

THE MISSING PIECES:
A PSYCHOLOGICAL
THRILLER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Whispers in the Hallways

Chapter 2 Stitched in Blood

Chapter 3 Shadows of a Scalpel

Chapter 4 The Phantom's Signature

Chapter 5 Beneath the Mask

Chapter 6 The Veil of Deception

Chapter 7 The Final Cut

Chapter 1

“We must speak to Evelyn Harp right now!” Anger echoes through the hospital’s hallway. “I don’t care if I’m making a scene! I’m going to sue everyone here! Do you know what the hell you’ve done?”

“Do we have a problem here?” I ask Mia, the receptionist for this floor. She remains as composed as ever, her tiny frame straight with perfect posture, her red hair wrapped neatly in a bun. Her hazel eyes are wide with fear though as she knits her brows, making her seem even more helpless in the face of this man.

The man in front of her turns to me, glaring as he folds his arms over his chest. He’s at least six feet tall, a black man in his mid-

forties, the vein on his forehead bulging out as he seethes in anger.

“Uh, this man, Tristan Beck, wants to speak to Evelyn. Says she’s in big trouble, that what she did is going to get her sent to prison for years to come,” Mia whispers, fear and concern lacing her voice.

“I’ll deal with it.” I turn to the man. “How can I help you, sir?”

“Are you Evelyn Harp?” he asks.

Evelyn Harp? This has got to be some kind of sick joke. Evelyn is the best surgeon in her department. She’s always been passionate about her work, known for going the extra mile for her patients. My mouth runs dry as I try to think through the chaos and push out an answer.

“No, but I’m-”

“Then I don’t give a damn! Get me Evelyn Harp now!”

“Sir, I’m afraid if you don’t calm down, I’ll have to get you removed from the premises.”

“Me? You’re going to get me removed?” he bellows. “You’re going to get me removed but not a fraud, criminal of a doctor? Do you know who I am? I’m Tristan Beck,” his voice gets louder. “My father was Thomas Beck, a man under your hospital's care. He was a well-known patron of this hospital. Our family has donated billions to this hospital, and this is what we get in return?!”

“If you could calmly explain what the problem is, I think I can help you,” I assure him. “But you need to stop shouting. There are sick patients on this floor, and this kind of tension isn’t good for them.”

“If you want me out of here, get that damn phony doctor out here right now!”

“What’s going on here?” Evelyn asks as she walks up behind Tristan.

“*YOU!*” He turns and looks at her with fury in his eyes. My stomach turns, sensing something bad is about to happen as he closes in on her. “You’re a bloody criminal! Tell me right now! What did you do with them?”

“Do with what?” she asks, standing her ground, not intimidated one bit by the man. With her hair in a tight, low bun, her strong stance, and her professional grade scrubs, she often easily takes command of most rooms she walks into.

“With my father’s organs!”

His words send a wave of shock through me as my hand flies to my mouth. This is the last thing I was expecting him to say.

Evelyn stands there, stunned and gaping at Tristan. Her pale complexion is even paler now, making her green eyes stand out. Her watch hangs delicately over her wrist as she fidgets with it, trying to make sense of the situation. I’ve never seen her look this nervous before.

“Don’t act all innocent. I want answers! I am not here to watch your performance. Where the hell are they? What on earth have you been up to?” The man’s voice echoes through the emergency room we made when our official ER was overflowing. Doctors and

nurses buzz around the beds against the wall, navigating their way through the room as if nothing unusual is happening. Each patient has their own unique - and awfully foolish - injury, but they all seem to be so distracted by the chaos that they've forgotten their pain.

Tristian holds up a note. I walk towards it, "What is that?" I ask. I can barely read what's written through the red splatters all over it. *Is that blood?*

"This is a note we got - a note covered in *BLOOD* that told us our father's organs have been trafficked! We looked at his body and there were suspicious stitches around his abdomen, stitches that had nothing to do with his heart problem."

My eyes connect with Evelyn whose face is drained of all color as she tries to digest what the man is saying. She stands there, unable to speak, unable to move, just blankly staring at Tristan.

"What the hell is going on here?" Daniel interrupts. "What is all this commotion

about? Everyone get back to work. I want this space cleared out right away!”

As the director of the hospital makes his way over, everyone starts getting back to work. The quiet space once again becomes busy with the usual nurses running around and doctors doing consultations. Daniel Dawson may not be the friendliest person to have around, but he will never let any harm come to his employees.

Evelyn, Tristian, Mia, and I are the only ones left standing in the same place.

“Hi, I’m Daniel Dawson,” he says as he offers his hand to the accuser who just stares at it. “I am the director of this hospital, and I understand that you have concerns. I’d like you to come with me to my office so we can address them. Making a scene like this in a hospital with sick patients is no way to go about things.”

Tristian looks from Daniel to Evelyn, then nods silently, his eyes still dark with anger. As Daniel starts moving, Evelyn and I begin

to follow quietly behind. However, Daniel shakes his head in disapproval, stopping us in our tracks.

“You two stay behind,” he orders. “Wait for me to call on you.”

Evelyn’s hands fall by her side as they walk away, her eyes vacant of any emotion. It’s not that I haven’t seen that look before, but it’s usually reserved for her work, when she’s too focused to acknowledge anything else around her. Unable to fathom Evelyn doing something like that, I walk towards her and touch her shoulder.

“Hey, c’mon,” I say gently. “Let’s sit and wait instead.”

Evelyn finally snaps out of her trance and looks around the waiting room. I grab her elbow and lead her behind the receptionist’s desk. Pulling out the plastic chair, I help her sit down. Once she’s settled, I grab a chilled water bottle for her from the staff’s room.

By the time I walk back out, Evelyn’s gone. My eyes roam the area looking for her until I

finally spot the shadow of someone running out of the hospital. I follow behind and find Evelyn rushing to her car.

For a second, I find her behavior suspicious. Why is she running away like that? As she gets into her car, I stand in front of it to stop her from driving off.

