my forehead.

“Because I feel safer with him here.” Then he slapped my bottom, “Get to the room,” Avery ordered, shutting the bedroom door behind me. I slinked into bed, listening intently for any sounds.

# The Nightmare

****

**-Avery-**

I honestly can’t believe this; that dickhead should have taken our warning. A few moments passed, and Lyndon returned, locking the door behind him.

“All clear, Mate,” he assured me. I nodded and walked into the living room, sitting at the table with Lyndon following behind. “Is she okay?” Lyndon asked, nodding towards Krystal’s bedroom.

“Yeah,” I replied, “he must have been released from the hospital and came here to watch.”

“Did you guys… you know?” Lyndon said, winking with a smirk on his face.

I picked up the tea towel on the table and threw it at him, “fucker,” I laughed.

He caught the tea towel and threw it back to me.

“It’s alright, mate. I’m here for the night so you can crawl up next to your girl,” he said. I put my head down and played with the bracelet around my wrist. Sitting beside me, Lyndon kicked my foot and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“I told her about Emilia,” I replied, looking at him. Lyndon was taken back. He grabbed his mouth with one hand and tried to find his words.

“What? Everything?” he asked.

“No, just that I haven’t been with anyone since her and that she died. She doesn’t know how, but I’m sure she will ask eventually,” I explained.

Lyndon nodded in understanding.

“And what are we going to do about Mother dearest?” he asked.

“Looks like I’ll have to promote myself,” I sighed, “but not yet. I’m going to try my hardest to keep Regina away from Krystal. I need to be ready for her.”

“I’m with you, man, every step,” Lyndon replied. I got up, tapped his shoulder, and thanked him before walking into Krystal’s bedroom and shutting the door behind me. When I turned to find Krystal, she was already sound asleep. I crawled into the bed beside her, cuddled up, and closed my eyes.

~

I felt a sense of familiarity as I walked up to a dilapidated white farmhouse with a wraparound veranda. I slowly climbed the stairs, one by one, and pushed open the slightly ajar front door. As I stepped inside, the scent of lavender and lilac filled my nostrils, and memories came flooding back. “Emilia!” I called out, unable to believe what was happening. How could I be back in this house? I made my way to the living room, and as the smell of rust and copper replaced the floral scent, I realized that things were not as they seemed.

I studied the living room closer to find a blood splatter on the arm of the couch and more on the floor. I hurriedly ran towards the couch and fell on my knees. “EMILIA!” I screamed in pain, grabbing my girlfriend’s lifeless body, lying on the floor covered in blood as her throat was cut. I sat sobbing over her body, taking another look at her cold face. Remembering her long blonde hair, light freckles over her face, and bright green eyes that sparkled when she smiled, I held her close, crying.

My heart jumped as a soft, gentle voice whispered my name, “Avery?” Looking up, I saw Krystal standing at the doorway.

“Krystal?” I said as I carefully placed Emilia down and stood up, wiping the tears from my face.

“Avery!” A panicked voice called out.

As I walked towards Krystal, I extended my hand to calm her down. “It’s okay, Kry,” I said reassuringly, as I got closer Krystal vanished and my eyes flicked open and the sweat was beading down my forehead, I looked around searching for that old familiar house but I was back in Krystal’s bedroom.

~

As I was about to finish my shower, Krystal was already in the kitchen preparing pancakes and bacon for breakfast. I overheard her talking to Lyndon and knew I couldn’t leave them alone for too long. I dressed quickly and went to the kitchen to find Krystal and Lyndon sitting at the table, throwing pieces of pancakes at each other. I was surprised by the scene and wondered what was going on. Krystal then threw another part, and Lyndon caught it in his mouth.

“Fuck yeah! You see that?” He turned and looked at me, “I won, you seen that, right?” he laughed, turning back to Krystal. I shook my head, smiling, and joined them.

“Do I still have breakfast, or has it become a part of your game?” I asked.

“Oh no, you still have it,” Krystal replied, standing up, walking over to the bench, and bringing it back to me, “although he did try and take it,” she laughed, pointing to Lyndon.

“Hey, you snooze. You lose,” Lyndon claimed, winking at me and taking a piece of my bacon. I wolfed down my breakfast like I hadn’t eaten in weeks; that dream must have gotten to me last night.

Krystal’s front door unlocked and flew open. Lyndon and I jumped from our seats, preparing to take on whoever was coming in. Ben couldn’t have been so stupid. Krystal looked at me and then at the door.

“It’s 10:30, Krystal. Why on earth is your front door still locked?” A woman who stood about 5’4 with short blonde hair cut into a bob entered the room. She shut the door and didn’t even notice us until she found us all standing around the kitchen table. “Oh, and who are they?” she asked, looking at Krystal and around the room. “And where are my grandchildren?” she added.

I looked at Krystal, who rubbed her head. “Mother, you could have let me know you were coming over.” Mother? This was Krystal’s mother.

I quickly nodded at Lyndon, and he gave one back, letting go of his Glock and turning to her. “Hello, Ma’am, I’m Lyndon, a friend of Avery’s,” he said, using his polite voice and holding out his hand. I watched as she took it and shook his hand.

“Nice to meet you, Lyndon. I’m Camilla, but who the heck is Avery?” she asked.

I cleared my throat. “I am. It’s very nice to meet you,” I said, reaching out to shake her hand. She looked back at me for a moment, up and down like she was trying to figure me out, and then took my hand.

“It’s nice to meet you too,” she said, returning her hand and looking at Krystal. “Krystal, you still haven’t told me why two boys are in your house and where my grandbabies are,” she said, crossing her arms over her chest.

Krystal’s whole body went stiff. Did she not like having her mother here? I thought to myself that she seemed to have a strong personality.

Krystal pulled her mother into the other room, “Mum, my kids are at Lexi’s for the night, but I need to talk to you,” she said. I sat back at the table and looked at Lyndon.

Camilla tried to reassure Krystal, “Krystal, don’t be silly. Ben wouldn’t do anything to hurt you or the kids.” I stood up and walked over to join them.

“Mum, I’m telling you, my car is burnt to a crisp out there because he did that.”

“It’s true, ma’am,” I confirmed, “Krystal and I witnessed the incident, and she has already given her statement to the police.”

Camilla gasped in shock, and her expression turned sour, “I never liked that man. But what about these two? Why are they here?”

“We’re here to ensure your ex-son-in-law doesn’t harm your family,” Lyndon said, standing at the door with a piece of bacon.

“Thank you both,” Camilla replied gratefully, “so, the kids are back today from Lexi’s?” Krystal nodded in response. “Ring Lexi and let her know I’m coming to get them. I’ll take them for a while to make sure nothing happens to them.”

“No, mum, I can’t let you.”

“No, Krystal, my babies need a safe place while their father goes through whatever he’s doing, and I won’t let them be put in danger. You ring and tell her I’m coming to get them.”

Krystal sighed, “Okay, I’ll do it now,” and left the room, grabbing her phone.

I looked over at Lyndon, who was still munching on some bacon or maybe it was a fresh piece. Did he have a secret stash somewhere? Suddenly, I heard Camilla calling out to me.

“You!” she said, pointing at me.

“Me?” I replied.

“Yes, you. If he’s here for you,” she gestured towards Lyndon, “then why are you here?” she asked me.

Oh shit, how could I tell her I’m fucking her daughter? I’ll try to put it nicely.

“I’m with your daughter,” I said. She crossed her arms and tapped her foot while raising an eyebrow, shit.

“She comes with kids, you know. You can’t just have her and not her children,” she huffed.

“I know. I want her and everything that comes with her. I wouldn’t change her,” I admitted.

Krystal came out of the room and joined me. “All done. Lexi said they’re excited for you to get them.”

“Good. I’ll get them now. You let me know when all this is over. Get a restraining order on him,” Camilla said as she turned and headed for the door.

“Sure, mum,” Krystal agreed. Her mum lifted her right hand and waved as she shut the door behind her.

“You know, a restraining order isn’t a bad idea,” Lyndon agreed, chewing on another piece of bacon.

“God damn it, Lyndon. Where have you been getting that bacon from?”

He laughed and put his hand into his jacket pocket. “Right here,” pulling out another bit, and started eating it.

~

We arrived at the police station and were greeted by an older officer who seemed annoyed. “What can I help you with?” he asked.

“Excuse me, where can I find a restraining order form?” Krystal asked politely. He snickered and gestured towards us.

“Why, when you have these two brutes to protect you?”

“Look, Mate. You will either give her the restraining order, or I will take care of it myself and do a better job. I’ll kill the bastard that torched her car last night, you understand?” Krystal filled out the form at the desk after the police officers handed it to her. Lyndon, who didn’t care about anyone’s opinion, nodded at me and said, “Just need to be tough, mate,” and winked. Krystal smiled and thanked the officers for their help.

Ever since I’ve known him, he’s always been so confident, like I’m confident with the ladies, but he doesn’t give a fuck who he crosses. On the other hand, I have a line, and I can’t cross that line with Regina, but now that I’ve found Krystal, it might be time. But first, we must ensure this cocksucker is out of her life for good. Krystal walked over to us.

“All done.” I nodded and put my arm around her neck, and we headed for the car with Lyndon following us. We climbed into the Chevelle and drove to the courthouse. Once we arrived, I parked the car while Krystal quickly ran in.

“You need to take that girl out, get her mind off of all of this,” Lyndon said while smoking in the back seat.

“You think?”

“Hell yes, she’s been through enough already,” Lyndon exclaimed. I nodded in agreement. She needed some fun.

“What if he follows us?”

“I’ll be there to make sure he isn’t, and if he does, I’ll make him pay,” Lyndon added, hitting his fist into his hand.

Krystal returned to the car, and we both fell silent. She looked at us and asked, “Did I interrupt something?”

“Nope,” we both said at the same time. She eyed us suspiciously.

My phone rang, breaking the silence. I answered, “Hello? Yeah, I know I’ve been busy. No, no, it’s not that. Can I do it? Yes. I’ll be right there,” slamming my phone down.

“Regina?” Lyndon asked.

I just nodded and then looked at Krystal. “I have to do some work for my mother, so I will drop you off at home with Lyndon, but I’ll be back later, okay?”

She nodded. “Okay, don’t worry about Lyndon staying with me; Lexi is waiting for me.”

~

Leaving Krystal at home made me anxious. I couldn’t stop worrying about her well-being with Lexi and the possibility of Ben reappearing. But I had to meet Regina, and cancelling on her was not an option as it would raise suspicions. I tried to clear my thoughts and drove to an unfamiliar house. I spotted my mother’s car parked outside. I intensely disliked Regina as I walked into the house with Lyndon close behind.

Regina approached me and kissed me, saying, “So nice of you to join us son.” However, I knew her only too well and realized that she was trying to make herself look like a good mother again. I wondered what she was up to this time. She gave Lyndon a nod, and he responded politely. That’s when I noticed a more petite man tied to a chair with a cloth in his mouth.

“Who’s he?” I asked, pointing to the man.

“He, my boy, is the snitch that has been taking us for granted and running our drugs back to someone else,” Regina said, crossing her arms. “He needs to be taught a lesson.”

I rolled my eyes, “really?”

“This is serious,” she snapped. “You must understand that this game has only one way out, death. And if anyone crosses me, they’ve sealed their fate.” She looked me up and down. I had to be careful. She couldn’t know that I was involved, or she might think I wasn’t giving her my full attention.

I just nodded at her, walked over to him, and started punching into him, leaving him covered in his blood. I pulled the cloth out of his mouth and then turned to walk away, but that’s when I heard her say those words that sent a cold chill down my spine. “Kill him,” she challenged.

I looked at her cold grey eyes and asked, “what?”

“You heard me, Avery. Kill him,” she repeated.

She knows I’m not bringing my A-game. She has never ordered me to kill someone, so why now? I pulled my gun out under my jacket and pointed it at him.

“Please don’t!” The man pleaded. “I don’t want to die, please Regina, I’m sorry”, he cried.

“Do it now, Avery!” Regina demanded.

I pulled the trigger back slowly, and the gun went off. I looked at the man, who now had a bullet in his head and blood dripping down his face. I looked at my weapon to find it still had the safety on. What the fuck? I thought.

I noticed that Regina was staring past me with a cold expression.

“Sorry, Regina, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to kill someone,” Lyndon laughed.

Her stare went from him to me. “Next time, it’s Avery’s.” I nodded, turned, and headed for my Chevelle; we were climbing in with Lyndon on the passenger side.

“Thanks man,” I said, “I appreciate that.”

“It’s okay, mate, I’m used to it. You. You don’t need blood on your hands. You’re not your mother.” Lyndon said, “I’ll always have your back,” he added.

# A Bet’s A Bet



**-Krystal-**

I sat in the living room with Lexi, watching her sip her iced coffee. The aroma of caramel latte filled my nostrils when I took a deep breath in. “I can’t believe that jerk torched your car, Kry,” Lexi said, taking a mouthful of her drink.

“It’s honestly so crazy,” I admitted, biting my nail, “I wouldn’t have thought he could be like this.”

“Your mother told me, and I just couldn’t believe it. But I never liked him and always had a bad feeling about him,” she said, placing her cup on the marble coffee table. I sat there, watching her.

“Why didn’t you say anything?” I asked.

“I dunno,” she shrugged, “he made you happy; I didn’t want to ruin your happiness,” she said regretfully, looking down at her hands. I placed my hands on hers, already knowing what she was thinking.

Lexi raised her head to mine on the touch of my hand, looked at me, and opened her mouth to speak, “even if you did say something, I wouldn’t have listened,” I stated, giving her a sincere smile. “I never listen to you,” I laughed. Her lips curled into a smile, and she laughed softly.

*Knock Knock*

Lexi and I turned our heads simultaneously to the hallway at the sound of knocking. We got up and began walking towards the door.

“Do you think he would come back?” Lexi asked, looking at me with a worried expression.

“I don’t know,” I replied with a shrug.

*Knock Knock*

We approached the door cautiously. “Who’s there?” I stuttered.

“It’s Avery and Lyndon,” came Avery’s voice from behind the door.

“Oh, thank fuck,” Lexi sighed; I let out a small sigh and unlocked the door, letting them both come in.

“You both okay?” Avery grabbed me and held my gaze.

I nodded, “yeah, just thought it was him.”

“Did he contact you?”

“No,” I shook my head, “just never know these days,” I grasped his hand and leaned in, savouring the scent of whiskey and sandalwood. It quickly became my favourite aroma. Avery pulled me into his embrace, his arm tightly around my neck. I glanced over at Lexi, who was standing in front of Lyndon. As he introduced himself to her, she immediately caught his eye with her beauty.

“Hello love, I’m Lyndon,” he said, extending his hand. Lexi took his grip and shook it firmly.

“Hi, I’m Lexi,” she replied, her smile beaming confidently.

“He’s Avery’s friend,” I interjected, studying her with a raised eyebrow. She shot me a glance, silently telling me to mind my business. I couldn’t help but giggle as I nestled deeper into Avery’s side, knowing I had asserted myself in the situation.

Lyndon turned to Avery and asked, “Well, mate, where are we going for this date?”

Avery looked uneasy while I looked at him, confused.

“What date?”

Lyndon grinned and said, “While you were sorting out your restraining order, Avery and I discussed you two going on a date.” He pointed at me and Avery. “And I’m coming with you,” Lyndon added.

“But why?”

Lyndon chuckled and replied, “because I’m your bodyguard. I go where you go, but you won’t see me.” He winked at me, and I couldn’t help but laugh.

“What about Lex? She can’t stay here by herself.”

“It’s alright, Kry; I can just go home,” Lexi said.

“Don’t be silly. You can keep me company,” Lyndon said excitedly, Lexi’s face twisted in disgust.

“She’d love to,” I interjected before Lexi could say anything. This was my revenge for all the times she made me go on dates I didn’t want to go on, including one with Ben. I smirked at Lexi, and she glared at me. I knew what she was thinking, but I didn’t care. If I had to go, so did she.

~

After getting dressed for our date, Avery drove us in his Chevelle, with Lyndon in the backseat and me sitting next to Avery.

I slipped my hands between my thighs and looked back as my best friend was flirting her ass off with Lyndon. I couldn’t help but shake my head and laugh. Avery held onto my hand the entire way like he didn’t want to let go.

We arrived at the pier, searching for a sushi bar to dine at. However, we noticed a Ferris wheel and an arcade situated behind it. Avery turned towards me and requested, “Can you give me a few minutes?” His mesmerizing emerald eyes gazed into mine, making me feel weak in the knees.

I nodded, and Avery quickly kissed me before leaving his car. He tapped on the back window, signalling for Lyndon to join him. I was sitting there with a massive smile, realizing this was my second date with Avery. Lost in my thoughts, I suddenly heard a cough from behind.

I turned to Lexi, who was grinning just like me.

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, but please don’t bring me along on your dates next time,” she replied.

“It’s just payback, plus I’m pretty sure you’ve been drooling over Lyndon. You even have some right there,” I said, pointing to her bottom lip and laughing.

She slapped my hand, “shut up,” she laughed, looking out the window, I saw Avery entering the shop while Lyndon kept watch. Suddenly, I heard Lexi say, “I have never seen Ben look at you the way Avery does.” Her words caught me off guard, and I turned back to face her while biting my lip nervously.

“It’s crazy, but he’s grown on me.”

“There’s nothing crazy about it, Kry. Ben was a jerk, and it seems like Avery truly likes you; otherwise, he wouldn’t have returned,” she replied, “that or the sex is good,” Lexi added, laughing.

I laughed with her as Avery opened my car door, momentarily interrupting us. “Sorry, did I interrupt?” he asked, looking back at me and then at Lexi. We burst out laughing again.

~

After finishing our meal, Avery led us to the arcade. “Do you girls want to try that game?” he asked, pointing to a machine with two guns.

We nodded and approached the game, “Ninja Assault,” Lexi read the name aloud. “I bet we can beat the boys for 10 bucks,” she said, looking at me.

“Count me in,” I said and grabbed one gun.

“Make it $100,” Avery exclaimed, holding the other gun beside me.

“You’re on,” I nodded. The game started, and a cut screen appeared.

After a while, music started playing, and small ninja-like creatures with long claws began attacking me. I fired my weapon several times, but unfortunately, I could not defeat them “shit”, I muttered and looked over at Avery’s screen, he was still alive and killing everyone, “You come here a lot?”

“No, first time here, actually. Why’s that?”

“You’re good at it,” I said with a smile. He glanced around nervously before losing the game, signalling his defeat.

