

DREAMING WITH EYES OPEN

By Mahlatse Mokone

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1. Waking Up

Lucky POV

Walking through the streets of LA surprisingly had a calming effect on me. The streets were buzzing, it was spring break but I couldn't bring myself to care, but then again I never did care about such things. I smiled to myself. As I thought about it more often, moving to LA was the riskiest and probably the best decision I've made yet. It's been a year since I left the small town of Raymond in Minnesota. I will never forget the look on my family's faces when I told them I wanted to travel halfway across the country to a city as big as LA.

My big sister wanted to come with me but I couldn't let her, her whole life was in Raymond, besides this was something I had to do by myself.

Jenna and I have never been separated our whole lives, me moving was tough on both of us.

The horns of cabs on the road snapped me back to reality,

I was just around the corner to my apartment. I enjoyed walking, it gave me a chance to let my mind relax for a while and not worry about anything but making my legs move forward.

I turned the key and opened the door, "Home at last" I muttered to myself.

My apartment was not bad for a 25-year-old single woman.

2 bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, lounge, and a dining area, it wasn't much but it was my sanctuary.

Over the last 3 months I've really put more effort into redecorating it, choosing the apartment was an easy decision.

It was open, lite, modern and cozy at the same time, just the way I like it.

After a nice long hot bath I grabbed my take away and made my way to the recliner by the large window in the lounge.

The view of LA was not bad from where I was sitting.

I closed my eyes and let my mind wander again,

"I'm so proud of you honey" said dad, pulling me into a tight hug after the rain of graduation caps was over.

"Aren't we all? Well done little sis"

"Thanks Jenna" I said giving her a hug too.

"Where's mom?" I could swear she was with them a minute ago.

"She ran back home, she wanted to make sure everything was perfect for your graduation party" Jenna chuckled. Knowing very well that the thought of a party annoyed me.

"Someone kill me now!" I said hanging my head, that request was a lost cause

"Oh don't be so dramatic, it will be fun you'll see" dad flashed me an encouraging smile.

"Fine" I sighed "but you're borrowing me your car for a whole month" I warned him

"Yes ma'am" he said trying not to laugh at my failed plan,

"Come on guys! We don't want to be late" Jenna patting her foot impatiently.

"Yeah heaven forbid that we should be late for our own party" I said with deep sarcasm,

This time we all laughed as we made our way out of the school's hall.

My eyes flashed open at the sudden pain in my chest.

Its been awhile since I've felt pain since I moved here, sometimes it felt like it was gone completely, but it would creep its way back in and stun me when I least expected it.

When I didn't feel pain, I didn't necessary feel happiness either.

My high school graduation was one of the best memories I had, a time when life was less complex and harsh.

A time when I was a happy teenager; eager to start conquering the world.

Everything changed 2 and a half years later, I was in college when my father was diagnosed with cancer. It shook my whole family; I for one was completely devastated.

I couldn't believe this could happen to one of the most sweetest and loving men on the planet, but then again when was life ever fair?

Dad went on with life as if nothing happened, he didn't want us to worry about him or treat him differently. But I could see that he was putting up a façade for mom, for me...for my entire family's sake.

When he grew weak to the point where he couldn't get out of bed anymore, I felt absolutely helpless.

My father was dying right in front of my eyes and there was nothing I could do about it. Somehow at the back of my head I kept hoping an angel would fall from the sky and cure him, or for him to jump up and say *'Just kidding!'*

When he died it felt like a part of me had died along with him, his death was hard on everyone but I took it the hardest.

He and I were close, he was not just my father; he was my friend, my idol, my everything.

Our family mourned him but in time they all started to accept and move on, hell even my mother appeared to have moved on, but me

I was stuck.

Even now watching the bright lights of LA I wonder if I *'am* capable of moving on.

I felt tears sting my eyes, but this time I made no effort to try and prevent them from streaming down my face.

"I miss you dad," I whispered, wiping myself up and headed to my bedroom.

2. One For The Money, Two For The Show

Jesse POV

I woke up this morning with a bad feeling in my stomach, something big was going to happen, change was coming and I wasn't going to like it.

I started my red Ferrari and there was an immediate beeping sound on my monitor,

"Jesse my boy" Bill Andrews appeared on the screen.

"Mr. Andrews, to what do I owe the pleasure?" I asked smiling,

"Stop by at the headquarters late today, we have important things we need to discuss" he said.

"Is there a mission in the works?"

"Ah you see, this is why I like you Jesse" he laughed, "You're so perceptive"

"I'll take that as a yes then" It wasn't a question, I knew Bill all too well

"Come over and we'll talk," he concluded.

"Very well then" I agreed and the screen went blank.

Bill is a CIA general in charge of all the undercover agents. I've been serving the agency for half my life and when I was recruited as a teenager, he was my trainer and mentor, he taught me everything I knew.

So I guess that gives him the right to call a 30-year-old man a *boy*, to him it's all I ever would be.

I had to make a stop at work first; I didn't need to check in everyday. I had a capable team, whom only called me when it was absolutely necessary.

I made my way through the main entrance of G-Industries LA headquarters, it was the one I lived closest to but because we had branches all around the world I was required to travel sometimes.

I was greeted with anxious and forced smiles and hellos, someone must've tipped them off that the boss was coming.

Way to go ruin my fun I thought bitterly, I loved seeing their faces when I made an unexpected visit.

I entered my office and my PA Bianca Anderson was waiting for me with my favorite Starbucks coffee.

"Good morning Mr. Gilbert" She beamed, handing me the coffee,

"Morning to you too Bianca, how are you today?" I asked sipping the coffee and settling on the leather chair.

"I'm good, so you've got a board meeting at 8 am and the MD wants to speak with you," she said, laying her files down.

"Thank you, tell him we'll talk after the meeting" I started going through the files

"Alright" she walked out after flashing me a brilliant smile.

Bianca is a sweet girl, young and ambitious. I hired her because she was intelligent and had a great work ethic; she was able to keep up with me easily.

It was awkward at first when she made her feelings about me very clear. I tried to let her down easy. I had dates not girlfriends; the life I led did not allow me to have emotional ties to anyone. Not that I wanted to either.

I guess she saw that it wasn't going to work out between us; I hope she saw that she was better off. She deserved nothing less than to be treated special.

I turned my chair and faced the big view my office had of the city, sometimes I wondered if being '*Jesse Gilbert*' was a blessing or a curse. This lifestyle, the money, success meant little to me.

But it was much easier being the billionaire slash playboy, badass agent than being the person I really wanted to be, living the life I really wanted to live.

"Excuse me sir, its time" the receptionist smiled apologetically, obviously hated having pulled me out of my daydream.

"Yes, thank you" I got up and closed the door behind me.

I pulled up at an old building downtown LA, the last place anyone would suspect was the government intelligence offices.

I entered the building and stopped in front of two metal doors to complete the identification process.

"Welcome agent Gilbert" a computerized voice came through as I entered the lift that led to the underground offices,

I walked out and through the huge and busy hallway filled with LED lights and glass walls and doors.

A young man approached me looking like he's just seen a ghost "H-hello agent G-gilbert" he stuttered, "I cant believe I'm finally meeting you, you're a legend man, I'm a huge fan of your work here at the agency" I looked closely at him, I've never met him before probably new here, I decided.

"Um thanks...." His eyes bulged as he realize he didn't introduce himself

"Adam, sir" he offered me his hand and I took it,

"Well thank you Adam, its nice to meet you too" not knowing what else to say, I walked away quickly trying unsuccessfully to avoid any more stares.

Bill normally assigned me missions anywhere, so I didn't understand why I had to come here. It couldn't be that serious, having been an agent as long as I have I've seen it all.

I knocked on his glass door to catch is attention "Go Away! I'm busy," he grumbled, this time he looked up and his expression changed from annoyance to excitement.

"Jesse! I'm glad you could make it" he said giving me a pat on the shoulder "you look sharp as always" he chuckled taking his seat again "Please close the door and take a seat...We've got a problem"

Bill continued explaining that Frank Dales, a criminal mastermind and arch nemeses of mine had escaped prison. He was now after a major energy source, and the CIA had to capture him and keep it out of his reach.

"I don't understand how I fit into this puzzle," I said trying to make sense of everything "And where is this energy source? Do you have it?"

Bill stood up and turned his monitor on and a picture of a girl...teenager maybe popped up along with some information about her.

"This is Lucky Melissa Strauss, she's from Minnesota but recently moved to LA" Bill said "And that" he pointed to an emerald necklace she wore "Is the energy source".

I tried to laugh but came out choked and strained "You're kidding me right?"

"I wish I was," He said slumping back to his seat.

"Then why don't you get the girl retrieve the necklace, and I'll get Frank," I offered.

"I wish it were that simple" he let out an exasperated sigh "This necklace cannot be *retrieved*, not without killing her. It is woven into her DNA thus it acts as any of her internal organs, its just as important as her heart or brain".

I was frozen, I could hear Bill but I couldn't begin to comprehend what he was saying to me...it was impossible.

"How?" Was all I could manage.

"Right now we don't know for certain, all we know is that her grandmother gave it to her when she was young and told her never to take it off, that it will *protect her*" Bill grimaced.

"You think grandma knows its potential?" I asked, feeling like I was crazy for even considering the possibility.

"I don't know, we'll keep investigating. The fact of the matter remains that Frank is convinced its real and worth a fight" He said, his eyes narrowed in concentration "He will stop at nothing to get it, even killing her in the process. She would just be collateral damage".

"This is madness!" My fists came down on the table, standing up "Are you hearing yourself? Even if it was true how could her grandma contain so much energy into one necklace? Let alone bind it to her life! You're talking supernatural crap here." Bill waited patiently for me to come down and sit back down again.

"Be that as it may, we have to take action and that's where you come in," he said, "You must retrieve her, and keep her safe while we hunt down Frank. If she's protected that will slow him down and we'll get him then".

"No, no" I shook my head "I already did this protection service thing once, I'm not going back there again. Or get someone else to do it" I said.

"I know that Jesse, but there's no one else we trust with this but you and all the elite agents are all busy with their current missions." he looked at me his eyes pleading. I groaned.

"Look" He said putting his hands up "Protect her, just for a couple of weeks until we get Frank and then we'll erase her and Frank's memory; they will never know she was with you or about her extraordinary necklace. That way she'll be

safe and Frank will be in prison, no one else would know about that necklace except you and me”.

I had to admit that sounded like a good plan for a moment.

“Fine” I grumbled, “I’ll do it, but you owe me big time. Taming a teenage girl is going to be too much work” I added, oh the horror.

“Oh no, she’s not a teenager” he said pushing a button on his remote, and a picture of a woman appeared “She’s 25 at the moment, I’ll send you info on where she lives and works”.

I couldn’t hear Bill anymore, all my attention was on the woman on the picture. She had long dark hair, almost as dark as mine except hers had some brown in it. Complimented by big green eyes, smooth fair skin, full lips and a petite but curvy body. She wasn’t just beautiful...she was *stunning*.

Bill must’ve seen something in my expression because he coughed and said, “She’s quite something, isn’t she?” stifling a laugh.

“Yes she is” I said, my voice surprisingly was wiped clean of all emotion as I tore my eyes from his monitor to look at him.

I don’t know what my face revealed because he suddenly straightened “I see I don’t need to worry about you getting distracted” he said it like he was disappointed.

“Never” I confirmed, rolling my eyes at him.

I’ve dealt with women like Lucky my whole life, and as far as I was concerned she wasn’t any different from all the others. Except for what was going to happen to her anyway.

Bill thanked me and promised to deliver that information as soon as possible, *this is going to be a long month* I thought, as I got into my car and sped home.

3. Beautiful Nightmare

Lucky POV

“Lucky? Lucky!”

I jumped, nearly spilling my coffee all over the desk and myself.

“Jesus Abby! You nearly gave me a heart attack,” I glared at her. I loved Abby; She was nice, a little obnoxious but an overall good friend.

“Sorry, what’s up with you today? You seem miles away and you look a little tired” she said, examining my face.

"It's nothing, just had a rough night" I said, I couldn't shake the dream I had last night. I was jogging in the street when all of a sudden a guy was jogging right behind me. I couldn't see his face because he was wearing a black hoodie. I tried to not panic or let paranoia get the best of me, but when he made every turn I did, I broke off on a sprint and he mimicked me. I was just around the corner to my apartment when I tripped and fell, but before I could scream for help, I woke up with a gasp...

"You know what would do you a world of good? Lunch, come on my treat" Abby chimed; I envied her enthusiasm.

"I don't know Abby, I still got a lot to do and..." she started closing my laptop and files, all I could do was stare at her in shock "What are you doing?"

"I'm not taking no for an answer girl" she tugged at my arm "You work too much, now come on!"

"Okay, no need to push me" I mumbled, grabbing my handbag.

We headed to a nearby restaurant,

"You know all work and no play makes Lucky a very dull girl," Abby said, while munching on a burger. I don't know where she puts all the food she eats, she was so tiny. I was not a health freak but she overdoes it sometimes.

"Hey I know how to have fun, okay?" I said stubbornly

She rolled her eyes "You call reading books and listening to music fun?" she waved her fork in the air "What about parties and boys?"

"I'm not a party girl Abby," I said, nor will I ever be...

"Okay maybe not a party animal, but what about *boys* huh?" she rose her eyebrows "When was the last time you had a date?"

"What's that got to do with anything?" I tried to keep the annoyance out of my voice.

"Everything!" she sighed, "look Lucky, you're 25 and hot as hell, it's a crime that you're still single. You need to get out more and start having some fun." She said, her voice surprised me; Abby was hardly the serious one so when she was it shocked me.

I knew her heart was in the right place, but I couldn't find it in myself to enter the dating scene again. The last guy I was with cheated on me with my best friend for God's sake;

After catching Travis in bed with Tanya, I couldn't even gather enough strength to scream at them for betraying me. I just wanted to run and keep running. So I managed to whisper "its over" to Travis, who looked more shocked than I was. Before I turned I looked at Tanya, whatever she saw in my eyes made her flinch.

I found Jenna on the couch drinking a glass of water; she dropped it when she saw me on the doorway.

"Lucky!" she screamed, rushing to my side pulling me to the couch "What's wrong? Did someone hurt you?" her voice frantic with worry.

I shook my head "Travis...I caught him cheating on me with Tanya" I was able to choke out, behind tearless gasps.

Different emotions appeared on Jenna's face all at once; anger, betrayal...pain I don't know how long we just sat there holding each other.

Now that I think about it, I never really loved Travis that's why I couldn't cry even though I felt pain. I was grieving the loss of my best friend on a time I needed her the most; in a space of 7 months I had lost a father and a friend.

Moving to LA was foregone; I was tired of putting my family through hell and worry. I wanted an escape, and the prospect of starting afresh in a new place, where no one knew me was exciting. The whole charade with Travis and Tanya was really the last straw that propelled me to take my plan into action. So as soon as I graduated from college I packed my bags, and left Minnesota without looking back.

"Earth to Lucky" I blinked to see Abby snapping her fingers in my face

"Oh I'm sorry Abby" I said, chagrinned.

She slumped back to her seat looking confused "Okay Lucky you win, I won't force this upon you if you're not comfortable with it"

I smiled apologetically "Thanks for understanding" I said as I got an idea...

"But that doesn't mean we still can't have a girls night out" I smiled.

Abby let out a faint scream "YAY!! Really?" she asked and I nodded "Thank you, thank you, thank you" she said hugging me "I promise we are going to have a great time"

"No boys, right?" I asked.

"For me or for you?" she eyed me carefully,

"Jeez, for me of course." I said, duh. "Deal" she exclaimed.

I laughed, Abby was a sucker for a good time "Lets go back to work before we both get fired" I said, and she groaned but got up.

We decided to go to a club that was a few blocks away from us. We could even walk there, but Abby refused saying she didn't want to walk in her high heels. I for one didn't do much to change my normal appearance. Just threw on a silver V-neck dress that I hardly ever wore, I put on some sassy boots and we headed out. Abby was right, it wasn't nearly as bad as I thought it would be. Except the guys that kept hitting on us, the night turned out to be worthwhile. As the night grew later I could see that my reserved nature was holding Abby back, "Go" I shouted over the loud music. Abby looked at me like I was crazy "And leave you here alone? No way" she shook her head.

"I'll be fine, besides I think I'll just head back home and try to catch up on some sleep" I said, its sweet that she was willing to stay with me even if it meant missing out on some 'Abigail FUN'.

"Trust me, go" I coaxed,

"Okay, you'll get a cab right?" she asked, concerned.

“Absolutely” I promised, “Now go before someone takes your place”.

She gave me one last look and smiled. Then went over to the guy that has been winking at her and motioning with his finger for her to come over.

I let out a sigh; I couldn’t understand her apprehension in leaving me. Its almost like she would never see me again.

I walked out of the club and was met by a cool breeze, which felt good on my skin, having spent so much time in a stuffy nightclub.

Before I could stop myself, I started walking in the direction of my apartment

I know I promised to get a cab but it’s been a while since I just *walked*; because of the workload...I missed it.

I had expected a lot of things when I came to LA, but I hadn’t expected the peace I would find here. It wasn’t necessarily happiness but it was pretty damn close.

I heard a suspicious sound behind me, I looked back to see what it was and I was suddenly engulfed by very strong arms, dragging me into the dark alley.

Before I could scream a hand clasped my mouth shut. I tried to fight him off but he had me in an iron grasp; there was no escaping him. This was my nightmare incarnated and this time there was no waking up...

Tears of terror streaked down my face, he didn’t cover my nose but I still couldn’t breathe.

“Shh, shh” The man’s deep voice was at my ear “Its okay, calm down Lucky, relax” he said in a soft soothing voice.

How the hell did he know my name?

I tried to make sense of it but my knees gave away and everything went completely blank, hoped to God that I was dying...

Much to my disappointment I could feel myself regaining consciousness, I could hear everything around me. We weren’t in the streets anymore, there was no buzzing of cars from afar; there was only complete silence. I opened my eyes to see a dimly lit room. Which had a huge bed, and some impressive furniture. I continued to scan the room until I saw my black hooded kidnapper standing in the dark corner, the furthest from me, he was staring at me.

I let out a faint scream, but he didn’t move,

I tried to get up and run only to realize that I was tied to the chair, panicked I tried to free my hands to no avail.

“Careful, you’ll hurt yourself” The man said, in the same voice I heard in the alley, soft, soothing...*alluring*. Moving very slowly towards me.

I whimpered “Please, don’t hurt me” I pleaded

He stopped, putting his hands up “I’m not going to hurt you” he assured.

I was bewildered when I realized he actually meant it.

"Who are you? Why did you kidnap me?" I asked, trying to slow my breathing. I still couldn't see his face under the hood, then I remembered... "You called me Lucky," I whispered.

At that, he pulled off his hoodie; if I weren't so afraid I would've been swooning over him. He was absolutely gorgeous.

He was tall, and muscular, his features were chiseled and beautiful. The tank top that he was wearing underneath his hoodie showed off his impressive muscles. He had really dark hair; almost jet-black, it was short and scruffy-looking.

"It doesn't matter who I 'am, I just wanted to talk to you and I knew you wouldn't be so co-operative" he said moving closer towards me.

"Stop!" I shrieked "If you mean me no harm, then let me out of here, if you want to talk you should've asked, not kidnap me!"

He chuckled "Its not that simple, and I can't let you go yet".

"What do you mean you *can't*?" I shouted at him "Let me go you creep!"

He moved fast; before I could gasp he was crouched below me, his hand on my cheek. I know I should've told him to get away from me but I couldn't, his palm felt amazing against my cheek.

"Lucky please, you have to trust me" he coaxed,

Dealing with fear and anger was so much better than these strange and foreign emotions that paralyzed me at that moment. All I wanted to do was jump on him now...and it scared me.

"How can I? I don't even know you," I whispered, my resolve shaking.

"You will, I'll explain later, just calm down" His own voice sounded strained, or maybe my mind was playing tricks on me.

I looked into his eyes; I couldn't distinguish their color in the small amount of light, blue maybe? Involuntary my face shifted that my lips touched the inside of his hand.

He froze for a second and then his face moved towards mine and I felt the rope around my hands loosen.

"You are free, if you try to run I *will* drag you back here" he threatened, his breath on my face his lips inches from mine.

A warm shiver ran down my spine and I took in a shaky breath...breathing him in, he was intoxicating.

"Why are you doing this to me?" I asked, my head spinning,

"Because I want you" he purred, and that was it for me.

I crushed my lips to his and he returned the kiss immediately, his lips hard and passionate against mine.

My breath came in gasps, as he lifted me off the chair. I wrapped my legs around his hips as he backed me up against the wall. His lips never leaving mine, he held my arms up over my head and began a hot path down my neck. My mind couldn't comprehend what I was doing or the implications of it. I suddenly felt

my back against the mattress and I knew there was no turning back, I don't think I even wanted to.

I was not sure how long I've spent gasping and moaning in pleasure, him doing things to my body I never thought were possible, for me to realize what I was about to do.

Did it matter that I didn't know his name? That he was a kidnapper and possibly a murderer? That I was naked underneath him in a room I've never seen in my life? Did it matter that he was about to take me now? ...That I was a virgin?

No, none of those things mattered because there was nothing I wanted more in that moment but *him*. I would deal with whatever consequences that waited for me tomorrow, if I lived to see it. But for now I would devour my own beautiful nightmare.

I gasped when he took me.

4. Hide And Seek

Lucky POV

The sun shone, sending the light directly to my eyes. I groaned realizing that I couldn't keep my eyes closed any longer wishing I were back in my apartment or better yet...dead.

I didn't want to open my eyes because that would only confirm what I unsuccessfully tried to avoid. 1. Yes, I was kidnapped last night 2. Yes, he was not a figment of my imagination; he's real 3. Yes, I slept with him.

I never understood why people made a fuss about their first time, I didn't even know his name and yet it was so amazing. I knew I would remember it 50 years from now...*he's good* I thought as I chuckled without humor.

I said I would take whatever punishment waited for me; I guess God decided to take me up on my offer. I slowly opened my eyes,

I was in a different bedroom, than the one I remembered last night. This one was bigger and had a bigger bed, 10 people could fit into this bed. It was empty,

The furniture was just as impressive though a bit darker and masculine. Complimented by large striking paintings on the walls. There were 2 large wooden doors and a single door in the opposite direction; all closed.

I'm guessing this was *his* bedroom; butterflies attacked my stomach at the thought of facing him. We'll it was now or never, I had to find him and get out of here before I literally go insane.

I looked around for my silver dress and I couldn't find it.

Crap! What would I wear now? I couldn't go out there naked! I climbed off the bed taking the sheet with me as I went through the single door. It was a bathroom, all white and huge, I decided to put it to good use.

I felt a little better after a bath, I was careful not to get my hair wet; I wasn't going to find a blow dryer here. I used his toothbrush, after what we did last night, what was the point of worrying?

I had no idea what I was going to wear so I pushed the 2 wooden doors open; it was a closet.

A walk in closet, filled with clothes from every angle. I took a shirt from a dozen of them. I thought about taking pants but decided against it. I walked over to the window and opened up the curtain.

I gasped when I saw that the 'window' was a sliding door leading to a spacious balcony, but that was not why I gasped.

I was three-story's in the air, overlooking a golf course and a lake!

From what I could see; this was a mansion that freakishly looked like a castle.

This is crazy! I thought as I exited the room and was in the hallway, I was going to get lost. I started walking to my right.

This guy cannot be real, hot, and rich too? It was hardly fair. I sighed in relief when I came across a grand staircase, but only he *was* real.

I saw him sipping coffee on the kitchen counter; he was wearing a dark blue suit. My memory of him in a semi-lit room did not do him any justice; he was striking under a precise light. He was with a brown haired woman, in her early fifties maybe? Was this his mother? I took a deep breath when I could see no resemblance. She looked up at me then away; she didn't seem surprised to see me.

Ah so seeing women come down the stairs in nothing but a shirt was a normality for her? I don't know why that seemed to upset me.

He didn't look up until I made my way down the last stair. His eyes met mine and for a moment I held my breath, I was right about his eyes being blue, really blue. They were careful, detached and full of desire as he slowly took in my appearance. The look he gave me confirmed fear number 3, oh yeah we slept together because he looked like he wanted to take me back upstairs for round 2. A shiver ran down my spine and I dropped my eyes.

"Good morning" he said turning his attention back to his cup,

"Where's my dress?" My attempt at sounding harsh failed miserably.

"I disposed of it, I figured you wouldn't try to run if you don't have any clothes" he calmly replied, as if it was a normal thing to do. Something snapped in me. "You what?" I shouted "You have no right to destroy my clothes, who do you think you are?" I glared him furiously.

"I'm the guy that kidnapped you" he said in a threatening tone and flashed me a menacing smile. I flinched,

Even though he was gorgeous beyond belief and we've slept together; something told me I was skating on thin ice. I took deep breaths to calm myself down.

"Look I don't want any trouble, I just want to go home," I said my voice a soft plead, "What do you want from me?"

My sudden mood switch threw him a bit but he quickly recovered. "Right now I just want you to stay put," He said, I thought I heard a plead of his own.

"Tell me why I'm here, why *me*?" I asked, the anger returning to my voice.

"If I was you I wouldn't be asking questions, what is important is that you are safe here, end of story" His blue eyes flashed. I saw that talking to him was useless. I turned to the woman, who seemed oblivious to what was going on. Was she in on the secret too? "Lady please help me, I have to get out of here its not safe for me to be here. Please" I pleaded with her.

For a moment she looked shocked but then her face quickly turned blank,

"I'm sorry senorita, I can't help you," she said, with a deep Latin accent. "Rest assured this is the safest place you can be."

I shook my head "No, no its not, please..." I whispered desperately.

"Yes it is" she persisted "No one here will harm you senorita, including Mr. Gilbert you should listen to him he knows what's best" I looked at him then. He seemed to ignore my plead with this woman. It was only when I whispered '*Gilbert*' echoing the Lady did he look up at me.

I saw a strange emotion in his eyes; I couldn't understand what it was; longing maybe? What did he long for that he didn't have already? I thought bitterly.

"No he doesn't Lady, please help me" I tried one last time, knowing very well that the battle was lost. I could never win with him, hell he even had his staff keep me here. She smiled apologetically and walked away.