“Open the passenger’s side door,” I tell her. She does.

As I join her in her car, I glance at the rear-view mirror to see if I look as disheveled as I feel. My dark brown hair is overgrown and messy from running my hands through it all day. My shirt is no longer tucked into my pants, and the first two buttons have come undone. My blue eyes are swollen, the lack of sleep and stress of this morning catching up to them. I need to wash my face, maybe even take a shower to revive myself.

“What do you want Adrian?”

“I just want to help. Why are you leaving? We both know you're innocent, so why would you run away?”

“I’m not running away.” She lowers her gaze.
“I just need to get out of here.”

I sigh and give her the bottle of water. She sips it as she stares outside. Tears pool in her eyes. I’m in disbelief. As a doctor, an accusation like this is your worst nightmare.

“I know this feels really bad right now, but trust me, Daniel will handle it. He knows you, and he knows you’re ethical. You have a bunch of people who can vouch for that, including me.”

“I just hope it’s a really bad misunderstanding,” Evelyn says as tears stream down her face.

I’ve been working with Evelyn for enough now to know that she would never sabotage her career, especially like this. What that man is alleging her and this hospital of is a federal crime. Any doctor accused of organ trafficking is a doctor that can say goodbye to their career, even if they are innocent.

“Hey,” I place my hand on her shoulder, “I know you didn’t do anything wrong, okay?”

You don't have to worry. We'll figure it out. Now, come back in and hold your head up high. Everything is going to be alright."

She nods. We get out of the car and go back into the hospital.

After about an hour, Tristian leaves the building, his head lowered, not looking at any of us. Just then, a shrill ring breaks the silence, coming from the reception desk's phone. Evelyn's head jerks up as she springs up from her chair, as if anticipating the call.

"Hello. Yes sir, they're here." Mia looks over at us. "Alright... right away sir... anything else? ... Understood." Mia places the receiver down, looks at Evelyn, and whispers, "Daniel has called you in his office. Both of you."

Evelyn's face is stoic. Her body moves almost robotically as she walks by my side. I just know everyone heard Tristian's accusations, and gossip travels fast around here. Everyone is probably pointing fingers at her already, especially Mike Bennett,

Evelyn's rival at the hospital. He must be having the time of his life.

We reach the door to Daniel's office. I look at Evelyn to make sure if she's okay, but without sparing a second thought, she knocks on the door and slides in after a quick "come in" booms from the office. I quickly follow and take the seat beside her.

Daniel suddenly looks older than he is, his frown lines visible as he sits on his revolving chair, head in his palms. The buttons of his black blazer look ready to pop as even his tailored pants seem to have shrunk on him over the years. The stress of this job is also probably fueling his premature balding, with hair only going around the back and side of his head, the top a shiny reflection of the light above.

He sits there, suspending us in silence. It feels like the quiet before the storm. Chills run down my spine in anticipation of what he's going to say.

“Daniel?” Evelyn croaks. He does not acknowledge her. “Daniel? Is everything alright? What happened? What did that man say?”

There’s a palpable tension in the room that cannot be ignored, one that we’re all hyper aware of. Daniel sits up straighter, finally meeting our gaze as he clears his throat.

“Evelyn, you operated on Tristian’s father, Thomas Beck. Adrian, you were present keeping tracks of her records, am I right?” We nod in acknowledgement. Daniel continues, “Well, the family has played a very important role in funding this hospital. Tristan came in here accusing us of hiding the fact that you were trafficking his father’s organs. He has proof and has threatened to sue us if we do not act against this.”

After a momentary pause, Daniel starts again, “I know you might be at the peak of your career right now, but if you cooperate, I won’t let the word get out. You have to - no - you *need to* come clean right now and tell me if

there's anything I need to know before I can help you out in any way."

Eve stands abruptly. "Daniel! What are you saying? You know me! You know I would never jeopardize your hospital or my career like that! You know I genuinely love helping people. My dream has always been to save lives. I can't even imagine doing something like this to anyone. Please, please, tell me you believe me. You need to understand. I... I can't... *please Daniel.*" She's breathless as her words fade out.

Once Evelyn stops talking, Daniel passes his sealed water bottle towards her and motions for her to sit down. Evelyn slouches in the chair behind her and takes a deep breath. After she settles down, Daniel starts again in a lighter tone this time, as if speaking to a child.

"Okay, listen to me very carefully. Both of you." I straighten up immediately, hoping he has some solution to this problem. "Evelyn, you have been accused of something very serious. You cannot be seen working here for

now. I know you love your job and would never want to ruin this for yourself, but you must understand. Until everything is sorted out and your image is cleared up, we will have to suspend you.”

“Suspend her? But she's done nothing wrong? This is only because they're a rich family and they donate to us. No one would question Evelyn if the circumstances didn't involve these people!”

Daniel turns to me, clearly irritated, “Last time I checked, you were not in any position to tell me what to do. But you are correct. As far as this goes, we must take these accusations seriously. They're coming from people with serious power, and the repercussions of not suspending her could be worse for her than for us.”

I stay silent, but Evelyn finally speaks up, “Daniel, you do what you must do, but what is it that you want me to do?”

“I want you to lay low. However, your assistant can work on the necessary

paperwork left here until you return for good. This is not what I want Evelyn. You are an important asset to our hospital. I know people will question you. In fact, many people may be waiting for you to slip up. But I need time to clear this up if there's any chance of you redeeming your career."

Evelyn stays silent, her eyes red and swollen from crying. I gather some courage and speak, "Hey, maybe Daniel has a point. Maybe it's better for you to rest before you're back here. Don't worry, we trust you and will help as much as we can." I squeeze her hand to show my support.

"It's okay Daniel. I know you're also in a difficult position because of me. I'll leave, but," she looks at Daniel, "I need you to know, I'm not going down without a fight." She stands and walks out. I follow her.

Evelyn goes straight to the staff room and opens her locker, her hands shaking as she begins emptying it.