“Oh shit”, he muttered. “Oh well”, he smiled, walking my way, putting his arm around me as we walked over to Lyndon and Lexi, we watched as they played; both were still in and doing well.

“Hey, Lexi Love”, Lyndon yelled over the music.

“Yeah?” She answered.

“Change of bet. You win, I must strip down and run down the beach. I win.” He stopped, and we could see the excitement in his eyes. “I win, and you have to.” he laughed while still playing the game. Lexi froze, and I could see she was intrigued.

Lexi loves to bet and won’t back down, “You’re on Lyndon!” she exclaimed while shooting, we sat watching and laughing, “FUCK! No!” Lexi cried out.

Lyndon looked over at Lexi’s screen and began to laugh. He put his gun down in the game and grinned in triumph. “I win, love,” he said in an arrogant tone. Lexi smiled tightly.

“Alright, alright. But when we leave.”

“I can’t wait!” Lyndon replied eagerly.

Avery laughed as he took in his friend and me before grabbing my hand. “Come on,” he said, pulling me out of the arcade and walking towards the Ferris wheel.

“Are we going in there?” I mumbled, feeling nervous because I was afraid of heights. But the look on his face made me think it would be better to keep quiet: he looked so relaxed, his hair pushed back, his top button undone, his eyes shining in the moonlight, and his smile charming and genuine. I couldn’t help but wonder if this was the first time he had enjoyed himself in a while.

~

I chose to stay quiet and wait for him to join me when we got into the carriage. We could hear Lyndon and Lexi laughing about something in the next carriage. The operator ensured the door was closed correctly before standing behind the box and pressing a button. Gradually, we moved around and up into the air. I gripped the bar tightly, keeping my head pushed back. I was afraid to look down. “Krystal, open your eyes,” Avery said to me. I hadn’t realized that I had them closed. I took a deep breath and slowly opened them, only to see his beautiful, sculpted face smiling warmly at me.

“Are you afraid of heights, princess?” he asked. I nodded and focused on him. “I don’t understand why you didn’t speak up,” he said gently.

“You seemed so excited about going on this, and I didn’t want to spoil that for you.” I held onto the railing, relieved that he didn’t blame me.

He chuckled softly, “oh, my princess,” he said, drawing me nearer and holding me close. “You could never have ruined it,” he whispered, kissing my forehead. His touch made my whole body vibrate. I felt us reach the top, and the wheel stopped.

Avery still held me, stroking my hair, “why have we stopped?” I questioned him, raising myself to peek out over the side.

“I paid the guy off so we could have a few moments,” he admitted, taking my hand and pulling me onto his lap. “I know it might sound cheesy and overdone, but the view here is beautiful, and I wanted to share it with you.” I saw the beach stretching out wide below us, with the moonlight glinting off the ocean. A gentle breeze carried the scent of the sea, which was so peaceful up here. Avery gazed down at me, his eyes shining brighter than before. His face was tender, and I could feel the depth of his feelings for me. “I haven’t been with anyone since Emilia. Not until now, I need you in my life. I need you to be completely mine in every possible way,” Avery emphasized.

“I understand that we haven’t been together for long and we haven’t defined our relationship,” Avery said.

“It’s okay, Avery. I know it’s not easy for you. I understand that I can never replace Emilia,” I confessed.

“No, but I want you to be with me. I want to protect you,” Avery said with a soft smile, trying to bring himself to finish his sentence. He leaned in and kissed me; this time, I felt his love and need to protect me. As we rode down, I could sense my partner’s worry, the same fear of losing me that he had felt when he lost Emilia. I vowed to myself that I would never let that happen. After a few minutes, the ride stopped, and we stepped out holding hands, with Lyndon and Lexi tailing us. We decided to walk back to the car, and as Avery opened the door, Lexi grabbed onto the back door handle.

“Excuse me, love,” Lyndon interrupted, clearing his throat, “aren’t we forgetting something?” He chuckled. Lexi and Lyndon then went to the beach while I stood patiently waiting on the pier next to the car.

“She won’t do it,” Avery declared.

I just smiled and said, “Just wait.”

That’s when we both heard a whistle on the beach and looked down to find Lexi running up the beach with no clothes on.

Lyndon stood next to her clothes, whistling.

“Go, Lexi!” I cheered, laughing.

“Your friend is insane,” he said, laughing.

I cupped my hands around my mouth, “Lyndon,” I called from the pier.

“What?” he asked.

“Her clothes! Grab her clothes,” I pointed to the clothes on the beach next to him. He gave me a thumbs up, grabbed her clothes, and began chasing after her.

She heard him coming and covered herself with both her hands.

“Here, Lex, I got your clothes,” Lyndon handed her clothes, she reached out to grab them, and he quickly pulled them back, running away with her chasing him.

“You are mean,” Avery smiled, looking at me.

“I’ve told her not to bet big; she never listens.”

I shrugged and walked over to the car. Just then, Avery’s phone rang. He answered, spoke, and hung up.

“In you get, princess,” he gestured. I did as he asked and got in the car.

“Everything okay?”

“Yeah,” he nodded. “I’m just going to meet them at the park as he’s making her chase him there.” I laughed, covering my mouth.

# Leave Her Or Else

****

**-Avery-**

As I arrived at the park, I spotted Lexi sitting on a bench, fully dressed and talking with Lyndon. “Should we let them know we’re here?”

I shook my head and replied, “No.” Lyndon seemed to enjoy his conversation with that girl, so we stayed in the car and waited. Krystal leaned forward, gazing out the window at them.

Fuck, Krystal looked good. She wore high boots, a little black skirt, and a matching black halter neck.

“So much for a bodyguard,” she said, smirking. She took her hair down and slid her boots onto the floor.

“You don’t need to worry about him,” I said, “he notices everything, he would have noticed us straight away, but he’s enjoying himself. He’s good like that.”

I placed my hand on her thigh. She looked at my hand, then back at me. I leaned in and kissed her tender lips, gently grabbing her hair. She let out a little moan as she kissed me, then pulled away, after noticing something amiss, I asked, “What’s wrong?”

“If he sees us, won’t he know?”

She pointed between us and I replied, “Give me a minute.” I quickly sent a text to Lyndon, and his phone beeped. He checked it, and he and Lexi walked away to the other side of the park.

Krystal looked at me curiously, “Does he always do what you say?”

I answered, “Pretty much,” and we resumed kissing.

I pulled her up onto my lap, placed my head back onto the headrest, and she kissed me, sliding her tongue in and colliding with mine. Her skirt rose as she sat on me, and I found my fingers stroking her slit; she was already so wet. I must have the same effect on her as she does me; she pulled me closer, kissing me hard and biting my lip as she pulled away. Her halter neck had a tiny slit; I pulled at it, ripping it and exposing her breasts. I pushed my fingers inside her, and she moaned, her hands were running through my hair.

She looked down and grabbed for my belt, quickly undoing it and then pulling me free. She lifted, and I rearranged myself so she could sit. She slowly sat down, taking me to her hilt.

“Yes,” she moaned, biting down on her bottom lip, I could feel my urge to finish in her, I grabbed her back and pulled her down further, and she tightened around me, I couldn’t hold it any longer I felt still and came inside her.

My orgasm sent her off, and she came all around me.

She sat on me, out of breath, looking down.

I touched her face, brought her attention, and kissed her quickly. I heard voices, “Oh shit it’s them,” Krystal panicked, lifting off me and back into her seat, I did myself up and looked at Krystal’s top.

“Shit, take it off.”

“What?”

“Take it off and put this on.” I handed her my hoodie, she took the torn top off, threw it behind her and quickly put my hoodie on just as Lyndon opened the back door.

“Took your time mate,” Lyndon said, smirking, climbing into the backseat with Lexi following him.

“Yeah, what took you guys so long to get here?” She asked, looking at Krystal and then back at me.

“I had to pee,” Krystal piped up.

Lexi nodded. “Okay, let’s go then.”

I looked at Krystal and then turned the key and the engine roared to life, and we started driving for Krystal’s place.

“So, what happened to your top?” Lexi asked.

“What?” Krystal squeaked.

“Well, I’m guessing, when you went to the toilet, you must have ripped your halter.”

“What on earth makes you think that?” Krystal laughed nervously.

“This,” Lexi said, holding Kry’s torn top up so I could see it in the rear-view mirror; Krystal turned around to look and just shrunk down in the seat.

“I’m sorry, I love you,” she whispered while laughing.

“So rude! You guys left us out in the cold while you got it on in the car!” Lexi yelled while laughing.

~

I laughed and pulled into Krystal’s driveway when we found the cops. “What’s going on?” Krystal asked. Upon arriving, she opened the car door and got out, followed by the rest of us. I noticed a broken window and an open front door. “Officer? This is my house. What happened?” Krystal inquired.

“It seems like somebody has broken into your house while you were out. It’s trashed in there, but I don’t think anything was taken,” he replied. Krystal thanked him politely and walked towards her open front door. We followed her in and saw everything torn up or broken, including all her photos. The TV was also smashed in the living room. Krystal was in shock.

“This is supposed to be a safe place for my children. How could he do this to his children?” she exclaimed.

“You think he did this?” Lexi asked.

Krystal looked at Lexi and replied, “Who else could do this? I get he’s mad at me, but his children don’t deserve this!” Lyndon walked out of Krystal’s room with a piece of paper in his hand.

“I found this,” he stated, handing me the note, Krystal hadn’t seen it yet. The letter read, “Leave her, or it will get worse.”

“What’s that?” Krystal asked. I handed her the note. She read it and looked at me shocked, I can’t lose her, but I can’t get her hurt either.

# Home Is Where They Take Me



**-Krystal-**

After informing the police that Ben was likely responsible for the chaos, I mentioned that I had recently obtained a restraining order against him. Once the authorities had left, we spent the night attempting to tidy up the damage. The sight of the wreckage in my children’s home was heart-wrenching. As the protector, it was my responsibility to keep them safe. Instead, I had to send them away because their father had lost his mind. Tears welled in my eyes, but I tried to hold them back. Standing behind me, Avery wrapped his arms around me and rested his head on my shoulder. “Krystal, this isn’t your fault,” he reassured me, “he did all of this, the house, the abuse, the cheating,” he added. I couldn’t hold back my tears any longer and started crying. He pulled me closer to him and cuddled me, saying, “It’s okay Kry, I won’t let anything else happen.” I wiped my eyes.

“I can’t let him get to me,” I nodded, “and I won’t let him hurt me or the kids anymore.” Avery nodded in agreement.

“Good. In the meantime, you need a safer place to stay,” he said.

“What are you suggesting?”

“You and the kids can come to stay at my place for a while, just while things cool off,” he smiled.

“But he knows where your place is,” I pointed out.

He thought for a second. “True, but he doesn’t know where Lyndon lives,” Avery said, smiling.

“Is Lyndon okay with that, or does he even have a choice?”

“It’s completely fine, Krystal! I’ll be staying at a hotel,” Lyndon called out from the other room.

“Are you sure? I have three kids, Avery,” I reminded him.

“I know, but I think they need to be back with their mum, and you with them,” Avery said. I smiled and hugged him tightly.

“Thank you. It will just be until I can get another place.”

“It’s fine, Krystal.” He kissed my head.

~

After packing a few bags for myself and the children, we left in Avery’s Chevelle with Lyndon at the back. Lexi had left for her home earlier, and we dropped Lyndon off at a hotel near his apartment, just in case anything happened. Upon reaching Lyndon’s place, Avery grabbed our bags, held my hand with the other, and led us inside.

Lyndon’s apartment was massive, with a rustic exterior but expensive interiors. There were two sculptures at the entrance.

“What does Lyndon do for a living?” I asked, looking around.

“You probably wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” Avery laughed, he placed our bags on the floor and hugged me. I felt safe here, knowing Ben didn’t know where we were.

“Call her and get them here,” he said, smiling at me. I nodded and did as I was told.

~

*Knock Knock*

Avery walked towards the door, opened it, and my mother greeted him. “Why am I dropping them off here?” She asked.

Avery scratched his head and replied, “Something happened to the house.” He opened the door more comprehensively, and Camilla entered with Anna, Sarah, and Lucas. I left the kitchen and saw my three children standing at the entrance.

As soon as they saw me, Sarah and Lucas ran towards me, yelling, “Mummy!” I hugged them tightly; I had missed them so much. Anna hugged me, but I could tell she was still upset with me. I kissed her on the forehead quickly and then let them go.

“Why aren’t we going home?” Anna asked.

“Did someone break in?” Anna called out.

Mother approached us and asked, “Did they take everything?”

“No,” I replied, “they just broke in and trashed the place. A lot of things are broken.”

Mother nodded and said, “I see.”

Avery added, “Well, in the meantime, you’re welcome to stay here, so I guess that means you guys need to find your bedroom.” The kids all cheered and ran to find a room, and Avery laughed, “That should keep them busy.”

~

I sat with my mother and explained what had been happening with Benjamin and why we had to leave the house. After I finished, she hugged me tightly and kissed me. She then went to the kitchen to talk with Avery. “You better not let anything happen to my daughter and grandchildren. If you do, I’ll be coming for you.”

Avery responded, “I promise I won’t let her get hurt.” My mother left him and walked to the front door to say goodbye.

I found Avery standing still in the kitchen. “Is everything okay?”

He chuckled and said, “Yeah, I think your mother threatened me.” I burst out laughing at his response. “Are the kids ready for dinner?” he asked.

“Yes, I’ll bring them to the table,” I replied. I walked off to get the kids, and we all joined Avery at the table. He had just finished cooking a pizza and was serving it up. Anna took a bite.

As everyone enjoyed the pizza, Anna asked, “This is some good pizza; where did you buy it from?”

Avery replied, “Oh, I made it.” She just nodded, indicating that she didn’t like him. I knew that she felt that way because Avery wasn’t her father. Meanwhile, Avery took a big bite of his slice and got some pizza sauce on his top lip. Sarah and Lucas laughed at him.

“Pizza!” Lucas exclaimed.

“You like your pizza?” Avery smiled at Lucas, and Anna looked up and laughed.

“You have a pizza sauce moustache,” Anna pointed to Avery’s top lip.

“I do?” Avery asked, wiping his face and accidentally getting more sauce on his face. “Did I get it?” All three kids burst into laughter. Avery stuck his tongue out and tried to lick the sauce away. “How about now?”

“Nope!” they laughed even more. My heart swelled with joy as I watched this gentle giant purposely wipe sauce all over his face to make my children smile.

~

After we finished our tea, I gave Sarah and Lucas a bath. Walking into the living room, I noticed Anna and Avery playing chess on a giant glass chessboard. “Lyndon likes chess, does he?” I asked Avery.

He nodded and replied, “He’s from England and a geek at heart.” I chuckled at his response, and he gave me a soft smile before returning to the game.

Suddenly, I heard Anna’s little voice, “Checkmate!” Avery looked confused, surprised that a ten-year-old had just beaten him. I walked over to Anna and congratulated her on her victory.

“Good job, Anna,” I cheered. “It’s time for bed now, though,” I added.

Anna hugged me tightly and said, “Okay, mum, goodnight.” She turned to Avery and said, “Goodnight, Avery,” before leaving for bed.

I led Lucas and Sarah to their rooms. I put Lucas down first, and he immediately fell asleep. I kissed his head and tucked him in. When I entered Sarah’s room, she was already in bed with Avery, reading her a story. She was tucked in bed, and her little eyes glued to him.

After finishing the story, Avery whispered, “Goodnight,” and got up. He froze when he saw me standing in the doorway watching him. I stepped aside, and he exited the room, shutting the door. “She asked, and I couldn’t refuse,” he apologized. I just embraced him.

# Regina’s Business

****

**-Avery-**

I was abruptly awakened by the vibration of my phone on the nightstand. I quickly grabbed it and answered in a hushed tone, “Hello?” Regina, my mother, was on the other line.

“Avery? Why are you whispering?” she asked. I couldn’t let her hear any background noise, so I hurriedly approached the front door and closed it behind me.

“Sorry, Mother, I was still asleep,” I reassured her.

“I thought you would have been out drinking with a random girl by now,” she joked.

“No, not tonight. I had a bit of a headache,” I replied. “What did you want, mother?” I asked, trying to steer the conversation in a different direction.

“I need your help. That business meeting has come up and I need backup and your plans. Not only that, if things go sideways, you’ll be able to take them out,” she said with a hint of urgency.

I rolled my eyes, “Of course, send me the address and I’ll be right there.” With that, I hung up the phone.

I rushed back inside, changed my clothes and kissed Krystal’s forehead. She winced, but after a minute, I left her and walked out the door, grabbing the spare gun from the back of the hallway cupboard.

I reached the garage, found my car, and unlocked it before climbing inside.

*Click*

I fastened my seat belt and felt my phone vibrate again. I checked the address, which read “Number 1 King Street”. I entered it into my GPS and followed the directions, taking every turn as instructed. I didn’t know what would happen, but I made a mental note to protect Krystal if things went wrong.

I quickly dialled Lyndon’s number. “Hey, how’s the place?” he asked.

“I don’t have time for that, Lyndon. I’m on my way to meet Regina. If I don’t call you back in an hour, come to Number 1 King Street,” I instructed.

“Understood. I’ll be waiting for your call,” Lyndon said before hanging up.

I focused on the road and soon arrived at a set of steel gates that were already open. I saw the mailbox with the address and muttered to myself, “This is the place.” I drove up the long driveway and parked my car in front of the elaborate fountain at the centre of the circular driveway. I shut the car door behind me and prepared to face whatever lay ahead.

I adjusted the buttons on my suit to ensure it was done up. Mother always said that no matter what, we must look our best. I raised my head to take in the mansion before me. It had stone pillars at the bottom of the stairs and two big double doors. I started walking up the stairs, taking one at a time. Finally, I reached the double doors and knocked hard. Within a few minutes, Phillip, one of my mother’s men, greeted me and opened the door wider to let me in. He closed the door behind us, and I asked him, “Do you know what this is about?”

The man nodded and said, “I’m sorry, sir. She’s been in the west wing upstairs and hasn’t come out since we arrived.” I thanked him and began walking towards the stairs, with Phillip trailing behind me. Phillip was a tall man with dark features. He had intense blue eyes that could become chilling when on the verge of killing. He also had dark brown hair with a faded haircut, and his face was round. However, his rugged beard and several tattoos all over his body made everyone aware that he meant business. Phillip and I have known each other for years. We used to be childhood friends as his dad was close to my parents. However, something changed when my mother came into the picture. The kid I knew was replaced with a cold and distant person. Unlike me, Phillip never had a close connection with Lyndon and always seemed wary of him. This may be because Lyndon loved having fun and playing jokes, while Phillip focused more on work.