"Wait" I tried to scream but only a whimper came out; I didn't want to admit that I was afraid to be alone with him. He was devastatingly handsome and he had a dangerous aura about him. I could feel his gaze on me but I didn't dare meet it, so I sunk to the floor and wrapped my arms around my legs. Breathing deeply trying to calm myself down.

"If you calmed down a bit you would see that she's actually telling you the truth," He said with calm patience.

I got up "Who are you to judge what's true or not? You've got your maid lying for you," I shouted. He was really furious now, something told me to run but I was frozen.

"I don't have maids, I have help and they are considered family around here, so I suggest you start showing some fucking respect" he spat.

I recoiled as though he slapped me, it felt like he did and I deserved it. Though I didn't mean any deliberate disrespect.

I slumped back to the floor, for a minute I thought he flinched too.

"Bianca? Clear my schedule for this morning, I'm going to be late today" he said, I looked up to see him talking on his phone. And I realized I had one more weapon in my arsenal.

He put his phone back in his pocket "Lucky get up off the floor" he said quietly, like the idea disturbed him, why?

"Its not like you care, anyway" I retorted, he didn't say anything.

"I'll call the police," I threatened

"Go ahead" he chuckled, like I was missing something obvious "You'll just be wasting your time".

"What do you mean?" I got up, staring at him dumbfounded "They wont help you, I made sure of it" he said taking another sip of his coffee.

I was shocked when I realized he meant it.

"How? Who are you?" I whispered in complete shock

"I'm Jesse Gilbert, sorry I didn't introduce myself" he said amused with himself

Jesse Gilbert? It couldn't be, but it was.

I didn't know much about him, but from what I heard he was a corporate mogul, rich and powerful. He ran a multi billion-dollar enterprise.

That explained a lot; why he kidnapped me so easily, why his mansion looked like a *castle*, why I couldn't call the police.

My face dropped into my hands "No one will believe me, they'll all think I'm crazy," I muttered to myself. I considered another possibility,

"I wouldn't run either, we're not in LA anymore. Plus there are guards around this estate" he said as I dashed passed him.

"And I gave them a thorough description of a woman that might try to run, I told them to keep her here at all cost"

I froze. It was pointless to run now; he and his guards would just drag me back.

I don't know what I was thinking when I grabbed what looked like a very hard stick from a big vase, he didn't turn around to look at me.

"This can be easy or this can be hard, it's your choice, but either way you're not going anywhere" he added, still had his back to me.

I quietly walked towards him with the stick in my hand and flung it in the direction of his head,

It was a blur. He turned and grabbed the stick off my hands before it could hit him. I staggered back as he stood up, fury returning to his eyes as he charged towards me.

"You're really starting to piss me off," he mildly shouted

Fear stricken I retreated back gasping, only to be stopped by a locked door

I whimpered. I couldn't look at him anymore; I wrapped my arms around myself.

Suddenly he stopped and let go of the stick like it burned him, he put his hands up and took a few steps back.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you" he said, his soft, soothing voice returning. I looked at him shocked "I don't hit women" he added.

Obviously offended by the idea that I thought he would. He looked like I'd just hit him below the belt, why did I feel the need to comfort him? I dropped my arms.

"Lucky, I know this is stressful for you, but trust me. I just need you to stay here, like Maria said I won't hurt you and neither will anyone here".

"The truth?" I asked a question I already knew the answer to,

"That is not the best thing at the moment" he turned.

"What about my family and friends? They're going to realize that I'm missing and they'll come looking for me," I added hopelessly

"No, they won't" he assured.

"Excuse me?" stared at him dumbfounded,

"You see, you left a message for them last night and told them that you decided to take a well deserved secret vacation. You told them not worry about you" he said poring himself more coffee.

"What? I didn't call them..." before I could continue, he pulled out his phone and my voice came through after my mom's answering machine.

That was it, there were no more weapons in my arsenal, and there was no escaping...

I didn't even care how his phone was able to perfectly mimic my voice, because he could kill me now and no one would ever know it was him.

"I didn't tell them where I was," I whispered "Or when I was coming back" I looked into his worried eyes, I could feel myself go weak in the knees, I wouldn't fight the darkness that threatened to overtake me.

For a moment he looked horrified, I didn't understand why, I looked at him questioningly.

Then everything went blank...

5. Distraction

Jesse POV

I knew I pushed Lucky too far when she figured out the implications of her 'phone call' back home. No one would look for her, and no one would believe her.

She started swaying and I fought the need to reach out and still or comfort her, I knew that if I touched her it would send her over the edge.

She looked at me like she was trying to solve a math problem, then much to my horror; her eyes rolled to the back of her head and she collapsed.

"Oh no" I caught her before she could hit the floor.

"Lucky? Can you hear me?" I asked shaking her gently, she didn't respond.

I let out a pained sigh as I lifted her into my arms and carried her back to my bedroom.

What I'm I going to do with you I thought as I laid her carefully on the bed.

I couldn't take my eyes away from her, even with a pale face and unruly hair; she was breathtaking.

I felt a pang of guilt at how I've treated her,

In one morning I had frightened her, threatened her and *swore* at her. I flinched as I remembered the look she gave me.

I would be surprised if she didn't think I was a demon sent from her own personal hell to torment her.

Maria's gasp in the doorway broke my train of thought,

"What happened?" she asked rushing to her side. She even had Maria wrapped around her finger; Somehow Bill's voice came to me *she's quite something, isn't she?*

"Nothing, she just fainted" I said surprised at how strained my voice sounded.

"What did you do?" She asked, her brown eyes accusing.

I shrugged. Turning my gaze back to Lucky. I couldn't deny that I had caused this turmoil. I could feel Maria's gaze on my face, but I kept watching the woman on the bed. My expression must've told her something because she sighed,

"You care about her, don't you?" she asked softly.

I didn't understand what she was implying "Yeah well I don't want the CIA to come down on me if she gets a heart-attack" I said confused.

"No, that's not it" she shook her head "I know you Jesse, you've done this before. Never have you looked at the last woman the way you look at this girl".

Something clicked as I caught what she meant; she saw that and it only strengthened her resolve.

"Nor did you ever sleep with her, or bring her to your bedroom" she continued

I couldn't argue with the last statement. Never had I brought anyone to my bedroom before, even when I brought a few women home. I had sex with them in any other room except for my bedroom. But there laid Lucky in the same bed I made love to her in last night.

Was that what it was all along? I cared about her? No, I don't care about anything. I never had and never will; I accepted that fact a long time ago.

"You're wrong" I simply replied as a matter of fact. Turning towards the door

"I'm I?" she challenged

"Absolutely" I said with finality.

She let it drop,

"I have to get to work now," I told her glancing at my watch "I'll call Amanda and Allison, they'll be more than happy to prepare a wardrobe for her".

My peace offering to her, women loved clothes right? I glanced at Lucky, wishing I could be there when she woke up.

Who was I kidding? I was the reason she was there in the first place. Maybe some time away from me would do her a world of good. I tore my eyes away from her to look at Maria, who looked very pleased about something.

"Prepare a bedroom for her, tell Mandy and Ally to put her clothes there" I told her. She nodded.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of her when she wakes up" she added, I gave her a smile and rushed out.

I gave Bill heat that he didn't want to let me help catch Frank.

"We have this under control Jesse, if we need your help you know that I will call you immediately, besides we can't draw attention towards us. If Frank heard that we are onto him, he would flee or shorten his plan," he said through the phone.

I knew what he meant, Frank would lead us on a wild goose chase or kill Lucky immediately, we wouldn't have time to stop him. I shuddered at the last option.

I knew he was right but still, I wanted to do something...anything.

"Your only focus should be on protecting her, nothing else" he insisted "By the way, how is she holding up?"

"Not too well boss" I grimaced.

He laughed, "Where's your touch man? You're a good-looking guy, charm her into it" he said it as if it was obvious.

"Keep me informed about any slight change," I said, avoiding his last request

"You know I will," he said, and I hung up.

Charm her into it? I chuckled without humor, I tried that last night and it failed as soon as it was set in motion. I tried to seduce her into wanting to stay; instead she ended up seducing me. I ran my fingers through my hair in frustration.

Last night was not supposed to happen, but it didn't feel that way. My hands still stung at the memory of touching her, my lips at kissing her, my body at loving her. When I realized she was a virgin it was not enough to stop me, and the fact that she didn't either shattered my self-control.

How could I be so weak? I was always able to stop myself when needed before. But with her, I was possessed with the need for her, I couldn't think straight. Taking her chastity was my ultimate sin; and I have sinned a lot. I would be punished for it, she was pure and sweet, and I didn't deserve to take her. She didn't know any better, but I did.

With a sigh I picked up the phone and called Amanda and Allison, my two fashion-crazed cousins. They are identical twins, my uncle Ben's daughters. I always considered them my little sisters rather than cousins.

"Jesse! Its so good to hear from you bro" Amanda exclaimed

"Hello Mandy, Is Ally around?" I asked,

"Yeah she's here, I'll put you speaker okay?" she said "Hey Jesse" Allison's voice came through.

"Hey girls, I need a favor..." I continued to tell them what I wanted, of course leaving out that I kidnapped Lucky and was holding her against her will.

"OMG really?" Mandy asked, "Yes! We'll get to it big bro. You can count on us!" Ally chimed in "how much are we working with?" she asked

"Go wild" I said rolling my eyes.

I held up the phone giving them a chance to squeal in excitement

"Girls I need you to get to work, now" I ordered "I need those clothes in her closet by 2pm today".

"WHAT?" they both shouted "But its only 10am" Mandy said panicked "yeah, we'll need the whole day to pull this off" Ally pointed out.

"All the more reason to get cracking" I said, "What do I pay you the big bucks for huh?"

They both laughed and quickly said their goodbyes. I hung up and emailed them a picture of Lucky and info on the dress and shoe size.

I tried to drown out my thoughts by diving into my work.

The sun was starting to set behind my large window, I watched it like it offended me because it meant that I had to go home and face an angry and indifferent Lucky. Somehow we both did not bring up last night in our argument in the morning, I dreaded when we would; because I knew what I had to say, and do and it was going to be hell. I breathed out and went out of my office.

I found Maria with my chef in the kitchen; busy with dinner...Lucky was nowhere in sight.

"She's in your bedroom," she said turning her attention back to chopping "She refused to come out until you came back" To let her go, I silently finished for her.

"How is she?" I asked; my voice surprisingly detached.

"She's been out almost the whole day" she said shaking her head sadly "She just woke up 2 hours ago" I raised my eyebrows in shock, "This can't go on Jesse, I don't care what you have to do to make her comfortable. We can't have her thinking this its hell incarnated, or else she'll really have that heart-attack" She said, I could see Maria did care about her.

She was right, but what could I do? What she wanted was to go home and that couldn't happen.

I nodded and headed up the stairs,

I found her resting on my bed with her eyes closed. When I closed the door her eyes flashed open and she looked at me; I saw fear, anger and desperation all at the same time. I was right about her needing time away from me.

"Look who decided to show up?" she said icily,

"Good evening to you too Lucky," I replied, not wanting to scare her again.

I put my jacket on the bed and loosened my tie

"Oh don't give me that crap Jesse" I felt a surge of pleasure at the way she said my name.

"Why? Can't a guy be nice?" I said, looking at her I noticed the clothes she wore. Mandy and Ally must've come through for me. She looked beautiful.

"Yeah be nice, start by telling me when I can get out of here" she glared

"I can't do that," I said, I started unbuttoning my shirt,

"What are you doing?" she hissed, shocked.

I looked at her confused, she waved her hand at my clothes,

"What? I'm undressing" I mused.

"In here?" she asked.

"Um where else I'm I supposed to do it?" I raised my eyebrows. Ah still very much modest, I figured there's no harm in teasing.

"Besides you have seen me naked before, haven't you Lucky?" I purred

I watched her blush and drop her green eyes. I stifled a laugh,

"Fine, I'll go dress in the closet" I said with my hands up.

I put on a pair of jeans and a shirt and walked back out, she was still on the bed. She didn't really plan on staying there for the rest of the night, did she?

"Want a tour of the house? There are some things here that might intrigue you," I said offering her my hand.

"I doubt that, and no I want to go home!" She grumbled

"Suit yourself," I said exasperated, I was tired of arguing with her. I was walking towards the door when a pillow hit me; this woman was going to drive me crazy!

Annoyed I turned to look at her...I froze the second I saw tears, she never cried in front of me before, it pained me to watch.

"I'm scared...and confused" her voice broke, she looked down "I don't understand why I'm here, I just want to go home," she whispered, sitting on the edge of the bed with her arms around herself. "If I can't do that, at least tell me why, you owe me that"

She looked up at me this time, pain evident in her eyes. God help me.

I walked towards her and crouched down in front of her, it looked like I was proposing. Maybe I was, for her to stay with me.

"Look, I'm sorry I frightened you, I'm sorry about your dress and I'm sorry I'm causing you pain right now" I said softly. She didn't know how truly sorry I was for the last one, I wiped her cheek with the back of my fingers and to my surprise she didn't back away or flinch.

"But you're asking me for something I can't give you at the moment" I said. She looked deeply into my eyes, as if she would find the truth there. "I know this might be hard to believe but this is a safe place to be right now. Everyone in this estate myself included will not harm you; we'll try to make staying here as comfortable as possible. We'll stay out of your way if you want, just don't fight us on this. I *will* tell you the truth in time, but you're going to have to trust me" I pleaded.

She paused for a minute and her eyes showed quiet acceptance,

"Don't you know that trust is earned Mr. Gilbert?" she teased softly, wiping her face, grinning a little.

I couldn't help but smile too "I'm aware, but I'm sure you and I can work something out" I teased back,

"Fine, I'll stay here" she said.

For a second I hung my head in quiet relief "Thank you" I said sincerely

She threw her hands up "Well isn't this just fantastic" she added sarcastically.

I looked at her questioningly "I get to live out most women's fantasy, being whisked away to a castle by Jesse Gilbert, who buys me ridiculously expensive clothes" she sighed theatrically. I smiled "There's just one problem" she added

"What's that?" I asked, chuckling.

"I *am not* most women" she said fiercely, she stood up and turned for the door

I stood up facing her "What's *your* fantasy then?" I coaxed. I really wanted to know. She blushed furiously and charged back towards me.

"That's none of your business," she hissed.

"After last night, yes *it is* my business " I said my eyes lingering on her lips hungrily.

For a moment she looked shocked and then started laughing hysterically,

She slumped back to the edge of the bed, running her fingers through her soft hair. "I look and feel like a mess" she said laughing at herself,

"No, you look great" I said offering her my hand again "how about that tour?"

She looked at my hand for a while then took it.

And I led her out of my bedroom.

6. Broken Strings

Jesse POV

I showed Lucky most of the castle's best rooms, breathing easy as I saw her start to relax and enjoy the tour.

She seemed more interested in me, where I came from, my family, my beliefs...

I answered where I could, but this conversation unsettled me. I was used to people asking me questions about what I did for a living, how much money I had, places I've been to.

But this one was personal, and I would rather much not discuss it.

We were in my study when something caught her attention; I turned to see what it was. It was a family portrait of my parents and me taken when I was 9, a year before they died.

"You haven't changed a bit" she smiled, referring to the little boy grinning in the picture "Are those your parents?" she asked, turning her gaze to me.

"Yes, Peter and Jane Gilbert" I said,

"Your mother is very beautiful, I see where you get your eyes" she added then blushed as though she said something she didn't want to.

I shrugged; I would've said that awhile back, I used to think my mother was the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. But looking at Lucky now I would say it was a tie. I smiled to myself *sorry mom* I thought.

"Do they live here in LA?" her voice suddenly came through,

Taken by surprise "No, they died a year after that picture was taken. Car accident" I simply lied. Her expression turned remorseful,

"I'm sorry," she whispered softly.

"It was a long time ago," I offered, hoping she would let the topic drop.

My parents were murdered in front of me but she didn't need to know that. I suppressed a shudder at the memory that was clear as though it happened yesterday. Maria is the only person who knew how my parents' death really affected me, having served them when I was young. She's known me my whole life. Her and my parents were all I cared about growing up, I was loved and cherished; that's all one can ever ask for in life.

Loosing my parents the way I did left a huge scar in my soul, I was never the same since then...

"Where are we exactly?" she asked, when we got to the roof of the castle

"We're just outside of LA, it's a 20 minute drive back to the city," I said looking at the stars that were slowly showing themselves in the sky.

I wondered what they would think of me now, but then again I guess I knew. This was not the life they would've wanted for me.

"So you just decided to build a *castle* in the middle of nowhere?" She asked, confusion in her voice.

"No, this is a family estate. I inherited it from my father" I said meeting her gaze

"No siblings?" I shook my head and she nodded, satisfied.

I raised my eyebrows at her; she paused then sighed

"Okay, I'm letting you off the hook...for now" she grinned,

"For now" I agreed, happy the interrogation was over.

"Because I want to show you one last thing," I said, glad to switch the topic to more comfortable spheres.

"What?" she asked, surprised

"My fetish" I grinned at her; leading the way.

I opened the door to my massive garage, flicking on the light.

For a moment she looked shocked as she took in her surroundings, then her expression seemed amused.

"Cars" she exclaimed looking at me "Why I'm I not surprised" she giggled

Hearing Lucky laugh was truly a gift; I hardly heard it.

"Let's see, you got a Lamborghini, a Porsche, a Ferrari, an Audi R8, a Bugatti, an Aston Martin and two Ducati bikes" she said "I'm impressed" she added, sarcasm clear in her voice. I chuckled pleased with her knowledge of automobiles.

She walked over to the Martin; I quietly followed,

"It's a Vanquish," she said softly, touching the hood "I didn't notice"

Now I was shocked, she looked slightly emotional. What did this car mean to her?

She must've seen the confusion in my face because she took a deep breath.

"It was my dad's favorite car. He absolutely loved it" she smiled, but it looked pained.

"Was?" I noted the past tense,

"He died 2 years ago, cancer," she said clearing her voice.

Now it was my turn to feel remorseful, yet again I found myself fighting the need to hold her, comfort her.

"I'm sorry," I said, my voice laced with sincerity.

She closed her eyes and took another deep breath, she opened them and they were peaceful. I thought I heard her whisper "thank you" guess I was wrong.

"He used to tell me that he would one day take me on a ride in it" she laughed without humor "If he was here, he would've been freaking out" she added drawing her hand back from the car.

I could see that she was close with her father, his death was still fresh in her mind; I realized we shared a common pain. But I would try to remedy hers; people like her should not feel pain, it was utterly wrong.

"Well I'm not your dad," I said, grabbing the keys to the Martin from the key holder. "But I can surely take you on a ride" I opened the passenger door, gesturing for her to get in.

A strange emotion was in her eyes as she looked at me then smiled,

"I would love to" she said getting in the car. I closed her door and went over to my side. The sensor caught the sound of the car purring to life and the garage door automatically opened.

She watched me closely as I sped out of the estate in to the road heading to the city "Where are you taking me?"

"To the city, I'm going to show you LA like you've never seen before" I said smiling at her "you're not going to run on me, are you?" I teased.

"Would it make a difference if I did?" she said, I shook my head,

She sighed, "Well I'm not, I promised to stay and that's what I'll do"

For some reason her statement brought me slight happiness.

We talked and laughed as we went through LA's most famous sites and roads.

I wanted to know her more and I wanted her to allow me to do that; not perform some background check on her.

"You're not from here, are you?" I asked, easing into it. She seemed surprised at the sudden change in the conversation.

"No, I'm from a small town in Minnesota. I moved here a year ago" she replied quietly. This woman had some secrets and I wanted to know them all.

"Does your family live there?" not wanting to frighten her off, I started with the simple questions; one's I already knew the answer to.

"Yeah my mom, elder sister and little brother" she said "and all my other relatives"

"So you're in LA alone?" I asked; I didn't understand why she would want to be alone in a city as big as LA. "Why did you leave when you're whole family is there?" I asked and she shrugged,

"It's a long story," she said trying to dismiss it, I wasn't having that.

"I've got time to kill" I persisted, grinning at the *killing* part

She looked at me reluctantly, probably figuring since I spilled my guts; well a portion of them...then she should to. She sighed,

"I took my dad's death pretty hard, for some time I've thought that maybe if I did something differently, he would still be alive today" she said sadly, taking in a shaky breath. "It was hard you know, watching him like that and knowing there was nothing I could do to help him. When he died it was the darkest time of my life" she looked at me then, I could see how much pain she was in...how much pain she's still in.

"Time heals all wounds right?" she said chuckling without humor "In time my family learned to let him go and move on, even my mom" she smiled sadly "But I didn't...I couldn't".

"It hurt and worried my family to see me so lost and empty. I didn't want them to suffer anymore because of me; I wanted an escape, an adventure. Starting life anew. So I told them I wanted to move to LA" She said.

I paused for a while, taking it all in.

"And they let you go? Just like that?" I asked, finding it hard to believe "Didn't they try to stop you?" I asked.

She shook her head, "I don't think they even had a choice, plus they didn't want to hold me back. I guess some light returned to my eyes at the thought of coming here that they couldn't stop me. If I was happy, they would let me go," she said.

"There was nothing left for me back in Minnesota but heartbreak and memories, it's the only home I'd ever known but I had to do this and I'm happy I did" She added smiling genuinely.

"I'm guessing you found you're adventure then?" I asked, parking the car in the garage.

"I guess you can say that" she laughed to herself "I also found peace, and serenity, for once I feel like I'm alive again. Its what I wanted coming here" she looked down and I knew the conversation was over.

"I hope you get everything you want," I said sincerely, somehow wishing I could be amongst those things. But bottom line is that I couldn't.

"I guess it would be weird to say you too" she chuckled, referring to everything I had. If she only knew that the things I really wanted; I could never have.

Before I could stop myself I reached over to tug a lock of her hair behind her ear, she looked at me and then I saw it; she wanted me just as I wanted her.

"We better get inside" she said breathlessly, and then she was out of the car in an instant I followed her through to the lounge.

"I'm sorry I made you miss dinner," I said, realizing everyone was gone

She shook her head slowly, smiling "No, I had fun...thank you" she said.

I nodded and turned to read the message Maria left on the fridge.

"Where's everyone?" she asked taking note of the still silence in the castle, I thought I heard anxiety in her voice.

"They've turned in for the night, most of them are in the far end of the castle and others in the penthouse" I said "Maria left dinner in the oven"

She nodded; having Lucky here alone was bringing back dangerously tempting memories. I was bewildered at how much I still wanted her; it was unusual for me. Normally if I had a woman once I didn't want seconds.

We had dinner quietly...I looked at her wondering if I should bring up last night; I didn't want to but it had to be done.

"I'm sorry I was less than a gentleman last night, I just want to make sure there is no misunderstanding between us" I said, she was shocked but quickly recovered.

"Do you always apologize after sleeping with women?" she asked,

"No" I replied chuckling "But you were a virgin and I don't make a habit of deflowering women either; they always have expectations"

She flinched "And what are these 'expectations'?" she asked, clearly offended.

"You know, they always expect the guy they sleep with to be *the one*, and I'm not the one for anybody" I said, struggling to keep my voice detached, I should've never slept with her, I didn't deserve the gift she gave me.

For a moment I thought I saw hurt in her green eyes but she dropped them and laughed darkly.

"Don't lose any sleep over me Jesse, I don't *expect* anything from *you*" I suppressed a flinch at her cold tone, confirming what I already knew; I was nothing but a heartbreaker who didn't deserve her or any other woman for that matter. She regretted sleeping with me; I could see it.

"Lucky I didn't..."

"Mean it like that?" she finished for me, and took a deep breath.

"Jesse look, I know guys like you. You meant to have no strings attached sex, I get it and I don't fault you for it, because I was aware of that last night" she said her tone now wiped clean of all emotion. She put her dish in the sink and turned to face me.

"So you can breath easy, I wont expect you to put a ring on my finger" she added, sarcastically. This time I did flinch, but she had already turned heading for the stairs. She muttered a "Good night" over her shoulder.

I watched her leave, wishing I could stop her; what would I tell her? That she was wrong, when I knew very well that she was right.

I didn't mean to belittle her virtue or make her feel like she was just a one-night stand; she was more than that, which is why I had to say that.

I wanted her too much but I couldn't touch her...make love to her again, without giving her something concrete, it was just wrong and she was too good to be treated like that.

My fists came down at the table in frustration and I went to my own bedroom, her presence in the room the night before would always haunt me.

7. Cold War

Lucky POV

I woke up in the new bedroom Maria gave me; it was beautiful. It made my attempt at interior décor at my apartment look like child's play. It had a queen-sized bed, with beautiful oak furniture and the rest of the décor and curtains were red and white...striking and sophisticated; something *I* was not. Like *his* bedroom it had a huge bathroom and 2 wooden doors to a closet just as big as his; if not bigger, filled with clothes I could never afford in my life. I sighed

Try as I may to avoid it but my conversation with Jesse last night came back to me,

I don't make a habit of deflowering women either; they always have expectations I snorted. Of course he didn't. He was used to worldly women who weren't needy and weak like me. Him making love to me was just a mistake, heat of the moment thing, I thought bitterly.

I'm not the one for anybody That I couldn't argue with. There was nobody on this planet that can claim to deserve him, no one could reach his level of perfection.

I should've just laughed it off with him and pretended not to be fazed, but instead I showed how truly hurt I was by being cold and sarcastic.

Stupid, stupid, stupid! I cursed myself, banging my head onto the pillows *How could I be so stupid?* Honest to God, what did I expect? I knew exactly what I was doing; and it didn't matter. Of course I didn't feel like he owed me something just because I was a virgin. Although I always thought I was saving myself for my future husband. But in that point in time none of that mattered, the world just stopped for me. Worst part of it is that I couldn't even blame him, what for?

It's not his fault that he doesn't care; it's not his fault that I'm weak.

He could walk in this very instant and I would make love to him all over again. Even though I knew it didn't mean to him what it meant to me, I wouldn't have the willpower to stop him yet again because I still wanted him that much. *How pitiful*, and now I would be counted amongst his many conquests. A label I've tried to avoid my whole life.