“Hey, let me help,” I offer, grabbing some of the things out of her hands.

“You don’t have to pity me Adrian. I’m a big girl.” She lets out a small laugh.

Ignoring her, I grab her backpack and start organizing her things just like I’ve watched her do every single day. Once that’s done, I look at her, my eyes going towards the exit as she hesitates to walk out.

“Should I say my goodbyes to everyone?” She messes around with her sleeves.

I’ve never seen her act this way, so clueless and scared. My heart aches for her.

“Listen, you’re coming back here, okay? You don’t have to do this right now. Take a deep breath and walk out with your head held high.” She takes a deep breath. “Good, now let’s leave. You don’t need to give any explanations to anyone. Daniel said that he will handle everything, and he will.”

We begin moving towards the exit, all eyes on us as faint whispers are scattered through

the hospital. I stand by Evelyn's side and assure her, "Just keep going. You're okay."

Once we're outside, Evelyn gets into her car without saying a single word. I wave to her as she drives off. My heart drops as I watch her car drive out of sight. Evelyn has been my mentor for years now, and working for her has taught me so much.

My mind races over what Tristan Beck said. I'm furious at him for accusing Evelyn so recklessly. That anger only fuels my motivation to help her.

I am going to solve this case no matter what it takes. I am going to clear Evelyn's name.

Chapter 2

I shut the door to my tiny, one bedroom apartment, pressing my back against the door as my head falls in defeat. *God, what has this day turned into?* I throw my bag on the couch and lay there for some time with my eyes closed. All the things from today come rushing back in, overwhelming me. I can't help anyone like this. I need to clear my head. Then, I need to get to work.

A shower washes away the stress of the day. Once I'm out, I sit on my sleek, grey couch in my sweatpants. I always wanted to have my own place so I can decorate it the way I like - with beige walls, a wooden table, framed artwork made by my friends hanging on the wall, and a few potted plants to bring some life into the space. No TV because, let's be honest, everything is accessible on laptops now. I probably couldn't afford one anyway.

I take out my laptop and the diary I keep for all my notes. Then, I look up the names Daniel mentioned in the directory. Being an assistant to a surgeon has its benefits. I have access to a lot of resources that could help me clear Evelyn's name.

I go through the letter 'T' and find Thomas Beck's name. After a quick internet search, his profile comes up. One click, and an old picture jogs my memory. He was admitted to the hospital just a few weeks ago, having been diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. Even though his surgery was high risk, especially given his age, his family insisted. Even in his sick state, Thomas was lively and full of hope. He refused to give up. He went through chemotherapy with great strength. The sparkle in his eye that was there until the moment he went into the operation theater.

Evelyn was all nerves before the operation. It was a shock for everyone when the operation was successful. I don't even think she expected to pull it off. Thomas had woken up that night, but a few hours later, his vitals went flat Evelyn tried everything she could

think of, but she couldn't save him. I know it killed her to announce his death to his family members. Only a handful of patients have ever died under her care. Only I have seen what each death does to her.

A part of me fears what could happen next if someone can just walk in and remove a patient's organs. Who will be next? How deep does this thing run? Are any of our lives in danger?

I decide to check Evelyn's schedule for that day. She clocked in at six in the morning and finished the operation by six thirty in the evening, leaving the hospital right after. I pull out my other diary where I write all her commitments and flip through the pages until I finally land on the day of Thomas Beck's operation. Evelyn's daughter's recital was at seven that evening. She must have left for that, meaning she wasn't even at the hospital after the operation.

How can they have proof against Evelyn if she wasn't at the hospital? She operated with a whole team and left right after. How can

anyone accuse her of anything if they can't prove she was there in the first place?

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. I have proof, digital and hardware. I'll just go talk to Daniel about it tomorrow. It must be a misunderstanding. She'll be back in no time.

However, my growing smile quickly fades when I spot an entry in the schedule noting when Evelyn returned to the hospital later that night. I remember this. She had come back to pick up her belongings and hand in the paperwork that night around nine. *Oh god.* I know why Evelyn was there, but this won't go unnoticed by the board. This could get her in trouble. They might think she came back...came back to remove Thomas Beck's organs.

Goddammit. How did I miss this? I know no one else will overlook this. I'll need evidence that she didn't do anything wrong - hard evidence.

My mind goes blank. No one is going to take my word for it. They're just going to think

I'm trying to save Evelyn as her loyal assistant and write it off as bias. God, this is so messed up.

My rumbling thoughts are cut short by two loud knocks on my door. I make my way over and look through the peephole to find my long-time neighbor, Victor Blackwood, standing outside with two white boxes. We catch up most days after work. I wish he could be of some help, but I don't know if I should involve him in all of this. Nonetheless, I open the door for him.

"Bro! What's up?" he asks with a laugh. "Okay so, get this, buy one get one free at Chinese takeout. Can you believe it?" He hands me a takeout box.

I have a lot of work to do, but I can't lie, I'm starving. I take the box from his hand. "Man, I totally forgot about dinner today. Thanks for bringing this in." I nod, gesturing at him to come in. We sit on the carpeted floor in front of the couch with our food.

“Nah man, don’t mention it. I was craving some Chinese food and thought we could rant about work. I had a hell of a day today. Some idiot dropped his drink on my coding computer. Thankfully, I recovered most of my work, but when I tell you I had half a heart attack. Oh god.” He laughs, shakes his head, and takes a bite. Speaking with his mouth full, he looks at me, “You tell me though, what’s got you worried today? There’s something... off about you.” He scans my face, his brows knitting together.

“Not much. Just like you said, a hell of a day today. Let me open some beer. I think we both could use some.” I get up off the floor and make my way over to the fridge, grabbing two chilled cans of beer.

Just as I’m about to take a bite of my food, my phone rings. It’s a call from Evelyn. I answer only to find her on the verge of hysteria, out of breath and panicking.