As I approached the west wing, Phillip opened the double doors and announced my arrival in a cold tone. Shivers ran down my spine as I walked into the room. My mother sat on a velvet red couch, and a more petite man sat opposite her. As they looked at me, my mother gave me a fake motherly smile. She patted the couch next to her and asked me to sit. As I sat beside her, she grabbed my hand, curled her fingers inside mine, and continued to fake her smile while showing her teeth.

“Avery, my dear, I want you to meet Mr. Ricky. We’ll be working together,” said Regina. I turned to face Mr. Ricky, who was slim and had a scar on his cheek. His dark blue eyes and black hair made him look mysterious. He extended his hand and shook mine firmly.

“Nice to meet you, sir. My name is A,” I started to say, but he interrupted me by shaking my hand and cutting me off.

“Your mother has been talking highly of you, Avery Anderson,” he said crookedly as he pulled his hand back into his lap. “I love the blueprints for the new property I purchased.”

I gave a nod and said, “thank you, sir. What do you plan to do with it?”

Regina giggled, tapping my hand, “Avery, it’s his business.”

Mr Ricky corrected her, “It’s alright to ask, especially if we’re going to work together. Trust is important among us.” I gave another nod.

“I want people to think it’s a legitimate business, so no questions asked from the cops or the FBI or whoever else, but in the basement, we will be running our drugs and also our money laundering; of course, you guys will get a cut for letting us in and doing it in your city” he nodded.

“Okay, but why do we need you? We already have places like that setup,” I spouted. Regina gave my hand another squeeze; I knew I had overstepped.

“Because my place was going to look like a regular skyscraper, the basement would be the business end, and the middle would be our famous restaurant, and of course, at the top will be the fun of it all, a strip joint but the girls will be a little different” he admitted.

“Different, how?’ I questioned.

“Let’s just say they will be the property of Regina here and trained to smuggle drugs into places or out.”

“Okay,” I nodded, “I’m guessing I’m here to ensure the drugs get to and from?”

“We need someone to acquire such girls,” Mr Ricky explained. I looked at him, then back at Regina.

“You want me to get the girls? Aren’t you afraid I might fuck them?” I smirked. Regina just glared right through me.

“No, son, we don’t have these girls yet, but we need you to guide some girls there.” I was confused again. “You’re an attractive boy. any girl you find in a club, just put this in their drink and then deliver to this address.” She handed me a bottle and a piece of paper with the address.

I looked at it all, no fucking way! She wants me to drug and kidnap some poor girl and leave them with him. He sat with a ridiculous grin; I jumped up, “no fucking way.”

“Avery!” Regina said, rising.

“No fucking way Regina! I’m not going to drug and kidnap some girl to leave her with him,” I spat, pointing at Mr Ricky.

He rose slowly. “It seems you might have been mistaken about your son Regina.”

Regina turned to face him. “I assure you, I am not,” she turned back to me. “He’s just forgotten his place, and he will remember it,” she affirmed.

I swallowed hard. “Shit,” I mumbled.

I sprinted out of that office and down the stairs, reaching for the front door and pulling open the car door, breathing heavily. I heard footsteps behind me. I felt a hand on my shoulder, turning me to face them; it was Phillip. He swung and punched me in the face; he grasped my shirt with both hands and pushed me into the car.

“PULL YOUR SHIT TOGETHER!” Phillip yelled, swung again, and his fist connected to my face again. I pushed him off and went to swing at him. “Stop,” he said in hushed tones and then nodded his head sideways over his shoulder. My eyes followed to see Regina standing at the front door, watching everything. I lowered my fist, and Phillip grasped my shirt again and pushed me up against the car.

“I’m telling you this for your own good!” He said through gritted teeth. “She knows,” he whispered. My heart sunk into my chest. I tried to be careful; he couldn’t be talking about Krystal.

“She knows about her,” Phillip whispered again, pushing me hard against my Chevelle. I froze with those words. Fuck! How long has she known for?

“You will do what she asks Avery. I will be there to make sure you do what she asks,” Phillip stated. I just looked at Regina standing there watching, pleased with Phillip, and then I looked back to Phillip’s dark eyes and nodded.

“Okay.”

He let go of me, backed away as I got into the car, and quickly turned the ignition, bringing the engine to life. I sped out of the driveway through the steel gates. Seeing a familiar black jeep, it was Lyndon. Was I really in there for that long? I gave him a nod, and he returned it and followed me as I drove back to the city. My phone lit up with Lyndon’s name; I reached for it and slid my finger across the screen.

“Yeah,” I snapped.

“Everything okay, mate? You look a bit shaken,” he claimed.

“She fucking knows,” I growled.

“What? How?”

“I have no clue, but she knows!”

“Where are we going?”

“I must go and do mother’s dirty work. Probably best if you don’t come; Phillip will be there,” I told Lyndon.

“I’ll stick close. So, if anything goes down, call, and I’ll come running. Guns blazing,” Lyndon exclaimed.

# Drink Up

****

**-Avery-**

I arrived at the club called “Rock Bottom.” Despite its ironic name, it was where people would go when they hit rock bottom. I exited my car, wiped the blood off my lip, and walked into the club. As I entered, the bouncer recognized me and just nodded. I was a frequent visitor after Emilia died, so everyone knew me here.

I walked up to the bar and ordered a whiskey neat. The bartender, a tanned girl with long blonde hair, said. “Avery didn’t think I’d see you back here.”

I downed the glass and slammed it back down on the counter. “Neither did I, but I have some business to attend to,” I replied. She poured another glass and left me alone.

I checked my phone and saw it was already 3:30 in the morning. Phillip was supposed to be here by now, but he was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, the big guy walked through the door. As much as I wanted to punch him in the face, he told me she knew. I wondered why he would do that if he were loyal to her.

He sat down next to me. “How’s the face?” He asked, smirking.

“It’s fine. It doesn’t even hurt,” I replied. He just let a laugh out and ordered a drink. “So, are you going to tell me why you told me?” I looked at him, picking my glass up; he took a swig and looked back at me.

“Let’s just say I don’t want history repeating itself.”

I don’t know if that reassured me or made me even more unsettled.

“I can’t hurt an innocent,” I said, looking at him. “I Won’t,” I added, and he nodded.

“Lucky for you, Avery, this place is riddled with not-so-innocent people.” I looked around the bar, and Phillip nudged his head toward a young female covered in tattoos and with bright blue hair.

“Her?” I asked. He just gave me a nod. “Why her?”

“She killed her boyfriend.”

I looked at him with a surprised expression on my face. “How do you know that?” I asked, raising an eyebrow; he just stared blankly at me.

“Really? Avery, how long have you known me?”

“All my life,” I answered.

“Exactly, and what do I do for your mother?”

“You get information on people.” he just nodded again.

“She was a target that got away from us as her husband was one of our guys. She killed him to take the drugs; she is a user.” I looked her up and down. “She has track marks all over her arms.”

As soon as he said that, I could pinpoint her marks and nodded, “alright, I’ll be back,” I said, picking up my glass and taking a sip, then stepping over to her.

“Hey, I’m Avery,” I smiled.

As I approached her, she gave me a quick and polite smile before saying, “Sorry Avery, not interested,” and then dropped her head to her empty glass. I nodded understanding and asked if she would object to me buying her a drink. She hesitated momentarily before saying “No,” and handing me her empty glass. I took it to the bartender and ordered another of whatever she was drinking. I then sat beside Phillip and noticed the bartender watching me as I pulled out a small bottle from my pocket and poured some of its contents into the woman’s drink. I stirred it with a straw and left it in front of her.

“Here you go, hope you have a good night,” I said warmly before leaving.

“Yes, another,” Phillip said to the bartender as she grabbed him another drink. We observed the girl with blue hair take a sip of her beverage.

Within a few minutes, she passed out on the table.

The bartender asked, “I’m assuming that Regina has plans for the girl?” Phillip looked at her, unsure of what to say.

I stepped in, reassuring him, “It’s alright, Phillip. This whole place belongs to Regina. No one in here will say a word.” I then walked over to the girl and lifted her over my shoulder.

“Where to?” I asked, looking at Phillip.

“This way,” he replied as he got off his stool and walked out the front door. He opened the back door of his black SUV, allowing me to place the girl inside. “You sit in the front,” Phillip said sharply.

I climbed into the passenger seat and watched the road as Phillip drove us to Mr Ricky’s place.

“She’s known something was up since the other day,” he said. “The day you let Lyndon take that shot.”

I knew she was onto me. I bit my lip and asked eagerly, “How much does she know?”

“She knows you’ve been seeing her, and that her name is Krystal, that she was married to a Ben, and she also knows she has kids, “but she doesn’t know her last name is Callie, or the fact that you two are now taking up residence at Lyndon’s apartment,” he said, turning to me. Phillip gathers information on people for her. He had been watching her and me, but I wondered why he hadn’t told her everything.

“Why didn’t you tell her everything? You never keep information from Regina,” I added. It was quiet while Phillip focused on driving and turning the wheel, and then he finally spoke.

“I watched her, Avery. Followed her for days, and I see her with her children and with you. She doesn’t deserve what Regina has planned for her.” My heart pounded, and my hands started to sweat.

“No one deserves what Regina has planned for them, not even this one in the back,” I spat as I nodded towards her.

“Yeah, but it’s her or Krystal,” Phillip said quietly.

“I know,” I nodded.

We finally made it to Mr. Ricky’s place. It was a massive skyscraper and was surrounded by guards. To the untrained eye, they were bouncers, but to me and Phillip, they were stone-cold killers. I got out of the car, grabbed the girl from the back, threw her over my shoulder, and Mr. Ricky greeted me at the front door. He nodded and smiled, wearing an all-white suit.

“Very good Avery,” he praised me. I had so much anger bubbling inside of me; it took all my strength then and there not to knock him the fuck out.

“It was easier than I thought’” I admitted.

Mr Ricky raised his hand and gestured for one of his guards to grab the girl. I placed her in their hands and turned back to him.

“Is that all?” I asked.

He nodded. “Yes, thank you, I’ll call you again when we need another.”

I nodded and backed away, taking one last look at the building before climbing into the car.

~

Phillip pulled back up to the club where my Chevelle was parked. I found Lyndon inclining on it, and once I climbed out, he came running up to me.

“Fuck mate, I thought you were dead,” he admitted.

I just shook my head. “No, I’m okay,” I reassured him.

Phillip climbed out of the car and walked over to me. “Why is he here?” His tone was stern.

“I was here to make sure Avery was alright. Is that alright with you? Mate!” Lyndon’s tone was harsh, and he got up in Phillip’s face. “You. Mate, need your bloody head kicked in,” Lyndon spat.

“Please take a swing. I’ve been looking for an excuse to take you out,” Phillip grunted.

“ENOUGH!” I shouted. Both just stopped and looked at me. “Lyndon, Phillip was helping me with what Regina wanted to be done.”

Lyndon looked back at Phillip and backed away. “Right, fine, you’re done now. So he can go,” he said, walking over to my side.

“I’ll try and keep Regina in the dark about Krystal as much as possible, but you know what will happen if she finds out,” Phillip said, focusing on me.

“What about our girl Krystal?” Lyndon asked.

I looked at him. “Phillip has been gathering information on Krystal and me for Regina,” Lyndon gave him a look of loathing and was about to return to him. “But he hasn’t given her all the information,” I added.

“Why the fuck not?” Lyndon questioned Phillip.

“She seems like a complete bystander; she and her children don’t deserve the wraith of Regina,” he soughed. “I’ll let you know if she finds anything more out, but if you guys are going to do something. You might want to do it fast.” Phillip urged while strolling over to his SUV and getting in. Within seconds, he was gone, and it was just me and Lyndon standing in the club’s car park.

“What has she got you doing?”

“I have to kidnap women and take them to this new guy, Mr. Ricky,” I explained.

“What?’”

“It’s either do this, or she will go after Krystal; I need her to think that Krystal means nothing to me!” I snapped.

“Understood.” Lyndon nodded. We both shared a look, climbed back into our cars, and drove home.

# Let’s Go To The Mall



**-Krystal-**

As I woke up to the sound of my phone alarm, I discovered Avery, who slept beside me with his arm around my waist. I carefully freed myself from his hold and pretended to be asleep while he stirred. I noticed a missed call from Nancy on my phone and wondered what she needed. I covered myself with the blanket quietly and walked towards the door, closing it gently behind me. I dialled Nancy’s number, and she answered after three rings, sounding worried. “Are you okay, Mrs. C?” she asked.

“Yes, I’m fine. Why do you ask?” I replied, trying to assure her.

I spoke through the phone and heard Nancy’s voice shrill, “Your house! It’s completely trashed.” I realized I had forgotten to inform her not to come over this morning.

I raised my hand to my head and apologized, “I’m so sorry, Nancy. I forgot to let you know.”

She asked, “What happened?”

“Ben happened.”

Her voice went soft, and she said, “Oh.”

I told her, “You don’t need to worry about watching the kids today; I’m going to take them out to spend some time with me.”

“That’s okay, Mrs C, but I brought Lucas a teddy bear. How can I get it to him?”

I was touched and replied, “I can meet you somewhere?”

She agreed, “Sure,” and we decided to meet outside the mall in half an hour. After hanging up, I went downstairs to find that Anna had made breakfast for her and her siblings.

I asked, “You made breakfast?”

She smiled, “Yeah, I thought I should start helping a bit, considering you’ve had so many bad things happen lately.” Her tender smile made my heart thump, and I pulled her into a big hug.

Avery came downstairs and asked, “Where’s my breakfast?” as he licked his lips and looked at me. I felt his eyes looking down my body and back up. Under that stare alone, I could feel myself getting wet.

Anna pointed to the table and exclaimed, “I made cereal!” Avery’s attention shifted from me to the breakfast table.

“Sweet! Coco puffs,” he said excitedly, rubbing his hands together as he sat down to eat. Anna joined him and started eating.

“Hey Avery, do you mind watching the kids while I duck out to meet Nancy? She has a present for Lucas, and I wasn’t sure if I could give her our address,” I requested.

“I’ll come; I’ll get Lyndon to watch the kids,” Avery offered.

“But he’s not here,” I pointed out.

“Tada!” Lyndon said, jumping out from behind me. “How’s that for a neat magic trick?” he chuckled.

I face-planted myself. “How long have you been here?” I questioned him.

“I got in around four when we both got home,” he replied.

“Both?!” I exclaimed, turning to Avery, who was now rubbing the back of his neck with an innocent smile.

“I’m sorry, he wanted a few drinks,” Avery explained.

I looked back and forth at them both. “Okay, hurry up, we must get going,” I said, passing Lyndon and walking upstairs to our room.

Once I got dressed, I discovered that Lyndon and Anna were engrossed in a game of Minecraft on the PlayStation 5. While Lyndon bragged about how good he was at the game, Anna seemed to be enjoying herself. I left them in charge and went to join Avery, who was already dressed and ready to leave.

~

Avery parked the Chevelle between a black SUV and a pink Beetle. We held hands as we walked towards the mall entrance. The chatter of people and children begging for ice cream filled the air. I noticed Nancy sitting on a blue bench and approached her. She stood up and hugged me, taking me by surprise. I hugged her back. “I’m fine, and so are the kids,” I assured her.

“Thank God you’re okay,” she said with relief. I stepped back when Avery put his arm around me.

“Sir,” she said, nodding at him. He just nodded.

“So, you got Lucas a teddy bear?” I asked.

“You know you didn’t have to do that,” I added.

“I know,” she replied. “But I felt terrible for him since he lost his other one.”

She handed me a brown Teddy bear from her bag, saying, “I couldn’t find his favourite one last time I was there, so maybe this will bring him some peace.”

I thanked Nancy and admired the bear. “It’s cute. He’ll love it,” I said. She nodded.

“I really should go now, Mrs. C.”

“That’s okay, Nancy. Thank you again,” I said sincerely. She grabbed her bag and dashed off.

“Home now?” I looked at Avery; he kissed my forehead.

“Not yet, princess.” He started walking towards the mall.

“What are we doing?” I asked curiously.

“Going shopping.”

“But I don’t need anything!”

“Princess, your whole house just got trashed. It would be best if you had new things. Say what you need, and I’ll get it for you and the kids.”

“No, Avery, I can’t let you spend your money on me,” I protested.

He covered my mouth. “Do you ever shut up?” He asked playfully as he pulled us towards a store.

~

My hands were full of shopping bags after visiting every store in the mall. Avery wanted to buy things for the kids, so I put the teddy bear in a bag to make it easier to carry. Avery unlocked the trunk of his car with his key fob, and we loaded the bags into the trunk. He courteously opened the door for me, bowing and holding it open with a smile. After I got in, he closed the door, jogged to the driver’s side, climbed in, closed his door, and started the engine.

“Ready to go home now?” I asked.

He paused and patted his pockets. “Wait a minute, I’m forgetting something,” he said. He turned to me, kissed my lips, and pulled back with a smirk. “Now I’m ready,” he said, reversing the car.

~

We walked into the apartment carrying bags from the mall. Lyndon sat with Anna in the living room while Lucas and Sarah watched a movie in Sarah’s room. “Did you rob the Mall, mate?” Lyndon joked.

“Bite me,” Avery retorted.

“I’ll leave that to Krystal,” he added, nudging my shoulder.

Anna asked, “What does he mean, mum?” looking confused.

“Nothing, baby. Here, have a bag,” I said, handing her one of the bags.

“Cool, new clothes, thank you, mum. Oh wow, I have my own iPad?” exclaimed Anna.

“You should thank Avery. He wouldn’t let me spend my money,” I explained.

Anna hugged Avery and said, “Thank you, Avery!” Lucas and Sarah came running out.

“Hey! Where’s mine?!” Sarah demanded.

Avery replied, “We got you both something, too,” and reassured her.

“Alright, where’s mine?” Lyndon asked, holding his hand out.

“Oh yeah, man, yours is right here,” Avery reached into one of the bags and pulled his hand back out, flipping his middle finger up.

Lyndon rolled his eyes and said, “Love you too, mate.” I couldn’t help but laugh at both of them. When Avery is with Lyndon, he becomes more relaxed and playful, I smiled, enjoying this side of him.

“Lyndon, do you want to come to the movies with us and the kids?” I asked.

“Does he have to?” Avery moaned.

“Shh you,” I said, covering his mouth. Lyndon gazed at me, shaking his head from side to side, contemplating the situation. I mentioned that Lexi would be present, and he responded with a smile, his lips curling upwards.