The saddest part was that despite all of this I still couldn't find it in my heart to regret it. It was *that* special; to me at least.

A tear escaped the corner of my eye; I quickly wiped it away in disgust for myself.

I got out of bed wondering how I was going to live in the same roof with him and pretend as if nothing happened, *STOP BEING WEAK!!* I shouted inwardly. *Prove yourself strong, that you're not some woman he can just screw around with* I told myself. And strong I would be.

With that a cold war began, Jesse and me never sat together or did anything if the rest of the gang weren't there. Even as everyone did something together we were always indifferent to each other, sometimes avoiding each other altogether. We never said anything more to each other than "hello" and "Goodbye". It depressed me. Sometimes he came home late; looking like he just ran 10 miles, and on others he didn't come back at all. Those nights were pure torture, because I knew very well what he was doing, and my stomach turned at the thought.

Even when I started vamping up my look, tighter jeans and tops, mini dresses, high heels. Somehow playing dress up made me feel slightly good about myself

But when he didn't even spare me a second look; that was crushed.

It has been a week and a half since I'd been kidnapped, and now with everything I was more than ready to go back to my old life. Praying to God that when I did, I would let go. Let him go, and this silly fantasy I had go too.

I was in my room when I heard foreign but familiar voices down stairs; curiosity got the best of me as I made my way down the hallway. No one ever came here; well not after I came here. I quickly checked my appearance; I looked decent. I wore a black and silver mini dress that flowed from the waist down and paired it with silver Jimmy Choo platforms. At least I looked like I belonged in this castle. Maybe that's why Jesse bought me all of this, so that if anyone came here I would look like I belonged. I snorted; I could never belong here.

I gasped as I came down the stairs at who was in the living room,

The guys from 30 Seconds To Mars, my favorite band since forever. Jared, Shannon and Tomo were greeted by Jesse, they looked like long time friends. Now I was sure this place drove me insane, it couldn't be.

They all looked up at me and I had the pleasure of watching 4 pairs of eyes bulge out, including Jesse's; but I'm sure he just hated that I decided to turn up then. Who would I say I was? I thought I heard Shannon whistle under his breath as I walked up to them. *Don't fall* I chanted to myself *don't make a fool of yourself relax; breathe.*

"Oh my goodness, Mars!" I purred, avoiding Jesse. I could feel his blue gaze burning holes in my brain "I'm a huge fan of yours, I've always been for a very long time now" I said shaking hands with all of them.

"Are you now?" Jared asked, very pleased,

"Definitely, its great to finally meet all of you. I'm Lucky by the way," I said smiling.

"It's great to meet you too Lucky" Shannon chimed "Um wow, you look great" he cleared his throat.

"Hands off brother, this one is mine" Jared warned; I blushed. I couldn't believe Jared Leto was flirting with me. Suddenly Jesse cleared his throat,

"Let's get down to business," he said calmly, but it sounded forced "Excuse us would you Lucky?" he turned to me, his blue gaze fierce.

"No, she should join us, would you?" Jared asked, ha! At least someone around here wanted my company.

"I would love to" I purred, Jared smiled widely.

Jesse was furious, but he quickly controlled his expression

"Very well then" he said stiffly.

He led us to the large lounge room as we took our seats; I took the single couch chair, crossing my legs. I had to play the part too.

"I've never seen you here before Lucky, what's your relationship to Jesse?" Tomo asked and I froze, in the corner of my eye I saw Jesse tense too.

"She's my girlfriend" Jesse quickly replied, and for a second we all sat there in shocked silence, myself included. Before the guys could look at me I controlled my expression, not wanting to blow the cover.

"I recently asked her to move in with me" he lied so well even I was convinced.

Jared let out a choked laugh "Well I'm sorry man, for making advances on your girl" He said and Jesse shook his head.

"Heck I'm glad you finally got yourself one, nice" Shannon gestured towards me, he turned to Jared "Pay up bro" he murmured.

"What was the bet?" I managed to say, my heart doing somersaults.

"If Jesse would ever have a girlfriend, Jared betted against it. I knew it would take a special girl; but it would indeed happen" he laughed "Congratulations, you were able to tame Jesse here, something most women tried and failed".

"What most of us thought was impossible" he added referring to Jared, who frowned and gave him a hundred dollar bill,

There were no words for what I just heard.

"Thanks, I guess" I said, surprised at how steady and normal my voice sounded; I must be really freaked out then...

"I just remembered I had to help Maria with something" I lied, getting up. I had to go somewhere so I could hyperventilate peacefully.

"Aw you're leaving?" Tomo asked, crestfallen

"Yeah unfortunately, but it was awesome meeting you guys, I love your music" I said, that at least was not a lie.

"Does that mean we are invited to the wedding?" Jared smirked

And here I thought nothing could shock me anymore, I was sadly mistaken.

Jesse looked at me then, I couldn't comprehend the emotion in his eyes; it was so carefully concealed.

I saw red in an instant; these guys were talking about me doing things I knew I could never do; tame *him*? They were talking about being invited to a wedding that would never happen.

"Of course you are" I tried to keep the sarcasm out of my voice, but I knew Jesse would get it; and quite frankly I didn't care "Actually I think you should perform when we take our first dance as man and wife" I spat.

"What do you think *honey*?" I turned my gaze to Jesse,

"Yes, that would be great" he replied, much to my surprise; sarcasm was nowhere in his voice.

I put my hands together "its settled then!" I chimed

I deserved an academy award.

"Awesome, we'd be honored" Tomo replied

I turned and muttered a goodbye over my shoulder.

I should've been proud of myself; I was stronger than I gave myself credit for. But why was my heart breaking into a million pieces at 2 of the simplest words, girlfriend and wedding. I made my way into the first floor's hallway, for a

moment I leaned against the wall for support. I've never been so exhausted in my life; I couldn't even distinguish if it was physical or emotional. My head and heart were racing as I tried to make sense of what just happened but nothing coherent came to me.

"Lucky? Are you ok?" Angela's voice came through

"Yeah, I just felt a little woozy. I'm fine now," I said, straightening up

"Let's go bowling, I challenge you," I said, grinning

I wanted...needed a distraction.

"Um, I don't know" she said reluctantly,

"Oh come on," I said, grabbing her arm, walking towards the game room.

I didn't see the need for it because he never came here, but then again it's a family estate, he probably spent lots of time here as a kid. My mind wandered back to the cute boy I saw in the picture, he didn't change except that now he's an unbelievably handsome man. There was something in the boy's eyes that I don't see looking at him now, something big happened to him and I know he would never tell me.

Angie turned up the music, noisy pop songs flooded the game room, not my style of music; but I didn't care so I started dancing to the beat.

"Ok you go first" Angie said, smiling at me.

I took a bowling ball and fired at the pins, hitting my first strike.

"In heels by the way" I added with pride, Angie laughed and clapped hands "Nice shot!" she said, grabbing her ball.

Angie was a brown haired girl with hazel eyes; I thought she was pretty. She was about my age, though she seemed younger than me. We often enjoyed each other's company; she was easy to talk to.

I clapped my hands as she hit her strike, she curtsied and we both laughed.

I was losing track of time as we made bet after bet; challenging each other, I was having fun and oblivious to any stress.

The music suddenly stopped and I turned to see who switched it off, I saw Jesse walk towards us, his demeanor standoffish. I sighed *not again* I thought.

"Hey, turn the music back on" I said, my tone irritated, pouting. I know it was childish of me but I was tired of caring what he thinks of me.

He stopped in front of me and looked at Angie "Excuse us Angela" he said in an eerie calm voice.

My heart started pounding, oh crap! I thought panicked *why should I be afraid of him? I did nothing wrong.*

"No Angie stay" I said over my shoulder "We haven't finished our game yet" I turned to him "What do you want Jesse?" I asked.

Now we had a full-blown stare down, he turned his gaze back to Angie

"I um, just remembered that I have some laundry to do, see you later Lucky," she said quickly, smiling apologetically then darted out of the game room.

Ugh! Did everyone have to give him his way all the time? Then I remembered *yes they do* myself included.

"Are you deliberately trying to make me miserable?" I asked, angry now.

I didn't wait for his answer I walked past him and felt a strong hand grab my arm, I froze. My heart pounding out of my chest, his touch always made me go weak in the knees but this time I had some willpower.

I withdrew my arm as though his hand burned me; in truth, it did. His touch alone was enough to set my skin on fire.

Hurt flickered in his eyes for a second then fury replaced it

"What was that in there?" he said, with barely contained rage.

I didn't get what he was referring to...oh my academy award worthy performance. Why was he angry though? I helped him.

"That is called improvising," I said, taking a few cautious steps back "You're welcome" I spat.

"Yeah well you took it a bit too far, the whole 'I'm your biggest fan' charade was uncalled for. They came here to discuss business, not to flirt with you," he said

I was beyond shocked, that's what it was all about? "For your information / *'am* a big fan of their music, and just in case you missed it; Jared was the one flirting with *me*" I said and took steps forward, wanting to make sure he got every word.

"Last time I checked, not flirting with hot guys was not part of our deal, what's it to you anyway huh? I will flirt with whomever I please and I don't need your permission to do it, you don't own me," I said icily, wishing otherwise.

I wouldn't even be counted amongst his least favorite possessions; I tried to squish the brief stab of pain. He continued to glare at me,

"He liked me, didn't he?" I asked smiling genuinely, at least someone wanted me "I should call him when I get out of here, I'm sure he would love to take me out" I giggled. That struck a chord.

"You will do no such thing!" he shouted, his voice full of authority and possessiveness towering over me, my face inches from his chest. I was surprised I didn't stagger back. I lifted my chin bravely, even though my insides were turned to marshmallow.

"Oh no? And who's going to stop me?" I asked, keeping the tremble out of my voice. For a moment I thought he was going to say something but then he breathed in and chuckled darkly.

"No one" he said peacefully, taking steps back like I was contagious "You're right, what you do does not concern me, I was merely cautioning you. You're free to do whatever you want, like you said I don't own you" he said, his tone detached and distant. He turned and walked out too.

I should've been happy, I won...but at what cost? I threw a ball in frustration.

I didn't want to go on a date with Jared, or anyone else for that matter; hell I didn't even mean to give him the wrong idea.

I just wanted Jesse and I could never have him; I saw that now.

I shook myself trying not to let sorrow overtake me, I wasn't going to fall apart *what was the use?* I thought as I walked out of the room with my head held high.

8. The Change

Lucky POV

I found myself hiding in my bedroom a lot for the past couple of days, avoiding any unnecessary casualties with Jesse; *coward* I thought to myself.

The view of the estate's garden was breathtaking from my balcony; I was still waiting to wake up from this dream, everything about this place and its *people* seemed unreal to me.

Much to my chagrin my feelings for Jesse have only but intensified day after day, great! So its not just lust anymore, I was beyond screwed if that was the case.

The simplest things he did drove me crazy. The way he licked his lips, the way he looked when getting out of the pool, the way he smiled, walked, talked...oh yeah I had it bad; I watched him everywhere, it was sad.

Watching the way he interacted with everyone here, he has a confidence about him; I guess that came with being rich and successful. It only added to his sex appeal. I rolled my eyes, as if he needed it with his good looks.

I also noted how everyone in the castle treated him with love and respect.

I was the only one who was being standoffish towards him. I couldn't be nice to him; he would see all too easy how enthralled I was with him. It was easier pretending to dislike him.

A knock on the door interrupted my thoughts; I got up to open it.

It was Maria, who looked slightly irritated "Can I tidy up a little?" she asked

"Um sure" I said, letting her in. I was not used to people doing this kind of stuff for me; it felt weird.

I started walking back to the balcony, when she suddenly slumped to the bed; I rushed to her panicked "Maria, are you ok?" I asked, my voice frantic.

She raised her hand "I'm fine, I just feel a little dizzy and I have a headache. Could you be a darling and get me some aspirin? Its in the kitchen counter"

"Of course" I said, rushing out of my room.

I heard voices in the lounge as I got down the stairs...it was Jesse and a woman?

I turned into the lounge to see Jesse kissing a woman on the couch; platinum blonde hair, tall, petite well a little too skinny for me but she was very beautiful. She looked like one of those supermodels you saw on the magazines.

I felt a stab of pain and jealousy, was she his girlfriend? It couldn't be, then that would mean that he cheated on her with me. But it didn't matter either way; right now she had what I wanted.

They didn't seem to notice my presence, and that's when I really looked at them.

Jesse was not kissing her back; in fact he was gently trying to push her away and she refused to let him go. Something at the back of my head snapped.

I would've walked away graciously if Jesse was the one kissing her, but the bitch was throwing herself at him when he clearly didn't want her back. *Oh the irony* I thought but I still couldn't let this continue. Somehow I was more than happy to oblige. I loudly cleared my throat.

The blonde finally releasing him to look at me, at first she looked stunned to see me and then her expression turned to amusement. I didn't look at Jesse.

"Oh sorry sweetie, I didn't hear you come in. Just got a little distracted" she smiled clearly satisfied with her kiss with Jesse, I was going to love bursting her bubble. I chuckled without humor walking towards them "Yeah, I bet you would've If you didn't force yourself upon a man who is clearly not that into you" I said icily. Her brown eyes bulged in shock; she looked at Jesse then at me.

"How dare you speak to me like that" she spat, standing up "You better watch it, or else I will have him throw you out on your behind"

"I doubt that" I replied, "You see I live here, question is who are you?"

She looked surprised then she smiled "You didn't tell her about me J?"

"No" Jesse replied, stifling a laugh.

"I'm Michelle, a long time friend of Jesse's," She said, lifting her chin.

"Ah a friend looking for benefits?" I asked innocently

Jesse chuckled and Michelle gave him a scornful look then she turned to me

"And who the hell are you?" she asked, clearly irritated, I walked up to her.

"I'm Lucky, his girlfriend" I said as a matter of fact, she staggered back as if she'd seen a ghost. I had never been in a catfight before; I avoided getting into one with Tanya over Travis. But I would fight for Jesse even though it was faked.

She looked at Jesse now.

"You have a girlfriend? She is your girlfriend?" she asked incredulous

Jesse slowly nodded "I asked her to move in with me just recently" he said just as convincingly,

"I'm sorry Michelle," I said, feeling anything but.

"Don't you sorry me you little bitch," she hissed

"Watch it Michelle" Jesse warned; I couldn't believe he was defending me.

"Jesse, stop this madness. Sure you've had casualties here and there but you never had a girlfriend before. You want to know why? Because it's always been you and me, we are supposed to end up together" she persisted.

I nearly puked on myself at how desperate sounded; she didn't want or love Jesse. She was just wanted what Jesse could give her.

"She's just a phase Jesse, soon enough you'll get sick of her. You don't love her, do you?" she asked.

Jesse looked at me with that same concealed emotion in his blue eyes, I once again was mesmerized.

Michelle gasped and we both looked at her "No, it can't be" she murmured to herself "You do love her, don't you?"

Jesse didn't say anything, I already knew the answer to that; he just didn't want to blow his cover.

"All the women that have tried to touch that stone you call a heart but to no avail, was all for her in the end?" she asked, turning to look me up and down bitterly.

"Then again I always knew this would eventually happen. Of course if you were ever going to fall in love with any of us, it was going to be a female version of you. I just never thought she existed" she said, her tone slightly sad.

What was she saying? *Me*? A female version of Jesse? Oh no, she must have me mistaken with someone else. She walked up to me so we were facing each other

"I wouldn't get too comfortable here If I was you, he may think he loves you now but I know him, and trust me sweetie very soon you will be out of here so fast your pretty little head will spin" she spat.

"You may think you know him Michelle but you don't, you only see what *you* want to see. I know women like you, spoilt little rich girl who always gets what she wants and always wants to increase her trust funds. You don't care about Jesse, you only care about his possessions," I said, and a felt her hand sting me across my face. Jesse pushed her away from me, clearly angry now

"I hope that makes you feel better, I really do" I said, actually meaning it.

"You arrogant bitch, I've known him my whole life and you think you care more about him?" she hissed

"Yes" I replied without flinching.

I could feel Jesse's gaze on me, but I couldn't meet it. I had to stay focused in order to see this charade through.

"You've said more than a mouthful Michelle, and quite frankly I don't have to put up with you, so I think its best if you leave" I said turning to get the door for her, ready to be over with this.

"You're not going to let her kick me out, are you?" she asked, expectantly.

"Goodbye Michelle" Jesse replied with finality, she staggered back.

"If I walk out that door Jesse I'm never coming back, it's either me or her" she nearly shouted. Jeez did she have to give him an ultimatum?

"Her" Jesse said too quickly, well that was a shocker to both of us.

"Fine, to hell with the both of you" she spat glaring at Jesse. She stopped in front of me too and gave me a 'this isn't over' look then walked out; I closed the door.

Only it was over, for me at least; if she ever came back she wouldn't find me here. I walked back into the lounge and Jesse leaned against the wall facing me, he started laughing and I joined him "You're welcome" I said.

"So we only play the girlfriend card on your terms?" he asked

"Exactly" I confirmed.

"I'm actually disappointed you interrupted us," he said chuckling

"I didn't interrupt you, from the looks of things I saved you" I chimed.

"Oh yeah? And you know that how?" he teased.

"Simple, she was forcing herself onto you and you were clearly not interested" I offered

"Touché" he said, smiling.

At least we were now having a proper conversation, teasing instead of glaring and snapping at each other. It was a welcomed change,

"Are you ok?" he asked referring to Michelle slapping me. He used his soft, soothing voice, a voice I had grown to love and a voice I hardly ever heard,

I took a deep breath, taking it in. I didn't know when I would have the pleasure of hearing it again. "I'm fine," I said, my voice shaking slightly,

It was completely unfair and unhealthy for him to have this much power over me.

"Did I seem interested when you kissed me?" he asked suddenly and I paused.

"I wouldn't know." I whispered truthfully, glad that I didn't blush at the memory of that night.

"You have no idea do you?" he whispered back

"Of what?" I asked, confused. He wasn't making any sense.

"Never mind" he said, "I'll be in my study"

He turned and walked away; I could only stare at him like an idiot.

9. The One

Jesse POV

I don't know how long I've spent in my study doing nothing but staring at the ceiling, trying to figure out what just happened. Lucky could be rid of a girl I've been trying to dodge my whole life in one day. I chuckled at the look on Michelle's face at some of the things Lucky said to her.

I was still unsettled at how Lucky could see that I wasn't interested in Michelle but be completely blind to how much I wanted *her*.

Okay, maybe that was my own fault for being so cold to her for the past week, but I only did it in a useless attempt to get her out of my system.

What an epic fail I thought to myself.

She expressed no warmth towards me, while she drove me crazy every second of everyday. I tried to stay away from her and not stare at her unless I couldn't help it. I didn't want her to think I was an obsessed psycho. I smiled to myself.

She was in every thought I had, my whole world now seemingly revolved around her alone. I had to be honest with myself that my feelings for her went deeper than lust. I had to face the possibility that Michelle was right; I was in love with her. I took a deep breath, admitting that felt good, like a heavy weight has been lifted off my shoulders. For a moment I let myself *feel* everything.

I always thought I was incapable of loving someone again, for me not getting attached was safe play. A way of protecting myself from ever feeling anything, for anyone; If I was honest with myself, I fell in love with her from the moment her picture appeared on Bill's monitor.

I was just too ignorant to realize that I never really had a choice in the matter.

I chuckled without humor. Where do I go from here then?

Things between us are strained at the moment; I'd be fortunate if she ever wanted anything to do with me.

Did she care for me too? Well she told Michelle that she did but that was all just an act.

I couldn't be sure, after she flinched away from my hand in the game room, it hurt me in ways I couldn't describe. She never flinched away from my touch before and I knew then that she didn't want me anymore.

Do I love her? Yes, do I want to be with her? Yes, would I put a ring on her finger? Without doubt.

But what kind of life could I offer her? What kind of boyfriend...husband could I offer her?

I was a CIA agent for heaven's sake! My world was too dangerous for her. I was too dangerous for her. If any of my enemies were to learn about her, they would try to use her against me. I shuddered. Already one of them had started plotting; I would never forgive myself if anyone hurt her.

And would I tell her the truth? Would she still want to be with me regardless?

I had so many questions and no answers. I gave up and glanced at my clock,

It was midnight; not knowing how I could've lost track of time. Probably everyone was asleep now, and I needed a drink to take the edge off. I was hardly ever stressed to the point where I needed alcohol to relax, I hated its taste and effect. I always wanted to remain sharp; I guess one drink would help.

I went to my bedroom and changed into my pajamas, leaving out the top. Everyone was asleep, so what was the point.

I made my way to the kitchen, pulled out a glass and a bottle of whiskey I never touched before. It was a gift from the MD at G-Industries.

The stresses and pleasures of being in love I thought dryly as I sat on the chair by the counter and took a sip. I guess there's a first time for everything...

I took my third sip when I heard soft footsteps come down the stairs and then halt.

I didn't need to look up to know it was her; I could feel her like I felt the wind.

Damn it, I was really being tested now. I looked up at her and froze where I sat, her eyes were guarded and embarrassed but that wasn't the reason why I couldn't take my eyes off her. She wore a black satin nightgown; it was short showing off her long legs. It had a black lace bodice with crisscrossed straps, the bodice was not low cut but it showed off her magnificent chest. I swallowed hard. For a moment I thought she tried to cover herself but decided against it.

I tore my eyes away from her, it felt as though my eyes would burn in their sockets but I didn't want to make her feel uncomfortable.

She let out a shaky laugh "Well this is very immodest of me, I'm sorry I didn't think anyone would be down here" she said.

"Couldn't sleep?" I asked, glad my voice sounded reasonably normal

"Yeah, I came to get something to drink. You?" she asked.

I nodded as she went to the fridge and poured herself some juice; I stole a look at her again. She was truly one of God's finest creations, pure perfection.

She turned to leave; I couldn't have that. I craved her company, it was something I had been denying myself and it was pure torture.

"Don't go," I said and she froze, she turned to look at me like she didn't hear right. Wow I really overdid it didn't I? Now she thought I didn't want her around.

"Join Me," I said, she deliberated for a while and then came to sit in the chair next to me. That was a good sign.

We sat in peaceful silence for a while, enjoying nothing but each other's presence, that at least had a calming effect better than the whiskey. Which didn't do anything to my senses, what a let down.

"Do you know that I hate alcohol?" I asked, she looked at me in confusion "I don't like it, I only drank it hoping it would relax me," I said pushing the glass away "It didn't have the desired effect, I'm still stressed out"

She smiled her gorgeous smile, even more defined in the half-lit kitchen "I'm sure it's not easy being the CEO of G-Industries" she said.

Missing the mark again "The Company is the least of my problems" I replied, staring at her soft lips, and then they moved. "What are your problems Jesse?" she asked, genuinely curious. I'd be honest were I could; I bargained with myself.

"You" I said truthfully, her eyes grew wide as she saw what I meant,

"Me?" she asked, incredulous.

"Yes" I said, lifting my hand to her soft cheek and much to my delight she didn't flinch "And how much I want you right now" I added, touching her lips with my forefinger. She dropped her shocked eyes and blushed.

"Jesse" She whispered breathlessly "Don't please"

"I'm sorry I've been so standoffish for the past week, I was only just trying to tear myself away from you, escape these feelings. I couldn't and I know now that I never will," I said, sliding my hand down her neck.

"I was disgusted with myself for being weak and taking you that night, despite what you think of me I do value virginity. But now I can see why I acted that way. I never had the power Lucky you did, you waved your hand I was on my knees immediately, and I've been your prisoner ever since" I said.

"What your feeling is lust, nothing more" she said, her breath labored she looked up at me and her green eyes sparkled with the same desire I felt "And for me its not just about that anymore".

"Lucky do you really think I'd do this if I didn't feel something more for you?"

I asked, she paused and then slowly shook her head. That's all I needed.

I brought my lips to her soft ones, kissing them like it was the last thing I would ever do. She didn't respond to my kiss, I almost stopped but I heard her moan, a sound that always drove me insane. Yet again I found myself at mercy to this beautiful creature.

She gasped as I slid my lips to her chin and down her neck and shoulder, sliding the straps out of my way; she smelled amazing.

"Jesse" she choked out between gasps "Please don't do this, you're not sober"

"I'm sober little one, besides I would never do this if I wasn't; it wouldn't be fair to you" I purred, bringing my lips back to hers. This time she kissed me back meeting me halfway with the same level of passion and desire.

This woman will be the death of me I thought as she wrapped her legs around me and I carried her up to my bedroom.

I laid her on the bed still kissing her, her hands caressed my back and hair; it felt amazing to be touched by her. I slid her gown and lacy panties off, taking a moment again to appreciate her attributes.

I worshipped every inch of her body with my lips and hands, kissing her, touching her, and tasting her. She was like a drug, and she encouraged me to take more of it with her moans and gasps.

"Te amo, afortunado. Le necesito, para el resto de mi vida" *I love you, Lucky. I need you, for the rest of my life*, I whispered in her ear in Spanish.

I groaned in pleasure as my hands went to her hips and I entered her. She gasped my name over and over again as I loved her with my body. The first time was great; but this was mind-blowing.

She let out a faint scream and I moaned as we reached our climax, my breath was labored and my head was spinning.

I'd never had sex like this before with other women, it just wasn't anything special. I realized that it was because our feelings for each other went deeper than lust; that our lovemaking was just purely extraordinary.

I made love to her over and over again; once was just not enough to satisfy my need for her. I'm not sure after how long but we finally stopped and she nuzzled into my chest and fell asleep. I thought I heard her whisper "I love you" but her voice was too low for me to be sure.

I closed my eyes too, happier than I've ever been in years.

I woke up to find my bed empty; normally I was the one to wake up first. It felt wrong though, why would she leave? She probably got hungry I told myself. Besides I did it to her once and many times to a few. I got up noticing her gown on the floor, grinning as I remembered last night.

I threw on my pajama pants and went out to find her.

I found her in the kitchen making coffee; she didn't see me so I stopped to scrutinize her more. She was wearing my pajama top and she looked amazing in it. She took the collar inhaling deeply and smiled but it looked unsure and troubled. Something was wrong.

I sneaked up and engulfed her from behind, kissing her neck and hair

"Good morning" I said.

"Hi" she replied, her tone off. Yes something was definitely wrong, I didn't understand given how incredible last night was.