“Adrian, I am so sorry. I had to call someone. I...I don’t know...I didn’t know what to do.”

She sounds worse than when I left her in the car, causing me to panic as I worry she's done something or worse. What if someone's after her? I need to go see her for myself.

"Hey, listen, I'm just leaving, okay?" I get up and grab my shirt. "I'll be at your place in no time. Relax. Take deep breaths and drink some water. I'll be right there." I hang up the phone and grab my keys.

"Is everything okay?" Victor asks with a wide-eyed gaze.

"Uh, no, not really. It's a work thing. Do you mind? I'll come back in a while and we can talk?"

"Yeah, no, do what you have to do man. I'll be out of your hair," he says, getting up, grabbing the boxes, and placing mine on the kitchen counter. He leaves, and I walk out right behind him, locking my apartment door behind me.

I need to make sure Evelyn's okay.

Chapter 3

Within fifteen minutes, I'm outside Evelyn's house ringing the doorbell. The door swings open, and I see Evelyn standing there, looking smaller than she would on any other day. Her eyes are red, hair in a messy bun. She's drowning in an oversized sweatshirt with matching sweatpants. She's a wreck. As soon as she sees me, she bursts into tears, her body shaking.

Work Evelyn and the Evelyn in front of me could pass off as two entirely different people. I give her a comforting hug before leading her back inside and closing the door behind us. Her body seems frail, as if she hasn't eaten the whole day. Once we settle down in the living room, she separates from me, her movement slow. There's a fearful look all over her face.

“I am so sorry I disturbed you at this time...I...I just had to tell someone this and you were the only one who believed me. Hell, you’re the only one ready to listen to me. I am really sorry Adrian. I don’t want to burden you with any of this, but I don’t know what else to do. I’m not usually like this.”

“You can count on me. It’s alright.” I lower my head, trying to catch her eyes. “Now, tell me what happened,” I coax her, softening my gaze. I want to let her know I’m here for her, and she isn’t a burden to me, even if it’s endangering my career. She’s been there for me through it all. It’s only fair I do the same.

“I was looking up the names and...and I saw his profile. I saw Thomas Beck’s profile, and I remember that day very clearly. I think someone’s trying to frame me.” She scans my face to see if I believe her. I nod, encouraging her to go on.

“That day I had to rush off for Ella’s recitals, but I did come back. I had to give you an important file and check in on the body, but... but by that time, the body was already

off to the morgue and..." She sniffs, her head lowering into her hands before she continues, "by then, I didn't have access to it. They said they'd already released the body to his family. I thought my work was already done, so I didn't feel the need to enquire about my access. Now that I think about it, how was it possible? I don't understand!"

She looks off in the distance. Her access being revoked the same day is very suspicious. Doctors usually have access to the body until the very end. I also know for a fact they would keep the body overnight at least. So, what the hell is going on?

My mind races with possibilities. I can't help but feel like maybe this was an inside job. I can't be sure yet, but this is no coincidence. I will have to dig deeper and find whoever is behind this.

Evelyn is deep in thought, her hiccups sounding out through the room. I get up and bring some water to her. It seems like that's all I've been able to do for her today; bring her water.

“Have some water.” I gently touch her shoulder and hand her the glass. She drinks it with huge gulps.

“S...sorry...I was really thirsty.” She pauses and looks down. Then, her gaze meets mine. “I think someone in the hospital might be framing me. I just think that something bigger than what we can imagine is going on here. This can’t be a one-person job, and even if it is, organ trafficking is a serious allegation for the hospital, and me, to face.”

“What do you mean?” I ask as I hold her hand. “What are you thinking? Do you think there’s some other doctor involved?”

“I think someone from the hospital might be running this whole corrupt ring of organ trafficking. Think about it Adrian. There aren’t many people who could revoke my access to the body. Not many people would know when I was at the hospital and when I was not. Maybe someone who works there doesn’t like me. Someone might have been collecting all these loopholes against me just

to frame me all along. There are so many possibilities.”

Now that I think about it, it does make sense. The culprit could be someone who’s aware of Evelyn’s every move inside and outside of the hospital, who keeps track of everything and can hack the system to revoke Evelyn’s access. The problem is, there are so many people who aren’t happy with Evelyn’s success. Many people would kill to be where she is at. Anyone could be part of this.

Evelyn suddenly sits upright, straightening herself as she concludes, “It must be someone from the board members committee! I know it may sound ridiculous, but if you read between the lines, they’ve been cold towards me because of my position at work with me being a woman. They threaten to get me kicked out at every chance they get.”

She takes a deep breath that trembles on its way out, her hand playing with her wristwatch. “It just has to be! No one else has that kind of power or authority either. What

do you think? Do you see my point? It could be a possibility, right? Right?”

“Eve, I know it’s a huge possibility. You could be spot on, but you know that’s not enough, right? Guessing a few names won’t help us. We need evidence against them, solid evidence that points straight at the person or people framing you. We can’t accuse someone with that kind of power without consequences. I hope you know doing something like that would not only get you out of the hospital but also revoke your license as a surgeon.”

Her body deflates like a balloon, her shoulders sagging in disappointment. Her head drops, and her eyes focus on a little stuffed toy lying on the carpet.

“I’m sorry. I’m not thinking straight right now. I thought I finally had something, something that could help me out even a little. Ever since that Tristan guy appeared at the hospital... I haven’t been able to focus on one good thing. I feel so guilty. I wasn’t even able to give my full attention to Ella, and she

was so excited to show me the artwork she did in school today.”

“What happened today is very difficult to digest so quickly, and it’s okay if you need time to settle down and come to terms with it. You need to take care of yourself and Ella right now, at least until we know who’s behind this. We don’t know how dangerous this person is. If they can go to such lengths to frame you, then we don’t know what else they can do.” I stand up, then look down at her. “Make sure you’re extra careful with the locks and security now. Only open doors for people you know you can trust, and please sleep. You can’t stay in this zombie-like state.”

She forces a smile.