“I’m in,” he said, winking at me.

~

After lunch, we got into Lyndon’s jeep, which had more seats than the Chevelle. Lyndon drove the kids while they played, I Spy. Seeing how much fun they had with Avery, Lyndon, and Lexi was heartwarming. I couldn’t help but hope that Benjamin couldn’t find us and we could all be one big family. We arrived at the theatre, where Lexi greeted us and hugged the kids. Lyndon asked for a hug, too, and she gave in, smirking.

I asked the lady behind the front desk for four adult and three children’s tickets for Light Year. She printed our tickets and asked if we wanted any snacks. I nodded, and we ordered our snacks. After distributing the popcorn and drinks to everyone, we walked to the theatre, feeling like we were the only ones watching the movie. Avery held my hand and smiled while the children played. Later, I overheard someone complaining that the theatre was fully booked. A woman explained that the theatre had been reserved for a private function. I was surprised but couldn’t help smiling.

I quickly went to the restroom, washed my hands, and returned to Cinema 2. As I entered, I sat beside Avery and observed Sarah and Lucas playing as Buzz Lightyear while Anna sat back on her chair, eating her popcorn, Avery sipped his drink.

“Thank you,” I whispered.

“For what?” Avery turned his head, taking in my gaze.

“For all of this,” I gestured around us. He knew what I meant, and his arm draped around me, pulling me closer to him. He kissed the top of my head again.

“By the way, Lyndon and Lexi are missing,” he whispered, and I giggled.

“They’ll be back before it ends.”

The movie ended, and the kids clapped and ran around excitedly.

“Let’s go,” I said, grabbing Lucas by the hand and reaching for Sarah’s.

“No, mum, I’m holding Avery’s,” Sarah said, smiling and grasping his hand.

Avery just laughed and shrugged. “Okay then,” We headed out and down the steps, where we met Lexi and Lyndon, who were linked arm-in-arm.

“Hey guys,” I said.

“Did you enjoy the movie?” Avery added, smirking, Lexi and Lyndon looked at each other and quickly let go.

“Do you mind if I have the kids tonight?” Lexi asked me.

“Oh, I was about to take them home.”

“Please, can we stay at Aunt Lexi’s?” Anna pleaded.

“Okay,” I agreed, “But Lexi, please be careful getting home.”

“I’ll drop them off, Krystal. I won’t let anything happen to them, love,” Lyndon said, easing my worries.

“Thank you,” I nodded, and they all ran off with Lyndon and Lexi.

“They would make a pretty good couple, huh?” Avery asked.

“They really would,” I beamed.

~

Avery and I hailed a cab to go back to the apartment. The halls echoed without the sound of my kids laughing. “I hope they’re having a good time,” I said, grabbing Lucas’s bear and squeezing it. Avery came over and rubbed his hands up and down my arms.

“Lyndon just messaged. They’re having fun and having ice cream.”

I nodded, “okay, I just miss them.”

“I know,” he said, comforting me. Avery moved before me and took the teddy bear from my hands. He placed it gently on the coffee table before tilting my chin towards him.

“Thank you for today,” I said, wrapping my arms around him.

“Shh,” he hushed, pulling me in closer. Putting his soft lips on mine, entangling our tongues together, he tasted like popcorn. He kissed my lips and then the side of my face, down to the nape of my neck and into the ditch of my collarbone; I let out a low moan.

“Shh,” he hushed me again, covering my mouth with his hand and continuing his sweet torment. He lifted my arms and pulled my top off, and then his hands trailed down to the button on my jeans; with one movement, he had already undone the button and was now kneeling in front of me, pulling my jeans down. He got to my ankle, “lift”, he ordered; I did what he said. I lifted one leg, and he slid my jeans over my foot. He tapped my portion; I knew what to do. I looked down at him as he gazed up at me. I tried to remove his shirt, but he stopped me.

“Wait.” He Demanded.

Holy fuck, didn’t he look hot! I could feel his appetite for me. He ran his fingers up my legs slowly, followed by a kiss; he reached my inner thigh, kissing and nibbling.

“Fuck me.” I moaned.

I heard a small sinister laugh, “I plan to.” he kissed the outside of my delicate and then looped two fingers under the fabric on either side. And he ripped them down. He slid his finger across my core and then placed it in his mouth, sucking my essence off his finger “mm,” he moaned. He continued pushing two fingers inside me, circling and pushing in and out. I closed my eyes. He moved his two fingers back in, and then I felt his tongue torture me, licking and sucking; this was such a pleasurable torture. I could feel myself getting closer, and he stopped when I was on the edge of oblivion.

My eyes flicked open, and I looked down at him, a sinister look on his face, “Tell me what you want, princess.” I couldn’t help it; he was teasing me, and he knew it. Something deep inside me told me to do what I wanted, and that’s precisely what I would do. I grabbed his hair and pushed his mouth on my core, driving me closer to climax, but then I stopped him. He looked confused, “Princess?” He asked, wiping his face. I tugged at his shirt and ripped it off him, throwing it to the ground. He went to undo his jeans, and I tapped his hand away.

“Mr Anderson.” His eyes widened at my words, and I ran my hands down his chest, pushing into the line of his abdomen. I trailed kisses down his chest and twisted my tongue around his nipple. I stopped and undone his jeans and pushed them down. He was standing in front of me, I traced my finger in a circle, and he slowly turned around. I bit my lower lip while arching an eyebrow, admiring every inch of this majestic man. I pushed Avery back, so he fell onto the couch. He looked at me excitedly; I unclasped my bra and let it drop, and then slowly, I straddled him, leaning against him.

Avery moaned, feeling the slickness of me. He reached around, placing his hand on my lower back, and took me into a deep kiss. Fuck, this felt so right. Every time Avery touched me, my skin would light up with electricity. I arched myself up, and he grabbed the base of his cock, finding my entrance. I pushed down onto him.

“Fuck, you feel amazing,” he gritted through his teeth. I got my rhythm and rode him up and down until I felt him still under me; all my muscles tightened, and we came together. I laid on the couch, starting to fall asleep.

“Oh no,” I laughed.

“What?” Avery said, rubbing my back.

“Poor Mr. Bear will need therapy,” I giggled.

Avery laughed with me, “Good thing I can afford it. Okay. Time to get you into bed,” he said, getting up and placing his arm under my back and the other under my legs. He kissed me on the nose and carried me upstairs into bed; he laid in bed, cuddling up next to me. I could already feel his erection growing, but I happily fell asleep in the arms of the man I was falling head over heels for.

# Drink Up Part 2

****

**-Avery-**

Krystal laid sleeping contently. I searched for my phone and tapped the screen; it showed that the time was 1:44 a.m. I put my head back on the pillow, rubbed my eyelids with my fingers, and sighed slowly. I whispered, “Hey,” tapping her shoulder. She groaned, still half asleep, “Princess,” I shook her a bit more.

“Ah, what?” She groaned, looking at me through sleepy eyes.

“I have to meet Lyndon; I’ll be back soon.”

“What time is it?” she croaked.

I smiled, admiring how beautiful she looked. “It’s late, go back to sleep.” She just nodded and rolled over the other way. I planted both feet on the ground and pushed off the bed, heading for the closet to grab my clothes. I threw on my black suit with matching pants and tie. I only wore this when I had to do Regina’s dirty work, which is precisely what I had to do again tonight, but this time, I’m changing the rules.

~

I went to Club Rock Bottom and ordered my usual drink. Phillip showed up unexpectedly. “I thought you weren’t going to be here,” I said.

“Regina still thinks you’re out of the game.” I was worried, but Phillip reassured me that everything was fine. We waited for the next victim in Regina’s world. Finally, Phillip pointed out a young girl with strawberry-blonde hair and amber eyes. I was still determined, but Phillip was confident. I ordered another whiskey and took out a small bottle.

I confidently said, “This is for you, darling,” but she shook her head.

“No, sorry.” Shit, I needed to put in the effort; I grabbed a chair and sat before her.

“What’s your name?” I asked the girl with amber eyes.

“My name is Alice,” she replied.

“You see that guy over there, Alice?” I said, pointing to Phillip. She looked at him, shifted in her seat uncomfortably and glanced back at me.

“Yeah.”

“Well, he’s here to take you somewhere.”

She swallowed hard. “Where?” I saw a glimpse of dread in her eyes.

“To a guy called Mr Ricky, who will teach you how to be a drug mule and whatever else he has planned for you.” I watched as her breathing quickened. “Ease your breathing. Else he will know,” I moved, sipping my drink.

“How do you know this?” She asked me suspiciously.

I took another drink and watched as Phillip stepped outside to answer a phone call,

“Because I’m the delivery guy, and that drink has been drugged.”

Her chest rose and fell hard while her eyes shifted from me to her drink and back up.

“You spiked my drink?” She yelped.

“I don’t want to do this; therefore, I’m telling you. But I have a plan,” she swallowed and looked at me.

“What?”

“I need you to drink that, and when I drop you off, I’ll leave my phone with you, and as soon as you can, you open my phone and find a contact called Lyndon and call it. I will be waiting out back to come in and get you.”

She sat biting her nails. “No fucking way,” she spat.

“Look if you don’t drink that drink,” I pointed, “he will know something is up and he will take you by force and I won’t be able to get you back out once you are in there!” I needed her to know how important this was; her eyes darted from me to the door, watching Phillip walk back in.

She bit at her nails anxiously. “Why me though?”

“Who have you killed lately?” Her eyes widened.

She looked back over at Phillip, “he works for her. Doesn’t he?” She asked, looking back at me, I just nodded. “Fuck it,” she said, picking the glass up and drinking it all. I nodded and rose from my seat.

“You wanna pay our tip?” I yelled across to Phillip, and he nodded and turned to the bartender. In that split moment, he was distracted. I dropped my phone on the floor; it fell at Alice’s feet. I coughed, walked over to Phillip, and turned back to see Alice had already picked it up and hidden it.

“How long, you reckon?” Phillip asked, staring at Alice.

“Not long,” and like magic, she passed out as she stood up from the table. “I’ll get her,” I said, walking over, picking her up, throwing her over my shoulder, and carrying her to the car. I fucking hated every second of this, taking girls even if they had killed someone; I’m sure some of them had good reason.

I laid Alice on the back seat and hopped in beside her. Looking at her, she appeared to be a small, delicate thing. She had black bags under her eyes like she hadn’t slept well. She looked familiar up closely like I had seen her before, but I knew I hadn’t.

The streetlights flickered through the car as Phillip drove us back to the same place. “How many more until Regina is off my back?” I asked, aggravated.

“I’m not sure, but she was happy with the last one,” he stated. I felt sick that this was what made my mother proud of me, not the fact that I won a national spelling bee when I was seven. No, she was proud when I started selling drugs at nine. Fuck her; I won’t lose the best thing that has happened to me forever. I was going to take all the control back.

~

We arrived at Mr Ricky’s residence. I stepped out of the car carrying Alice on my shoulder and approached the same guard who had taken the other girl from me earlier. He escorted Alice inside while Mr. Ricky gave me a nod of gratitude. I returned the nod and got back into the car.

~

As soon as I arrived at the club, I quickly exited Phillip’s car and walked towards my car. I intentionally dropped my keys on the way. I saw Phillip receiving a call and driving away. I picked up the keys and rushed to my car, where Lyndon was already waiting. “Are we good?” he asked me.

“Yes,” I answered, nodding my head. “Let’s go,” I said, putting the key into the ignition and starting the engine of my Chevelle. I shifted the gear and pressed the accelerator, making the car spin around and head back towards Mr Ricky’s place.

Lyndon asked me, “Are you sure you want to proceed with this?” I nodded, determined.

“Regina can’t control me anymore. After we finish this, we’ll leave and go somewhere she can’t find us.” I spoke through gritted teeth. Lyndon said nothing; he sat in the passenger’s seat and cleaned his gun.

We arrived at the large building and parked the car behind it under some trees to stay out of sight.

“Ready?” I asked Lyndon.

He cocked his gun and replied, “Always.”

As we searched for a way in, it quickly became apparent that getting in through the front was impossible.

I held Lyndon’s phone and mumbled nervously, “Come on, Alice.”

A few minutes passed until Lyndon’s phone lit up with my name on the screen like Christmas lights.

# The Great Escape

****

**-Avery-**

I swiped across my phone screen and whispered, “Hello?” to the person on the other end. “Alice?” I asked, hoping it was her.

“Yeah, it’s me,” she replied.

“Are you okay?” I asked anxiously.

“I’m okay for now, but I want out. Where are you?” she asked.

“Just outside. Where are you?” I inquired.

“I don’t know,” she apologized.

“That’s okay. I need you to try and find your way to the back entrance. But before you do, you need to find another girl with bright blue hair. She has to come out with you,” I instructed.

“Why?” Alice asked, confused.

“Please, Alice. There is no time. Find her and get to the back entrance. We will try and find a way in,” I urged.

Alice sighed and hung up the phone.

“What now?” Lyndon asked.

“We need a way in there,” I said, looking at the back door guarded by two men.

I approached the guards, and one of them recognized me. “Avery?” he said, looking confused.

“Hey, yeah, I dropped that girl off earlier. Did you see me drop my phone by any chance?” I asked, pretending to pat my pockets. “I just can’t seem to find it,” I added.

He pushed me back. “No. And if you did, you would have lost it around the front,” he stated, eyeing me suspiciously.

“Oh yeah,” I said, scratching my head and acting forgetful. “Leave!” he yelled. “Or I’ll call Mr. Ricky,” he added, grabbing his phone.

“Hey, no need to—” I began.

“Leave!” he demanded, interrupting me.

*Bang*

The guard held his chest and collapsed on the ground. Lyndon appeared from my side with his gun aimed at the guard. I hadn’t realized he had attached a silencer to his gun, which explained why no other guards were rushing to the scene. I quickly grabbed the guard’s key card and approached the back exits. I swiped the card through the reader, and the door opened.

*Beep.*

The doors opened wide, and we pushed through; another guard approached, saying, “Hey! You’re not allowed in there!”

*Bang, Bang.*

Lyndon set two more rounds into him; I grabbed his gun and ran through the doors ahead. We were headed into a meth lab. Where is Alice? A guard came rushing at Lyndon, pushing him to the ground; another guard came running at me, swinging a punch connecting with my face. Fuck this. “Fuck you!” I spat, punching the guard in his fat face and pushing him back. I jumped on top, digging my knees into his ribs, beating left and right after the other.

*Bang!*

“LYNDON!” I screamed. I grabbed my gun and hit the guard over his head with the heel of the gun, knocking him out.

I jumped up, looking over at Lyndon to find the guard still on top of him,

“Get this asshole off me,” Lyndon let out a yell. Upon hearing him, my lips curved into a smile, and I rushed over to him. I pushed the guard aside and helped Lyndon up. As I looked at the bullet hole in the back of the guard, I realized that neither Lyndon nor I had fired a shot. Confused, we both turned towards the door. That’s when we noticed a strawberry-blonde girl standing there with her arms outstretched, holding a gun.

“Alice!” I said, smiling; she lowered the gun and walked down to us with a bright blue-haired girl following. One look at me, and she started screaming

“YOU.”

“Oi! You want out, then I suggest you shut the hell up,” Lyndon yelled. That moment the blue-haired girl went silent, we heard alarms blaring.

“We need to leave now!” I exclaimed, rushing towards the entrance we had used earlier. We sprinted back to the Chevelle and quickly got in. I turned on the ignition and sped away, leaving tire marks on the road.

On the way out, we passed Phillip driving to Mr. Ricky’s; he saw me and what I had just done, and I saw him. “Shit” I yelled, putting my foot down to make the Chevelle move faster, sending Alice and the others flying backward.

“What’s wrong mate?” Lyndon asked.

Phillip quickly turned the car, skidding across the ground, and put his foot down, quickly catching up to us.

He was sitting right on our ass now, and I knew it would be tough to lose him. Phillip was known for his reckless driving, and he was the guy whenever we needed a getaway driver.

The headlights shone through the back window, nearly blinding me.

“It’s Phillip,” I shouted out.

“I’ll get rid of him,” Lyndon smiled wickedly, pulling his gun out.

“Do not kill him!” I urged. Lyndon just looked at me, but he knew why; he had done me a favour, and I owed him, so with that, I wouldn’t kill him. I drifted the car around the right corner, and Phillip followed closely; Lyndon was hanging out the window, shooting as we went. He climbed back in.

“Fucking missed,” he growled.

“Take the wheel,” I shouted, and Lyndon grabbed the wheel and replaced my foot with his on the accelerator; I wound my window down and hung out it. Lyndon turned the car, and within that second, I shot.

*Pop*

I heard his wheel pop, and his car spun out of control, making him drift off the road and hit a tree. I gritted my teeth, climbed back in, and retook the driving. “Think he survived?” Lyndon questioned me.

“Probably,” I replied, looking into my rear-view mirror.

We returned to the hotel that Lyndon was staying at and went into his room; the blue-haired chick ran for it as soon as the Chevelle door opened. I can’t blame her, but she better run and run far.

I leaned against the bedside table, crossing my arms. “Avery, what are we going to do about your mother?” Lyndon asked, standing next to me.

“Your mother?” Alice asked, confused. Lyndon eyed me and me back to him; I never gave her my name for obvious reasons. “Avery, Anderson?” She slowly said, looking at me with the fear returning to her amber eyes. I looked down and shuffled my feet. “You’re her son, aren’t you?” She said, rising from the bed. “Regina’s son!” She trembled.

I raised my head and looked back at her, nodding.

“Unfortunately, yes,” I sighed.

“Why the fuck would the Queen Pin’s son help me?” She yelled, “Is this some sick ploy!” She pulled the gun out and pointed it at me, directly to my head. In a split second, Lyndon had his to her head.

I stood looking deep into her eyes while she looked back at me. She was pissed or terrified, but I knew she didn’t want to pull that trigger.

“Lower it now or lose your own head!” Lyndon forewarned. She looked back at Lyndon and then back to me.

“Let your pet do all the work while you take the fame?” She questioned; her hair was now all pushed to the front, falling around her face.

“No, and he’s not my pet,” I growled. “But I’m not going to hurt you,” she cocked her head sideways. “Regina is threatening someone I love, and I had to take you and the other girl to ensure she stayed off my back. But I’m done letting her control me. I guess I’m like my father more than I dare to admit,” I explained.

She slowly lowered her gun, and Lyndon did the same, “What do you mean you’re like your dad?”