"Its early, come back to bed" I said, inhaling her hair

"No" she replied, trying to pull away from me. Baffled I let her go.

"Did I do something wrong?" I asked, hurt.

"No, you never do anything wrong" she whispered sadly "but I just cant do this, not this way"

"I don't understand," I stated, I didn't know what she was trying to tell me.

"Sex I can do Jesse, but not this cuddling and hugging, it throws us...me off balance. And there's just too much at stake" she said.

"Physically I want you so much its not even healthy, I don't think I have it in me to ever refuse you. You said you were my prisoner, in truth it's the other way around and I'm ok with that. I just don't want it to get emotional, because when it's all said and done someone will be hurting and that someone is always me" she stated, sadness in her tone.

I was shocked at the direction this morning was headed, I was so resolved last night, and I still was. I was in love with her and knowing me I'm going to love her for the rest of my life, I'd made peace with that. But what was she saying? She didn't want to be with me? Was I wrong and she didn't care about me?

"Don't you want to be with me?" I asked, desperation in my voice.

"Of course I do, more than anything" she said, I got closer to her and she backed away shaking her head.

"It's not the same for you as it is for me, I can't allow myself to get emotionally attached to you. I'm sorry, I know I'm being unfair to you but I can't risk this right now. You're an amazing guy Jesse; it would be all too easy for me to fall for you. But I just can't allow myself to do that, if I do and you end up..."

"Leaving" I finished for her, my voice blank.

I understood now, she doubted my feelings for her and she didn't trust me enough not to break her heart.

"Yeah" she looked down "And when you would, I still want to remain in one peace"

"Have you ever considered the possibility that I want to be with you too, that I feel the same way about you?" I asked.

She shook her head stubbornly "Be honest with yourself and me Jesse, even if that was the case, there's no future for us" she said, her green eyes pained.

"I can only do this for so long, I want to marry and have kids Jesse. I'm not saying you should give me those things I...I just think you couldn't or wouldn't want to either way, do you see yourself ever settling down?" she asked, like she already knew the answer. All I could do was stare at her; she'd hit me on my weakest spot. Did I want to give her those things? Yes, but couldn't and somehow she knew that too. I had lost.

Taking the silence as confirmation "I didn't think so" she said chuckling without humor. She turned for the stairs

"Wait!" I said; trying to think of something...anything to say that would change her mind about me. If I told her I loved her right now she probably wouldn't believe me. I was blank. She turned reluctantly

"What do you mean by there's too much at stake, what's at stake?" I asked

She smiled sadly "My bruised and weak heart" she said and headed up the stairs.

So that was it? I lost her before I even had her? It hardly seemed fair, but hey isn't that the story of my life?

Something happened to her that she didn't tell me about in the car, why she was so wary of me.

I had to get ready for work...it was going to be a long day.

10. Just Tonight

Lucky POV

I watched Jesse's Lamborghini speed away, *Please drive safely* I thought laughing to myself. He always drove like a maniac, fast cars should not be disposable to people like him.

Then again who goes to work in a Lamborghini? One of the richest men alive I guess. I didn't like to think about Jesse's fortunes; material things have never been of importance to me. I didn't have material things growing up and I was happy regardless. I sighed.

I felt a little guilty about what I said to him a week ago, it probably didn't mean as much to him but still I was unjust to him.

That morning I woke up feeling on top of the world and looking at his sleeping form I couldn't believe he really wanted me. Then I remembered Michelle's words *He may think he loves you right now but trust me honey, soon you'll be out of here so fast your pretty little head will spin.*

She was right, what Jesse felt for me was just lust, nothing more. Pretty soon he would get over it and then what would happen to me? I would be left in pieces yet again. I wasn't having that; I've had my fair share of heartbreak so I got up to make my contingency plan.

Jesse and I couldn't keep our hands off each other. Sometimes he would show up out of nowhere and start kissing me; and like a hopeless fool, I was immediately coaxed into wanting him too. On others I would randomly start taking his shirt off, he would instantly stop whatever he was doing and attend to me.

Trying not to fall for Jesse while being so intimate with him was a very thin line to walk on. The fact that he was an unbelievable lover, patient and tender with me; didn't help matters. I offered him my body; I didn't have a choice in the matter. It was his; he owned it from that very first night. But under no circumstances could I offer him my heart, if he dropped it, there would be nothing I could do to mend it. I'd once teased him about getting me pregnant; he seemed unfazed and it worried me why?

Earlier this morning I woke up in his bed. I looked at him and I got up

"Where are you going?" he asked, *damn it* I thought he was still asleep; I froze. Knowing he caught me while I was trying to make my escape.

"I'm leaving" I said, he frowned

"Stay" he said, it wasn't a question.

I shook my head "No, you know the rules Jesse" I persisted.

"Screw the rules," he added, he sat up and grabbed my waist pulling me back down to the bed with him. His arms locked around me, I tried to get out but couldn't.

"You're not going anywhere, so stop trying to push me away" he said, amused.

"Curse you and your muscles" I spat, I felt his chest shake in laughter.

For a moment I let myself enjoy being in his arms like this, it was comforting and sweet. I wouldn't mind if I were to stay like that forever.

"Let me into your head" he said suddenly "just this once"

I sat up and he let me "No" I replied simply.

"Come on, there's something you're not telling me" he said.

"Well I'm pretty sure there are loads you're not telling me either" I said.

"Something else happened in Minnesota, there's another reason why you left isn't it?" he asked, his blue eyes searching.

I was shocked as to how he could've guessed that, I dropped my eyes.

"Even if there is, why should I tell you?" I challenged,

"Because I care more than you think" he said quickly.

I rolled my eyes and sighed, I guess he wanted to know why I was so wary of him. Maybe telling him this will answer some of his questions.

"Well you asked for it" I said, exasperated. I leaned my back on the headboard; I was going to need the support if I was going to go down memory lane.

I took a deep breath "I had a boyfriend named Travis, he and I dated throughout high school and college, he was sweet and fun. I cared about him," I said not wanting to meet Jesse's stare just yet.

"We had our problems, one being that I didn't want to sleep with him" I felt Jesse tense beside me. "But we were happy, or so I thought we were. We grew apart after my father got sick, I couldn't see him as much as I used to, as I wanted to"

I chuckled darkly remembering the many times we fought about me neglecting him and his *needs*.

"When my father died I went into full-blown depression mode, and because I couldn't satisfy his needs he found someone that could. I caught him cheating with my best friend Tanya," I said monotonously.

I heard Jesse take a sharp breath; I looked at him then. His eyes were full of fury, remorse and finally understanding.

But he didn't understand; that's not the reason why I'm pushing him away. I didn't love Travis, I only thought I did. But him on the other hand, I could see myself not being able to live without him. It scared me.

"I told him that it was over right on the spot. It hurt, but I didn't have it in me to fight either one of them, they weren't worth it. They both betrayed me in a time that I needed them the most. I thought I loved Travis but I didn't, that's why letting him go wasn't as hard. It only hurt because it was with my best friend, *her* betrayal hit home," I said.

Jesse scrutinized me for a while "He is not the reason you left?"

I shook my head "Coming here was already a done deal".

I didn't realize I was crying until Jesse wiped away a wet substance on my face

"You see Jesse, I'm a mess. You don't want to deal with this, trust me," I said, sadly shaking my head.

"I'm already dealing with this" he teased, grinning at me.

I couldn't help but smile back, he was indeed putting up with my crap and I couldn't understand why.

Before I could stop myself I reached out and stroked the side of his face. For a moment he looked surprised and then he relaxed to my touch. I drew my hand back and he caught it, shaking his head for me not to stop. I got closer to him, running my hands through his black hair, his nose and mouth. It felt good to touch him this way; it wasn't intimate but endearing. I doubted there was anyone more outstandingly handsome and masculine as him. My hands shifted to his neck, muscular shoulders, arms and chest. I heard him sigh remaining still.

I leaned in and laid a soft kiss on his neck "Thank you" I whispered, he turned his face to me and kissed me. This kiss was different, it was touching, full of adoration. These were the kinds of kisses that would be the death of me.

I pulled away "You are going to be late for work" I said, breathless

"Screw work," he said, laying sweet kisses on my neck and face.

"If you don't get up right now, you are never to touch me again" I threatened, he froze and looked up at me.

"Yes, I'm serious" I confirmed, he rolled his eyes

"Okay boss" he teased, chuckling. He kissed my forehead and went to the bathroom.

Damn, he was persistent. Was he deliberately trying to wear me down? What for? If he didn't have anything permanent in mind.

I saw my chance to escape; I sneaked out to my own room.

Thank goodness Jesse didn't come looking for me; I needed some time to myself, he always clouded my every thought. I couldn't think straight when he was around, *you're pathetic* I thought as I went to my own bathroom.

I found Maria watching TV in the lounge, something she rarely did; she is always all over the place all the time, it's good that she's taking it easy.

"Hey, mind if I join you?" I asked; she smiled, she reminded me so much of my mom.

"Not at all sweetie" she said "You look puzzled," she added looking at me intently

"Is it that obvious?" I asked in chagrin.

She nodded "Besides, I'm good at seeing such things. What's bothering you?"

"Jesse" I said simply "I'm trying to figure him out, and it's not working for me"

"Ah, he has that effect on people" she smiled.

"Help me out?" I asked desperately,

"Oh no, you're going to have to find a way to get it out of him. Its not my place to tell you anything about him, it's his" she replied.

"Fine" I grumbled "Tell me about you then, how come you two are so close?"

"Well I've known him his whole life," she said in a motherly tone.

I was shocked, what did she mean? "I don't follow you," I said

"I grew up in Mexico, I lived there until I was about your age when I came to America. Hoping for a better life, I was sadly mistaken. I was unemployed and homeless for sometime now, that was when I met Peter and Jane" she said

"Jesse's parents?" I asked, engrossed in the story.

"Yes, they were at a flea market. They seemed out of place there and at the same time they looked like they belonged. They walked up to me and started talking to me; somehow they ended up hiring me on the spot. They told me that I would live with them while I helped around, Jane was 4 months pregnant with Jesse at the time" she said, her eyes miles away from here.

"They went out of their way to make me feel like I was part of their family, they were kindhearted and humble despite all their riches. When Jesse came along they were ecstatic." She smiled.

I imagined a dark haired, blue-eyed baby boy and I couldn't help but smile too

"How was he growing up?" I asked intrigued.

"He was a happy little chimp, and why wouldn't he be? He had parents who loved him very much. He was closest with his mother; they had a bond like no other. It was truly tragic when they died" she said, looking down. I thought she was fighting back tears.

"What happened to him?" I whispered, she smiled apologetically

"I'm sorry, but he's going to take that part of the story" she said.

I took a deep breath; I would've loved to meet Jesse's parents. From Maria's description they seemed like amazing people, I couldn't argue with that. The proof was Jesse himself.

Maria and I just kept on talking and laughing, she was a true delight to be with; she was a gentle soul. The sun was beginning to set, and I knew he would be home soon. The butterflies in my stomach went nuts at the thought of seeing him again.

Jason walked in with a phone in his hand; he was one of the guards in the estate and buddies with Jesse, so I've seen. His expression was horror stricken, his voice frantic.

"I'm sorry for interrupting, but we've got a problem" I said, his voice shaking

"What's wrong Jason?" Maria asked, worried now.

"I've just received a call that Jesse was in an accident," he said sadly

"No" I gasped, dropping the remote I had in my hand. My heart was pounding in my ears and somehow everything turned into slow motion.

I saw Maria cover her mouth with both her hands, her eyes mirroring Jason's horror stricken face.

"WHAT?" I screamed, jumping out of my seat in full panic mode "Where is he? Is he okay?" I shouted at Jason.

"At the moment I didn't get any details, but our presence was requested at the scene" he said quickly.

Maria got up too "Let's go, NOW!" she shouted, "Get a car, I'll be right there" she instructed Jason, who flew out of the lounge towards the garage.

I couldn't breathe; I was choking on oxygen, Maria turned to me

"Stay here Lucky" she said.

"No, no, I'm coming with you" I choked out, Maria shook her head

"I'm sure Jesse's fine, think about him. He would rather you stay here, where he'll know you are safe" she persisted.

She didn't wait for me to answer; she darted out towards the garage too. I was pretty sure she counted on the remaining guards to keep me here.

"Wait" I whispered, unable to find my voice.

I had a strange sense of déjà vu at that moment, me begging Maria to stay, afraid of being alone. The only difference was that Jesse wasn't here.

I heard a car speed out of the driveway and I dropped to my knees. Surprisingly I didn't faint so I started praying to God and the angels above for Jesse to be okay.

I made all sorts of bargains with him, he could take everything I had, and I would do anything he wanted just so he could bring Jesse back to me in one peace.

I could live with him leaving me, I could live with him breaking my heart but I couldn't live if he didn't too.

Waiting was going to kill me, but I had to stay strong. Maria was right, he would want me to stay here. That's why he kidnapped me in the first place right? He did it to keep me safe?

I'd do that if its what he would want, I sat down, wrapped my arms around my legs and waited for my fate.

11. As Long As I am Here

Jesse POV

I kicked the scrap metal that was once my Lamborghini, how could I have not noticed that there was something wrong with it sooner.

I was driving home when I suddenly lost control of the car. I was an infallible driver but when I noticed that my brake and steering wheel were not working, I knew the car had been tampered with. Before the car could hit the rocky corner I opened the door and jumped on to the road, glad I decided to wear a leather jacket today.

I saw a black SUV come around the corner and stop, Bill got out “Jesse” he called out to me “My team informed me about you, glad to see you’re still in one peace”

“You trained me well,” I said.

He chuckled “I did” then his expression turned serious

“What the hell happened here?” he said, looking at the mutilated car.

“I lost control of it, someone must’ve tampered with it. I think Frank sent one of his cronies to do it,” I said, as a matter of fact.

Bill thought about it for a second “I’ll have to take a look at your parking lot’s surveillance tape, we’ll bring this bastard to justice” he said.

I couldn’t believe how blind Bill was; didn’t he see this? It was all too obvious.

“How about you bring *Frank* to justice, don’t you see Bill? He’s on to us. He knows I have her and he will stop at nothing, he was trying to send a message here” I shouted, pointing at the car “He’s going to do whatever it takes, to get what he wants. I can’t have that, what if she’d been in the damn car with me?” I said clearing my voice as the thought attacked me.

“You better find a way to bring this son of a bitch down, or else I’m going to get involved, weather you like it or not” I said with conviction.

I had never spoken to Bill like that ever, for a minute he looked shocked at my tone of voice but it was replaced by irritation and understanding.

When it came to protecting the woman I loved, I wasn’t going to take any prisoners.

“I understand your frustration Jesse, but trust me when I say we have this under control. I’ve been doing this for a very long time my boy” he said warning in his voice.

I fought the edge to argue further so I just nodded tightly

“I have to get back to the headquarters, I’ll give you a ride,” he offered.

My Aston Martin came around the corner at that time and stopped, it was Jason and Maria. I thought in relief. She must be home and safe.

“No, my ride just arrived” I said, Bill nodded

“Well talk soon” he said, walking towards the SUV and sped away.

Maria and Jason got out and ran to me. Maria immediately hugged me "Thank heavens, Jesse. Are you okay?" she asked, checking me

"I'm okay just a couple of scratches here and there," I said as we went to the car. I let Jason drive us back.

"What exactly happened back there? I know you, you wouldn't just simply lose control like that," she said.

"You're right, I didn't. Someone tampered with it" I said, still agitated

"But who?" she asked, baffled.

"Frank, he must've sent his men to do it" I said blankly.

"The guy that is trying to get Lucky's necklace?" Jason asked

"Yes, he must know that she's under my protection, he's giving me a warning" I said.

"Goodness me" Maria exclaimed "And what would happen to her if he got it?"

"She would die," I said, my voice breaking as I put my face in my hands "I can't let that happen Maria, I just can't," I whispered.

"I know," she whispered back, trying to soothe me.

"But at the moment Bill won't let me do anything, I can't just sit by while a sadistic bastard like Frank continues to plot against her" I said in frustration, lifting my face to look at Maria "Where is she?" I asked.

"She's back home and...you might want to come up with a convincing story on how you are still walking. She was pretty shaken" she said, I glared at her furiously.

"You told her?" I asked

"No, but Jason just had to say it in front of her that you had an accident" she offered.

"You what!" I said turning my glare to Jason, who shrugged

"I'm sorry boss, I just didn't know what to do," he said quickly

I took deep breaths, worrying about Lucky. She may not love me, but I was pretty sure she would've been scared for my life.

"It's fine, I'll take care of it," I offered, Jason relaxed.

We parked in the garage and made our way into the lounge, I saw Lucky on the couch with Angela. She was laying her head on Angela's lap who was stroking her hair in comfort. She looked up and her eyes grew wide as she met my gaze, her eyes were red-rimmed and her face was tearstained. She looked like she'd been tortured for years. *Sweet Jesus* I thought.

"Jesse!" she screamed, running towards me and crashing onto me. I caught her in my arms; she buried her face in my neck and let out a pained sound.

"Hey now" I said, trying to soothe her,

"Thank God you're okay," she whispered fervently.

I chuckled uneasily as she didn't let me go, she only wrapped her arms tighter around me as I moved with her. She was more distraught than I thought.

"Lucky honey, give the man a chance to breathe" Maria said in a soft voice, I cast Maria a warning glance. Lucky lifted her head "sorry" she whispered as she unlocked her arms around me and I let her down.

Pissed at Maria for cutting our embrace short,

"Sorry, I'm just a little freaked out, are you okay?" she asked, still frantic.

"I'm absolutely fine" I reassured. She chuckled without humor, it was shaky and uneasy "I wonder how much I owe for this" she murmured to herself.

"What?" I asked; what was she talking about?

She looked up at me and shook her head "Nothing" she took my hand pulling me down to the sofa "What happened?" she asked.

"The car had a problem, fortunately I noticed it before it could get out of control. I was able to jump out, before it could crash," I said truthfully.

"On to the road?" she asked shocked.

"Yes" I motioned at my torn jacket.

She flinched "I guess that would also explain these" she lightly traced the scratches on my hands and one on the side of my face.

"I'll get the first-aid kit," Maria said, walking away

"I don't understand, Jason said you were in an accident. I thought you were..." her voice broke, I stroked her hair comfortingly.

"I'm fine, and no I was not in an accident. Whoever called Jason must have exaggerated," I said casting Jason a scornful look.

Maria came back in with the first-aid kit

Lucky stared at me for a while "Don't you ever, ever, ever do that to me ever again" she said.

"Yes ma'am" I said chuckling, glad to see she cared about me a lot,

"I just didn't think you cared this much" I said.

She froze and her eyes sparkled with fury.

"You didn't think I cared this much? Look at me Jesse. Do I look like someone whose been jumping for joy while I waited for you all to come back?" she shouted, standing up.

"Lucky I..." I began

"What is wrong with you huh? Why are you so ignorant to other people's feelings? You might not care but the rest of us do. Look around you Jesse" she shouted, throwing her arms up. "This room is filled with people who love and care about you deeply, you are just too blind to see that. Do you think any of them would've been happy if something had happened to you?" she took a few steps back. I got up facing her.

"I love you," she screamed at me, her voice echoing in the silent room. "The thought of you never coming back killed me! And you thought I didn't care? Do you think I'd be screaming at you right now if I didn't?"

I was shocked into utter silence and stillness; she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"No one on this planet lives and dies alone, at some point you are going to touch other people's lives and they yours" she said, her voice blank and monotonous

"But you don't care either way do you?" it wasn't a question.

"Lucky please listen to me," I begged walking towards her,

"Stop right there" she screamed and I froze again. Her screams pierced me.

"Do not follow me and under no circumstances should you come into my room, I want you to leave me the hell alone" she said, her voice blank again.

She turned and ran up the stairs, for a moment I thought of going after her but that would do more harm than good.

I turned, forgetting that we had spectators. I looked around the silent room. Maria wore a disappointed look on her face, she agreed with Lucky. She has always had a problem with me ignoring her worries about the agent business. It has always bothered her not knowing if I was going to come back home in one peace or not.

"Maria..." I started, but she just got up and left the room without giving me a second glance.

Angela's eyes were accusing and apologetic as she got up and followed after Maria.

Jason grimaced and left the room too.

And I was alone.

I went to my own room and sat in my balcony; letting the cool summer breeze calm me. My thoughts and emotions were in turmoil, first I couldn't believe that Lucky truly thought of me as heartless that way, especially towards her; I would have to prove her wrong. Secondly she told me she loved me; that would've made me happy except that she was screaming it in fury. If she loved me too, then what was stopping me from getting what I want...her.

I heard my bedroom door open and close, I didn't turn to see who it was, but I could guess.

Maria sat in the chair next to me; she didn't look at me, only at the stars above

"I thought you were mad at me" I said, breaking the silence.

"Tyler I've always considered you my son, I could never be mad at you" she said, smiling warmly.

Maria hardly used my middle name, only when she wanted to seriously talk to me. It has always been a sign.

"You think she's right about me?" I asked, I already knew the answer,

"Yes and no" she replied "Yes in the sense that you don't consider the people who care about you when you subject yourself to these dangerous things" she sighed. "And no to you not caring, you do care." She said.

I put my face in my hands "What I'm I going to do Maria?" I asked desperately.

"You already know what you have to do Tyler, you heard her; she loves you. And I know you love her too" she said "Question is do you pursue this or not"

She faced me "I'm sorry but there's only two ways for you, either you let her go; free her while there's still a chance. Save her the heartbreak of having to lose you in the end" she said looking up at the sky again.

"Or you could go after her like nobody has ever seen; convince her and show her that you do feel the same way, that you do want something with her. Let her in, give her the chance to know the real you."

"What about the dangers? I have enemies Maria, one of which is hunting her down as we speak, and he doesn't even know how attached I 'am to her" I said.

"Let her make that decision, it would be wrong for you to deprive her of the choice. If she wants to be with you regardless, leave her be" she insisted.

She got up and put her hand on my shoulder "I will support any decision you make, only if it doesn't hurt you or Lucky" she turned and left.

I thought about what Maria said for some time, deliberating on what I want and what was right. I wanted to be with Lucky more than anything, but could I risk her life dragging her into this dark world of mine? But I couldn't completely let her go either; it would kill me.

I got up heading to her room, Maria was right; the choice was hers. I for one have made mine.

I paused outside of her door, she'd told me to leave her alone but I just had to make sure she was okay. It was past midnight, and she was probably asleep.

I lightly opened the door and came in, the room was semi lit from lights emanating from outside.

She was under her covers and she looked like she was asleep so I moved closer to the bed. She looked worn out, I sighed inwardly.

She opened her eyes sensing she was not alone, her eyes met mine and she quivered.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you," I said quietly

She shifted "I thought I told you to leave me alone" she said, her voice weak and rough. I sat on the edge of the bed facing her.

I smiled "You did, but that's an impossibility for me" I said softly, that was the God's honest truth; I had no idea how to stay away from her.

She sat up "What do you want Jesse?" she asked, her voice didn't express anger

"Well firstly I came to apologize," I said, staring into her green eyes.

"You don't have to apologize, you did nothing wrong. I just got carried away, I don't know what came over me" she looked down.

"No Lucky you don't understand, you're right about me being ignorant to people's feelings and I'm sorry I was insensitive towards yours" I said, lifting her chin with my finger "But you're wrong about me not caring, I care more than you think" I assured, she shook her head.

"Yes Lucky I do, you're blind too little one. You can't seem to see how crazy I 'am about you," I added softly,

She looked up shocked.

"You're not the only one who is a mess Lucky, something also happened to me to make me wary of a relationship. Why I was ignorant towards my feelings and yours" I continued; I was going to do the talking for once.

"Tell me?" she whispered, reluctant that I would do it,

I nodded and took a deep breath, I have never had to tell anyone this story not even people I considered my close friends.

"I grew up in a small town in Texas, my parents liked the small town life a lot. They never cared about money and power and that also translated onto me growing up," I said "I'm sure Maria told you about how she met my parents?"

She slowly nodded "She refused to tell me anything else".

I grinned *typical Maria* "Even without siblings I was a happy child, I was closest to my mother. She meant the world to me; I loved my father too very much. I think in overall I lost them way too young, I went from being loved and happy to being completely alone and traumatized." I said in sad voice.

Lucky's eyes expressing the hurt I felt,

"I lied, they didn't die because of a car accident, they were murdered," I said. I heard Lucky gasp; I looked into her shocked eyes and continued it gets worse after all.

"That day Maria had to run to the shops to get some groceries, me and my parents were playing in the living room when a bunch of black-suited and armed men burst in" I said my voice blank. "I was too young to understand what was happening, it looked like they were trying to fight them off. My mother screamed for me to run but I couldn't".

"The men shot both of them down, I will never forget watching my parents die right in front of me," I said.

Her hand was on my shoulder as if trying to support herself from falling backwards, tears streamed down her face "Oh my God, Jesse" she choked out.

"They left me behind, I didn't know why they decided not to finish me off too. They probably saw me as a harmless kid, who couldn't threaten them" I said, wiping her tears with the back of my hand.

"Maria found me crying in a puddle of my own parents blood, she called 911 but instead witness protection services came for me and took me away, claiming it was for my own good. Maria wasn't having it, but they took me away anyway. I remember Maria's anguished screams as she tried to fight off the officers to get to me. That was the last time I saw her for a very long time" I said remembering that dreadful day.

"Did they catch the killers?" she asked between sobs,

"Trust me they were taken care of," I said in a harsh tone. I had personally taken justice into my own hands and hunted down the bastards that took everything from me.

Lucky shivered "What happened after they had you?" she whispered pained.

"My uncle Ben came and took over custody of me, he helped me in a way. But the wound was too deep; the trauma of their death left an irreversible scar on me. My uncle took over my father's company and assets until I came of age" I said, it was around that time that Bill found me and offered me a job I couldn't refuse.

"I was in college when I found Maria again, it was quite an emotional reunion. Maria was happy to see me, but I had changed. I was not the sweet and innocent little boy she once knew, and she blamed herself" I said in a solemn voice "She always regretted going to the shops that day, but I didn't. I was glad she did"

"They would've killed her too," Lucky whispered blankly.