“I’ll take my leave now. I’ll update you if I figure something out, and if you remember anything, do let me know. Anything, okay? No matter how small a detail it is.” She nods.

On the way out, I hug Evelyn lightly and notice that she seems stronger than when I

first entered. Her shoulders are more relaxed and her once shaking hands are now clenched into fists as if trying to hold herself together. Good. She needs to be strong right now. We don't know who's after her, and if she breaks down, it could mean the end of her career.

As the door closes behind me, I wait to hear the lock. Once I know that Evelyn is safe, I get an Uber back to my apartment. I can't do much right now, and it's killing me. I need something to work with. Lost in my thoughts, I make my way to my apartment door, not really paying attention to anything around me.

“Yo! Adrian!” I turn around and find Victor staring back at me, baffled, “Dude! I've been calling out your name since you first came out of the Uber. Is everything okay? I've never seen you this distracted.”

I scratch my head, a little disoriented. Maybe Victor can help. He's been there for me before, be it with work or life, and I know I can trust him. I shake my head, looking up at him, “A lot has happened today, and you

wouldn't believe it if I told you. My mind is all over the place right now. I don't even know what to do anymore."

For some reason, he seems to be lost in his own thoughts. I realize maybe he doesn't have time for me. "I'm just going to go inside and rest up a bit," I tell him.

Suddenly, he snaps out of whatever has distracted him and looks at me, "I can join you over a beer, and you can tell me about it. I don't think you'll be able to rest like this anyway." He gives me a small smile.

"Okay, yeah, sure man." We walk into my apartment, and I grab a few beers. Then, I tell him everything.

Chapter 4

Victor listens to my little rant without any interruption, his face focused. Once I finish, he touches my shoulder and says quietly, “You, my friend, are spiraling. You can’t work anything out if you’re on the verge of hyperventilation. You need to plan everything out in a diary or something. Write about the things you know, the suspects you have, and then maybe start to collect data. Think of it like you’re a detective. Make a crime board of some sort. That way at least you’ll have everything in front of you, and you won’t be scrambling to remember details.”

He makes some good points. I instantly stand and grab my laptop, the notebook, and some pens and highlighters. “I hope you don’t mind helping me with this. I know I’ll go

crazy if I do this on my own right now,” I tell him, handing him a set of pens and the notebook.

“Of course I will! Let’s start with the things we already know. Who came in accusing Evelyn of organ harvesting and who was the victim? First put down: *Doctor Evelyn Harp is accused of organ trafficking*. Then, add that the accuser is Tristan Beck, Thomas’s son.”

I scratch my head. “We could also say he has proof, but we haven’t seen that. The proof caused Doctor Evelyn’s suspension. What else are we missing?”

“Evelyn’s whereabouts from that day?”

I turn my laptop on and see Evelyn’s timetable. “Right, so I have the day mapped out...” I take the notebook from Victor and write down Evelyn’s occupations for that day. I scribble in the corner all the things that made Evelyn look suspicious. Then, I add, *‘need to find a way around this’*, so that I know we still need proof on those specifics.

“Now that you have the background covered, you need to list out your suspects, and you need good reasons for it, something of consequence.” Victor helps me write it out, seeming even more invested in this than me. I have been going crazy the whole day, and his clear head helps both of us.

“We need to investigate these people in detail, but most of all, we need to find more information on Doctor Mike Bennett,” I note once we’ve finished writing down the suspects list. “I think he should be our number one suspect. We need to figure out his schedule for the day of Thomas’s operation and if he was present after hours at the hospital.” I highlight the name *Doctor Mike Bennett*.

“Why do you suspect the board and this Mike Bennett guy?” Victor asks.

“With the board, Evelyn has her own reasons. Some of them make sense since they have authority over everything and everyone. Nothing in the hospital can be moved unless one of them approves it, meaning they’re part

of our suspect list. As for Mike Bennett? He's a great doctor but nowhere near as good as Evelyn. They have been working in the same hospital for years.

"They both started as interns and secured their positions together, but it has always been a competition for Mike. Evelyn managed to move above him, becoming the chair, and he hates that. For Evelyn, it was never a competition. She's always been dedicated to helping people, and she deserves everything she's achieved."

I lose myself in my thoughts once again, unconsciously clicking the pen in my hand, trying to understand why anyone would ever try to harm Evelyn.

"I need your head back in the game," Victor interrupts. "And I think I have someone who can help you out."

I sit up at that, listening intently.

"I have a lawyer who may seem like a bit of a crook, and he might just be one, but he's crazy good at digging up dirt on anyone you

want. His name is Tyson, or at least that's the name he goes by. Talk to him. He'll help you out. If there's anything else you need help with, just let me know. Keep me updated about everything he tells you. I'll try to figure out things with the information I have."

Victor gets up, giving me his hand to lift me too. Talking with Victor erases the feeling that this is a lost cause. I finally feel enough relief to go to bed. I need to visit the hospital tomorrow and go over security details, maybe even talk to Garret, a friend of mine from the hospital's IT department. Maybe he can go over the footage of the morgue from that day. And maybe, just maybe, I can find some clues.

I wake up the next morning with a slight jolt. *Shit! I need to get ready and get to work.* I take a quick shower, put on my clothes, and run down to the cab waiting for me. The second I get to the hospital, I rush inside.

First, I need to make sure all of Evelyn's things are still in place. I open her office door and collect all the files I find lying around, quickly assembling them into her shelf with locks. I lock her office door on my way out.

As soon as I turn around, I crash into a short young woman with big, blue, doe eyes, her blonde hair in her face giving her that innocent and introverted look. However, she's anything but that. She's Mike Bennett's assistant, Stella. I think I just caught her trying to sneak into Evelyn's office.

"What are you doing outside Evelyn's door?" I ask, raising an eyebrow at her suspicious behavior.