“My dad wanted out of this life, and on his last job, it went terribly. Someone shot him, and he died doing this. I don’t want to do this anymore,” I sighed, looking down again; this was the first time I had spoken about my dad. I bet he would be proud I turned out more like him than my mother.

I heard a small laugh come from Alice’s lips; it surprised me. I raised my head and watched as she laughed like a crazed person.

I looked at Lyndon, and he just looked back at me and said, “this bitch is crazy!” I turned back to her.

“Bitch couldn’t even tell you the truth!” Alice spouted and had a look of rage that could consume her.

“What are you on about?” I asked.

“She killed him,” She affirmed, staring blankly into my eyes.

“What?”

“That last run he did. She was there, and she took his life with a smile.” She added.

“How do you know this?”

“Because I was there.”

My mouth dropped open “Excuse me?” I said in disbelief. “How could you have been there?” I added.

“Because the last job your dad had to do,” she exhaled, “was to take out my mother.”

“Why would Regina give a shit about your mother?” I said, scratching my face. ‘No offence.”

“Because my mother was the woman your father was going to get out of this life for, they would take off and be a happy family with me.” She placed her hands in front of her.

It took me a moment, but my jaw dropped as she shared my father’s desire for a better life for us. I couldn’t blame him. Standing there, I couldn’t help but stare at the delicate girl before me.

Alice said, “I was hiding behind the couch so Regina couldn’t see me. I was only four at the time, but I remember it all. They had been together for six years.”

My brain struggled to process all of this new information. I had to process it; what did I expect from Regina, who had lied all her fucking life? Interestingly, my mother never told me about my father’s affair. But why would she? She hates being humiliated, which is precisely how she would have felt.

Lyndon asked, “Mate, does that mean that tonight we just…?”

Before he could finish, I interrupted him and said, “Saved my sister?” I stared at her - this delicate, fragile girl who, now I know, looks an awful lot like my father.

I embraced her and held her tightly in my arms. We were standing in an old, dilapidated hotel that smelled of sweat and death. I had just discovered that she was my younger sister. After a few moments, I let go of her and held her at arm’s length. “I’m sorry for what Regina has done to you,” I said sincerely. She gave me a polite smile and shrugged.

“It is what it is, Avery. Besides, she has her time coming to her,” Alice replied.

We fell silent, and the awkwardness between us was palpable. The tension in the air was so thick that it felt like you could cut it with a knife.

Lyndon was cleaning his gun when he broke the silence and said, “Well, this isn’t awkward or anything.”

I turned to Alice and asked her where she was staying, to which she shrugged and replied, “I don’t know, I’ll have to get a hotel. Do you know of any place better than this?” She laughed and scanned the room we were in. I laughed with her; she was right. I never noticed, but the room was covered in a snot-green wallpaper with tears and old blood stains.

“You can stay with me,” I said, watching as her eyes widened in surprise.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Lyndon asked sceptically. I wasn’t sure either, but I needed someone to watch Krystal while I was at work. Regina couldn’t know about Alice either; she would kill her immediately.

“I’m sure,” I nodded.

“Alright then,” she confirmed. “But only if you’re sure,” she added.

“I am,” I reiterated.

Lyndon said, “Good, let’s get out of here then. This place is starting to smell like old feet,” as he walked towards the front door. We reached the apartment and approached the front door. “Mate, how are you going to explain this one to Krystal?” Lyndon asked, gesturing with his head.

“I have no idea,” I confessed. “But Krystal can’t find out about any of this,” I said, turning to Alice. “Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand,” Alice replied with a nod.

# Alice & Lexi



**-Krystal-**

It’s been days since Avery brought her home; seeing him with his little sister warms my heart.

She doesn’t leave the apartment, and I feel she isn’t allowed to leave, like me, which makes me anxious. I know why I can’t go, because of Ben, but why couldn’t she?

“Coffee Krystal?” Alice calls from the kitchen.

“Yes, please,” I smile, sitting at the kitchen table, one foot on the chair with my hands resting on my knee.

She placed the steaming mug on the table and sat next to me,

“Penny for your thoughts?” Alice Asked,

I just looked at her, trying to sort out my thoughts; I needed to know why she couldn’t leave.

Alice looked at me for any clue about what was happening in my head.

“Why don’t you leave the apartment?” I blurted out.

She coughed and gagged on her drink, “Why don’t you?” She replied.

“Ben, he’s the reason I don’t go anywhere without Avery,” I conveyed.

Alice just nodded. “I, too, have someone who doesn’t want to see me. Avery thought it was best if I stayed inside and kept an eye on you,” she admitted. I was not too fond of that. Keeping an eye on me like I’m some kid. I scoffed, and she laughed, “You don’t like someone watching you, do you?”

I looked into her amber eyes, rolled mine, and started laughing, “No, not really.”

“I get that,” Alice said, sipping her coffee.

The front door opened, and Lexi strode over to me and placed herself on my lap,

“Morning beautiful, I brought you a coffee,” she said eyeing the coffee on the table before me.

“Thanks, Lex, but Alice already made me one.”

Lex leaned forward, took a sip of the coffee, and spat it out. “Oh god, no!” She shouted; I couldn’t help but laugh. Lexi got up, grabbing my coffee and walked into the kitchen, tipping it down the sink, and returned it to me. “Have a real coffee,” she said.

I laughed, grabbed the coffee she had bought me, and sipped, “Sorry Alice, this is Lexi. My best friend, and she is known to be a coffee addict.” I smiled and looked back at Alice, who watched Lexi’s every movement. Lexi introduced herself, and Alice just went shy.

“Sorry, sweetheart, I didn’t mean to shit all over your coffee, but Krystal has a taste for the best,” Lexi answered, rubbing her hand on my back and winking at Alice; her little pale face just turned a bright red, blushing. Lexi’s phone rang, and she excused herself from the room; Alice watched her as she left and then turned, looking back down at her coffee cup, smiling.

“How old are you, Alice?”

“24, I know. I don’t look it,” She laughed, looking back at me

“Lexi is quite pretty, isn’t she?”

“She’s beautiful.” Alice answered, blushing at her name.

“You know she’s single right?”

“No?” She shook her head.

“Not going to lie, we thought she was going to get with Lyndon, but I don’t know what happened there, but at the moment, she is single,” I declared.

Alice looked back at her cup, blushing a crimson red; from what I could tell of her, she was a sweet girl who happened to like other girls.

“She’s bisexual,” I grinned while sipping my cup; with those words.

Alice’s face rose, and a childish grin crept across her face, “Really?” She asked.

I just nodded, smiling. “Yeah.”

Lexi returned to the room, “what are we talking about?” She asked, sitting at the table,

“Oh, just a little old you,” I admitted, smiling at her.

“What about me? How amazing I am?” Lexi said flipping her hair back.

“I told Alice that we thought you and Lyndon would get together. But then you didn’t, so I told her how you like men and women.” I love playing Cupid.

“Alright, firstly.” Lexi said, gesturing one with her finger, “me and Lyndon did happen, and it was amazing.” My mouth dropped; I knew it! “Secondly,” she gestured again, “I feel it’s more just a sexual attraction with Lyndon, and lastly, why would you need to tell Alice I’m bisexual?” She finished looking at me; I just nodded towards Alice and then back to her, giving her that look that told her, She’s attracted to you. Lexi just nodded.

“Well, yes, this is true. I am bi, but so are you!” Lexi laughed, pushing my shoulder; Alice’s head shot up.

“Really, does Avery know?” I giggled and looked back at Alice.

“You know, I don’t know; I think I forgot to tell him with everything going on.”

Lexi blurted out, “I bet you didn’t tell him about us in college either?” and took another sip.

Alice was shocked and asked, “What? You and Lexi?”

I shot Lexi a look and pushed her back, then said, “Yeah, it was ages ago and surprisingly, it never hurt our friendship. We know each other’s boundaries and never tried anything once we had partners or if we were interested in someone else.”

Alice asked us, “You guys are so open about it. Aren’t you afraid of what people will think?”

Both of us shook our heads and replied, “No. Besides, who cares what others think?”

Lexi then asked Alice, “Are you a lesbian or bisexual?”

“I have never had a boyfriend, but I have always been attracted to females. So, I guess I am a lesbian,” she said, shrugging and tapping the rim of her cupcake. Lexi got up and walked over to Alice, who kept her head down, still looking at her cupcake. Lexi placed her hand on Alice’s chin, tilted her head up to face her, and Alice started breathing heavily. I could see a crimson blush peak through her cheeks. Lexi leaned in and kissed Alice, who had unconsciously imitated her subtle movements. I heard Alice moan and pull Lexi in, making the kiss deeper.

Lexi asked Alice if she enjoyed it. Alice nodded in stunned silence.

“Then you’re definitely a lesbian,” Lexi stated.

“Holy fuck, that was hot! Do it again!” Lyndon called, standing in the doorway with Avery.

Lexi, Alice, and I couldn’t stop laughing.

~

I was sitting at the end of the bed while Avery was lying near the headrest. Suddenly, I heard him shouting my name, “Krystal? Krystal?” I snapped out of my daydreaming and asked, “huh?”.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

I just nodded, but my thoughts were running wild. “What is it?” he pressed.

“I was wondering, who is Alice hiding from?” I asked him.

He pulled me up by grabbing my leg, and I sat up, leaning on my elbows. Sighing, he said, “It’s best if you don’t know.” His response made me angry, and I was tired of being kept in the dark. I felt like everyone knew what was happening except me. I huffed, got up from the bed, and started to throw my clothes on. “Krystal?” He shouted.

“I’m done being left in the dark, Avery! You won’t tell me about your mother, Alice, or even Emilia! I understand that you have reasons for keeping secrets, but I feel like you’re hiding things from me, and I won’t be with someone who keeps me in the dark!” The anger was getting the better of me.

“Krystal,” he continued while he was putting on his jeans. “I want to tell you everything, but it’s,” he began, reaching for my arm, but I pulled away.

“But nothing! I’m done with it, Avery. I won’t be in another relationship where I’m lied to!” I turned on my heel and walked out the door, slamming it behind me.

~

I was lying on the couch and repeatedly playing things in my mind; I missed home. I miss my children being with me all the time. fuck, I missed my job; I might take some photos tomorrow. I mean, what harm could it do? Ben has no idea where I am, and we haven’t heard from him in ages; I bet the restraining order worked, and he’s left me alone. I started to feel the sleep sneak into my mind, but I tried to fight it, though my eyes flicked open and shut every time they focused on Lucas’s little brown Teddy bear, and then sleep consumed me.

I awoke to Lexi shaking me. “Krystal, why are you out here?”

I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes and checked the time: 10:15. I slept in. “Kry, why aren’t you in bed with Avery?” She asked again.

“We fought.”

“I’m sure you guys will be okay, what was it about?”

“I’m sick of being kept in the dark about everything.” She just nodded. “I’ll go up and try and talk to him,” I said, standing up and heading upstairs to mine and Avery’s room. I practiced what I would say in my head repeatedly; I didn’t want to lose this man, but I didn’t like to have kept secrets from me either, not anymore.

I pushed the door open to find that Avery had made the bed and was nowhere to be seen in the room. I walked over to the side of the bed and found a note on the marble bedside table.

“I’m so sorry, Krystal; I never wanted to keep secrets from you. But I promise, princess, I will fix this, and then I will tell you everything once it’s safe, but please, do not leave; Alice has been put in charge of watching you.” My heart sank when I read the note; I felt sick and like I would vomit. I put my hand to my mouth to try and stop it, but nothing came up. I felt the tears well in my eyes, but I pushed them back; this was his choice. he could have just told me what was happening but left instead. I clutched my chest and sat on the bed where we had been a few hours earlier.

~

Hours passed, and I sat on the couch playing with my phone, trying to buy the time. Alice kept checking in with me. She’s sweet, but I am so fucking annoyed; someone younger than me has been in charge of me, and I want out. Out of this place, out of the state. I want to get my kids and go.

“Hey Kry?” Alice spoke, approaching me

“Yeah,” I replied, looking at her

“I know I’m supposed to be watching you, but do you think I could duck out quickly? Thirty minutes tops?” I tried hard not to smile; this was it. If I wanted out, I could leave while she was gone; I grabbed my phone.

“Yeah, that’s fine.”

“Ah, maybe I shouldn’t, Avery would kill me,” Alice said, second-guessing herself. Shit! I needed her to leave. I texted Nancy asking if she could come over, and she replied.

“It’s okay, Alice, you can go; I’m waiting on Nancy to come over anyway.” I smiled; Nancy was coming over, but what Alice didn’t know was as soon as she got here, I was gone.

“Are you sure?” Alice asked again.

I nodded. “I’m positive,” I assured her.

“Okay, thank you. I’ll be back soon,” Alice replied, grabbing her jacket off the hook and throwing it on, walking out the door.

As soon as the door closed, I ran upstairs, dressed, and grabbed my camera; all I wanted was some time away from this place, being myself and doing what I loved.

# The Distraction

****

**-Avery-**

Lyndon and I sat in my Chevelle, waiting for Phillip to show up, “Are you sure you want to do this?” I asked Lyndon, “Of course, mate,” Lyndon assured me, and Phillip pulled up in his black SUV, getting out of the car and leaning on it.

“Alright, now let’s show this prick,” Lyndon said, grabbing his gun and opening the door.

“What’s this all about?” I asked Phillip, who was staring at us with his arms crossed.

“Why did we need to meet all the way out in the middle of fuck knows where?” Lyndon chimed in.

“Phillip finally spoke, “Because I need it to be private.”

“Alright, shit turd, it’s private. Spill it,” Lyndon snapped.

“I just want to say, I’m sorry, Avery. I never wanted to be a part of this. And I never wanted to wish your girl harm,” he spoke softly this time.

“No harm will come to her. I’ll make sure of it,” I replied. “Phillip, has Regina told you something?” I asked, scratching an itch on the side of my face. He went quiet and looked down at his foot, kicking his black boot into the dirt and then back up to me.

“Yeah, she has,” he admitted.

“So why are you here with us?” I questioned him.

Whatever Regina has asked must be far from Phillip’s morals, because he wouldn’t risk meeting us out here, not like this. He just stopped and looked me dead in the eyes; at that moment, I felt anxious, like he was about to say something horrible.

“I’m the distraction,” Phillip finally admitted.

My heart jumped. “What?!” Lyndon snapped. “What do you mean?” He repeated, but my eyes widened, and my face fell. I knew exactly what he meant.

“Krystal!” I yelled and turned on my heel, running towards the car. Lyndon was behind me like always. I jumped into it and started the Chevelle, bringing her to life. The engine roared with life, and I put my foot down, taking off and leaving dust.

“Please be okay! Please be okay! Please be okay!” I kept repeating over and over in my head while I drove towards the city.

# I Welcomed The Darkness



**-Krystal-**

I heard someone knocking on the front door as I descended the stairs. I quickly made my way down, taking two steps at a time, and pulled the door open with a massive smile. “Nancy!” I exclaimed in excitement. However, when I looked at the person standing there, my smile faded, and a lump formed in my throat. It was hard to swallow.

“Hello, Pretty Lady,” his deep voice reverberated. His blue eyes had a cold stare. He looked unkempt and hadn’t shaved in days.

“Ben,” I whispered. His smile grew wider and darker as he lunged forward towards me, but I reacted by pushing the door shut. He managed to wedge his foot inside the door, preventing me from closing it. He pressed harder on the door and sent me flying backwards, causing the door to open wide.

I ran to the kitchen to grab a knife from the block. “STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!” I screamed as loud as I could, holding the knife out and pointing it at him; all I heard was a dark laugh come from his throat.

He pulled his gun out from behind his back and pointed it at me, “Has nobody told you never to bring a knife to a gunfight?”

How could our marriage come to this? I was standing in our new home, holding a knife at my ex-husband while he held his gun. He wouldn’t do it. Would he?

He stepped forward, and I swung the knife, throwing myself at him.

*BANG.*

All I felt was a wetness; it started dripping down my side. I looked down to find myself bleeding; the bullet entered beside my ribs. I was still standing; Ben ran towards me and grabbed me by my hair, pulling me down so I couldn’t see. I created a fist and punched into his stomach. He let go of my hair, and I stood up and scratched at his face. He grasped at the blood on his face and then hit me in the cheek, striking me and bringing me to my knees.

“You’re not going to win this, Krystal,” I heard him hiss.

“Fuck you,” I spat.

I saw his hand come down and felt the heel of the gun slam into the back of my head.

I was lying on the kitchen floor, unaware and unconscious.

~

All I can hear is my own heart beating faster and faster. It is like my heart is sitting in my ears. I’m stuck somewhere I can’t see; I can feel the silk fabric over my eyes. I tried to listen; all I could hear was the busy city over my heartbeat. What was happening? Where am I? I started to cry; I felt the sting of my tears slowly sliding down my cheek. I was hurt; I hadn’t noticed that before. My adrenaline must be wearing off.

I tried to pull my hands free, but the pinch of the steel handcuffs hurt. I tried my legs and felt the rope pressing against them. My hands are above my head, and I feel the cold of what I think is concrete on my back; I am lying down. Why can’t I remember what happened? I tried to scream, but the cloth in my mouth muffled the sound; all I could think about was my kids and Avery. They had to be wondering where I was.

I sat there for what seemed like hours; who could tell? All I could see was black. I felt woozy and knew I was bleeding. I could feel the wetness soaking into my side, making my shirt stick to me. It was quiet.

I heard a car pull up, and I started to try and scream out for help. Someone was there; whoever it was could help. “Help!” I screamed, still muffled by the cloth.

*Bang.*

The door shut, and I heard footsteps. They slowly walked towards me, “Help!” I yelled again.

*Slap!*

A hard hand came bearing down across my face. “Be quiet, you stupid cunt,” He hissed. I knew that voice. No, he can’t be behind this; I felt him next to me, please God, please don’t let it be him. He yanked the blindfold off, and his cold blue eyes greeted me, “I told you it would get worse,” he sneered. I pleaded as much as possible, and he removed the cloth from my mouth.

“Please, Ben, don’t do this,” I begged.

“Filthy whores need to know their place,” he said. “Plus, if I get rid of you and that pretty boy of yours, I’ve been offered a very nice reward,” Ben explained. His words rang through my ears: Get rid of you and your pretty boy. Avery, he meant Avery.

“Please don’t hurt him or the kids, Ben,” I pleaded.