I nodded "Collateral damage, for me having her was better than having no one at all. She has never left my side since."

"Losing my parents the way I did was agonizing. Never wanting to feel like that again, I shut out everything and everyone. I interacted with people and I had dates but I never got attached to anyone. I promised I would never need anyone but myself," I said.

I smiled, gently caressed her red cheek and sighed "I should've known that promise would have an exception...you" I said.

"I'm so sorry Jesse, for everything. What happened to you was truly tragic, no one should ever have to go through that" she whispered "And now I feel horrible for calling you heartless"

I shook my head "I deserved it, even I thought I was. Until I met you" I said.

She hugged me, wrapping her arms around me like she did earlier "I love you Jesse, and that's not going to change, I realize that now" she whispered with conviction.

"What happened to not getting attached to me?" I teased, hoping to lighten the mood.

"Lost cause" she muttered, kissing my neck "You made it so hard not to Mr. Gilbert it was hardly fair" she smiled.

I kissed her, happy that she was able to accept my dark past; a part of it at least. I would tell her everything in time "I want to be with you Lucky, please give me a chance to prove myself to you" I asked, kissing her forehead.

"I thought you would never ask," she whispered, smiling. I got a strange Idea.

"Can I try something?" I asked, not sure what I wanted to do myself,

"Sure" she said, confused. I laid her back on the bed and got beside her, laying my head on her chest. For a moment she was tense but then relaxed and began stroking my hair. This gesture brought back a very fond memory I never thought I had; behind the trauma and pain, my parents left me with beautiful memories. They just have been clouded over the years.

I listened to her heartbeat; it was oddly comforting.

We stayed that way for a long time, neither Lucky nor me broke our embrace or bothered with conversation.

Another memory came to me,

"Ewww why do you do that? It's nasty" I made a gagging sound at my parents kissing while we ate breakfast. They both stopped and looked at me, amused.

"When you get older and meet a girl you like, you won't be able to help yourself my son," my father said looking at my mother. "She will become your everything"

"And you will have to treat her right, not break her heart" my mother teased, "You will have to be careful with her Tyler".

"Yeah well whatever you say, I still think it's nasty," I said wrinkling my nose.

They both laughed and my mother kissed my forehead.

I thought they were talking nonsense at the time and I still thought that way for a while. But after meeting Lucky I could see how spot on they both were.

I smiled to myself and let sleep take me.

12. Adventure

Lucky POV

I woke up with a huge headache; damn all the crying and stress of last night took its toll on me. I realized Jesse and me fell asleep in our embrace, it was beautiful and unexpected; I wondered what inspired it.

I wanted some aspirin, but I didn't want him to wake up and not find me there. He opened up to me in a way I thought I'd never witness, and he and I bonded in a way I thought we never would. We shared a common pain, but mine was not nearly as tragic as his. I shuddered, imagining what he must've gone through.

I tried to get up without waking him up *I'll be back my love* I thought

I went out and down the stairs into the kitchen.

I found Maria making herself coffee, she always woke up earlier than everyone else, and she looked up at me and smiled with understanding at my expression.

I went to her and hugged her tightly "I'm so sorry Maria," I whispered.

She let out a shaky chuckle "I'm guessing he told you huh?" she asked,

I nodded letting her go.

"It's alright sweetie, I've learnt to accept and move on. But it was never my pain to move on from" she said.

"I know" I said, she meant that it wasn't hers, but it was Jesse's

"Where is he?" she asked, looking up the stairs.

"He's still asleep," I said softly, smiling

"I'm guessing the love train is in motion," she stated smiling too.

I blushed "You can say that" and then I remembered

"What happened?" she asked.

"We talked, I cried like a baby and he told me that he wanted to be with me...how could I refuse when I wanted the same thing?" I said "And then he...he asked if he could do something and then he laid his head on my chest. It was sweet but I didn't understand why he would ask permission first" I blabbed on.

Maria froze "What did you say he did?" her eyes wide with surprise

"He laid his head on my chest, it was a sweet gesture," I said, not understanding why this was freaking her out.

Maria sat down in complete shock; she started muttering to herself in a language I didn't understand "Maria?" I asked, alarmed now.

"When he was a boy he loved to lay his head on his mother's chest, listening to her heartbeat; it had a calming effect on him" she said "He sees Jane in you Lucky, he sees his mother in you".

Now it was my turn to be shocked as I got what she meant; Jesse never need to ask permission to touch me before. It was because this gesture was more personal, it had a deep meaning behind it. And his mother; I could never be compared to her. I didn't know her, but from what I heard I didn't even come close.

I shook my head "No, no Maria you're wrong".

"No? Then what else would explain him doing that? This was something he only shared with his mother. I don't see any other explanation but that one" she persisted, smiling now.

"For the past years I've been praying to God for him to send one of his angels to help heal my Jesse and he did; he sent you Lucky" She said, tears escaping her eyes.

"No, I'm not some angel that was brought to come remove Jesse's pain" I insisted, freaked out by what she was saying.

"You don't see what I see Lucky, I have been with Jesse for a very long time. This is the happiest I've seen him. You may not be an angel but you're going to heal him. Thank you," she said hugging me.

"He is the one healing *me*," I said, giving up on trying to convince her otherwise.

It was true; Jesse was the one healing me, he was what I had been looking for I just didn't know it. He is the adventure I'd been seeking.

I got the aspirin and headed back to my room, pleased that he was still asleep. I got into bed and kissed his forehead gently, that woke him up "I could get used to this" he murmured, I chuckled.

"Yeah you could, good morning," I said, smiling

"Morning little one, you look terrible" he teased, I laughed out loud beating him up with a pillow.

"If this relationship is going to be about insults then we better quit while we're at it" I teased back.

"Heaven forbid," he said, kissing my cheek "Just kidding, you look magnificent as always, though you do seem a little off" he added.

"Yeah, headache" I said motioning towards the aspirin on the nightstand "Don't you have work today?" I asked.

"No" he lied, Jesse didn't need to go to work everyday but I know things were hectic because he's been spending a lot of time in his study lately.

I gave him a knowing look and he sighed

"You're a buzz kill, you know that?" he said frowning.

I chuckled "Yeah I've heard that before, hit the shower mister" I said.

"Care to join me?" he purred, hot water and Jesse was a very tempting thought.

I smiled in agreement and he lifted me off the bed and into the huge bathroom.

I had 2 weeks of complete bliss; I never thought I could feel happiness like this ever in my life. I came to LA in search of a new life; instead I got to live my wildest dreams, even they didn't conjure up someone like Jesse before. Our happiness also reflected on everyone else, they all seemed happy that we were together.

My birthday was a week from now, and everyone in the castle but me was excited about it. Jesse and I had argued before about him not getting me anything, but he wasn't having it. I knew that if I let him do it, he would go completely overboard, wasn't his supposed 'wardrobe' for me bad enough?

"That's really unfair you know," he said, by the pool.

I took off my sunglasses turning to face him "No it's not, it is my birthday after all. And what I want is for you to not get me anything" I said.

His eyes narrowed in thought for a second, I thought he'd given up but he smiled deviously.

He had me in his arms and over the pool in seconds "You wouldn't" I said, looking down at the blue water below.

"No?" he said, "Allow me to get you presents or you're going to get soaked"

"Damn it Jesse!" I shouted "A little help Angie" I called out to Angela who was passing by, seemingly enjoying herself.

"Oh no, I'm not getting involved" she called out, laughing

"Traitor!" I spat, she only laughed louder retreating to the penthouse.

"Last chance darling" Jesse warned, I groaned

"You're so immature!" I said and he chuckled.

"Thank you, presents? Or the water?" he asked, enjoying himself too

"Fine, you can get me the damn presents, but one only" I said

He lowered me, I screamed.

"Okay, okay, as many as you want" I said quickly "Now let me down"

He smiled and turned around with me, I breathed easy with dry land beneath me

"Screw you and your stupid presents" I said, exasperated.

He chuckled "wrong answer" he turned back

"No, Jesse don't..." I screamed, but he threw me into the pool.

I landed in the water with a huge splash; I swam back up furiously

I gasped as I reached the top, throwing my hands in the water in a frustrated fit.

"Oops, sorry little one, I slipped" he lied, amused

"Ugh liar" I shouted, Knowing very well that Jesse never 'slips'.

He laughed and bent down offering me a hand, pay back time!

I grabbed his arm with all my strength, trying to pull him into the water with me.

Either I was able to do it or he just decided to humor me because he went in the water with me too. I laughed when he came back up "How do you like it?" I asked

"I like it this much" he said, kissing me, pulling us back down in the water.

We got inside to dry up.

"We should move," he said as I finished drying my hair

"Move?" I asked, surprised.

"Yes, to my pad in the hills. Just for a short while, I thought you'd like the change of scenery" he replied, sitting on the bed next to me.

"Um okay, I guess" I said, I really didn't need the change. I loved it here, but if he wanted to move I'd follow him anywhere.

"Excellent, Maria will come with us if you want" He offered

"Wait you have a pad in the hills? Jeez how much property do you have?" I asked, and then I regretted it because I really didn't want to know.

He smiled sheepishly "I don't like hotels, so when I travel for work I want to have a place to stay" he said "I have a house in New York, London, Tokyo, Sydney and Cape Town, so I could be close to our headquarters there"

I stared at him open mouthed, "Wow, you travel a lot?"

"Only when its necessary, or when my presence is requested," he said "I mostly run things here in LA and the rest of my family elsewhere, but I'm still the CEO"

"Are the rest of your family in those places?" I asked.

"Yes, my Aunt Rebecca is in the UK, my Uncle John in South Africa, my cousin Daniel is in Japan and my Aunt Kylie in Australia" he said "Me and my uncle Ben run things here in the US, he's in New York at the moment".

"I didn't realize you came from such a big family, you never talk about them much," I said, he's never even mentioned them.

"That's because there's nothing to say, I don't really see eye to eye with any one of them except uncle Ben" he said, monotonously "From what he tells me, neither did my parents too"

I shifted my gaze "Why is that?" I asked taken by surprise.

"My family is only bound by their mutual love for money and power, my mom and dad didn't like that so they separated from them and moved to Texas"

He said, his eyes a million miles from here.

"My grandparents must've seen how greedy everyone else was, so when they died they left G-Industries and some of their assets," he said, referring to the castle "To my mom and dad, and they to me".

"And the rest of your family still holds a grudge about that" I stated, it was obvious now.

He nodded "I don't see why, because they all still have their trust funds and they still get to play a major role in running the company" He said.

I sighed; I now saw why he didn't like to speak about them.

"My uncle Ben is the only one who my mom and dad trusted with me and the company when they died. I only see the others after a long while, like when we have a get together to brief each other on business" he said, turning his blue gaze to me.

"I'm guessing they don't visit often huh?" I asked, already knowing the answer

He shook his head, and somehow I was relieved at that. I was pretty sure they wouldn't take well to a nobody like me.

He got up "We better start packing if we're leaving tomorrow"

"Tomorrow?" I asked shocked that it was so soon.

"Yeah, what are we waiting for?" he said, helping me up "I'll get Angela to bring you luggage" he said and dashed out of my room.

Half an hour later Angela came back with a bunch of Louis Vuitton suitcases

"Ugh does everything have to be designer around here?" I said, frowning

"Sweetie you are dating a billionaire you better stop whining and get used to it, and no there aren't any other suitcases," she said mockingly, chuckling at my perplexed expression "I'll help you pack"

I groaned as I opened the closet doors.

We arrived at Jesse's pad the following day; of course this one was a reasonably proportioned house, okay maybe proportioned considering Jesse's standards.

"A great pad for a bachelor " I said, impressed as we walked in and to the large living room, which had a massive fireplace and a glass wall with a sliding door leading to a huge balcony overlooking the city.

"Thanks, what do you think?" he asked as he hugged me from behind looking at the city lights.

"Its beautiful, you have awesome taste" I said truthfully, this view put the one I had to shame. Mine was exactly in the city while this one looked like we were above it.

This pad had a more modern style, than the décor at the castle, which had a vintage feel to it.

"Why thank you my lady, do you want to see the bedroom? I think it will blow you away," he purred in my ear, smiling deviously

"Lets go," I said wrapping my arms around his neck.

13. Arrangements

Jesse POV

I was infused in my work when I heard a soft knock on my office door, Bianca came in "Excuse me Mr. Gilbert but Linda James is here to see you" she said.

"Thank you, bring her in" I replied, Linda James was an accomplished events planner, I worked with her in the past; so I knew what she was capable of.

"Jesse" Linda said walking in.

I stood up to greet her "Linda, its good to see you, how have you been?"

"Parties, traveling the world, yeah life's good" she smiled. "I must say I was surprised when you called me to organize this, its not what we normally do"

I chuckled "Well there's a first time for everything" I said.

That seemed to be my phrase nowadays. She was right; asking her to plan Lucky's birthday party must've caught her off guard. Normally I would have her plan team building and networking parties for G-Industries, but never a birthday party.

"She must be special then...girlfriend?" she asked, curious

"Yes" I replied, happy that it was actually true.

"What were you thinking?" she asked, sipping the coffee Bianca brought us.

"She is a huge fan of music, so I was thinking a party that would rival award shows, a bunch of live performance, fireworks, and everything in between" I said, I knew Lucky was going to kill me for doing this, but I knew she would love it.

"Alright, what theme did you have in mind?" she asked, taking down notes

"Classic Hollywood, red carpet and bright lights" I replied, "Her favorite color is blue," I added.

"I wonder why that is," she teased, referring to my eyes,

Humph I never thought about that. I just smiled "See how you can incorporate these in her party," I said, giving her a list of Lucky's favorite things.

I had raided her apartment yesterday, trying to find things that would help me decide what to do with the party. I couldn't ask her without giving away the surprise; she was already watching me like a hawk.

I pulled out her iPod and handed it to Linda "I want you to book the first 5 people on her playlist, and improvise where needed" I said.

"Ok, venue?" she asked.

"My place, I prefer you do it outside. You can start working there immediately," I said.

I had moved Lucky to my pad so that Linda's people can work there peacefully

"Awesome I'll have loads to space to work with, and attendance?" she said.

"Send invitations here," I said handing her the address to where Lucky worked, I was sure many of her friends and acquaintances were there.

"The budget?" she asked

"Don't worry about it, her birthday is this Saturday can you pull this off?" I asked wary of her coming through with it at such short notice.

She rolled her eyes "I'm the best in the business, besides have you forgotten that you used to have me plan parties overnight?" she said, standing up.

I chuckled "That's why I called you Linda"

"Well I think that's everything, I'll keep in touch" she said offering me her hand

I stood up shaking it "Thank you, call me if you need anything" I said.

She said her goodbyes and left my office.

I wanted to surprise Lucky with something I knew she couldn't hate me for, her family. I didn't think they would actually agree to fly to LA to supposedly meet Lucky's boyfriend and attend her surprise party. But they did.

I talked to her mother Joslyn about it, at first she was completely shocked that 1. I was her daughter's boyfriend 2. I actually offered to pay for their trip here

She told me she'd bring her sister Jenna, and a close friend of hers, obviously trying not to burden me, I rolled my eyes; I can see where Lucky gets her modesty.

I told her I'd pick them up at LAX on Friday and not to breathe a word about any of this or them coming here to Lucky. She agreed, thanked me and hung up.

I pulled up on Rodeo drive, I wanted to get Lucky a bracelet I could alter, I wanted to install a tracker and mic on it, just a precaution for the night only; okay maybe I was being overprotective. I entered the Tiffany & Co store; I found a simple and elegant bracelet with diamond and gold gemstones, it was perfect and it wouldn't give anything away.

I thanked the sales lady, who smiled a little too much and I walked out

I decided to pay my two favorite cousins a personal visit, it's been a year since they opened their boutique here and it was doing very well.

I walked in to see Ally behind the counter; she didn't look up as I walked over

"Can I help you?" she said, looking at her files.

I smiled "Yes, I'm looking for my annoying cousins" I chuckled

She looked up shocked "Jesse!" she screamed, startling the rest of the customers

She ran over to hug me "Mandy! Look whose here," she called out.

Amanda came around to see what was going on and her expression turned to excitement when she saw me "Hey Jesse!" she said.

I didn't visit the girls as often as I wanted to; I hoped to change that

"Hey girls how are you?" I asked, smiling. Their enthusiastic nature always rubbed off on me, even on my gloomiest days.

"Great" Mandy said

"Fantastic, what are you doing here?" Ally said.

"Can't a big brother visit his little sisters?" I asked, amused with their expressions,

"No" they both said laughing; I playfully frowned.

"Well I'm actually taking you both to Lunch, can you go?" I asked

"Yeah, we'd love to. Patricia, we going out for lunch we'll be back in an hour"

Mandy called out to the back.

"Okay" a woman's voice came through

"Lets go" Ally said grabbing her bag under the counter.

"What's on your mind big bro?" Mandy said, sipping her cappuccino

"Why do you think that?" I asked, trying to play dumb.

"Because we know you, you don't just pop up out of nowhere and take us to lunch," Ally replied, eying me carefully.

"So what? I can't just take my cousins out, without it being questioned?"

"You know that's not what we mean," Mandy added

"Fine, I actually came to personally invite you to a surprise party I'm hosting" I said, smiling as their eyes grew wide at my statement.

"What? For who?" Ally said, shocked

"Lucky" I said, sipping my coffee,

"Wait, that's the same woman we bought all those clothes for isn't it? You two have a thing right?" Mandy guessed.

"Well yes. She's my girlfriend," I said

"Holy shit" Ally said, almost choking on her drink.

"Damn, and you didn't think to tell us? Wow, I feel so important" Mandy said with biting sarcasm,

Ally nudged her on the arm and cocked her head in my direction.

"Did you just say you have a *girlfriend*? Well I'll be a..." Mandy swallowed

"That's enough," I said cutting her off, so what if I didn't have a girlfriend before. Did everyone have to treat it like it was an impossibility for me to have one now?

"We're happy for you bro, we really are. We just want to meet the woman who finally captured our brother's heart" Mandy said.

I chuckled "Which brings me back to my proposal, I'm hosting a surprise birthday party for her this Saturday and guess who gets to play her stylists for the day?" I said,

"Us?" Ally asked surprised.

I nodded "You'll get to spend the whole day with her, and talk about whatever it is you women talk about when you get together" I added. "That's if she doesn't get annoyed with you both and kick you out" I chuckled, imagining the scene.

"Ha ha very funny, but wont we be blowing the surprise?" Mandy asked

I shook my head "She'll think I'm taking her to a fancy restaurant or something, but she'll never guess what will be waiting for her back home" I said.

"Awesome, we're in. We can't wait to finally meet her" Ally exclaimed, looking at her watch "Shoot, Mandy if we don't bounce we're going be late" She said.

They both got up "Jesse thanks for the invite, where will she be?" Mandy asked

"At my pad in the hills, you can come by Saturday morning" I told them.

"We'll be there" Ally added, "This was awesome bro, thank you," she said hugging me and Mandy followed suit.

They both waved and left, for a moment I thought of what Lucky and they will think of each other. One thing for sure is that Ally and Mandy already loved her for the fact that she was able to make me love her. I chuckled inwardly.

Lucky for one was going to feel slightly anxious about meeting anyone from my family, I didn't understand her insecurities sometimes, no one can resist her charms; I was living proof.

I too got up; I had a lot of things to take care of in order to see this plan through.

14. Birthday

Lucky POV

"Happy birthday" Jesse said, kissing my forehead. I groaned, half asleep

"You're not being for real are you?" I grumbled, covering my eyes.

He lifted my arm off "Yes I 'am" he said

I sat up frowning "You're on a mission to kill me aren't you?" I spat.

He chuckled "Something like that, now close your eyes" he said

I sighed loudly and closed my eyes. He laid a box like thing in my hand.

"You can open them," he said, excitedly. I couldn't find it in me to put him off

"Wow" I said with forced enthusiasm at the Tiffany's box in my hand

I opened the box and I was actually taken aback, in a good way.

Inside lay a beautiful and simple bracelet; it had some diamonds and gold gems, I liked its conservativeness. I could actually wear it without drawing too much attention to myself. I smiled in approval.

"Not bad huh?" he asked, obviously pleased I liked it.

"No, I like it. Thank you," I said leaning in to give him a kiss, hoping this was the first and last of my 'presents'.

He stopped me. "Oh no, I know what you're trying to do and no, you're not off the hook just yet" he said, chuckling.

I moaned in complaint slumping back to the bed

"We had a deal little one," he said kissing my nose "Wear that tonight" he said getting up.

"What's happening tonight?" I asked shocked

He shrugged smiling "Jesse!" I bellowed.

"Relax, we're just going to have some fun," he said putting his hands up. "Besides Amanda and Allison are coming over, you don't want to disappoint them now do you?" He said.

His cousins were coming to see me? What the hell!

"What?" I nearly screamed, nerves attacking my stomach.

"Yeah, they're going to give you the whole spa treatment thing. Their treat, a gift to you" he said in that soothing voice.

"But..." I tried to talk

"They won't bite sweetheart, you'll love them...I think" he chuckled "If they ask how we met; we met at your secret vacation in Miami"

"Oh okay. Where are you going?" I asked noting to his appearance.

"I have some errands to run, but I'll be back later to pick you up" he said, kissing me goodbye. I wasn't ready to have him leave me,

He chuckled as I refused to end our kiss. "Don't do this to me please, I have to go" he breathed into my mouth, in my useless attempt to keep him here I

grabbed the back of his neck and tried to pull him back to the bed with me; kissing him more fervently. He pulled away and I dropped to the bed alone.

"Be reasonable Lucky, you know I want to stay here with you," he said with a strained voice.

I pouted realizing he really has to go because he never tried to resist me before.

"Okay, hurry back to me" I said smiling

"I always do" he kissed my forehead and I touched his cheek.

He turned and paused at the door "Oh, try to play along okay?" he asked

I nodded, he smiled and he was gone.

Nerves attacking me again I threw my head into the pillows, somehow the prospect of meeting some of his family members terrified me. What if they don't like me or worse yet...think I was nothing more than a gold digger? I could care less about their money; I would gladly take Jesse without all of this.

Be strong I chanted to myself as I went to the bathroom, I had agreed this madness after all.

I knew it was time to go downstairs when I heard two new voices in the living room with Maria. I took a deep breath, just be yourself; I told myself as I came down the stairs. They were identical twins, probably in their early twenties; they were very pretty *beauty runs in the family then* I thought to myself. They both had natural blonde hair, though they wore it differently. One wore it straight and with bangs while another was curly and shorter. They both looked up at me then, I noted they both had those really blue eyes Jesse had *ah another Gilbert trait*.

I walked over to them "Hello" I said in a pleasant voice.

"Hi Lucky, its so good to finally meet you. You're even more prettier in person" the one with straight hair said and giggled, "I'm Amanda, but you can call me Mandy"

"Hey Mandy, its nice to meet you too" I replied, suppressing a blush at her calling *me* pretty.

"This is my sister Allison," she said referring to the one with curly hair

"Hey, nice to meet you" she smiled extending a hand to me, I took it "please call me Ally"

I smiled back "You too".

"These are Ben's crazy daughters" Maria added, waving her hand at them

"Why thank you Maria" Ally said and they all started laughing, I couldn't help but laugh with them.

"So Lucky are you loving your wardrobe?" Mandy asked. I gave her a confused look, and then I put two and two together. Of course it had to be Jesse's stylists who would put together my wardrobe, I just didn't think they were also his cousins.

"Oh yes, its lovely" I told her, glad my voice sounded convincing,

"You sure use it well, I'm glad" Ally said scrutinizing my appearance, approval in her expression.

"I don't know how much time we have together, so where should we do this" Mandy asked,

I then noticed the things they brought with them; a suit cover, three gold boxes and a large silver suitcase, which looked like an oversized make-up case.

"Um follow me," I said turning towards the staircase, Maria flashed me an encouraging smile; either Maria knew me too well or my attempt to hide my anxiety failed hopelessly.

"In here's good" I said returning to the bedroom,

"Cool" Mandy said, they both started setting up their things. It looked like they packed a whole salon. I stared at them in shock.

Ally laughed at my expression "We take our work seriously"

I nodded solemnly.

They started by giving me a facial, then manicure and pedicure. It was useless, but I agreed to play along. We all talked and laughed throughout, I was really enjoying their company, they were funny, sweet, quirky and everything in between. Jesse was right I liked them...a lot. They seemed to like me too.

"We are just dying to know how you did it Lucky" Ally said, painting my nails

"How I did what?" I asked, confused at the sudden change in the conversation.

"How you got Jesse to fall for you," Mandy added

"I don't know" I said, truthfully "He just did I guess, sometimes even I don't understand why he feels the way he does".

I was hardly what most people considered 'a catch' but Jesse on the other hand was in a league of his own.

They both looked at me incredulously "Um, have you taken a good look in the mirror lately?" Ally said, shaking her head in disbelief.

I shrugged "Besides, there are thousands of 'pretty' women out there and Jesse could've had anyone of them" I said, the thought bringing me sadness.

"But he didn't, that's our point; I can see there is more to you Lucky, I for one like you" Mandy stated, smiling at me warmly.

"Yeah, me too" Ally chided

I blushed then "Thanks" I said, smiling.

I scowled at the large make-up set,

"You're not into this sort of thing huh" Ally said, it wasn't a question.

"Honestly" I took a deep breath "No, don't get me wrong. I appreciate what you're doing and I like the clothes, it's just that I didn't grow up in this lifestyle. So it's a little hard to adjust I guess" I blabbed on.

"Well most women do more than just 'adjust' you know, I'm glad Jesse found himself a woman that won't be all about shopping and taking extravagant vacations" Mandy said, for once in a serious tone.

"A woman that would care about him only, nothing else. And it seems he has found that in you Lucky" Ally added.

"Well I love him, none of this matters to me" I simply stated, they both smiled "I can see you two want the best for him" I said, noting their protectiveness towards Jesse's interests.

"Yes, we've always considered Jesse our big brother rather than cousin" Mandy said, "He's always been there for us, and protected us. He is the best, and we just love him to pieces for it" she added.