"N...Nothing, I just wanted to discuss something with Evelyn... Is she here yet?" Stella looks past me at Evelyn's door. I narrow my eyes on her, knowing for a fact that there was a faculty meeting at the end of the day yesterday where Daniel told everyone that Evelyn has gone on a break and will be continuing after some time.

“Rightttt...Do I look like a fool to you? I know about the meeting. I received the message to join it as well. Why were you lurking around here?” I straighten my back, an attempt to intimidate her.

“I...I already told you. Oh look, Mike’s paging me...I need to go see him. Bye.” She doesn’t wait for my reply, just runs the other way.

Right. Now I need to keep an eye on her and her boss. I clench my fingers into a fist and march to the IT department, not in the mood to see anyone else who could potentially annoy me.

As soon as I make my way over to Garrett’s desk, he looks up at me, flashing a big smile. “Hey man, what’s up? What brings you here to my side of things?” he asks while turning his chair towards me, giving me his undivided attention.

“I’m running short on time, and I really need your help. Remember I texted you about how I wanted footage from the morgue late last

night? Well, I need to see it *now*. It should be from somewhere between six-thirty in the evening to ten at night on the ninth of February.”

Garrett turns towards the computer. “Is there a specific camera we need to look at?” he asks while typing away on his computer.

“I’m not sure about that yet. I just know the time,” I reply while moving closer to the computer.

“Alright, so all these videos are from that specific day. You can go over them and check whichever interests you the most,” he tells me, moving his chair to the side so I can get a closer look. I scroll through the lists of videos, the hours mentioned with them.

“Thanks a lot man. This is a huge help! I don’t know what I would do without you.” I keep scrolling. For some reason, I can’t find the timestamps I’m looking for. “Umm, can you check if the footage from six o’clock is in this folder? I... I don’t think it’s here,” I

tell him, quickly scrolling over the page from bottom to the top.

“What are you talking about? It’s all in here. You must have missed it.” He furrows his brows and moves me to the side. He goes through the list of videos slowly at first. Then, in a state of panic, he scrolls over them quickly, opening several different folders.

“Oh no!”

“Oh no, what?” I ask.

“The videos... someone deleted them!”

You’ve got to be kidding me.

Chapter 5

My head spins. Unable to find the culprit. Unable to help Evelyn. Unable to piece the information together. Unable to gather more information.

I exit the IT department and see a short figure turn around and to the right, running to the stairs. I decide to follow them. Why does this person look familiar to me?

As I watch the silhouette disappear near Mike's office, it becomes clear to me that this must be his assistant. What was she doing outside the IT department? Unless she was there before me to delete the footage - or is she just keeping an eye on me? Mike must have asked her to do it to see if I find any dirt on him.

I burst into Mike's office. The door slams open against the wall. "Sending your assistant after me? That's a new low, even for you Mike."

Mike's arrogance is visible in his boisterous laugh. Trying to control my anger, I fist my hands.

"What do you think you're doing? Just because you envy a self-made person, you start plotting their downfall? And all for what exactly?" With each question, I move closer to Mike. He stands up from his chair and comes face-to-face with me. "How can you be so cruel? Do you ever think about anything or anyone other than yourself?"

He brings his face closer to mine with a grin. "You, my friend, are hilarious!" Mike slaps my shoulder as if we're close friends. I shrug off his hand.

Unable to control myself, I grab Mike by his collar and grit my teeth, my tone full of warning. "What game do you think you are playing here exactly? Do you think you can come after Evelyn, and I'll let you win?"

The arrogant smirk falls off Mike's face. He looks me dead in the eyes. Good. He should know I'm not here to entertain him, and neither is Evelyn. I've had enough of him working in the shadows.

“Do you think you scare me? You may be able to intimidate me with your size, but don’t forget Adrian, I am your senior, and I can have you fired like this,” he snaps his fingers.

My hold on his collar tightens as I tower over him, “Oh, you can get me fired, but when I break your legs, how are you going to work?” A small grin plays on my lips.

The color drains from his face. He’s scared, and that’s good.

“What do you want from me?” he stutters, his voice full of fear.

“I want the truth Mike. No. Lies. What have you been up to? Why has your assistant been following me? Why would you do something like this to Evelyn? You do understand that what you did is a crime, and once the case is out in the open, you’re going to be rotting in prison.”

His face is stone-cold as he struggles with my hands holding his collars. “You have the wrong information, you fool. I am nothing but a bystander here! I swear to God! And as for Stella, I needed insight into what exactly was going on

around here. Thanks to her, I know details that even you might've missed."

Mike's eyes narrow on me, and he smirks when he is finally able to loosen my grip on his collar. He moves away from me while straightening his white button-down shirt. "I haven't done anything yet, but just so you don't forget, I have an alibi. I would be careful with who and how I ask questions, especially as some lowly assistant. You watch yourself White. You don't know who I am. I have more years of practice than your age," he threatens, then points at the open door.

If I stand here any longer, I may punch the guy. So, I walk out with my head held high, even if his words did get to me a little. Subconsciously, I make my way over to Evelyn's office. I hope she's okay. I know this is a very difficult situation for her, and I just want to get her out of it. So much has happened in these two days. I need to figure out something.

I quietly slide inside Eve's office, locking the door behind me. I remember arranging a bunch of loose papers in a file and putting that inside one of the shelves. So, I grab the file and pull it out,

rummaging through the papers, trying to find something out of the ordinary.

Unable to find anything, I start going over the inventory on the first page. These are the names of all the employees on this floor. One of them, however, seems a bit odd. Nick Black, a name I don't recognize. I don't see his name anywhere else either. I put the file back, lock the shelf and the door, then make my way over to the reception desk.

"Mia, can you look up a name for me?" I ask quietly.

"Does it have something to do with Evelyn's case?" she inquires, wide-eyed. I nod. She focuses back on the computer and starts typing. "Give me the name. I'll do anything to bring Eve back," Mia whispers softly.

"Nick Black." She types it into the search bar but finds nothing on that name. "Try searching these two names separately then." When she does, a lot of names start popping up, but they're all people I'm already familiar with. I run my fingers through my hair.