“The kids? You think I’d hurt the kids?” He scoffed and knelt in front of me. “I’d never hurt my children, Krystal,” Ben said plainly. The tears kept dripping down my face. He raised his hand to stroke my face, so I pulled away; he clutched my face and pulled me to look at him. “I told you to take me back. I threw myself at you, and what did I get?” He asked, I spat at him. “Nothing,” He wiped the spit from his face and hit me across my face again. I cried out in pain.

“HELP!” I screamed.

“Scream as loud as you want,” he said, rising. “No one will hear you.” As my vision returned, I took in my surroundings; I was in a large concrete building with concrete flooring. My hands were cuffed and attached to a chain fastened to the wall. Ben had tied my legs to a metal anchor on the floor. I could hear the sounds of the city outside, including cars, trucks, and nearby trains. Ben had told me that he used to play around the train tracks when he was a child.

“What will happen to the kids after you’re done with me?” I asked him.

“They’re my kids, Krystal. I’ll take this new job, get a nice house, and the kids will live with me. They won’t think about you because Nancy will be with them.” I needed clarification.

“Nancy? What does she have to do with all of this?” A sinister smile slowly spread across Ben’s face.

“You still haven’t figured it out, have you?” he asked me. I stared ahead, not understanding.

“What are you talking about?”

“Nancy was keeping an eye on you for me. She would let me know when you left or what time you got home. She even gave one of your kids a teddy bear, but you didn’t know it had a camera in it,” he whispered, his face close to mine. I gasped in shock. How could I have let Nancy slip by me?

“Why did she do all that?” I asked, turning to him.

“For love,” he replied.

I scoffed, “You and Nancy?” He nodded slowly. “Why did this all have to happen then?”

“Well, Nancy wants to be with me, but the problem is, I want you.” He said, lifting his hand and stroking my face again. “I’ve always wanted you,” he said, pushing a strand of hair away. “But you’re spoiled now, ever since that Queen Pin’s kid touched you.”

“What?”

“Oh, I thought he had told you everything. I guess not,” Ben stated.

“What the fuck are you talking about Benjamin?”

“Avery Anderson is the son of Regina Anderson, who is known as the Co-Founder of Perspective Building Co., but that’s just a cover for what they do; she is a Queen Pin; she runs the show, slings drugs left and right, kills people who don’t fall into line” my mouth just dropped further, this can’t be true. “Avery is her son, the one who has to do her dirty work, beat up people run the drugs, kill people as well as kidnap young women.”

“No, Avery would never do that!” I refused to believe him.

“Really?” He asked, “Have you met his mother? Did he introduce you to her? Or what about that beautiful Alice? Bet he hasn’t told you how he came to find her?” He added.

I couldn’t move; all I could do was cry. How could Ben know so much about Avery and his mother, and I knew nothing? I bit my bottom lip, trying to pull my thoughts together. My chest was pounding so hard that I felt like I would be sick. Ben had to lie to get under my skin; I turned my attention back to Ben, who was sitting there looking me over.

“So what are you waiting for?” I asked; he gave me a puzzled look, “If you’re going to kill me, then just fucking do it because I’d rather be dead than have to look at your fucking face for one minute longer,” I screamed.

*Whack!*

His fists hit me in the face, one after the other. I felt my lip split, and once I opened my eyes again, one of my eyes had blurry vision. “Fuck you, Ben, just do it,” I whispered, looking straight ahead; I had to let him know he didn’t control me, and I had no fear of him.

He grabbed my chin and tilted my head his way, “Don’t worry, Kry, I’ll get there, but first, I want to make sure Avery suffers,” he said, slipping a finger from my face to my chest. I jolted under his touch.

“Don’t touch me!” I yelled.

“Avery might have ruined you, Krystal, but I’ll leave my mark on you for when he finds your body,” Ben said with sin in his eyes. My fear was there more than ever now; I’d never seen Ben this dark.

He brought his body over top of mine, pushed my legs apart with his knees, and kneeled in between them, looking down at my body.

“Ben, please don’t,” panic sank into my voice. I watched as his cold blue eyes made their way down, undressing me; he undid the buttons on my shirt and just sat in front of me, looking.

“You may be spoilt. But the last thing you’ll be is mine,” he proclaimed.

He leaned closer, placing his lips on mine. I pushed my face away, but he grabbed it, pulling it back. He slid his tongue into my mouth, and I bit down. He screamed in pain, holding his mouth, “You fucking bitch!”

“Get off of me!” I cried, jerking my legs, trying to get them free. He punched me in the face once more.

“Fucking do that again, and I’ll slit your throat and then fuck your corpse,” he hissed. I just looked out the window, tears streaming down my face. This couldn’t be happening, and it couldn’t be happening from the man I used to call my husband.

I felt him pull my bra aside and touch my breasts, pulling and twisting. His skin on mine made it feel like someone was pouring acid onto my skin, and I was burning. I felt his hand slide up my thigh and under my skirt, and his fingers pushed against me. I jolted and tried to push him off once more.

“Please! Please! Don’t, Ben! Please,” I cried out, screaming, tears rolling down my face. Ben snarled at me, ripping my underwear to the side, sat back up, and undone his pants. I felt him hold himself above me, and I could feel him inside my leg. I could taste vomit; I couldn’t hold it down; I cried so hard I made myself vomit.

“Fucking disgusting bitch”, Ben said, displeased. I had hoped that act would make him stop, but in a blink, he pushed himself into me, and I screamed in excruciating pain; I could feel him tearing me as he slid in and out of me. I tried to block it out, and he grabbed me by my neck with one hand. He started to squeeze hard while he was raping me. His hold around my neck had become even tighter, and he pushed back into me deeper, still and finished. Then he released his grip on my neck and got up. I laid there still, covered in blood, sweat, vomit, and now him. “I’ll be back soon,” he said, leaving for the front door and closing it behind him.

I just laid there, crying. Sobbing, I kicked my legs to see if I could get them free.

“I can’t die here”, I yelled, kicking; I got one leg free and the other. I looked up at my hands; how would I get out of these? I thought to myself.

I heard the door open again, and Ben returned, “Off somewhere, are we?” He asked while looking at my legs free. I sat up, pulling myself against the wall.

Ben came over to me and pulled at my leg, trying to pull me back down; I jerked and kicked until finally, I kicked him in the face, and he let go to check his lip. “I’m going to enjoy killing you,” he huffed and came towards me with a hand raised; he grabbed me by my head and pushed it back into the concrete wall.

I was now dizzy and sure I had a concussion. Ben stopped when his phone rang. He answered it and then hung up. “I’ll be back for you soon,” he said, placing the cloth back into my mouth and walking out the door. I heard his car pull away as I sat up against the wall. My breathing was more demanding now, and I was still bleeding from the wound on my side; this was where my life would end; my children would grow up with a woman as their mother who helped kill me. I sobbed even more until, eventually, I welcomed the darkness.

# It Was The Teddy Bear

****

**-Avery-**

“Alice, you were responsible for her safety, and you failed. Explain yourself!” I grabbed her and pushed her against the wall, pinning her to it, “fuck you, Alice, I gave you one job!”

“Hey, get off of her!” Lexi yelled, pushing me away from my little sister.

“No,” I roared. “Did you do this? Were you working for Regina?” I accused Alice, it could be possible, I barely knew this girl and I trusted her.

“This is what you think of me?” Alice asked, hurt evident in her voice. “How could you even begin to believe that, Avery?”

“Look, I’ve known Krystal longer than you, and I’m not trying to kill your little sister over it. Krystal can be pretty convincing when she needs to be,” Lexi added.

Alice just looked at Lexi. “Thank you”, she whispered. I pulled myself away from them and searched the apartment for clues or anything that would point us in the right direction to find her! Nothing, I couldn’t find more than the blood on the kitchen floor and the open door. I was so angry that I grabbed the little teddy bear from the couch, tore its head off, and threw it into two pieces. After taking a deep breath, I ran my hands through my hair and sat on the arm of the couch.

I looked down at the broken teddy bear and huffed “shit.” Then, I stood up and walked over to pick up the teddy bear I had to replace before Lucas returned home.

Upon closer inspection, I noticed a cord protruding from the teddy bear’s neck. I tugged at it and discovered it was connected to the bear’s eyes. What the actual fuck! This was a camera this whole fucking time.

“Lyndon!” I shouted, holding the teddy bear’s head and the dangling cords in my hands, “Get in here now! I think I know who took her!” I heard his footsteps approaching.

“What is it, mate?” Lyndon asked, looking at me with concern. I showed him the teddy with the lose cords.

“Does this look like something my mother would do?” I asked, gesturing towards the teddy bear.

“If she did, it’s definitely something new,” Lyndon replied, sitting beside me.

“How does Regina know Nancy?” I asked him.

“Who’s Nancy?” Lyndon asked, looking confused.

“The babysitter,” I reminded him.

“I don’t think Regina would know who the babysitter is,” Lyndon replied.

“No, but Ben does!” I exclaimed.

“Krystal never hired a new babysitter, as the kids liked Nancy,” I added.

“The night of your girl’s car fire, you said he knew the kids weren’t there,” Lyndon pointed out.

I nodded. “Yes, because Krystal took them to Lexi’s, and Ben is with Nancy!” I realised.

I jumped up and ran out of the room, with Lyndon following me. “Alice!” I shouted.

“What?” she asked, looking surprised.

“Why did Krystal ask you to leave?” I demanded.

Alice stared at me; afraid I might hurt her. “She told me to leave because Nancy would be here soon,” she finally admitted.

“I knew it!” I yelled, pointing at Alice. She just looked confused.

I returned to the room, grabbed the teddy bear, and returned it to show them the hidden camera. “This teddy bear belongs to Lucas,” I said.

Alice and Lexi looked even more confused. “So?” Lexi asked.

“Why would Krystal put a camera in it, then?” I asked, frustrated.

“I don’t think Krystal would, that shit is creepy,” Lexi confessed.

“Exactly,” I agreed, gesturing towards Lexi. “Besides, Lucas got that teddy bear from Nancy, and I remember the day she gave it to him.”

“Why would Nancy give Lucas a teddy bear with a camera in it?” Lexi asked, placing her hand on Alice’s.

“Because Nancy was working for someone,” Alice said.

I nodded. “Exactly, Ben, he must have paid her off, or fuck knows, but she has been working for him this whole time.”

Alice asked, “So, I leave, Nancy comes and then what? Has Ben come in and taken Krystal?”

I replied, “Honestly, I’m not too sure, but I’m going to get Krystal back.”

“What’s going on?” Lyndon asked as I paced back and forth in the living room.

“We need to find her. I have to make a phone call,” I said, walking up to the bedroom where we had slept the night before.

I pulled my phone from my jeans pocket and quickly found Phillip’s contact on my list. I pressed the call button, and Phillip answered on the other end.

“Avery, I take it she’s gone?” Phillip asked. What a cockhead, he knew, and he could have told me, and he didn’t!

“Yes,” I snapped, “where the fuck is she?”

“I don’t know,” Phillip answered softly.

“Don’t fucking lie to me! You were the distraction, and you knew this was going to happen. How did you know Ben was going to take her?”

“Because Regina ordered it.”

I felt a sudden weight in my chest and a sharp pang in my gut, “Regina is paying Ben?” I asked, my voice firm and unwavering.

“Yes, Avery,” came the reply. “And if he succeeds in getting rid of both you and her, he’ll be rewarded with a luxurious house and a huge pay check.”

“You knew! This whole fucking time!’

“I’m sorry,” Phillip apologized.

“Don’t fucking tell me your sorry. You told me you didn’t want this to happen again, so why did you let it?” I raged through the phone; if he were before me, I would have killed him with my bare hands.

“I had to let him take her. Regina had my daughter and wouldn’t let her go until she got your girl. It was a price for the girls you took back from Mr. Ricky. I had to pay for it,” Phillip said gently.

“I’m sorry,” I sighed, I implored him, “Do you know where he has taken her?”

“No, I don’t,” he admitted. I sunk back against the wall behind me, not saying a word. Phillip added, “I will try and find out. Now that I have my little girl back, I’ll do everything possible to find out. But I must go into hiding and get rid of my phone. I’ll buy a burner so she can’t track me, and I’ll call you back soon.” With a click, Phillip hung up the phone. We all sat in the living room, surrounding my phone in desperation, hoping we would find Krystal before it was too late.

Alice asked softly, “Do you think he’s trying to find out?”

I growled, “He has to be.”

Lyndon assured me, “We’ll get her back mate. If he doesn’t call back soon, then I will call everyone I know.”

It didn’t help; my thoughts ran, and they all ran to the same place, to her, what he was doing to her, and if he hurt her. I could feel my blood boiling again just thinking about her alone with him.

“Fuck this,” I huffed, reaching for my phone.

*Bleep.*

I felt my phone vibrate in my hand as soon as I picked it up. The screen showed “no caller ID”; I knew it had to be him. I swiped across and put it on speakerphone so everyone could hear.

“Hello?” I answered.

“Avery, it’s Phillip. I got some details, but not much. One of Regina’s men told me that he had her somewhere near trains. He wasn’t sure where, but whenever he made contact, they could always hear a train nearby. And whenever he spoke, it echoed,” Phillip announced. “I hope that helps,” he added.

“Thank you.”

“You owe me, just remember that Anderson,” Phillip said before hanging up the phone.

“Okay, so he’s taken her somewhere near trains?”

“That could be literally anywhere,” Lyndon scoffed.

“I know,” I agreed.

Lexi gasped in surprise. “Wait? Didn’t he say it echoed when they spoke to him?” I nodded my head in agreement. “That shithead has taken her to his old warehouse just behind the train station,” Lexi exclaimed.

“How do you know this?” I asked with curiosity.

“Because when they first got together, we all went up there. Krystal never went inside, but Ben and I did. It was an old concrete building that echoed whenever we spoke. Trains made that place rumble!” Lexi explained.

My heart was pounding, and I knew I had to act fast. “Do you know the address?!” I begged her.

“Of course I do! Give me your phone,” she said, holding out her hand. I handed it to her, and she quickly opened the maps app. After hitting the “start route” button, she returned it to me. “There, go and bring our girl home!” she said with determination.

I pocketed my phone and nodded at Lyndon, who had already drawn his gun. “Let’s go, mate,” he said.

We ran down to the garage and jumped into the Chevelle. I put it into gear and pushed my foot down on the accelerator. The Chevelle roared to life, and we took off onto Main Street. I listened to the GPS as instructed, “Turn left here.” I pulled onto the steering wheel and drifted the Chevelle left around the corner. “In 800 meters, continue straight,” the robotic voice said, breaking the silence between me and Lyndon. I pushed my foot harder and slammed the Chevelle into the next gear, hearing the engine getting louder and the outside world becoming a blur. My mind was set on her and her alone; I would call her back and kill anyone who hurt her.

# Click,Click



**-Krystal-**

I was trapped inside the same cold, concrete warehouse upon regaining consciousness. Although disoriented, I felt relieved to be alive.

I searched the room for Ben, but he was nowhere to be found. My camera lay abandoned on a chair, and a sudden dread washed over me, I knew I had to leave immediately, summoning all my strength, I tugged on the cold metal handcuffs that bound me. I winced in pain as the steel bit into the sides of my hand. I pushed my head against the wall and pulled again, tears streaming down my face. Suddenly, Ben stepped out from behind the shadows, announcing that I was finally awake. My heart sank as I realized what was happening. “Please, Ben,” I pleaded, “leave me alone. I can’t do this anymore.” But Ben persisted, asking me if I remembered our first meeting. Through my tears, I answered that I did. “You were a gentle boy,” I said, “who never let anyone, including your friends, hurt me.” Ben grabbed for my camera.

*Click.*

Ben took a photo of me, but I shielded my eyes from the flash, and he moved to the other side.

*Click.*

Another flash blinded me. “Actually, we met before,” Ben said calmly.

“What?” I asked, looking right at him.

*Click.*

The camera flashed again. “I saw you on the beach with that whore of friend before you saw me,” he said.

*Click, Click.*

I was in a dark room, and all I could see were flashes of white. Ben kept moving back and forth around me, and I felt him getting closer. He knelt beside me and declared, “I saw you that day, and that was the moment I decided you would be mine and mine alone. I was just going to take you that night, but then I thought I’d see what you were like, and once you pushed Jake away, I needed to have you even more, all those years with you, and I still couldn’t be the man I wanted to be with you. Or do the things I wanted to do. You never opened to me like you did to that drug lord.” He got closer to me, grabbing my handcuffs and undoing them but grabbing hold of my wrist, pulling me up to my feet, and pushing me hard against the wall.

“I have seen the way you were with him, how he looks at you, you him. I watched as you fucked him.” He whispered into my ear and pushed his finger into the wound on my side. The pain was terrible but bearable; I needed to escape whatever he had next. He had my hands free; one slip up, and I could run. He pushed me hard against the wall and started to put the camera on the floor; this was it. I kicked at him, making him drop the camera, and tried to run, but my body wasn’t as fast as my mind thought it was; my wounds were painful, and within seconds, he was on me again, flinging me against the hard wall, my face was about to hit when I pushed my hands out to stop the impact, I heard a car rumble in the driveway, I knew that sound, it was Avery! I turned to Ben, who was now watching the front door. I started laughing.

“You are so fucked now,” Ben’s face contorted, and I felt the sting of his hand across my face once more; he grabbed me and pulled me close, my back on his stomach and pulled a knife out of his back pocket.

# Please Don’t Leave Me

****

**-Avery-**

I burst through the metal door and saw Ben holding a knife to Krystal’s neck.

“One more step, and I’ll do it!” Ben hissed through his gritted teeth. I had my gun in my hand, pointing towards him, “Drop it, or I’ll slit her throat,” he threatened. His voice trembled while beads of sweat formed on his forehead.

I yelled, “Don’t!” My voice cracked with fear. I slowly lowered the gun, tossed it on the slick concrete floor, and put my hands back up, showing a sign of mercy.

“Please let her go. Consider your children, Ben. They need their mother.” I tried to reason with him. Ben appeared to be in extreme agitation, and his behaviour was erratic. He was holding a knife to the throat of the woman he loved. His eyes were a deep shade of blue, with a hint of insanity lurking within them.

“My children will be with me, and they will have a mother,” he said, attempting to reassure me.

I sighed and said, “Let her go, and you can have me.” I pleaded with him, but he refused, and Krystal began to scream.

“No! Avery!” she shouted before Ben swiftly covered her mouth with his hand, trying to quiet her down.

“Shut up whore!” He snapped.

I took a small step towards them; every urge in me wanted to reach forward and kill him with my bare hands, but I couldn’t risk that, not now, not with her. “You promise?” Ben asked.

“Of course, I promise,” I replied.