Ally nodded reverently "When we were young, he always looked up for us. When we graduated high school our dad and the rest of my family wanted us to go to Harvard and come help out in the family business. Its not what we wanted to do, we've always had a passion for fashion and its been a childhood dream of ours to go to the Art Institute of NYC. Though we didn't want to disappoint them, we couldn't do what they wanted us to." Ally said, sadly.

"The fact that we didn't want to play a role in G-Industries disappointed them, but Jesse stood with us; insisting that they let us do our own thing. He was able to convince our parents but not so much the rest of them," Mandy continued, giggling. "He even flew with us to New York and helped us move in, it was sweet; he always was the hands on type of big brother"

Ally laughed along with her "After we graduated, we took a couple of interns in Paris and Milan, we got a chance to learn from the greats; it was a wonderful experience. When we got back to America, we styled a couple of celebrities, who gave us a little exposure; even Jesse let us play his stylists. He's the one who helped us finance and set-up our boutique slash salon down on Rodeo drive"

Ally said, finishing up my nails.

"And now we're currently working on our own fashion line, which is like a dream come true for us; and its all because one gentleman had faith even we didn't have in ourselves" Mandy chimed, proudly; looking like she was fighting back tears.

I for one was touched by their story and how much Jesse meant to them.

"Wow, I'm so happy for you girls. I'll be sure to stop by at your boutique when I get the chance" I said, fighting back a smile at the thought that my paycheck probably couldn't buy more than 5 items there.

"You better" Ally said standing up "Okay, time for hair and make up"

They immediately started working on my hair, applying what seemed like a dozen hair products I have never used in my life. They didn't do too much to it, they held it up and let a portion of it cascade down to my shoulders, and it was subtle and sophisticated. Under my strict instructions they didn't apply too much make up, but they put a lot of work on my eyes; I refused the false eyelashes.

"We are so good" Mandy exclaimed, looking at the beautiful woman in the mirror, who was staring at me with confused eyes. Then I realized the woman was *me*.

"Good God, you girls work miracles" I chimed incredulously,

"It helps when you have good raw material" Ally added "Now time to get dressed" she walked over to the bed and picked up the suit cover.

"We had to pull a couple of strings to get this baby" she opened it and revealed a strapless gold sequined mini dress, it looked like something a movie star would wear on the red carpet. I stared at it open mouthed.

"It's a one of a kind Oscar De La Renta dress, it hasn't even come out yet. Think of it as another birthday day gift" Ally said, she smiled and handed me the dress

"Well don't just stand there, go" Mandy pushed me towards the closet.

Careful not to mess up my hair I slid on my dress, glad that despite its close fit; it stretched and it was comfortable. I quickly walked out.

"Perfect" Ally said, twining her hands together in quiet appreciation,

"You know what will make it even better? Killer shoes" Mandy said, grabbing one of the gold boxes "I saw these and I knew they would look amazing with the dress",

She handed me a pair of platform ankle boots; they had the same gold incrust, except that it had some black in it. I quickly put them on; glad that I could now reach Jesse's height at leased.

"Mandy you're a genius" Ally smiled "Lucky you look amazing"

I smiled, Maria walked in taking in my appearance. She whistled under her breath.

"Wow, senorita you look marvelous" she admired,

"You think so?" I asked, not quite believing. They all let out an exasperated sound

"Would we lie to you?" Mandy said, rolling her eyes.

I blushed and turned to the large mirror on the wall, I was shocked to see that they were actually right...I looked beautiful.

"Well I think our job here is done" Ally said, starting to clear up their things

I turned "You're leaving?" I asked crestfallen,

"Yeah, but we'll see you *very* soon" Mandy said hugging me.

"Oh okay, bye then. Thanks again" I said hugging Ally too

They both grabbed their things, said their goodbyes to Maria and went out of the room.

"They are nice girls," Maria said, sitting on the edge of the bed,

I nodded reverently. "Yeah, they are. I like them a lot, they were so nice and accepting of me"

"Of course they are, we all want the same thing here; Jesse's happiness and you make him happy Lucky. The rest doesn't matter," she said.

I turned to her "I keep waiting for this silly dream of mine to end, I would wake up in my apartment and all of this...and Jesse, would be nothing more than a dream" I said sadly.

"You're not dreaming sweetie, I think you would've woke up a long time ago if that was the case" she chuckled "We are not going anywhere and neither are you" she reassured touching my necklace.

"Its fate that you're here, this is meant to be," she added, nodding to herself

"I hope you're right" I said, we both smiled.

"Oh" she said grabbing the box on the nightstand "The final touch" she said, putting the bracelet Jesse bought for me on my wrist,

"There you go" she said emotion clear in her voice.

"Thank you" I said, and it was not just for the bracelet but also for everything

Maria looked at her watch "I have to go home, Angie wants some help. Don't worry Jesse is on his way to pick you up" she kissed my cheek "Happy birthday, have fun" she said.

I nodded "I'll see you later" I said and waved her off as she closed the door behind her.

I sat on the bed for a minute, taking everything in. After a while I decided to go downstairs; the house was very silent.

I went to the large balcony; the sun was beginning to set on the horizon and the city lights started to come up...

15. Family

Jesse POV

I ran all over the estate making sure everything was in place for Lucky's party, the place looked great; Linda had truly outdone herself.

I was supposed to pick up Lucky's family at the airport but Linda called me and insisted that I be here. So I called Joslyn and told her that I'll be sending a car for them instead. I hope they didn't take it the wrong way. I had sent my butler Jeffery to go pick them up, I'm sure their on their way right now.

The sun was beginning to set so it was almost time for the party,

I went to my room to change, I threw on a semi casual outfit; I'd never given much thought to how I dressed, well that was before 2 annoying cousins started getting on my case about it.

My phone ringed; it was Maria

"Hey, is everything alright?" I asked,

"Everything is in place, I activated the bracelet; she's wearing it at the moment" she replied.

"How is she?" I asked, I knew I was in trouble for everything I made her do today

"She's happy Jesse," she said softly. That threw me a bit, but I was glad
"Great, I'm on my way. Thank you Maria, you can come home now," I said
"All right, bye" she said, and hung up.

I made my way downstairs and was met by Jeffery with 3 other women; they all were in awe as they took in their surroundings. One was maybe around Maria's age; slightly younger though, this must be Joslyn Lucky's mother. The other was about my age but a little older; she also had green eyes but short brown hair...Jenna I guessed. The other had dirty blonde hair and brown eyes, I didn't know who she was.

"Sir Jason said to tell you that your Mercedes SLR McLaren is ready," Jeffery said looking at me. The women all turned to look at me then, they looked even more surprised to see me; this cannot be good.

"Thank you Jeffery" I said, walking up to them. Jeff walked out and I faced Joslyn, smiling warmly "I'm so glad you could make it" I said, shaking hands with her

"Well it's a pleasure to be here, Jesse right?" she asked, scrutinizing me.

I nodded "Yes, I'm sorry I couldn't pick you up myself. Things were a bit hectic here"

"Oh no, it's no problem. This is my eldest daughter Jenna," she said, I was right again. I shook hands with her too.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, I've heard great things," I said, shocking her

"You did?" she asked, surprised.

"Yes, Lucky talks a lot about you" I said, Lucky absolutely loved Jenna. It was an honor to meet someone who held a special place in her heart as she did.

"And this is Tanya, Lucky and her go way back" Joslyn said referring to the blonde.

Shocked I tried to keep my voice normal as I extended the same courtesy to her,

I wasn't sure if having Tanya here was such a good idea; but I would let Lucky decide that.

"You've got a nice home," Jenna added, looking around.

"Thank you, there is a penthouse in the back. You can go there, get settled and ready for the party," I said

"Thanks, where is my daughter?" Joslyn asked.

"She's at my house in the hills, I was just going out to pick her up. I didn't want to blow the surprise by having her here" I clarified. She nodded "Please if you need anything Angela will assist you" I added.

"Thank you, we'll see you when you get back then" she said smiling

I gave them a parting smile and went to my garage.

That went reasonably well I thought as I drove towards the city. I parked in the driveway to the penthouse, excited to see my love once again.

I walked in the lounge to find her on the balcony staring at the city skyline; she herself was a sight to see...she looked ravishing.

I sneaked up on her and hugged her from behind; she didn't jump so I guess I didn't fool her.

"You look beautiful Ms. Strauss," I purred in her ear,

She turned to face me "Why thank you and you look rather dashing Mr. Gilbert".

I shrugged leaning in to kiss her "Did Ally and Mandy behave themselves?"

"They were wonderful, I like them," she said smiling "You really mean a lot to them"

"And they to me, I'm glad you had a good time" I said putting my hand on her back "Shall we?" I asked.

She nodded "Where are you taking me?" she asked, looking at me

"It's a surprise" I chuckled at my own little joke, as we walked out.

"Wow, new car?" she asked looking at the Benz,

"Yeah, I had to find something to replace my Lamborghini" I said, helping her in.

She laughed, "This is more than a fetish," She murmured

She told me about her day with my cousins as I drove us back to the castle, I signaled Maria to have everyone in place. I turned into the large open gate.

"The castle? This is where we're going?" she asked as I parked the car in the driveway, the estate was silent; everyone must be ready then.

"Well yes, why not go to the place you love the most" I said, helping her out of the car. She gave me a confused smile,

We entered the empty lounge "Where is everyone?" she asked

"Probably outside" I said, taking her hand and leading her there.

Outside was complete darkness; they're good, I thought.

Then all the lights were turned on and everyone shouted "Surprise!"

I chuckled at Lucky's expression as the crowd cheered and the music boomed to life, our backyard turning into a serious nightclub.

She anxiously smiled and waved to the people that raised their glasses at her.

"Jesse Tyler Gilbert, I'm going to kill you," she hissed through her teeth

I chuckled "Lucky Melissa Strauss, look over there and tell me if that's such a good idea" I pointed towards Joslyn and Jenna who approached us.

I saw her expression turn from quiet irritation to shock and pure joy, she looked at me disbelieving.

"Look who decided to join the party," I said smiling, I was glad I did this

"You didn't" she stated incredulous, I nodded.

"Lucky!" Jenna called out rushing to her, hugging her.

"Jenna! Oh my God, how come you guys in LA?" she asked, still shocked

"Well we have Jesse to thank for that, he called us and invited us here" Joslyn said

"Mom, its so good to see you" Lucky said, hugging her too.

She lifted her head to look at me "Thank you" she mouthed.

I smiled at her; she didn't need to thank me. Making her happy was a job I loved dearly and surprisingly not bad at.

I had almost forgotten Tanya was here until she came up from behind us

"Tanya?" Lucky asked, even more shocked than before.

"Hey Lucky...your mom invited me" Tanya smiled anxiously "Look I know I have no business being here but I really wanted to talk to you" she said.

"Um okay I guess" Lucky replied stiffly, she turned to look at me, her eyes full of apprehension like she wanted me to save her from this. I kissed her forehead in encouragement.

They both walked away, I thought about stopping them for a moment.

"Let them talk it out" Joslyn said bringing me out of my inner conflict "They both need the closure, I'm guessing she told you their history?" she asked scrutinizing me. I nodded

"I still can't believe you invited her, poor Lucky she probably just wants to get away from that poison ivy" Jenna spat and walked away.

Joslyn rolled her eyes and looked at me "Can we talk?" she asked

"Sure" I said,

We walked along the golf course; it was less crowded than the pool area.

"Don't mind Jenna, she's just a little protective of her little sister," Joslyn said

"So I've heard" I replied smiling, glad I had an alliance in protecting Lucky "I'm sure this and I must come as a shock to you" I stated.

She nodded "It does, but this is not the same Lucky that left home a year ago, She's happier; the light in her eyes that ceased to exist is back, that's all I ever wanted for her"

"I'm glad you feel that way Mrs. Strauss," I said

"Please call me Joslyn" she smiled.

We talked about everything from how I met Lucky, to my family, my life and this lifestyle, my beliefs and values. This conversation seemed reminiscent of the one I had with Lucky when she first came here; I only gave a fraction of the truth. The only difference was that Joslyn could never know the whole truth.

"You seem like a nice guy Jesse, I can't seem to find anything wrong with you" she said honestly. I chuckled inwardly.

"Were you trying to?" I asked,

"Yes, I just wanted to make sure my daughter is in good hands, she's been through a lot over these past years. She deserves nothing but happiness" Joslyn said, her eyes far away.

I nodded reverently "I care about your daughter Joslyn, I could never dream about hurting her"

"You better not" she said solemnly, turning her gaze back to me "Or else you're going to have to answer to me" she said.

I smiled "Fair enough" I said and she smiled too.

"It was good talking to you Jesse, I truly wish you both the best," she said

"Thank you, your support means a lot to me" I said, really meaning it,

She gave me a pat on the shoulder and walked away.

People I didn't know greeted and thanked me for inviting them, I tried to make small talk where I could; it seemed almost all of Lucky's colleagues made it.

I spotted Linda ever so busy like she always was,

"Linda, you've truly outdone yourself this time around," I said

"Yes, well you know how I operate" she smiled smugly.

"Yes, yes, you're good" I said sarcastically laughing and she did too

Lucky came up from behind me and wrapped her arm around my waist, she looked happy; I was guessing that talk went well.

"Hey, are you ok?" I asked, looking into her eyes,

"Yeah, I'm okay. That went better than I expected" she said, baffled.

"I'm glad" I said "Let me introduce you to your party planner, this is Linda James. Linda this is Lucky Strauss"

"Hello, its good to finally meet you" Linda said pleasantly, extending her hand to Lucky.

She took it "pleasure" she smiled "wow, this must've taken some work"

"You have no idea" Linda chuckled "Speaking of, I need to see the next performer through. Lucky, Jesse, enjoy the party" she said.

"Thanks Linda" I told her and she walked away to the small stage by the pool

"What performer?" Lucky asked confused.

"You'll see" I said, grabbing her hand and pulling her towards it as Linda introduced one of the bands she was able to book for her to come perform tonight.

I had the pleasure of seeing Lucky's mouth drop as they walked out wished her a happy birthday and started playing.

"I can't believe you," she said, shock clear in her voice

"What can I say, they were in the neighborhood," I teased, she laughed and started dancing along.

The song ended and they started playing a slower tune,

"May I have this dance?" I asked, extending out my hand flashing her a smile

She laid hers in mine "I'd love to" she said and I pulled her to the dance floor.

I pulled her into my arms and we started swaying to the melody, everyone cleared and started watching us instead. Lucky seemed oblivious to the attention we had, she was singing the lyrics of the song to me; it was endearing.

I looked up to see a figure I recognized all too well stare at us from the shadows.

The song ended and people came back to the dance floor, I kissed her hand in silent thank you and walked away towards my visitor.

"Hello stranger" a rugged voice came through the shade of the tree, I smiled; it was a voice I'd known all too well.

"Kevin, buddy" I said, giving my old friend and former partner in crime a hug "What are you doing here?" I asked, "I thought you were in France"

"I got back yesterday actually" he said.

"And you didn't even think to call up an old friend huh" I teased

"Well I heard that he was hosting a mean party so I decided to crash it" he said, chuckling.

"Well he's glad you did" I mused, looking at Lucky who was chatting to Jenna

"Yeah but I sure as hell didn't see this coming though" he said.

I looked at him puzzled, he pointed in the direction of Lucky "Given that you never slow dance with a woman and look so absorbed in it, I'm guessing she's special?" He asked knowingly.

I nodded; Kevin always did know me too well.

"Well I never thought I'd live to see this day, I'm happy for you man. I was starting to worry you didn't have a heart at all" he teased.

"Ha ha" I said sarcastically

"I can see why you're so smitten though...wow man, I've never envied you more than right now" he said in awe.

I looked at Lucky who blushed when Maria brought her cake with too many lit candles. I chuckled noting the look she had; it meant she wanted to run and fast.

She was right; she was going to kill me. Though I take no responsibility for the cake; that was Maria and Angela's prank.

The music died down and she blew out the candles; the crowd cheered, she smiled a little chagrined. I wondered if she made a wish, and for what.

She looked around frantically obviously looking for me, then she spotted me.

She said goodbye to Jenna and walked towards our direction

"Is she coming over here? Nice, that means I get to meet her today" he said clearly excited.

"Behave," I hissed, and he chuckled darkly

Lucky came over and wrapped her left arm around my waist "I thought you bailed on me" she teased "Hello" she said to Kevin, who smiled pleasantly

"Hi" he said.

"Lucky this is Kevin Philips an old friend of mine, Kevin this is Lucky my girlfriend" I motioned with my hand.

"It's a pleasure to meet you" Lucky said shaking hands with him

"Likewise" he replied "Jesse and I have actually been friends since high school" Kevin added.

I knew he wouldn't shut up, but then again when did he ever?

Lucky looked at me with surprise in her eyes "You don't say" she eyed Kevin curiously "Does he have any dirty secrets I should know about?" she teased. I froze; she didn't seem to notice but Kevin did. He chuckled darkly.

"Trust me, spilling them would take the whole night" he teased back laughing

She laughed too, obviously taking it as a joke. I relaxed a bit.

"Lucky" a woman called out from behind, she turned and smiled widely

"Abby!" Lucky exclaimed, the woman motioned for her to come over

"Well I have to go, it was nice meeting you Kevin," she said, smiling at him
He smiled back "You too" he said.

As soon as she walked away the light and teasing mood ended.

"She doesn't know does she?" Kevin's tone was solemn. I nodded slowly.

Kevin fell for a girl and when he told her that he was a CIA agent it was too much for her and she broke it off with him. He was over her now, but he was still sensitive to the matter.

"Are you planning to tell her?" he asked

"The situation is a little sticky at the moment, I have to make sure she's safe first" I said, looking at her smile and chat to the Abby woman.

Kevin's eyes widened "She's the woman Frank is after?" he asked, I nodded again

"Well this situation is a little more than sticky, but if anyone can get out of it scot-free, it's you" he said, as a matter of fact. Back when I had nothing to lose I would've agreed with him.

He looked at his watch "I wish I could stay and party but I have a plane to catch to Washington in the morning" he said.

"Of course, thank you for the visit my friend" I said hugging him again,

"I hope everything works out for you man," he said sincerely.

"Thanks, you too" I said. He started walking away but stopped abruptly.

"Hey Jesse, do you think we could ever partner up again?" he asked

I smiled "You never know buddy, we're still the best agents"

He laughed, waved and disappeared into the darkness.

I needed a moment to myself away from the noise of the party; I walked into the lounge. It was quiet, and I savored its peacefulness remembering all the times Kevin and me went on missions together. Comparing my life then and now, wondering if I would ever find a balance now...

16. History Repeating

Lucky POV

I said goodbye to Abby; glad the grilling was over. I told her whatever I could, and sometimes agreeing with the conclusions she drew herself. I couldn't exactly tell her that I'd been kidnapped into this 'dream life' she said I was now living. I looked for Jesse but he was gone; I sighed. I hated being away from him *like a lovesick and needy pathetic girlfriend* I thought. I'd be surprised if he didn't

leave me. I felt a sharp stab of pain at the thought; and there it was, the thing I tried to avoid from the beginning. Jesse leaving me would annihilate me.

I saw Jenna almost run towards me, fury evident in her expression

"Lucky, look around you girl. Where is your man?" she asked. I didn't understand why she was saying that.

"I don't know, probably somewhere around here" I said puzzled

"No, I'll tell you where he is. He's in the lounge and guess who's making the moves on him right this instant...that bitch of a friend Tanya" she said disgusted

Somehow I knew; I could feel it when someone threatened my happiness.

"I trust Jesse," I said blankly. What did she expect me to do?

She threw her hands up "Damn it Lucky, this isn't just about Jesse. I know you trust him. This is about you and her, how many times must this happen for you to finally see that she's poison. How many times must she stab you in the back for you to finally kick her ass out of your life...for good this time" she mildly shouted at me "Or you want me to do it? I'll be more than happy to..."

I put my hand on her shoulder stopping her "Allow me" I said icily, and charged towards the castle. I thought I heard Jenna say, "That's my girl"

I couldn't believe she still had the nerve to come here, make up a fake apology and jump on my man the second I look away. No more.

"That's enough Tanya, for the last time I'm not interested, now go away" I heard Jesse say clearly irritated now.

"You heard the man Tanya, now get your filthy paws off him" I spat walking in "What's that saying again? A tiger never loses its stripes right? You are still the same old slutty Tanya you were 2 years ago"

Tanya got up laughing darkly, anger registering in her eyes too "Poor little Lucky, ran away from home to LA. People shouldn't be so sympathetic with you, because in the end you always get what you want" she hissed pointing at Jesse "And what about me huh?" she asked.

"Maybe if you stopped contaminating other people's lives you could actually make something out of your own," I shouted at her.

"Travis left me right after you found us, he said that he was in love with you. That I was nothing more than a plaything," she shouted back "What do you reckon I make out of that Lucky?"

"Do you expect me to be sympathetic after all of this? I actually forgave you back there Tanya, I accepted your apology because I moved on, I was ready to put this crap to rest" I hissed.

"Yeah, it's so easy for you to *move on* when you have everything you want isn't it? It's always been you; for once I wanted to be number 1" her eyes flashed, "I've spent my whole life living under your shadow, you were always the prettiest, the smartest, every god damn guy wanted you and not me. For once I wanted to win"

I saw red, after everything we've been through together that's what she cares about? Winning?

I walked up to her so we were face to face.

"This was never a competition Tanya, I was your friend and I cared about you very deeply. I was there for you through thick and thin, I was there when the going got tough, I was there when you needed a shoulder to cry on. And when I needed you, you betrayed me. I have always been nothing but a good friend to you, but you took it and you threw it back in my face" I shouted.

She staggered, taken by surprise.

"It hurt me Tanya and not because I loved him but because I loved *you*! Not because I lost a boyfriend but because I lost a best friend, someone who I thought would always have my back," I added furiously, tears escaping my eyes.

Tanya's eyes widened at my confession "Lucky I didn't..."

"Shut up!" I screamed at her, she flinched. In the corner of my eye I saw Jesse flinch too, I had forgotten he was there in my furious fit.

Somehow knowing he was there calmed me down a bit, Tanya was my past and it was time to let the past go. I took a deep breath.

"I'm done putting up with you and you're crap, you've done nothing but poison my life from day one, I was just too blind to see that" I said blankly

"Lucky please..." she started, her eyes registering hurt.

"Save it for someone who cares, because I'm not that person anymore" I said, "Get out, now" I pointed towards the door "You wanted to win Tanya, well then congratulations you won, because to you that's what our friendship meant. I don't ever want to see you again so take your number 1 position and get the fuck out of my life...for good this time" I quoted Jenna at the end.

Her own tears streaked down her cheeks and I couldn't bring myself to care, she walked past me paused a little and then darted outside.

With numb legs I sat on the couch, Jesse was by my side in an instant wrapping his arms around me. We sat like that for a while.

"I'm sorry you had to see that" I said, weakly

"I'm not, I think your temper is sexy" he teased. Bless him and his silly jokes; they will keep me sane. I chuckled but it sounded wrong

"Are you okay?" he asked in my favorite voice, it nearly made me cry again.

"No, but I feel relieved. I didn't realize I was still holding onto her and our toxic relationship. It was a burden I'm happy to be rid of, it's been a long time coming."

He laid his chin on top of my head "I'm sorry" he whispered

I took a deep breath feeling safe and loved, ready to start focusing on the future.

Someone loudly cleared their throat, I looked up to see Jenna leaning against the wall. Jesse looked at me.

"I'll be outside" he whispered, kissed my forehead and walked out

"Hey sweetie, are you okay?" Jenna asked replacing Jesse's position.

I nodded "I'm just glad it's over"

"So I'm I, I'm proud of you" she said, rubbing my shoulders "I never told you this but when you were first brought home Dad made me promise that I will always take care of you. That was a promise I took very seriously, I'm just sorry I failed you in that aspect Lucky" she said sadly.

"Me too" Mom said, walking in "I shouldn't have brought her here, I just thought everyone deserved a chance at redemption" she shook her head sadly.

"It's okay mom, I'm actually glad you did. This was long overdue," I said hugging her. She actually felt bad about bringing me pain on my birthday party "And Jenna, you can't protect me forever you know. But thanks for trying" I smiled at her. She chuckled.

"Honey I still can't get over how good you look" she chuckled "How in the world did this happen?" she asked, referring to me being in love and living in a castle.

I chuckled too "Honestly mom, I have no idea. He sort of appeared out of nowhere and stole my heart," I said, laughing at the truth of my own words.

"You love him don't you" Jenna stated, it wasn't a question

I nodded, smiling "What do you guys think? Honestly?"

"Well I talked to him and he seems like a decent guy, I like him," Mom said.

"So you don't think it's too soon to feel this way?" I asked.

"No, I'm just glad you're finally happy little sis. With whom or how, I really don't care" Jenna said "But damn he is hot" she fanned herself. I laughed.

"I know right? It's actually mind boggling to me. But it's not just that you know, he's loving, kind, funny, a little crazy sometimes but hey I'm crazy over him so I guess that makes us even" I said, sitting back down on the couch by Jenna "I love him so much it hurts" I added.

"That's love for you honey, don't run away from it. It's hard but it's the best thing you will ever experience in your life" Mom said, sitting on my other side.

"I wish Dad was here" I said, "He would've loved Jesse, I just know it. They have so much in common they would've hit it off like a horse on fire" I chuckled

Both their eyes widened "Really? Like what?" Jenna asked.

"You know how Dad used to love putting peanut butter on his toast? Jesse does the same thing. He also loves putting his feet up on the coffee table every time he watches ESPN, it drives me nuts" I said, smiling at my revelations.

"No way" Mom laughed incredulously

"You know what else they have in common?" Jenna asked, "They both adore you"

I smiled at both of them "Thank you guys, for everything. I don't know what I'd do without you"

They both put their arms around me. "Let's get back out there before people start realizing that the birthday girl is missing" Mom said standing up

"You guys go, I'll be right behind you," I said, I needed to collect myself first.

"Mom you go, I need to fix her up" Jenna said, Mom nodded and walked away

"Come on" I said, leading the way to my room.

"Wow" she exclaimed, looking around the room and at my dressing table "You don't share a bedroom?" she asked. Damn, what do I tell her?

"Well my apartment was being renovated so he offered me a place to stay in the meantime, you know before we started dating," I said, surprisingly convincing.