Wait a minute, the papers in the file; did the heading say something relating to access granted? The name Nick Black echoes through my mind. I've heard it before; I just don't know where.

Suddenly, I remember. "Holy shit Mia, that's someone's pseudonym, and I know exactly who."

My phone rings, startling us both. I take my phone from my pocket, surprised to see an unknown number flash before my eyes.

"Hello? Hello? Is this Adrian? Adrian! They have taken me! They arrested me! Adrian... Please do something quick!" The call ends abruptly as Eve's screams fade out from the other side of the phone.

Oh my god, I didn't even know they had a warrant out for her arrest. What the hell have they done?

Chapter 6

It's been two days since that phone call from Evelyn. Two days since she was arrested. Two days of feeling absolutely useless. Two days of no luck.

"You called man?" A groggy voice answers from the other side of my cell phone.

"Yeah man, can you be my plus one to this gala I just found out about? I was thinking I could finally corner Mike Bennett there. You know about my last encounter with him. He isn't easy to handle, and I could really use your help."

"Sounds like a plan. I'm all in. Let's have some fun!"

I wish I had the same energy right now, but all this running around in circles isn't really helping. "Okay then, see you at six."

We take Victor's car to the gala being hosted in a huge garden with fairy lights adorning all the bushes. Round tables with crisp, white linen cloths, elegant chairs and floral arrangements are spread throughout the colorful space. A small, wooden outdoor bar is set to the right with a bartender showing off his tricks, pulling in attention from the audience that's already waiting in front of a short stage.

Victor walks straight to the bar. "Call me when you need me. I need a drink first," he says, waving without turning to look at me.

I rush over to Garret. "Did you bring everything I asked you to?" I whisper.

He nods before quietly mumbling, "The USB?"

I hand it over to him. There aren't a lot of people who I would vouch for since I

uncovered the truth, but I trust Garret. We hide the projector behind a red veil on the stage. I can tell people are already questioning what's going on.

As soon as we're done putting up everything for the projector, Victor makes his way over to me with confident strides. "Did you finally catch the guy yet or what?" he asks, raising his eyebrows at me.

"Almost." I wink at him and make my way over to the stage. Showtime.

I tap the mic to get everyone's attention, and the whole crowd faces me. "Hi everyone, I know you weren't expecting this today, but was anyone expecting what has happened these past few days?" I ask. "I don't think so." I toss Victor a fake smile.

"A renowned doctor's career is at risk. You may have noticed that Doctor Evelyn hasn't been at the hospital recently, and I'm sure you've all heard of her arrest by now. What a turn of events, am I right?" I pause, look

around, and catch Victor's gaze, subtly hinting at him to join me. "My friend here, Victor Blackwood, has helped me ever since Evelyn was accused of organ trafficking. He gave me the name of a lawyer who could help, Tyson. He was of *huge* help. Well, at least his office was when he wasn't around.

"You see, I was desperate, and I had a feeling that Tyson was leaving some information out. So, I went to his office when he was on his lunch break and snooped around. That's when I found out who the real culprit was. Low and behold, our very own Victor Blackwood."

Everyone's silent. "Victor here, or should I say Nick Black, was almost a doctor, but Victor didn't pass his psych exam. Evelyn deemed that he was mentally unstable and showed signs of sadism! Surprise, surprise."

Victor and I stare at each other, his eyes dark and his face blank. He knows I know. He tries to sneak off the stage, but as soon as he reaches the last step, security joins us.

“Right, so where were we? Yes, I recognized Victor’s handwriting while I was snooping around in Tyson’s office. I thought Tyson was friends with Victor, but it turns out that Tyson is his lawyer. Thanks to him, I even found Victor’s confession. Apparently, because of his personal grudges against Evelyn, Victor wanted to destroy her life. He said, and I quote, ‘I want to ruin them’ and that’s just what he did. He framed Eve, had her arrested, all the while pretending to help me.”

The room resounds with gasps from the entire crowd. Victor tries to run towards the bushes where the wall is a bit low. He’s quickly stopped by Evelyn who stands right in front of him. I can feel the shock course through the room, guards on either side of her. Victor’s expression cycles between panic, shock, scared, and then helplessness.

Evelyn, however, remains calm as her eyes narrow on Victor. “You. You’re Victor Blackwood. I remember you.”

“How...How did you recognize me?” Victor bursts out. “What are you doing out of jail? You...you failed me and stopped me from becoming a doctor.” He shakes his head, a hysterical laugh escaping his mouth. “Did you think I'd let you live with that? I had to ruin your career like you ruined mine!

“Yeah,” he looks around at the crowd, “I'm the one who took that man's organs out. I came in as Nick Black when you were done, opened that man up, and took out his heart and liver. I did it, and I don't care who knows. You deserved it! All of it Evelyn Harp! And I had my revenge until this idiot went digging around.”

He tries to run towards me, but the guards hold him back, pinning him down. The whole crowd gasps, their hands on their mouths as they watch in shock.

Evelyn bends down next to him, speaking in a calm voice, “You never had what it takes to be a doctor because *YOU* failed the psych examination and portrayed signs of sadism.

YOU wrote some evil ideas during your exam, and you are a hazard to this world! You're the one cutting up dead people and trafficking their organs! You are a monster! I don't ever want to see you near me or my daughter ever again!"

As soon as Evelyn is done saying her part, the police pick Victor up and handcuff him. He screams and kicks as they drag him to their car and take him away.

Once they're out of sight, I run to Eve and hug her tightly. Her body melts in mine as she takes deep breaths.

"This is all over now. No more Victor. You won, Eve."

Finally. Finally, everything can go back to normal.

Chapter 7

“Dr. Evelyn Harp, please report to the emergency room.”

The sound of her name resounding through the halls again brings a smile to my face. She’s back. Dr. Evelyn is back.