“You really love her?” He questioned me, giving me a scrutinizing look as I moved closer.

“I really do,” I said softly.

“Fine,” Ben finally said, and relief washed over me. I reached my arm out for Krystal.

“The kids will have a mother,” Ben muttered. I took another step closer, “just not her!” he added, smirking at me as he brought that shiny metal knife across her throat.

“NO!!” I let out a bone-chilling yell, and within an instant, I pulled my second gun from behind my back, pointed, and shot him.

Ben’s body fell to the ground hard. I ran over, grasped Krystal, and covered her throat, pushing down hard to try and stop the bleeding; she just looked at me with panic-filling her beautiful hazel eyes.

“Ave,” she tried to say.

“Shh, don’t speak! LYNDON!” I screamed. Within a second, he was by my side; Krystal was now unconscious.

“Get her and let’s go,” Lyndon said.

I couldn’t move. This couldn’t be happening again! I was frozen, looking at the love of my life dying. “NOW, AVERY!” Lyndon roared, and I quickly did what he said; I picked her up, carrying her delicate body in my arms, and I could still feel a heartbeat.

“PLEASE DON’T LEAVE ME,” I screamed. As I reached the front of the old concrete warehouse, I found Lyndon waiting with the back door opened. I shouted, “GO!” and quickly closed the door behind me. Without wasting time, Lyndon accelerated the Chevelle, and we left the warehouse, the tires squealing on the road.

The whole drive to the hospital, all I could hear was ringing in my ears while my hand was still pushed on her throat, covered in her blood. I could feel her pulse fading quickly. I could not dare take my eyes off her. How could I let this happen? I promised to protect her. I bent down and whispered, “Please, Krystal, I need you. I promise if you stay with me, we will leave all this behind; come on, princess!” I begged, hoping for some response.

Lyndon pulled up to the hospital emergency entrance and ran inside ahead of me. I could hear him from the car. “HELP! We need a doctor! Get me a FUCKING DOCTOR NOW!” I pulled Krystal from the car and carried her into the emergency room, where I found Lyndon threatening a nurse. As soon as she saw Krystal in my arms, she called for a doctor, and they all came rushing and took her out of my arms and onto a bed, where they ran her through the operating room doors.

I got stopped by the nurse, “please save her!” I whispered with tears in my eyes.

She nodded, “We’re going to try and do everything we can.”

“No,” I yelled, punching the side of the wall. “You must Save her!” I added.

The nurse tried to calm me down, “Sir, we will do everything we can, but we need you to stay calm, or we will remove you from the hospital,” she cautioned.

I nodded, “I’m sorry,” and she pointed me to the waiting area.

I just sat staring at the cold hospital floor under my feet; I shifted to looking at my hands, which still had her blood on them. It should have been his, I shot him, but I don’t know if I killed him; I hope I killed him.

“Think he’s dead?” Lyndon asked like he was reading my mind; I just sat back and gave him a look.

“I hope so, but I also hope he’s not, so I can go and finish the job,” I growled.

“I’ll send someone by to see if there is a body,” he insisted, I just gave him a nod, and he got up to make the phone call.

~

Hours passed with no news on Krystal. I nervously tapped my foot against the plain hospital wall. I am fucking nervous.

“Here, mate,” Lyndon handed me a cup of coffee as he interrupted my thoughts and sat beside me. I took a small sip and almost immediately spat it out.

“This shit is disgusting,” I said after forcing a swallow down,

“Yeah, if Lexi were here, she’d probably sue the hospital for their shitty coffee,” Lyndon joked; a small smile came across my lips.

“Yeah,” I agreed.

“I’d do more than sue,” Lexi said, rounding the corner holding a tray with four cups of coffee in her hand and Alice behind her. “I would have them hung,” she added, laughing,

“What are you doing here?” I asked, standing up.

Alice hugged me and said, “I’m so sorry.” I took a deep breath and sighed.

“I shouldn’t have put my hands on you, I am sorry,” I admitted, sinking into her embrace.

“It’s okay, I know you were scared,” she quickly responded.

“Here, real coffee,” Lexi said. I smiled politely and took the coffee cup, sitting back in my seat. I sipped the coffee and thought Lexi knew how to make a good cup. I leaned my head back and closed my eyes. Suddenly, I felt like I was back in that elevator with Krystal, remembering how she smiled and stood there biting her lip. She smelled of honey and vanilla, which made my mouth water and my heart race.

“Excuse me, sir?” I heard someone say. Startled, I quickly sat up in my seat.

“Yes?” I responded, my heart racing. “Are you Miss Callie’s partner?” asked the blonde, tired-looking doctor standing before me.

I nodded anxiously, “Yes, is she okay?”

The doctor looked down at his clasped hands before looking back up at me, “When you brought her in, she had life-threatening injuries.” My throat constricted, making it difficult to swallow. I could feel Lyndon, Lexi, and Alice standing behind me, their eyes fixed on the doctor.

“But is she okay now?” I asked, desperate for good news.

The doctor took a deep breath before letting out a small sigh, “She’s stable for now, but we’ll need to keep a close eye on her.” Relieved that she was alive, I took a deep breath and thanked the doctor. “It was touch and go; she lost a lot of blood, but luckily, the knife missed all the main arteries and cartilage. She will have scarring, but she will live.” Relief washed over me, and I could breathe again.

“Oh, thank god,” I blurted out. I overheard Lyndon and Lexi embracing each other while Alice approached me and hugged my side. “Can I see her?” I asked.

“Yes, but only one at a time. She’s still feeling drowsy from all the sedation,” he replied. I nodded in agreement and followed him to catch a glimpse of Krystal.

I walked into Krystal’s hospital room to find her lying on the bed; although her neck was covered with a clean, thick bandage, I knew she was a mess underneath, her face was swollen and bruised. I got closer to inspect her. She had bruising on her face, and her lip was busted; she had a large gauze bandage on her side where he had stabbed her. I could feel the tears swell in my eyes as I sat next to her, taking her hand and planting a soft kiss on it.

“I’m so sorry, princess,” I whispered, crying. I’m not a man to cry, but fuck, it hurts seeing her like this. She didn’t deserve this; I ran my fingers over the knuckles on her hand.

“Ave-ry?” Krystal strained.

“Shh, princess. I’m here,” I assured her.

“Avery,” she finally spoke while opening her hazel eyes.

My emerald green eyes came to a stop. Seeing Krystal’s beautiful eyes, a tear rolled down my face. “I should have protected you!” I insisted, and I felt her little hand wrap around mine.

“It’s not your fault,” Krystal said. “It’s not like you knew this was going to happen,” she added.

My hands got clammy, but I did know I got told that Regina was on to me, and I still didn’t pull away; Krystal deserved to know the truth.

“Krystal, I have to tell you,” She interpreted me with a wave of her hand.

“That your mother wanted me dead?” I could feel her tone growing harsh as she pulled her other hand away from mine; she knew; how could she know? Confusion washed over my face, and she knew what I was thinking. “Ben told me everything,” she said, clearing her throat.

My mouth widened into a hard line, that fucking bastard! Of course, he would throw me under the fucking bus, no I can’t think like that, this is my fault, I knew and I still stayed.

I released a small sigh to push the anger from my lungs and hung my head at her, “Krystal, I was going to tell you, I swear.” I returned my head to look at her eyes; they were now narrowed. I needed her to know she could trust me. “I wanted you to be safe first, and then I was going to deal with Regina,” I softly spoke, “She was the one who killed Emilia,” I admitted with defeat. I hung my head again, pained, thinking about how close it was tonight. I heard a small sigh and a wince as she shifted in the bed. I shot my eyes up to see Krystal sitting up on the mattress. “You shouldn’t be moving,” I warned; she ignored me and grabbed my shirt collar, pulling me closer and planting her sweet lips on mine. It took me a minute to realize that she was forgiving me. My lips found hers. I placed my hands on both sides of her face, embracing her and looking deep into her eyes, “I promise you now, princess, I won’t let anyone hurt you again!” I promised, kissing her forehead. I felt her body begin to shake, and I heard her sob. My heart ached, but all I could do was pull her into my chest and hold her tight; this time, I’d never let her go.

# Get Me Out Of Here



**-Krystal-**

It’s been over three weeks, and I’m still stuck in this stupid hospital. I’m so sick of seeing these plain green walls; now and then, I get distracted by the alarms ringing from one of the patients passing away, poor people. I hate to think I would die here, but I am safer here than anywhere else. My mind sped back to that old concrete warehouse, and a shiver ran down my spine; I shook my head to get rid of that thought. I never wanted to go back there.

When Lyndon returned to the warehouse, Ben was gone; there was evidence of him being there because of the blood stain on the concrete where he was standing when Avery shot him; there was also evidence of me being there, a lot of it. It made me sick thinking that he was still out there and even sicker that Avery’s mother was paying Ben to kill Avery and me; she shouldn’t have trusted him. He couldn’t even cut my throat correctly; I thought as I ran my fingers over the now scarred skin that ran across my neck.

My thoughts were interrupted when a young doctor came in; he attended to me the whole time I’d been there. He had dark black hair that shimmered when he moved under the lights with the prettiest blue eyes; I swear they changed colour to silver at times, too. His skin was tanned as he lived in the sun too much. He’s of medium build and has a smile that instantly melts ice.

“Hello, Miss Callie. How is my favourite girl doing today?” Dane smirked.

Okay, I now know why Avery doesn’t like the guy. I’m not blind; he’s breathtaking, but he doesn’t match up to my Avery, nowhere near.

“Eager to leave this hell hole,” I admitted, crossing my legs and sitting on the bed.

“If you leave, then who will keep me company when I do my night rounds?” He laughed.

“The next poor soul that ends up in here,” I replied, smiling.

“Okay, you win, but you know the drill.”

“That I do,” I admitted and sat back against the bed head so he could check my vitals.

He grabbed the thermometer and rolled it across my forehead. “Oh no,” Dane expressed fear.

“What is it?” I asked, concerned.

“You’re hot,” Dane smirked, I just rolled my eyes and laughed at his corny joke.

“Can you just do your job properly?” I joked.

“Can’t help I’m distracted,” he admitted, “temp is good”, Dane added and went on to check my blood pressure as he was wrapping the cuff around my arm and plugging it into the monitor. Avery walked in with a bunch of Lilly’s smiling. That was until he saw Dane standing a little too close to me. I gave him a reassuring smile.

“Hey, you”

“Princess, I know how much you love Lilly’s, so I brought these for you,” Avery claimed, walking over to me, standing on the other side of my bed away from Dane.

I took the flowers and inhaled their floral scent, “I love them! Thank you, Avery,” I said, smiling up at him. He grabbed my face and kissed my lips; he tasted like coffee, none other than Lexi’s.

“That’s enough; we need her blood pressure to be good, not high,” Dane snapped, I just laughed as I felt Avery’s hand rub up and down my back.

I watched as Dane stood uncomfortably shifting under the gaze of Avery’s now dark green eyes; he was trying to show dominance, and I couldn’t help but burst out into a fit of giggles.

“I’m glad this amuses you, Miss Callie,” Avery said teasingly, looking down at me and raising an eyebrow. “Have you eaten today, Krystal?” He asked. I just tilted my head quizzically, “Because I haven’t, and I’m absolutely starving,” Avery added, licking his lips.

My legs began to shake as I quivered under the stare of his green eyes that had hunger in them. My heart raced, and I bit down on my lip.

“Blood pressure is good, the pulse is fast, but other than that, she’s doing great,” Dane interrupted, and my eyes shot to him. Holy shit, can he tell how Avery makes me feel? I smiled politely at him.

“Don’t worry, doc,” Avery reassured, turning around to face Dane and resting his hand on Dane’s right shoulder. “Her pulse will be a lot faster than that when I get her home.” Embarrassment overwhelmed me, causing my cheeks to turn red. I quickly grabbed my pillow from behind me and buried my face in it, hoping to hide myself from the awkward situation.

I heard Dane laugh and say, “Krystal, everything looks good, so I’m pleased and saddened to say you can leave today.”

I pushed my pillow aside and exclaimed, “Really?!”

“Yes, really,” Dr. Dane smiled. “I’ll call you in a month just to check on you.” I jumped up from the bed and wrapped my arms around him, feeling his arms wrap around me tighter than I had anticipated. Avery walked over and pulled at the back of my top, causing me to pull away. I looked at Avery, gave him an apologetic look, and smiled politely at Dane.

“So, can I go now?” I begged.

He laughed and scratched the back of his head. “Yes, but nothing too physical for the next few weeks; you are still healing,” Dane cautioned.

“Yeah, got it, Doc,” Avery snapped and walked behind me, packing my bags. “Where does she sign out?” Avery added.

“Just at the front desk. I’ll let them know you’re coming.”

“Thank you again,” I smiled as I watched him leave the room, then turned to look back at Avery, who already had everything packed. “You’re in more of a rush than me,” I stated.

“I don’t like him,” he hissed.

“Why? Because he’s a flirt,” I playfully laughed.

“No, because he wants to fuck you.” Avery threw my duffle bag over his shoulder and walked over to me, throwing my shoes at my feet.

My eyes flicked from my shoes to him, “Are you jealous?”

“Protective.” Avery grabbed me by my waist and pulled me into him, invading my mouth with his tongue, I couldn’t even be mad; I could feel his worry and needed him to know I was all his.

I deepened the kiss by wrapping my arms around his neck, and I could feel the bulge growing; I pulled back. “Shoes on now, before I fuck you over the bed,” he hissed.

My mind ran with thoughts, which took me back there for some reason. I felt my stomach turning and pushed it all down, throwing my shoes on my feet and heading for the door. I can’t wait to be home, but a part of me is still scared; I know I have to tell Avery what happened to me, and when I do, God only knows how he will react.

~

It’s good to be home, even if it’s not mine. It’s incredible to be out of that hospital; my mother still has my babies, but she will bring them home when I feel more vital in a few days. I can’t wait.

Avery took my bags upstairs, and I found no sign of what happened to me in the kitchen; Lyndon must have cleaned it. I walked into the living room to find the head of Lucas’s teddy bear sitting on the marble coffee table; it looked all burnt. Did Avery light it on fire? I picked it up to examine it; that whole time, he was watching.

My body shivered, and I walked over and threw Teddy’s head in the bin forcefully; I didn’t even hear Avery walk back down the stairs.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” I lied, turning to look at him.

“If you don’t want to be here, we can go elsewhere.”

“No, it’s okay,” I replied, walking close to him and grasping his hands. “As long as I’m with you, I’m safe,” I added.

He leaned in and touched his forehead to mine, closing his eyes, “I am genuinely sorry, Krystal,” he admitted.

“Oh, hush you, I told you, I’m fine,” I reassured him. he opened his eyes, and I found myself looking at a much gentler version of Avery.

“What did he do to you?” He whispered. I felt a sudden jolt in my chest, and my breathing became laboured. I shook my head and moved away.

“It doesn’t matter now, I’m alright,” I said, trying to convince Avery and myself that I was okay. I don’t think I succeeded, but Avery didn’t probe further. He nodded and returned to the living room, sitting on the couch. I followed him, sat beside him, and sighed deeply. My gaze shifted from the camera to him and then back to the camera. My heart was pounding so fast that the sound was deafening. Finally, I opened my mouth to speak.

“Where did you get that?”

“Exactly where he left it,” Avery replied sharply.

I felt sick again, knowing exactly where it was, I had kicked it from his hands in the warehouse where he had left it. Suddenly, I saw a flash before my eyes, as if I was back in that dark room. My hands started sweating, and my heart started racing, making breathing harder and harder. I gasped for air and clutched my chest, feeling like I couldn’t get enough air into my lungs. Avery saw how emotional I was, and tears started streaming down my face.

“I can’t breathe!” I cried out, feeling completely overwhelmed. Avery wrapped his big arms around me, compressing my nerves. Slowly, I calmed down and caught my breath again, looking up at him with tear-stained eyes. “How much did you see?”

“I saw all of it, I seen the obsession he had, I saw the abuse he did to you, and I seen how he claimed you,” Avery said quietly. “Every. Last. Picture.” He added, gritting his teeth so hard I could hear the crunch of the clenching.

Tears streamed down my face uncontrollably. How could the man I loved and the father of my children do something like this to me? I felt like I had misread him completely. It pained me that I couldn’t confide in Avery about what had happened.

“I’m so sorry I didn’t tell you,” I sobbed.

“It’s okay, princess, this isn’t your fault,” he said calmly. He lifted my chin and looked me in the eyes. “But I’m going to kill him,” he added, and just like that, his sincerity had been replaced with a vengeance. I kissed his lips to bring him back to me; I felt him kiss me back and then push me away. “I love you, Krystal, but I need to kill him,” Avery confessed.

“I need you to as well,” I whispered, admitting how much I wanted him dead.

Avery looked at me, baffled. “Are you sure? What about the kids?” he asked.

I nodded and cuddled into him, “yes, and if Ben can do this to me then what’s to say he wont to the girls when their older, he has an obsession and his sick and they are so much better off without him.”

# Yes, I’m Fucking Sure

****

**-Avery-**

I covered Krystal with the blankets as she slept in our bed. She had fallen asleep on me downstairs, so I carried her to where she belonged.

I inhaled sharply and looked at her. She had so many marks on her body; her face still had signs of abuse, the yellowing bruising was still there, and her neck was permanently scarred from when the father of her children tried to end her life after he raped her repeatedly. Photos he took, I saw every last one. I felt my blood boil recalling the picture of him on top of her, of her crying out, pleading for it all to end. I reached into my pocket, pulled out my phone and dialled Lyndon’s number. On the third ring, he answered.

“Avery,” he answered.

“Lyndon, did you find him?” I asked.

Lyndon went quiet, and the anticipation was killing me.

“I did. Hang on a minute,” Lyndon said as I heard a muffled yell in the background.

“You there, mate?” He asked.

“Yeah.”

“He’s here, waiting for you. In the place he should have died,” Lyndon added.

“Good, I’ll be there shortly.”

“Yeah, better hurry, mate. I’ve been trying so hard not to kill him.”

I hung up the phone and looked at Krystal, “For you, princess,” I whispered and grabbed a bag.

I pulled up to that same concrete warehouse and sat in my Chevelle, looking at it; this is where he hurt her. This is the place he raped her. This is the place he will die. I smirked, grabbed the bag from the passenger seat next to me, and walked into the warehouse, pushing the door closed behind me. Walking around the corner, I found Ben handcuffed to the same bolt in the wall that he had Krystal. He had a cut cheek, blood running down his face, and his mouth stuffed with the same cloth he had gagged Krystal. Lyndon was sitting on a chair before him, cleaning his gun; I joined him, placing my bag on the floor. “He give you any trouble?” I asked.