She chuckled "How was it like living with him?"

"Torture, I already had serious feelings for him" I said, truthful this time.

"So I'm guessing my little sis is no longer chaste now" she stated,

I blushed "Is it that obvious?" I asked; there was no point denying it.

"Well I watched you two dance, there's some serious sexual chemistry there. Everyone could only just imagine what goes on in the bedroom," she said,

I put my face in my hands; Jenna's forward nature never ceases to shock me.

"Okay that's enough," I said teasingly, not wanting to discuss my sex life with her anymore. She chuckled and smiled innocently.

"I want to show you something" I said, grabbing her hand "Wait for it," I added as I opened the doors to my massive closet.

Jenna whistled under her breath as she walked in, touching every piece of clothing she could "Did you rob a boutique or something?" she asked

I shrugged, not mentioning that Mandy and Ally did that for me.

"Jeez he spoils you huh?" she asked, looking at the labels,

"He tends to get ahead of himself sometimes" I said chuckling.

"Jesus, you have everything from designer clothes to couture dresses" she added, "How rich is this guy anyway? I mean this is a bloody *castle*" she exclaimed

Jenna's expression mimicked mine on that very first day.

"I really don't want to think about that," I answered truthfully,

Jenna walked over to the shoes section of the closet and grabbed a pair of silver pumps "These Christian Louboutins are to die for" she said in awe.

"You can have them" I said quickly "They would look awesome with your dress"

"Are you kidding me? Thanks sis" she said sliding them on and fake posed

"Hot" I said and we both laughed.

Jenna helped me freshen up my make up, Ally and Mandy would kill me for this but I let all of my hair down, I ran my fingers through it. Glad to have all the pins off it. It didn't look half bad, at least it had some bounce and shine to it.

We went back to the party, glad to have Jesse by my side again. The night grew later and I got to see more bands I thought I would never see live, let alone in Jesse's backyard. I really had fun until Jesse ascended the stage and I knew that he would drop a bomb...and I wasn't going to like it.

"So as it stands I'm not allowed to buy Lucky any presents, which I think is unfair given that I'm her boyfriend" he said through the microphone.

The crowd laughed and I blushed; I change my mind, I 'am going to kill him.

"And then I thought, I didn't particularly buy this gift for her" he said and a picture of what looked like an island appeared on the monitors behind him.

"What you're looking at is a small island off the coast of Bermuda, and from today it will be known as Isle Lucky," he said smiling widely.

I was beyond shocked as the crowd collectively gasped and started cheering and hooting frantically as Jesse came down the stage.

"Wow he takes spoiling to a whole new level" Jenna mused, wide eyed

"Are you crazy? You bought me an island?" I tried to keep my voice calm.

"No I already owned it, I just renamed it after you" he said

"Oh" I said, breathing a little easier "It will be midnight in about 20 minutes, since it won't be my birthday after that; no more surprises!" I said sternly.

He frowned and then chuckled "You might want to get up there" he said

"What, why?" I asked, and then I realized that the crowd was chanting 'speech'

"Oh no" I said anxiously, Jesse pushed me towards the stage smiling.

"Go, you'll be fine" he reassured, I took a deep breath and walked on,

Everyone cheered louder and the music died down a bit.

"Hey everyone, um thank you for this really. I had a great time" I said trying not to stutter, I always hated public speaking "I just told Jesse that it will be midnight soon, so after that no surprises and presents allowed" the crowd murmured in disapproval.

"But the party continues right?" I asked and they started cheering again.

"I would like to thank you all for being here, you guys rule. To Linda the woman behind all of this, I'm blown away, thank you. To all the bands that performed tonight, I such a big fan of yours and the fact that you are here tonight is just amazing, thank you." I said and looked at Jesse.

"Last but not least I would like to thank my boyfriend Jesse; this night would not be special if I didn't get to share it with you, thank you" I said fervently and he flashed me a brilliant smile.

"Thank you, Lets party," I shouted into the microphone as the crowd cheered, the music going up again.

I walked off and was met by another round of birthday wishes and hugs from my colleagues and some people I didn't know, Jesse's friends I decided.

Jesse hugged me "Happy birthday" he whispered into my ear.

"I'm tired of hearing that" I said and he chuckled "Lets get out of here" I added, the only time I was alone with him was this morning, I wanted him all to myself.

He must've caught what I meant because he grabbed my hand and sneaked me out of the crowd and towards the castle.

"Can't believe you brought mom and Jenna here" I said, as we made our way up the staircase.

“Well I wanted to give you a present I knew you wouldn’t throw a fit about” he chuckled and I hit him on the arm.

17. Indecision

Jesse POV

I watched Lucky take off her heels and climb onto the bed motioning for me to join her; she nuzzled onto my chest and sighed.

“Alone at last” she said, I chuckled inhaling her hair

“You didn’t even have your cake,” I teased; she turned her head towards me.

“Nah, I would rather have you,” she said, kissing me.

I was caught off guard by the sudden passionate way she kissed me; then again we hardly did premeditate our lovemaking. She ran her fingers through my hair as I kissed her back, cupping her face with both my hands. She unbuttoned my shirt and took it off as I moved my mouth up and down her soft neck and nape; I heard her softly moan. She ran her hands over my torso; I grabbed her waist and laid her on her back to stop her from going further. I chuckled inwardly at how she’s grown into such a seductive vixen in bed. It was unfair how she could easily paralyze me.

I pulled away but she wouldn’t let me go,

“Um Lucky, I want you too but you don’t really want to do this with your mother down the hallway do you?” I asked and she froze.

“Oh crap,” she said throwing her head onto the pillows “I totally forgot about that” she chuckled chagrined.

“Well I do have that effect on people” I teased, she laid her head back on my chest

“You’re so egotistical” she giggled “And you’re totally exploiting the power you have over me” she added.

“Are you sure we’re still talking about me here?” I asked; how many times did she use her ‘power’ on me to do her bidding?

“Shut up” she said and I chuckled “Thank you for that, I had fun” she said softly

“Whatever makes you happy little one” I replied.

We lay like that silent for a long time, I checked and she had fallen asleep

I pulled the covers over her and got in with her, she unconsciously snuggled closer to me, I kissed her forehead.

I don't know what I did to ever deserve her, to deserve this heaven she's brought me. She and I were polar opposites, but yet our relationship worked so well; you'd think we were made for each other. But I had to be honest with myself; we were not.

If Lucky was destined to be with me then someone up there made a mistake, I may love her but that doesn't mean I'm supposed to be with her. I thought about what Tanya said when we met in the lounge;

Lucky is that girl, she gets married and has kids with the white picket fence and a dog, but you Jesse; you are not that guy.

Tanya has said a whole lot of bull, but here I had to give it to her, she was spot on.

There's a reason why I've been alone for so long, why I avoided attachment to anyone. I had no power over falling in love with her, but I did have power in what I chose to do about it. I was selfish by being with her, knowing very well the dangers of my actions. She's risking her life and wellbeing by being with me and she didn't even know it. Even if I told her the truth, she would always have a target on her back because of me; that's no way for a person to live, let alone one like Lucky.

Which is why I have to let her go, I know I would always love her. The wrenching pain in my chest at the thought of letting her go was a powerful testament of that. But she deserved the things she said she wanted, and she deserved to be with someone who would give her those things. Someone who would be with her with less extreme consequences.

She was right, there was no future for us. I just deluded myself into thinking there was. I was only sorry that I let us happen in the first place; I would be punished for leading her on this way. I knew I would hurt her and I hated myself for it but when this whole Frank business was over and she was safe, she will go on living her life the way it was supposed to be. Before I came and disrupted it.

Letting her go was going to kill me, but keeping her for myself was an even greater sin. I knew that doing this; letting her go was going to be my redeeming act. This one good deed, my act of unselfishness will be considered when final judgment was taken on my dark soul.

Free her while there's still a chance, save her the heartbreak of having to lose you in the end.

Maria wasn't going to be happy about this decision but she had to understand; she too loved Lucky and wanted what was best for her.

I felt like tearing at my own flesh as I formulated a plan on how to go about this; how to go about breaking her heart, something I swore I would never do. But it was for the best.

"I'm so sorry" I whispered, my voice laced with the pain I felt.

I hoped that one day she would see that I saved her, that I actually did her a favor by doing this; that I gave her a chance at the life she really wanted.

I woke up sadly resolved, the decision has been made and I was going to go through with it; I had to.

I kept a normal façade for everyone, Lucky especially I couldn't drop this on her now. We said goodbye to Jenna and Joslyn, they thanked me and drove away.

"They like you, you know" she said as we walked back to the castle.

"Do they?" I asked, it really didn't matter now

"Absolutely" she said frowning "Are you okay? You seem a little offish today"

I was surprised, I thought I could conceal my pain; guess I didn't fool her

I nodded "It's just a headache little one" I said.

"Serves you right for throwing unwanted parties" she chuckled "I bet I can kiss it away" she teased,

I tried to smile at her, but it felt wrong; I hoped she didn't catch that.

Over the past couple of days I had buried myself in my work, it was the only thing that kept me sane, I also distanced myself from Lucky and it made her unhappy. I was in my study when my phone ringed; it was Bill.

"Bill, what's the latest?" I asked

"Frank is set to be in the state, don't let her out of your sight" he said, "We're currently formulating a strategy to intersect him. This will be over very soon, and you'll be let off the hook" he said.

"Lock him away, for good this time" I hissed.

"Trust me, we'll have a special cell for him" he said in a harsh tone. "Oh before I forget, prior to our investigation on the girl's necklace, a source told me that since it is woven into her DNA, she could wield the energy source"

"What? As in control it herself?" I asked shocked.

"Well it is said that in order to do this she must premeditate it first, and since she's not aware of it. It can't happen" he said.

"That's impossible, you mean to say this necklace can give her superpowers" I said, I was starting to question Bill's sanity because he sounded convinced.

"As of yet we don't have anything concrete, but I'll keep you informed, either way we're sticking to our original plan" he said.

"Of course" I added solemnly, Bill would never have to know that I deviated from the plan.

"We'll talk later" he said and hung up.

I hoped Bill was able to catch Frank, the fact that he was in the state bothered me, and I didn't want him even a thousand miles off of Lucky.

Maria has refused to talk to me ever since I told her my plan, I've never seen Maria so angry before; she shouted at me and claimed that I was making a big mistake. I knew I was taking Lucky away from her too and everyone else in the castle; they'd all grown to love her.

But our feelings didn't matter; this is something I should've done from the very beginning, before things got complicated for everyone.

Lucky was anxious around me, like she was waiting for something. I guessed she could see that something was wrong, female intuition maybe.

That's when I knew it was time; I couldn't keep dragging this out.

We were sitting on the couch just staring at each other, I silently said my goodbyes and I love you's. She has brought me happiness I never thought existed. When she was gone I would always cherish the memories she gave me. She raised her eyebrows at me; that was the cue that my time with her was up.

"I've been doing a lot of thinking" I began monotonously

"Uh oh, that doesn't sound good" she chuckled uneasily.

I was right, she had guessed this, I tried to smile but my lips wouldn't move,

"This cannot continue anymore Lucky" I said my voice blank; I couldn't be sure what my eyes revealed with the pain I was in.

"What cannot continue?" she asked, confused,

"This...us, it would never work out, I see that now. I'm sorry that I let this go on for so long" I replied, staring into her beautiful green eyes.

"What are you trying to tell me Jesse?" she asked her voice frantic with worry.

"We can't be together anymore, you were right. There's no future for us, I thought I could give you the things you wanted but I can't" I said.

She closed her eyes for a moment, she opened them and they showed pain and realization, she grabbed both sides of my face.

"I don't want those things Jesse, I only want you. Please don't do this," she pleaded, desperation in her voice.

I was sure that even hell didn't feel like this.

"You don't understand Lucky" I persisted, gently removing her hands "There's a reason why I never had a girlfriend before, I'm a bad relationship risk; you don't want to gamble with me, you deserve far better" I said.

"No!" she shouted standing up. Her eyes flashing with fury "Don't give me the whole 'this is for your own good' crap Jesse. If you leave me; you are doing it for you not me"

I stood up too, facing her. I would let her shout and scream at me however she pleased; I deserved every second of it.

"You told me you wanted to be with me, I warned you and pushed you away but you kept coming after me. What did you think was going to happen huh?" she shouted at me. All I could do was stare at her, and try not to get on my knees and beg her forgiveness.

"You might not want to be with me but I love you Jesse, what do you suggest I do about that? Oh yeah, that doesn't matter since I've served my purpose in your bed, on to the next one right?" she shrieked.

"I would never treat you like that Lucky and you know it," I said solemnly letting emotion touch my own eyes for a moment.

I couldn't believe she thought I would use her like that. She is precious to me and every moment we had together meant the world to me. It killed me that we could never have them again.

"Michelle was right, this is the moment when you get sick of me, but question is when I'm I going to get kicked out, when I'm I getting out of here Jesse?" she hissed, of course she wanted to leave; I wouldn't stop her.

"You'll be free to leave soon," I said blankly,

"You don't get it do you? I don't *want* to leave. I want to stay here and be with you," she shouted furiously.

It felt as though I was being burned, and if I made any sudden movement the fire would only increase.

"I'm sorry" I said, that was all I could say with the agony that paralyzed me.

I felt her hand smack me across the face, normally I had good reflexes; I could see when a person was going to hit me, but this I didn't see coming.

Her hand didn't sting at all, what stung was the meaning behind it; she resented me. I saw her cover her mouth with both her hands, tears escaping her eyes. Clearly shocked by what she just did.

I shook my head at her not to say anything, I deserved it; I deserved her resentment.

"But you love me" she persisted desperately, her voice shaking.

Yes I do, more than you can imagine I thought, but I couldn't keep toying with her emotions. Haven't I done enough of that already?

I didn't say anything. She looked at me like she was trying to remember something. A strange emotion flickered in her eyes and she dropped them

"You don't love me, do you?" she stated sadly still looking down, it wasn't a question.

No, I wanted to scream but my lips refused to move. How could she believe I didn't love her, I was letting her go because I loved her too much.

She nodded to herself "Now that I think about it, you never did say you loved me before. It was always me." She chuckled darkly "That explains a lot, I understand now. You're right; this could never work if the other does not feel the same way. Well I'm stupid," she said sadly, looking at me.

I was shocked at the conclusion she drew herself, how wrong she was.

I thought it would kill me right then but if going with what she thought helped her let go; then so be it.

When I didn't say anything she walked passed me, turning to the staircase

"Lucky..." I was able to choke out.

She slowly turned to look at me, her eyes showing quiet acceptance and unfathomable pain. I couldn't find my voice; for once I was rendered speechless.

She smiled blankly "Don't worry Jesse, I won't hit you or scream at you like a crazy person anymore. And no I don't hate you. I understand," she said softly

For the first time since we talked, I flinched. I would rather have her do those things than hear her use that tone.

She turned and walked up the staircase without looking back.

I opened my mouth but my scream was stuck in my throat, I tried to pull out my hair but it wouldn't come out.

I darted towards my garage, I grabbed my motorcycle and sped out of the estate not sure where I was going. I just had to get away before I did something stupid.

18. Breathing

Lucky POV

I looked at the woman in the mirror of the bathroom; her face was tearstained and pale. Her eyes seemed an endless green pool of pain and her expression was blank. I remembered the same woman 2 years ago, the only difference is that this one had no hope, had nothing to fight for.

That was it, my heart was finished; there was nothing left of it because there was a hollow and numb feel in my chest...in my whole body.

Somehow I knew this was going to happen, I knew that at some point I was going to have to wake up from this dream I've been living in. I just only wished that when that time came, I wouldn't evaporate along with my dream.

For some reason the phrase *God giveth and God taketh away* came to me. I was given Jesse, someone who I thought I didn't deserve. So why did it kill me to let go of him when he never belonged to me in the first place.

I knew I would always be this woman in the mirror, and this time there was no starting over, no running away to a far away place. Because that was it for me, my life began and ended with the man I left downstairs last night.

I covered my mouth feeling nauseated, I ran to the toilet and opened my mouth but nothing came out.

I wiped a tear that escaped the corner of my eye, surprised that I still had any tears left at all.

I got out to get dressed, not really caring what I wore.

I went downstairs to find Maria and Jesse having coffee in still silence. Jesse looked dressed for work, I was glad that he would be leaving soon; I didn't want to stay cooped up in my room all day. He looked as handsome as ever, it pierced me down to my soul; though today he looked tired and pale. He looked up at me, there was an unfathomable emotion in his blue eyes; I recognized it from the woman in the mirror, pain? I must be wrong.

I don't know what my own face or eyes revealed because I thought I saw him flinch as he looked away.

"Good morning" I said my voice blank and lifeless

"Good morning Lucky, breakfast is ready. Where would you like to have it?" Maria asked, her voice worried.

"In the penthouse please" I replied monotonously

"Alright, I'll bring it to you" she said, I turned to face Jesse; who was watching me intently.

"I saw my iPod and a couple of my things on my nightstand, thank you" I said, my voice had no trace of emotion.

He slowly nodded and I walked outside towards the penthouse, it sounded like Maria and Jesse argued after I left; but I really didn't care either way.

I sat in the patio of the penthouse, staring at the sky. I don't know how long I sat there just staring; trying to see things that weren't there.

Maria approached me and laid a tray on the table, I didn't look at it; I wasn't even hungry. She sat down next to me, scrutinizing me; but I just continued to look at the clear blue sky.

"You should eat something dear" she finally said

"Where is he?" I suddenly asked, not sure why.

"He's gone to work" she replied, looking down

I suddenly went to pieces, crying and gasping for air, I couldn't control it. I realized why I wanted to know of Jesse's whereabouts. I didn't want him to see me like this and feel pity for me; I could handle anything but pity from him.

Maria wrapped me in her arms, rubbing my back comfortingly as I cried.

"I'm so sorry sweetie" she said with a pained voice, I was going to miss her when I got out of here.

I lifted my head and she wiped my face with her hands, her eyes slightly angry

"I'm going to kill him for this, and I told him..." she said, I shook my head to stop her. That's what they were arguing about? Me?

"No, leave him alone Maria. He doesn't love me, you can't blame him for how he feels" I said sadly.

"Is that what you really think Lucky?" she asked incredulously

"What more is there? I'll leave soon but I don't want this to drive a wedge between you two" I persisted.

She shook her head sadly "Things are not always as they seem senorita"

"You're right, I thought he felt the same way but I was wrong. That's always been my biggest problem; I love completely and blindly" I said nodding to myself

"No, that's not a problem. That's one of your charms" she replied

I smiled at her attempt to make me feel better.

"But I understand now, and I know I won't stop loving him; and that's okay. I just wish it didn't hurt so much" I said, looking at her.

"I feel so lost, I don't know how to be without him," I whispered, my voice breaking.

"Never lose faith, things will work out" she reassured, rubbing my shoulders.

How was I supposed to believe her when even she sounded unsure, but I appreciated her comforting words; though I had to be realistic, things were not going to work out. Not the way I wanted them to.

She sat with me, probably scared to leave me alone. I insisted that she was being silly and that I didn't need babysitting. She gave me a worried smile and left.

I was not sure how long I've been in this state of pure misery, an hour? A week? A month? I seemed to lose track of time easily. I sat by the lake a lot; it was the most peaceful place in the whole estate; a place where I could think.

I hoped that the pain would get easier once I didn't have to see Jesse everyday, but if I really thought about it; it would only get worse, because then he would seem like a dream; something that never happened.

I stole desperate glances at him whenever I could, but who could blame me? I longed for the man I loved.

He also watched me more often than not, I couldn't understand his case; this is what he wanted isn't it?

The sound of my phone ringing brought me out of my daydream. Now that he was sure I wouldn't say anything stupid; he brought me my phone back.

"Hey mom" I answered

"Hello honey, how are you?" she asked excitedly

"I'm fine" I replied automatically.

"Are you sure? You don't sound well" she pointed out

I cleared my throat "I'm okay mom, its just a sore throat" I lied.

"Get well soon my dear, I have good news. Jenna got a promotion, isn't that great?" she beamed. I smiled a little, glad that at least my loved ones were happy.

"That's fantastic mom" I said with forced enthusiasm "Why are you telling me though, why didn't she call me herself?" I asked.

"Oh she was going to, but I just couldn't wait to tell you" she said chagrined

"Aw mom, you shouldn't have stole her thunder like that," I said disapproving

"I know, I know" she chuckled.

"Where's my future son in law? How is he?" she suddenly asked and I froze

"Lucky? Are you there?" she asked when the line was quiet.

"I'm here, and he's fine" I told her, praying that my voice wouldn't betray me and express the sharp pain her words caused.

"That's great, say hi to him, okay?" she said,

"I will, I have to go mom. We'll talk later?" I said quickly.

"Of course honey, bye" she said and hung up. I threw the phone onto the grass and pinched my nostrils. Breathing through my mouth, trying not to let the tears spill over, I don't think I could take anymore crying.

Did it matter that mom sounded convinced that Jesse was her *future son in law*? No, because it would never happen, I knew that. So why fall apart over it?

Feeling a little better I got up, grabbed my phone and headed back to the castle. I was in the lounge when I heard one of Jesse's sports cars pull up in the garage.

I knew that was my cue to retreat back to my room; in most cases I found myself running away from him a lot, I wonder if he noticed.

I was sitting in my balcony when a soft knock on my door startled me "come in" I called out.

I was shocked to see Jesse walk in; he never came in my room ever since that night. He came into the balcony and sat in the chair across from me.

"Hey" he said, his voice was slightly uneasy,

"Hi" I replied quietly.

For a moment we just stared at each other; something we didn't do nowadays. His blue gaze burning me, I dropped my eyes. Trying not to hyperventilate, *will I ever stop loving you?* I thought sadly.

"Can we talk?" he asked finally,

I slowly nodded. I couldn't imagine what he wanted to talk about...and then it hit me. It was time to leave; he came to tell me goodbye.

19. Run

Jesse POV

I was driving home from work when I heard a beeping sound and Bill come up on my monitor, he must have news on Frank.

"Jesse my boy, we've got a problem" he started

"What's the problem?" I asked, given that I had a lot of them.

"It seems we've made a slight mistake, the Frank we thought we saw here was actually a stunt double" he said

"So he's not exactly here?" I asked confused now.

"We're not sure, it could be another set up. But we'll keep our eyes peeled"

"Alright, anything else?" I checked.

"Yes, it seems Frank is ready to take action so we cannot keep the girl in the dark anymore" he said, and I froze.

"I have to tell her the truth?" I asked, my voice slightly shaking,

"Well yes, its not safe for her not to be aware anymore. You remember our original plan right?" he asked, confused by my reluctance.

I cleared my throat "Of course, I'll tell her today" I said,

"I need to speak with her myself, but I'll let you explain things first" he said.

"Sure" I replied, my voice strained and the monitor went blank.

I immediately stopped the car and got out; I needed to breathe.

I knew eventually the day would come when I would have to tell her the truth, so why was I freaking out now? Its not like we could be together again, its not like I could cause her more pain than I was already.

No, me telling her the truth signaled the end. My whole mind, body and soul ached to be with her everyday. Watching her without being able to touch her, kiss her...has been torture. Even through the pain came one comfort; and that was getting to see her face everyday. When all of this was over and she was gone, I could never see her again, and that was a pain that was just unbearable.

I leaned against my Audi for support, shaking my hands to stop them from trembling. I chuckled darkly.

For a guy that is always in control, for a guy that has everything figured out; I was a mess. I quickly got in my car, but I had to be in control for everyone's sake.

I arrived at the estate with the mission of telling Lucky the truth...all of it.

I took deep breaths before knocking on her door; I haven't been in there since I broke things off. I wanted to give her space, besides its not like she would want me near her after I've caused her so much pain.

"Come in" she called from inside, I slowly opened the door

She was surprised to see me come in and take a seat across from her in her balcony.

"Hey" I said, trying to keep the alarm out of my voice,

"Hi" came her quiet reply. I was glad she didn't immediately kick me out. I took that moment to really look at her; staring into those amazing green eyes that always were my own personal heaven, she uncomfortably dropped them.

"Can we talk?" I started,

She slowly nodded, scrutinizing me and then realization touched her eyes.

"I'm leaving, aren't I?" she asked, strangely sounding relieved,

I tried to hide the pain I felt at her words. She said she didn't want to leave but from her tone she sounded like she was more than ready to get out of here; I've caused her *that* much pain.

I shook my head "Not yet, but I've come to tell you the truth" I said monotonously "Why you are here, why I kidnapped you in the first place"

I watched as shock altered her expression then she nodded.

"It's all because of that" I motioned towards her necklace

She touched it unconsciously "My necklace? What about it?"

"Your grandmother gave it to you when you were little, correct?"

She nodded, shocked as to how I could know that “And she told you never to take it off?” I added.

“Yes, but how...” she started, I lifted my hand to stop her

“That’s because you could never take it off, it is said to have unfathomable energy which is woven into your DNA,” I said, watching her.

She chuckled incredulously “What? It’s just a necklace...” her eyes widened “Did you just say its woven into my DNA?” She asked in a high-pitched voice.

I nodded solemnly “It is directly linked to your life Lucky, if it comes off your neck you’ll die” I said, glad my voice didn’t crack.

“That’s crazy, you can’t be serious!” she said,

“Tell me Lucky have you ever taken it off before?” I asked, she shook her head

“Is there something you could do that’s out of the ordinary?” I asked, letting her figure it out for herself. She thought for a second.

“Well I think I can feel when something bad is going to happen, like sense danger or something...I know it sounds crazy,” she said.

I shook my head “That’s from your necklace, it keeps you safe” I quoted her grandma. She gasped suddenly realizing what I was trying to tell her.

“Oh my God” she said standing up “But of course” she said to herself “That’s why I couldn’t feel you come behind me”

“Because I wasn’t really a danger to you,” I added, she looked at me.

“But what’s with it? And why did you kidnap me for it?” she asked

“There’s a criminal mastermind on the loose, by the name of Frank Dales. He knows about the energy contained in your necklace” I started.

“He’s after me isn’t he? He wants the necklace?” she asked, sure of herself,

I nodded sadly; she was very smart; she was able to figure it out herself.