I look over her schedule for the day. She’s busy till ten at night, just how she likes it to be. On her first day back, the hospital staff threw her a little party in a room for the staff with balloons, some food, and music. For one hour, everyone stopped by to meet Evelyn and welcome her back. It was exactly what she deserved, and I could tell from the look on her face that she felt like herself again.

In the aftermath of the gala, Victor was arrested and taken into custody. They opened a case against him, charging him with stalking, illegal organ removal and defamation. Aside from Evelyn, the hospital

also sued him. He's been cornered from all sides, unable to fight anyone. Daniel even offered to help Evelyn in her case by paying a good lawyer for her so she can win. At the end of the day, everyone is on her side, and no one is with him.

Victor also went through a psychological exam and was diagnosed with Intermittent Explosive Disorder - a condition that warrants his attempt to take revenge on Evelyn and accounts for his sadistic tendencies. The police searched his apartment and found picture cut outs of Evelyn, a blueprint of the hospital, and a revenge board of sorts that had evidence of his entire scheme. What shakes me the most is that I was part of this scheme.

Apparently, Victor had a few pictures of me as well. I was a part of his plan to take down Evelyn since I was her assistant. He moved in next to me three years ago solely to befriend me so he could access information on Evelyn.

At first, a part of me felt guilty for not seeing through his mask. If I had, I could have stopped all of this from happening in the first place. Then, Evelyn sat me down and told me there was no way for me to know, and she

was right. Victor had hidden who he was for so long and so well that no sane person could have guessed this is what he had been planning all along.

I shake off the thoughts and memories from the last few weeks and continue with my day at work, scheduling her appointments, managing patient records and handling all the paperwork. By the end of it, I'm exhausted, but it is the kind of exhaustion I missed. It feels...*normal*.

As I am getting ready to leave, I look into Evelyn's office and see her sitting in there, lost in thought.

"Hey there doc, I'm just leaving. Do you need anything?"

"Hey," she comes back to the present moment, shaking her head, "No, no. It's been a long day. You go ahead, I'm gonna leave soon as well."

"Alright." I narrow my eyes at her. "Is everything okay with you?"

"Yeah, it's great." She gives me a small, unconvincing smile.

I walk into the office, sure that something is going on with her. “Spit it out. What’s up?”

She takes a deep breath, moving forward in her chair and resting her elbows onto the table. “Nothing, honestly. Things are great. I’m just thinking about everything. I mean, things are good now, but god, it’s been a journey.” She lets out a small laugh.

I nod. “It has, but that journey is over now. You’re back, I’m here with you and everyone’s happy. You should be too.”

“I know, and I am. There’s just something so jarring about all of it. Like, someone went out of their way to do this to me. It’s like, you never really know what’s going on in someone’s head.”

“I get that, trust me.” Her eyes come to mine, a sympathetic look in them. “But this is just how things are supposed to be. What matters is your name has been cleared and that man is behind bars.”

She’s silent for a few moments before finally speaking again, “How are you doing with all of it? It must be a lot for you too knowing that he lived right next door.”

“I mean, it definitely sent me down a spiral at first. I do occasionally feel paranoid about my safety. I’ve had a few nightmares about him coming back, but I know he’s not going to. He’s behind bars, and I trust that he will stay there.” I purse my lips.

“I’m so sorry to hear that. You know, if you ever need to talk about it, I’m here.” She gives me an understanding look.

“I know.” I nod. “And I appreciate it.”

I stand and begin walking towards the door. Just then, Evelyn’s voice stops me. “Adrian...”

I turn around and lock eyes with her. “Yes?”

“Thank you. For all of it. I wouldn’t be sitting here if it weren’t for you.”

I nod and give her a small smile. “It’s the least I could do.”

I feel lighter after our conversation and grateful that Victor is no longer someone we have to deal with. He may physically be behind bars, but he lives in my head. And there’s only one way to deal with that.

I get behind the wheel and drive straight to the prison he's being held at. It's not very high security, but I do know there's a chance they'll deny me access to see him. Nonetheless, I want to try my luck. I arrive when visitation hours are just thirty minutes shy of being over. I go in, check-in with security, write my name down and once all the protocols are over, they take me to a room where there's a few other people visiting some inmates.

After about five minutes, Victor walks in, his arms and legs chained. They walk him over to join me and cuff his arms to the bar on the table before giving us some space.

Victor looks disheveled. He's no longer the man I once used to be friends with. His dark hair and beard are grown out. He looks a little weaker and tired. There's a deadpan look on his face.

"Lookie here. Someone finally grew the guts to come see me." He gives me an icy stare.

"I'm not here to bond with you Victor. I'm just here because..." the words evade me, and truth be told, I don't know why I'm here.

“You’re here because you’re weak.” He lets out a small laugh. “If you really hated me, you wouldn’t come to see me.”

A small grin plays on my lips as his words only solidify what I already knew. “Bold of you to assume I’m here because I miss you. But,” I lean forward, whispering now, “I can’t lie Victor, I don’t hate you. I despise you. I’m so glad you’re behind bars, because guess what? Despite all your efforts, Evelyn is still in the hospital, working, saving lives, a doctor. And you?” I lean back, laughing. “You’re going to be a nobody behind bars, and all you’ll be known as is the crazy man who cut a man open and took his organs out to frame someone.”

I can see the look on Victor’s face - the look of fury. My words hit him where it hurts. Maybe I do know why I’m here. It’s to say my piece and get this off my chest so I can move on for once and for all.

“You piece of shit!” Victor’s voice begins to get louder. “You’re going to pay for this. Just watch. I’m gonna get out of here, and I’m going to ruin your lives!” he screams.

I just smile and watch as the crazy look in his eyes takes over. This man deserves what’s

coming to him. The guards rush over, unlocking his cuffs and dragging him back to his room as he shouts, throwing out baseless threats.

I take a deep breath and gather my things before getting out of there. I sit in my car, look at the prison, and all I can think is: *this is where it ends.*