“No more than anyone else. Tried to bribe me. Guess this fucker doesn’t understand that if you protect something, so do I.” He placed his gun in its halter around his shoulders.

“I appreciate this,” I thanked.

“I know you do, but this isn’t just about you, mate, it’s for her, too.” he nodded.

I walked over and pulled the cloth from Ben’s mouth, as soon as it was removed, he spat at me.

“I’m not scared of you,” Ben laughed.

“Why’s that?”

“Because you’ve never taken a life and won’t start now.”

I just looked at him sitting on the floor and how pathetic he looked. “Your right, I have never taken a life,’ I admitted. “Never had the right reason to… until now,” I smirked, striking him with a closed fist. Ben’s head flopped forward, and he spat blood out of his mouth.

“You’re nothing but a delivery boy. A boy who can’t even follow through with his threats,” Ben laughed, I punched him again. “So tough you have to beat a man in handcuffs’, Ben said, trying to deceive me. I knew what he was doing.

“And you’re so tough you had to beat and rape the mother of your children because she didn’t want a piece of scum like you anymore,” I growled. Ben lunged forward, but the handcuffs bit at his wrists and pulled him back.

“The way she screamed under me,” Ben started, “mm, never felt so much joy in my life,” he said with a husky tone. I got up, walked over to the bag, pulled out the camera and held it up…

“Why did you take pictures?” I interrogated.

“Because I wanted you to know what I have done to her. I wanted you to see how much of her I ruined,” he claimed. I threw the camera to the ground, smashing it into tiny bits in front of his feet.

“Fuck you!” I boomed.

“Just a delivery boy,” Ben insisted.

I got up and returned to Lyndon, “Key now,” I ordered.

“Are you sure, mate?”

“Yes, I’m fucking sure!” I snapped.

Lyndon nodded, reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a small silver key. He placed it in the palm of my hand, and I closed my fingers around it. After that, I returned to him and undid the handcuffs, one at a time. I turned my back and threw the key back at Lyndon, and he caught it effortlessly.

When I turned back around, I saw Ben rubbing his wrists. “Get up!” I ordered, and Ben pushed himself up to his feet.

“Do you really want to do this?” he asked.

I nodded firmly. “Oh yeah.”

# This Isn’t The Fucking The End

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**-Benjamin-**

If this fucker thinks he will kill me, another thing is coming. I must be smart here; as soon as I get him down, that bastard over there will go for me, I thought as I looked over to his mate.

“This is still unfair,” I stated.

“How so?” The cock head asked.

“As soon as I’m done with you, your friend will finish me,” I explained, nodding at his mate.

“Alright, Lyndon!” Avery called out.

“Yes, mate?” his friend replied.

“Wait for me in the car. If I’m not out in ten minutes, drive away,” I watched as his friend nodded and just walked outside.

“Does your goon do everything you ask?”

“Yes, because he’s a loyal friend.” I watched as Avery took his gun out and placed it into the duffle bag; this was my chance. Avery turned his back; I grabbed some rope on the floor and ran up behind him, wrapping it around his neck. He was a big fucker, but I could take him. Avery grabbed my hands to try and pull me away, but I just pulled tighter; too easy this was. I’ll be with Nancy and my big house in no time.

*Whack!*

I felt the blow of his elbow come back and hit me in the side of the face. I loosened my grip on the rope, and Avery yanked it away, pulling himself free; he turned to face me. I took a swing, landed a punch on his jawline, and swung again, but this time, he blocked it and grabbed my wrists, pulling me towards him and headbutting me in the face. His fist hit me, and my nose cracking was loud; blood trickled.

I stepped back and put my hand up to assess how much blood was coming out, but it didn’t matter. I ran full throttle at Avery, tackling him to the ground, sitting on top of him, punching left and right into his face. This felt good; I heard cracking in his jaw. A few more hits, and I could break it. I brought down my left fist again, and he blocked it; I felt his punch as it connected with the side of my head, making me feel dazed for a second or two. He pushed me off, and now I was lying on the hard concrete floor; it was cold, and I regained my focus to find Avery standing above me with one foot on my chest, pinning me to the ground.

He had a gun pointed at my head. I couldn’t help but start laughing.

“You won’t do it,” I yelled, he cocked the gun and pointed it back at my head.

“Really?” He asked, panting to get his breath back.

“You wouldn’t do it for your mother,” I smirked.

“But I would for her,” Avery admitted, he inhaled deeply and whispered, “For you, princess.”

# For You, Princess

****

**-Avery-**

I inhaled deeply. “For you, princess,” I whispered, pulling back on the trigger.

*Bang!*

The gun went off, and Ben’s brain was splattered all over the concrete floor in the warehouse where he was supposed to die. My heart raced, knowing that he would never be able to hurt my Krystal again. I picked up the bag from the floor and walked towards the front doors where Lyndon was waiting.

“Didn’t I tell you to wait in the car?” I asked him.

“I just wanted to make sure you were okay,” Lyndon explained.

I nodded in gratitude. “Thank you. Now, let’s leave this place.”

Lyndon opened the front door, and I followed him outside. He got into his car, and I climbed into my Chevelle after executing that bastard. I felt uneasy about telling Krystal what happened today. As I sat in the car, I looked in the mirror. I had blood covering my face and hands and his blood; it was all there, and I didn’t even care. I just wanted to get back to Krystal to tell her that Ben was no longer a problem, but Regina remained a threat.

I put the key in the ignition and turned; the engine came roaring to life.

# It’s Over, For Now



**-Krystal-**

As I opened my eyes, I found myself in bed, feeling disoriented as I didn’t remember how I got there or where Avery was. Suddenly, I heard some noise from downstairs, making me jump out of bed and rush to investigate. To my surprise, I saw Lyndon entering through the front door with Avery trailing behind him. He was covered in blood. I gasped, “Oh my god,” and ran down to him. “Are you okay? I asked, inspecting the cuts on his face.

“I’m fine,” Avery said, kissing my hands. My heart raced; I wanted to know, but I didn’t. Did I get my boyfriend to take my ex-husband’s life?

“Ben?” I asked. Avery shook his head and smiled. My heart calmed, but I felt sad for my children. I held onto Avery and whispered, “Thank you.”

“I’ll do anything for you, princess,” he claimed, and I believed him. Fuck, I had to. Now I told him to kill someone, something he had never done before, and he had done it, all for me. Avery pulled away and stroked my face.

“One down,” he said.

“One to go,” I said, finishing his sentence.

“Regina is going to be a lot harder to deal with,” Lyndon chimed in,

“I know,” Avery assured, “I’ve already started dealing with her.” Both me and Lyndon looked puzzled, looking at Avery.

“What do you mean mate?” Lyndon asked.

“I got Phillip to make a phone call about how she’s been running a false business while selling her drugs and murdering people.”

“Oh, and?” I asked.

“I was informed by Phillip that they have already started investigating her. Apparently, she took off a few weeks ago and a lot of her people have left her. However, we just need to find out where she has gone as she always has backup plans,” I explained to them.

“Well, let’s make the most of it before we go and take her out, too,” Lyndon said, laughing.

~

The darkness engulfs me, and I only hear my breathing. I scan my surroundings, hoping to find any signs of life, but nothing. As I step forward, my left foot collides with something cold and unyielding, causing me to fall to my knees. My heart races as I realize a chain is wrapped around my ankle. Fear grips me, and I cry out, “Not again!” I feel tears welling up in my eyes, but I force them back as I struggle to break free from the steel chain. I pulled and pulled.

“Try as hard as you want, but you won’t escape,” a cold, cruel voice reached my ears. I frantically looked around, trying to discern the source of the voice, but all I could see was darkness. It felt like I was standing in a void about to swallow me whole. Panic set in, and tears streamed down my face.

“This can’t be happening.”

The voice spoke again, “Oh, but it is.” My knees weakened, and I crumpled to the floor, tears pouring down my face. A cold hand lifted my chin, and I stared into those cold blue eyes with the same dark expression.

“But he… he killed you,” I finally said.

“Did he?” Ben asked. I saw him reach out to touch me, and my body recoiled.

“NO!” I screamed, closing my eyes. I can’t be here again! Not again. Please, god, no!

“Krystal… Krystal! KRYSTAL!”

Suddenly, I heard someone yelling my name and woke up startled. I looked around the room as I sat up, feeling my chest heavy as my heart pounded. The sight of the white walls and marble bedside tables reassured me that I was in Lyndon’s apartment, and I felt a wave of relief wash over me. “Krystal!” Avery called out, grabbing me by the shoulder. I instinctively pulled back, feeling disoriented and confused.

“Avery?” I asked, struggling to understand what was happening.

Avery looked at me sadly and placed his hand on my forehead. “You’re all sweaty,” he said, his voice laced with concern.

I glanced down and realized that we were both asleep. It was all just a nightmare. “Oh,” I exhaled, relieved. “It was only a nightmare.” I sighed in relief that he was dead and couldn’t get me. Avery tried to embrace me, but I recoiled at his warmth.

“Sorry,” Avery grunted and got up from the bed.

“Avery, I’m sorry,” I apologized, “I had a nightmare,” I admitted, bowing my head.

“I know,” Avery said. I looked up, confused at him, “you were talking in your sleep, and I heard you say not again, and then you started screaming.” Avery sat at the end of the bed, looking angry and disappointed.

“Are you mad at me?” I asked, feeling sick. He didn’t answer immediately, and I looked down, picking at the skin around my fingers.

“No,” Avery finally answered, “Not at you anyway,” he admitted, looking at the wall and clenching his jaw.

“Who then?”

“Who do you think?!” He snapped, looking at me. I cringed and looked back down, I heard him take a deep breath. “I’m sorry, Kry… but I hate what he has done to you,” he said, looking at me. “I can’t even hold you without you pulling away from me.”

“That’s not true,” I said, looking him in the eyes. Avery slowly moved closer and placed his hand over mine.

My body reacted instinctively and pulled away from Avery’s embrace.

“See?” he hissed, “your body recoils from me.” I was shocked; I had never noticed this before. Was this the reason for my recent nightmare? “I cuddled you, and you started screaming at me,” Avery said, distressed. I sighed and looked down at the bed, feeling my heart breaking. All Avery had wanted to do was hold me, but my body had rejected him.

“I’m sorry,” I said, feeling desperate. “I love you, Avery, I really do.”

He let out a defeated sigh. “I know you do, don’t worry about it, Kry. But until you stop rejecting me, maybe I should sleep elsewhere,” Avery said as he got up and left me alone in our room.

My heart ached as I laid there. Why was I like this? I only wanted to be close to him and cry into his arms.

I lay in bed, tears streaming down my face. I knew Avery’s frustration wasn’t directed at me but at Ben. Ben had broken me, and both Avery and I knew it. Would it be possible for Avery and me to be together again if I couldn’t get past this? I refused to let Ben take away the best thing in my life. So, I pushed myself up from the pillow and declared.

“No! He doesn’t get to take the best thing away from me. I can’t give up. I won’t let Ben come between me and Avery.” I got off the bed, put my feet on the floor, and walked downstairs.

I paused halfway down the staircase and saw Avery sitting on the couch, flipping through TV channels. Suddenly, he grunted and turned off the TV. I slowly descended the stairs and watched Avery toss and turn. I could hear him muttering.

“Stupid Krystal with her scent of vanilla and honey.” He grunted as he tried to get comfortable, then punched the pillow and sat up. “How the hell am I supposed to sleep without her!” He said, pissed. I couldn’t help but chuckle to myself.

“I’m sorry,” I said, still amused. Avery turned around and got up from the pull-out sofa.

“I was just saying how well I can sleep without you.”

I giggled. “I see. I’m lonely upstairs. Can you please join me?” I asked, smiling at him.

His expression turned serious. “Are you sure?” he asked.

I nodded. “I’m sure,” and started walking up the stairs. Avery quickly followed me, and we reached the bedroom. I walked in, but Avery hesitated outside. “What’s wrong?” I asked, he looked at the bed.

“I’ll sleep on the floor next to you so I don’t touch you,” he said slowly, walking through the door. I didn’t understand what he meant and looked at him with confusion, “I don’t want to upset you anymore than I have already done,” he explained. I walked over to him, shut the door behind him, and turned him to face me. I wrapped my arms around his chest and embraced him, even though my heart was racing and my body wanted to push him away. I heard him let out a small sigh, and he placed his arms around me, pulling me closer. He rested his forehead on mine. “Is this, okay?” he asked.

I nodded. “Yes.” His warmth against me felt intense, but at the same time, it felt like I was being healed. This may be what I needed to feel his love and protection, I looked up at Avery, who was now beaming with love, and he planted a soft kiss on my forehead. I gently pushed him back until he sat on the bed, and I stood in front of him, between his legs. Avery placed both hands on the bed beside him, ensuring he wasn’t touching me. I cupped his face with my hands and planted tiny kisses on both sides before kissing him on his mouth. He didn’t kiss me back, so I tried again.

“Krystal,” he said softly. I backed off and looked at him.

“What?”

“You don’t have to do this; your embrace was enough,” he admitted. How did I get so lucky with Avery?

# The Big Surprise



**-Krystal-**

I looked out the window at the paddock, thinking how months had passed since that night, the night Avery killed Ben for me. It haunts me more nights than others. I sleep soundly, knowing that he won’t hurt my children, but then Regina slips into my mind, and I wouldn’t say I like the feeling of knowing she is out there waiting for the time to get her revenge on me and Avery.

We left Lyndon’s apartment and bought a beautiful two-story farmhouse away from the city. With winter upon us, the snow has arrived, and it’s a sight to behold, second only to my children and loving partner, Avery. The snow is beginning to accumulate, and soon, it will cover our entire house and yard in a fluffy blanket of white. Our children have adjusted well to our new home and adore Avery, who indulges them by buying horses and motorbikes. I also have my photography studio on the farm. I hesitated to pick up a camera again, but Avery reminded me not to let fear stop me from doing what I love. He was right; I love being a photographer and capturing the joy on my client’s faces when they see their photos. Avery embraced me from behind and whispered, “What’s on your mind today, My Queen?” My heart fluttered.

“Nothing much, just enjoying the peace,” I said. Avery then took my hand and looked at my beautiful princess-cut engagement ring, running his finger over it.

“Soon,” he said, smiling.

“Not soon enough,” I admitted. Avery chuckled softly, then led me downstairs, where Lyndon sat with Lexi and Alice.

Alice was sitting on Lexi’s lap, and I overheard Lyndon pleading, “Just this once, please?”

“No, Lyndon,” Alice snapped.

Lexi started laughing. “You can’t watch us having sex.”

I laughed, and Lyndon had a sad look on his face. “Come on, man, help me with the car,” Avery offered; Lyndon nodded and followed him to the garage.

“I’ll be back in a minute too,” Alice said, kissing Lexi swiftly and following out behind them.

“You guys are so cute together,” I said, smiling.

“So are you and Avery; I’ve never seen you happier.” Just then, my phone rang on the counter. I grabbed it and swiped across to answer.

“Hello?” I answered.

“Hello, Miss Callie, it’s Dane,” replied the voice on the other end of the line.

“Hello Doctor Dane, how are you? Is everything alright?” I asked, worried.

“Everything is fine, I’m good. I was just calling about your last blood work,” he admitted.

“Okay, what’s up?” I asked intently.

“I don’t know if you’re aware of this, but it looks like you’re pregnant,” he claimed.

Surprised, my mouth dropped open, “No, that can’t be so.”

“When was your last period, if you don’t mind me asking?” Dane inquired.

Shit! My mind went blank, and I couldn’t recall how long ago it was. “That’s what I thought,” Dane said. “I had to let you know. What you do with this information is entirely up to you.”

“Thank you, Dane,” I said, hanging up the phone.

“Everything okay?” Lexi asked.

“No,” I shook my head. “Yes. I don’t know,” I admitted.

“Okay? Want to share?” Lexi looked worried, but I knew I could trust her.

“I’m pregnant,” I blurted out, covering my mouth with my hand as soon as the words fell from my lips.

Lexi’s mouth dropped; she lowered her coffee on the table. “What? How far?” She asked.

“I don’t know; Doctor Dane just told me my last blood work said I am pregnant, and I can’t remember my last period,” I explained.

“Shit,” we said simultaneously.

We were interrupted when an older gentleman in a black cashmere suit stood in my doorway. I said, “Excuse me?”

“Who the fuck are you?” Lexi sprang from her chair.

The man approached the room and said, “Oh, sorry, I hope I have the right address.”

I asked him, “That depends; who are you looking for?” Although I couldn’t grasp it, something about this gentleman felt familiar. He was around six feet tall and had salt and pepper hair, a strong jawline, and soft green eyes.

Lexi interrupted us, saying, “Krystal, get this guy out of here.”

The man then asked, “Krystal? Your Krystal?” I felt a wave of fear wash over me. How did this guy know my name? I nodded cautiously.

“And that means you’re carrying my grandchild.” He exclaimed.

Shit. he heard me say I was pregnant; I placed my hand over my stomach.

“Grandchild?” I asked, and he nodded.

“Sorry, I need to introduce myself. My name is Rico Anderson,” he said. Both Lexi and I looked baffled.

“Bullshit,” Lexi said.

“No bullshit, I heard Avery was getting married, so I tracked him down. So where are my son and daughter?” He said, rubbing his hands together.

I sent Alice a text inviting her and Avery to my house. As Rico approached, he sat down at the dining table.

# Back From The Dead

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**-Avery-**

As we left the garage, I asked Alice, “Did she say why she wants us both up there?”

Alice replied, “No, she just said that we both needed to come now.”

Feeling uneasy, I continued asking, “Did we do something? Are we in trouble?”

Alice snapped, “Jesus Christ, Avery! I’m here with you, how in the hell would I know?” Hurt by Alice’s response, I remained silent and walked beside her in silence.

As we got closer to the house, my companion and I felt a sense of excitement and curiosity, we wondered why we were needed back at the house, we noticed a black BMW parked in front, and the front door was wide open.

“Shit!” I panicked, thinking Regina had found us and pulled my gun from under my jacket, “are you expecting anyone?”

“Nope, you?” Alice replied. I shook my head in response and rushed to the house, where I found my fiancée and Lexi in the kitchen, staring at an older man. He slowly stood up and turned towards us. I was shocked to see who he was.

“Ah, there are my children,” Rico said, holding his hands out.

“Dad?” Alice and I exclaimed in surprise.