“But where do you fit in all of this? And how do you know this?” she asked

My watch beeped *crap* I thought. It was Bill, he wanted to take over the story, I couldn’t keep him waiting any longer.

“Come with me, there’s someone who wants to talk to you” I said stiffly

She quietly followed me downstairs and into the dining area, I motioned for her to sit down and she did, looking confused.

I took off my watch and laid it on the table in front of her and pushed the accept button; a holographic screen popped up with Bill on it.

She jumped, looking at me frantically then back at the screen,

“Hello Miss Strauss, my name is Bill Andrews,” he said, pleasantly

“Hello” Lucky replied, shocked.

“I’m commander and chief of all secret agents at the CIA, I trust that Jesse here has told you about your necklace and why we abducted you?” he asked.

Lucky blinked twice and nodded stiffly, I was disappointed that she wasn’t going to find this out from me. I wanted to tell her myself.

“Well I just wanted to let you know that we are doing everything in our power to catch Frank and put him behind bars” he said, his eyes narrowing. “You

don't need to worry, you're in safe hands; Jesse here is one of the agency's top secret agents, he'll keep you safe," he added smiling proudly, but I just kept watching Lucky's reactions. She looked at me disbelieving and turned her gaze back to Bill "Secret agent?" she choked out; that's not a good sign.

"Well yes, he was assigned to protect you until we catch Frank. Once that is taken care of; you'll be free to go." Bill said "Miss Strauss its been a pleasure, I'll keep in touch; Jesse" he nodded towards me and the screen went off.

I put my watch back on, looking at Lucky; who hasn't moved an inch.

"Lucky?" I asked worried, I put my hand on her shoulder.

That snapped her out of it, she flinched away standing up; she took a few steps back from me, putting some distance between us "Don't touch me!" she said frantically. I flinched too, Her green eyes piercing.

"Lucky I can explain" I started

"Explain what? That you're a CIA agent? That you've been an agent all this time? Doing nothing but following orders," she hissed, fire returning to her eyes with a vengeance.

"It's not like that," I said, trying to make her understand. She had it all wrong; sure it was just a mission in the beginning, but I never thought I could fall for her. Me loving her was not a lie.

"Then what was it huh? Please enlighten me," she shouted at me.

"I couldn't tell you the truth, it wasn't my secret to share. But us...what we had was not a lie Lucky, it wasn't planned" I said, desperation in my voice.

She chuckled without humor "That doesn't matter now, does it?" she said "Tell me this though, was it fate? That we met? Was it fate Jesse?" she asked.

"No, but us being together; that was fate Lucky" I said, staring at her,

"Stop lying to me!" she shouted, "For once tell me the damn truth."

"This *is* the truth!" I said, raising my own voice "Our love was not a lie"

Tears streamed down her face "Not our love, *my* love was never a lie." she whispered "While I was nothing more but another mission."

I took steps towards her and she shook her head "Please, don't come any closer."

I stopped my eyes pleading with her; she drooped her eyes and chuckled darkly

"So that's you're reason for everything? For you not wanting to be with me?" she asked. Looking at me again "Did you ever care about me at all?" she whispered wrapping her arms around herself.

"Of course I do Lucky, how could you even think..." I said, but she stopped me with her hand, her head snapping to the side, her eyes searching the room frantically.

"What's wrong?" I asked, suddenly alarmed.

"I think someone's here," she said in a panicked voice. If she could sense danger here then *it meant that Frank was here.*

Crap! How could Bill have missed this? How could I have missed this...All along he was planning an ambush. He just wanted us to think he was doing something else. I grabbed both sides of Lucky's face forcing her eyes to mine.

"Run and hide" I instructed "And be quiet. Under no circumstances should you come out, do you understand me?" I asked solemnly.

She nodded grabbing my hand "Come with me please" she pleaded

I shook my head "I'll be fine, this ends today. Go" I said

I didn't have time to see where she ran to, I was busy gathering the ammunition I hid all around the house, in case of emergency.

Just then a large group of men came in through the windows and some knocking down the door. I shot some of them down but they kept coming. Frank surely brought some serious back up; I was outnumbered. If they were able to break in, then they must've taken down some of my guards silently. Which meant no one was shot, or else I would've heard it.

Frank came through the door laughing menacingly "Jesse my friend, it's been too long" he said.

"Frank, I can't say that I've missed you" I said playing dumb "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Oh don't play dumb with me Jesse" he said, smiling "Now put your goddamn guns down. Lets talk, or would you rather I have my men shoot you down?"

I quickly scanned the room; there were three men on both of my sides, two were behind me and in front of me, including Frank. All had their guns pointing at me.

I had to be smart and figure out a strategy on how to take them down, if I made any sudden attacks; they would open fire.

I put my guns down on the floor next to me and looked at Frank, who smiled triumphantly.

"You're a smart guy Jesse, you know exactly why I'm here," he said walking towards me "Where's the girl?"

"I don't know what you're talking about" I said smiling; I hoped that Lucky would stay wherever she was, Frank would probably try to lure her out with threats.

He punched me furiously "I don't have time for you're silly little games Jesse; look around you, I have the upper hand" he shouted "I know she's with you, now where is she?"

"And I see you're still the same stupid asshole" I spat, hoping to distract him while I planned my next attack.

He walked around the lounge; searching "I know you're here somewhere sweetie, come out now; Frank doesn't have all day" he called out.

She didn't come out. Frank started to get impatient "Leave Frank, whatever it is you're looking for, is clearly not here" I said

He frowned and then looked at me smiling deviously.

"You may not have regard for your own life, but I'm pretty sure she does" he said, pulling out his silver revolver and pointed it to my head.

"Listen up sugar" he called out "We're going to play a little game, this is how it works. If you don't come out in 5, I'm going to blow Jesse's head off. Now you don't want this man's death on your conscience now do you?" he said chuckling.

I froze. Frank was preying on Lucky's biggest fear, he knows she wouldn't just gamble with another person's life, and he didn't even know about her feelings for me. I prayed to God that Lucky would stay where she is; I told her no matter what.

"One" Frank said "Two"

Lucky still didn't come out "Three" he said, he cocked his gun.

She came out from the kitchen, tears on her face; she gave an apologetic look.

Why was she being remorseful? She is the one who is risking her life to save mine; I hung my head in defeat as Frank chuckled.

"Yes, come closer" Frank said, "Grab both of them" he instructed some of his men

"No" I grabbed my guns off the floor and started shooting at some of them. Frank grabbed Lucky's neck from behind and pointed his gun to her head,

I pointed mine to him.

"I wouldn't do anything stupid if I was you, or else its her head in the chopping block" he threatened, I immediately let go of my guns and let his remaining men

Restrain me. "Hold her too," he said and another one held Lucky.

"I like this" he said laughing "How does it feel to be on the back foot huh Jesse? I'm going to kill her and take that necklace and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it," he said walking back to Lucky scrutinizing her.

I looked at her too, she wore a frightened look on her face, and she too was watching me through her tears of terror.

"Ah isn't she marvelous" Frank touched the side of her face and she cringed "It would truly be sad to kill such a rare beauty" He said.

It took everything I had not to snap his neck for just touching her, but I couldn't do anything rash without risking her life.

"If you harm her, I will hunt you down Frank, do you hear me?" I shouted at him "And this time I won't hesitate to kill you; I will actually enjoy it" I spat

For a moment fear registered in Frank's eyes and then he chuckled.

"My, my, all that trouble for this one woman. Its not like she means anything to you" he said, looking at me for a while and then he began laughing hysterically.

"Of course she does, why else would you avenge her?" he put his hands together, pleased "Well I couldn't have planned this better myself" he said.

I looked at Lucky, who was shocked; Frank saw that.

20. Truth

Jesse POV

"You probably have no idea what I'm talking about, do you?" Frank asked Lucky.

"You see Jesse, I and his friend Kevin we go way back. They used to call us the three musketeers in college" He said.

I watched Lucky's eyes widen in shock.

"The problem was that I wanted to be the bad guy, they were the reason why I was in prison in the first place. So now its pay back time" he said chuckling "I've been looking for Jesse's weakness for years, I just never thought the opportunity would present itself in such a beautiful manner." he stroked a strand of her hair.

Frank turned to me, pointing the gun straight to my head "I should kill you right now for all that you've cost me you son of a bitch" he hissed. And then turned back to Lucky.

"But that would be all too easy; I want to make you suffer, and how better to do that than make you watch the woman you love die in front of you." he said.

I watched Lucky's eyes light up with realization; she finally saw that I loved her and why we couldn't be together. I was trying to protect her from this, from psychopaths like Frank, who would use her to spite me.

Fresh tears came down her face; I looked at her remorsefully.

I was sorry that I put her through this, through pain and heartbreak but mostly I was sorry that I put her life in jeopardy.

"Aw sweetie, I don't know weather having him love you is a blessing or curse because I was going to kill you quickly and painlessly. But having made this discovery I'm going to do it slowly and painfully; just so he could watch you scream in agony" Frank said, grabbing her necklace.

"Fuck" he said removing his hand as though the necklace burnt him "What the hell?" he asked looking at Lucky "What did you do?"

"Nothing" she replied quickly.

"Bullshit" he shouted angrily "Take it off now" he instructed pointing his gun at me

"No Lucky don't!" I said, as she tried to unhook it.

"I can't," she said, struggling with it.

"What do you mean you can't?" Frank asked angrily "I will kill him missy"

"No, please. You can take the necklace, just please let him go" she screamed, Frank lowered his gun looking at her.

"You are willing to die for him?" he asked incredulously

"Yes, you can take the damn necklace just stop this" she pleaded.

Both Frank and I stared at her in shock; she loved me that much? That she would die for me?

Frank laughed bringing his gun back to me “Well isn’t this touching, too bad I don’t like happy endings” he said and pulled the trigger; I didn’t even have time to close my eyes.

“NO!” Lucky screamed as I waited for the impact but it never came; shocked I noticed two things

The round emerald stone on Lucky’s necklace was glowing; something I’ve never seen before, and the bullet was stuck in mid air and then it fell to the ground.

“Amazing” Frank exclaimed looking at Lucky “I was right, you can control it”

I took Frank’s moment of distraction and snapped the neck of the man that was holding me. I grabbed my guns opening fire on all the men that came charging at me. Lucky stomped her foot on the man that was holding her, making him stagger back in pain, I took that chance and shot him too.

“Run!” I screamed at her, but she didn’t move.

“No” Frank shrieked, grabbing his own gun off the floor and shot at my direction, I ducked and it hit my leg making me fall to the ground, damn it.

“Jesse!” I heard Lucky scream and Frank grabbed her before she could reach me

“Oh no, you’re not going anywhere” he said, pointing his gun to her head

“You are going to pay for that,” she hissed in fury and Frank chuckled.

I saw Lucky’s necklace glow again and much to my shock her eyes turned completely black.

“What the...” Frank exclaimed shocked as he was floated into the air, Lucky turned her black gaze to him and he let out an ear-splitting scream as what sounded like bones started cracking.

Other men came flooding into the lounge room and they too just floated like Frank. Her hair started swirling around her even though there was no air.

My mind couldn’t comprehend what was happening but something told me to stop this “Lucky” I shouted at her but she didn’t respond, she kept staring at the men she was torturing.

I struggled to get up what with one good leg; I went to her side.

I didn’t know if touching her was any good, she looked like she was in some kind of unblinking trance.

“Lucky?” I shouted again, shaking her. Her head snapped to me and her necklace stopped glowing; the black faded as her eyes returned back to green.

The men all came down to the ground, they all looked alive; I thought with relief

“Jesse?” she asked weakly and then she collapsed, Maria and Angela both came running down the stairs.

“Lucky?” I shouted at her, shaking her but she didn’t respond “Maria call 911” I screamed at them when I couldn’t feel her pulse.

“Lucky sweetheart please, don’t do this to me!” I said, giving her CPR,

“I called them, and Bill their on their way” Angela said, crying.

“Lucky please, come back to me please” I begged but she still didn’t respond.

“Jesse” Maria said through her tears touching my shoulder

I shook off her hand “She’s not dead!” I shouted at her “She can’t be”

She couldn’t die, where would that leave me? My parent’s death wasn’t going to be nearly as painful as hers. I couldn’t live without her. She was my reason for everything, why I breathed, why I woke up in the morning; I woke up knowing I would see her beautiful face.

“Lucky I love you, please I’m begging you” I shouted, shaking her gently but still no response, no pulse.

I let out a pained scream and buried my head in her neck.

Maria dropped to her knees beside me, crying uncontrollably taking me into her arms, this time I couldn’t fight her off,

There was nothing to fight for.

21. Second Chance

Lucky POV

I could feel the darkness pulling me under as power surged through my whole body; I couldn’t control it. Fighting the darkness to regain control over my body was nearly impossible, but I had to do it.

If I let the darkness engulf me, I would die; I knew it.

I had to fight it; not just for me but for mom, Jenna and my whole family. I had to fight it for Maria, for Angela...for Jesse.

Jesse; my one true love my reason for being. I had to overcome this for him; my death would kill him.

I started regaining my senses, I could feel, smell and hear everything around me but I still couldn’t make my body move.

Even as I heard Jesse’s anguished screams for me to wake up, I couldn’t make anything move to let him know I was okay. My body was completely incapacitated. The amount of power I transferred onto Frank and his men was too much for me to sustain myself. I couldn’t stop myself, watching him shoot Jesse sent me over the edge. I cared about nothing but making him suffer worse pain than he inflicted on the man I loved.

Even as I felt the power draining out of me; that’s it!

What if I reversed the process? Instead of transferring it I should convert it inwardly, to give myself strength. If instead of inflicting pain, I use the energy to heal; I could save my own life, either way I had to try.

I tried to focus my energy within myself, I didn't know what I was doing but I was trying to remember what I did to Frank and try to reverse it.

It seemed to work because I could feel and move my hands and legs now; I focused harder so I could have full control over myself.

I gasped opening my eyes, to see Jesse and Maria hovering over me

"Lucky? Can you hear me?" he asked frantically.

"Jesse?" I asked, relieved that nothing felt out of place in me,

His expression turned to disbelief and then pure joy and relief "Thank heavens" he said kissing my forehead "Don't do that to me" He said.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't control it..." I started.

"Shh, its okay Lucky, as long as you're okay" he said, wrapping me in his arms.

I smiled "You told me you loved me" I said realizing that it was actually true,

He looked at me "Of course I love you, I've loved you since day one. I felt pain like no other when I thought I lost you" he shook his head "I can't live without you Lucky" he said.

"I'm glad, because I can't live without you too" I said and he let out a low chuckle.

I turned to see Maria and Angela both looking like they too were in hell at the thought of me dying. I tried to stand up.

"Careful little one" Jesse cautioned, but I shook my head at him "I'm fine"

I went to Maria hugging her "Oh Lucky" she cried

"I'm sorry Maria" I said, she nodded touching my face.

"I'm glad you're okay. That's all that matters," she said,

I hugged Angela too "You're in so much trouble for that" she hiccupped.

"I'm sorry my friend" I said ducking my head, she nodded kissing my cheek

I noticed Jesse's leg "Jesse, are you okay?" I rushed back to him.

"Its fine, the medics will take care of it," he said, and then I noticed the men were gone.

"Where is Frank?" I asked

"Bill's men took him and his cronies away, its over," he said.

"But you're in pain" I said frowning.

He chuckled "I'm a big boy, I can handle it" he said

I remembered again, if I was able to sustain myself couldn't I heal Jesse's leg?

"Wait, sit down" I instructed and he complied with confusion on his face "I'm going to try and heal your leg" I said.

"I don't know about that Lucky..." he said then I stopped him with my hand

I grabbed his leg with both my hands and tried to focus like I did earlier, it was harder trying to pull out the bullet and heal the wound.

I heard Jesse groan in pain and then the bullet came out and the wound closed.

"Are you okay?" I asked not sure if I did the right thing.

"Yes" he said incredulously, moving his leg back and forth "Its completely healed, wow" he said looking at me "How did you do that?"

"The same thing I did earlier" I said smiling that I removed his pain.

He chuckled uneasily "Remind me never to mess with you," he said

Everyone in the room laughed and we walked outside.

Three black SUV's and an ambulance was parked in the driveway,

The man I recognized as Bill walked up to us. "I'm so sorry guys, Frank tricked us; that son of a bitch, were going to lock him away for good"

"How is he?" I asked guiltily, I didn't know what came over me, I just saw him shoot Jesse and something in me just snapped.

"He and a couple of his men will be alright, just minor fractures here and there" he said "I wouldn't feel so sorry if I was you"

He gave Jesse a hug "Good to see you both in one peace, we'll go now. I'll talk to you later" He said solemnly.

"Sure" Jesse said but his voice sounded strained, I looked at him and he smiled at me but it didn't look right.

We sat on a bench as some people worked to clean off some of the mess that Frank caused, I was glad to see Jason and most of the other guards were okay as the medics treated their minor injuries.

"What happened in there?" I asked, turning my gaze back to Jesse

He shuddered "I'm not sure exactly, your necklace started glowing and your eyes turned charcoal black."

"Black? Like all over?" I asked shocked, nothing felt abnormal except the power that surged through my body.

He nodded "You looked like you were in a trance or something, which is weird because when you healed me none of those things happened only your necklace made the same glow" he said.

"Huh, so black eyes signify trouble" I nodded to myself and he chuckled and then his demeanor turned solemn.

"I'm going to miss you," he whispered to himself, touching my cheek

"What?" I asked; why would he need to miss me? I was here; I was not going anywhere. He shook his head.

Just then a young man probably in his early twenties approached us "The car is ready sir" he said to Jesse.

He nodded "Just give us a minute" he said, sadness in his voice

He turned to look at me "You have to go with them Lucky" he said.

"What?" I asked, what was he saying? He wanted me to leave?

"You should go with them, they'll keep you safe, its not safe for you to be with me," he said, shaking his head sadly "My world is too dangerous for you, Lucky"

"No, Jesse you're not doing this to me again" I said grabbing his arm "I don't care about being safe, I care about being with you. Now stop this madness," I said, panicked. He looked at me.

"I cannot risk your life for you Lucky, you heard Frank today; bastards like him are going to want to kill you, just because I love you. I could never forgive myself if something happened to you" he said squeezing my hand.

"Jesse please, I love you. We can't be apart, I can't be without you," I whispered desperately. I couldn't believe I was losing him all over again.

He smiled comfortingly "You won't have to little one, *you* will be just fine. Trust Me," he said softly kissing my forehead.

I shook my head stubbornly "Don't I have a choice? I chose you" I said tears stinging my eyes.

He grabbed both sides of my face "You deserve a happy, normal stress free life, I want that for you which is why I have to let you go. Put yourself in my shoes, if you knew for sure that I was going to be okay without you, would you try to hold me back for your own selfish reasons?" he asked.

"No, not if you chose it. Not if you knew you wouldn't be able to survive a day without me," I said shaking my head.

"Keep yourself safe, for me?" he asked, he hit me on my weakest spot.

I would do anything for him even if that thing hurt me in the process, if it's what he really wants I would leave.

I've been looking for Jesse's weakness for years Franks voice came to me.

That was it, I was a weakness to Jesse; I would be the one holding him back from doing what he loved. If I stayed with him, he would always need to look over his shoulder for me, always protecting me. And if got hurt he would blame himself.

If he had the strength and unselfishness to let me go, then I would to.

I slowly nodded tears streaming down my face "I will always love you little one, I just didn't want you to go without knowing that" he said, kissing my hair.

I buried my face in his neck inhaling him; memorizing his scent, he always smelled amazing to me. The thought that I could never see him again was breaking my heart into a million pieces.

I looked up over his shoulder to see Maria, Angela and Jason wave sadly at me behind us, they too have decided to let me go.

I got up with Jesse; somehow him letting me go knowing that he loved me was better than when I thought he didn't. Maybe that will help me do this.

He kissed me fervently, I wanted to remember this kiss forever; it would get me through many lonely nights to come. I already knew that I wasn't capable of loving anyone else; my heart would always belong to him.

"Go on" he said letting me go; I stared into his beautiful blue eyes and let them mesmerize me one last time.

I touched his cheek "Bye" I said, my voice shaking slightly.

I walked over to the young man that was waiting patiently for me "I'm ready" I told him; he nodded and opened the passenger door to the black SUV.

I turned to look at Jesse, who was watching me with sad and resolved eyes.

"Why did the chicken cross the road?" I asked through my tears, remembering all the silly jokes he used to tell me.

He smiled "Why?"

"Because it's loved one was on the other side" I said, and it didn't matter weather or not the chicken turned into road kill in the process.

"The loved one will be waiting" he said, his eyes full of love and sadness

I nodded and climbed into the car and the man closed the door; I would take that with me, the fact that Jesse was here thinking of me too.

I didn't even realize there were three other people in the car until it moved and we were out of the estate in an instant, for a moment I let sorrow overtake me. I couldn't even cry; the only thing that reminded me of what I was doing was the pain in my chest.

How could Jesse be so sure that I was going to be okay without him? I would never. And then I remembered his words; *you wont have to little one, you will be just fine* I felt as though I was missing something vitally important. I wouldn't have to? What did he mean? I thought about all the CIA movies I've watched in the past; what did they do the victims who were too traumatized? And then it hit me.

They were going to erase my memory; I covered my mouth to stop myself from screaming. Not at what they would do to me, but what that would mean.

I wont miss Jesse because I wouldn't remember ever meeting him; I wont feel pain because I wouldn't remember ever falling in love with him. Jesse Gilbert wouldn't even be a distant dream. And he knew that.

You deserve a happy, normal stress free life I would also forget about the power I possessed, because to me it would just be an ordinary necklace my grandma gave me; nothing more to it.

Somehow I thought about Dad, I never needed him more than I did at that moment. I looked around the car and saw nothing; everyone was completely gone.

"Hello honey" a voice came through out of nowhere, and then I saw him; my Dad was sitting across from me smiling at me, was I going crazy?

"No you are not, I'm really here," he said, I looked at him shocked.

"Dad? Is that you?" I asked not believing "But how?"

"That doesn't matter sweetheart, I don't know how much time we have together. I saw that you really needed me; I had to come" he said.

"What I'm I supposed to do dad?" I sobbed

"You already know, you love him and you want to be with him don't you?" he asked, I nodded "Then go be with him, what's stopping you?"

"But..." I said and he stopped me.

"But nothing, honey all your life you've lived up to what other people always expected, you've always put everyone above yourself and your own happiness. You have my blessing to be selfish for once," he said chuckling.

I smiled "But how am I supposed to get out of here? They wont let me go"

“You have powers don’t you? Use them and fight for what you want,” he said, “Oh and you were right, I do like him a lot,” he added, smiling.

I chuckled fresh tears coming down my face “Thank you Dad” I said, wiping them away “I can let you go now” I said, meaning it.

He smiled “I love you honey”

“I love you too Dad” I said, and he disappeared, grateful that I got to see him one last time. He would forever live in my heart from now on.

22. Promise

Lucky POV

I was one hundred percent sure that I dreamt the conversation I had with Dad because I suddenly woke up. I didn’t even realize that I had fallen asleep.

I looked around the car, everyone was here and we were nearing the city, I wasn’t sure where exactly they were taking me; but I couldn’t delay.

I had to get out and go back home, back to Jesse.

I thought for a moment of all the options I had, they didn’t seem very promising.

“Miss Strauss? Are you okay?” the woman sitting next to me asked, she gave me an idea that could work, I had to try it.

“Um actually I want to go to the bathroom,” I said, keeping my voice normal

“Well were are almost at our destination” she said.

“I really need to go, now” I said, I pretended to move my legs uncomfortably

“Fine, we’ll stop at a gas station” she said uneasily.

I smiled, as the car pulled up at a gas station. The lady offered to come with me but I insisted that she didn’t. It would be harder for me to make my escape with her there. She reluctantly agreed, obviously thinking that I wouldn’t try anything stupid.

I entered the convenient store and headed towards the bathroom, I knew that they would be watching me from afar and that I didn’t have enough time; soon they would come find me.

The bathroom was bigger than I thought with two windows at the back; I tried to climb out as fast as I could, taking off the heels I wore and breaking off on a sprint. I wasn’t sure how fast I was going because I used the energy from my necklace to propel me forward. I didn’t know how long it would take them to look for me but I couldn’t look back or slow down. I just ran and kept running

without pause, my feet hurting from the friction of the ground. I tried to heal them too. I breathed easy when I saw the castle from afar; I thought I got lost.

The guards at the gate were more than shocked to see me, with bear feet and my hair windblown. I ran and entered the lounge; Maria was washing dishes in the kitchen, she dropped a plate when she saw me.

"Lucky?" She asked incredulously,

"Yes Maria, its me" I said when she walked up to me and hugged me.

"I knew you would find your way back to us," she said reverently

"Where else would I be? I belong here," I said with conviction.

"Yes you do," she said letting me go,

"Where is he?" I asked looking around.

"He's by the lake," she said smiling, I immediately ran outside and found him sitting by the lake, the same spot I loved to sit by.

I slowly walked up to him; he seemed oblivious to everything around him, like he was living in his own little world.

"Can I join you?" I asked softly

Startled he looked up at me as though he'd seen a ghost.

"Sure" he replied quietly "You lost?"

I smiled "No" I said sitting down "I came to retrieve what is mine"

He smiled too, turning his attention back to the lake.

"I couldn't do it you know" I said staring at the lake too "But I would've, despite the pain I would've done it because its what he wanted"

He grimaced "What changed your mind then?" he asked,

Obviously humoring me in my hypothesis.

"When I realized that my memory was going to get erased" I said, and he froze

But I continued "That was a deal breaker right there, I would've lived my life with the knowledge that he loved me too, that he existed, that every moment we shared together was real and beautiful; that would've gotten me through anything. Losing that too would be unbearable," I said, shaking my head.

I could feel his gaze on me then but I continued to stare at the water.

"I cannot be expected to live without him, everything that's happened to me in my life is suddenly leading me up to this moment...to him" I chuckled at my own confession "I don't care how this came about, I can't deny that this *is* fate" I touched my necklace "And I'm going to grab it, even if it kills me. I love him that much, and you wouldn't blame me; he's amazing" I said smiling to myself.

I met his intense gaze then, his blue eyes never failed to stun me. He flashed me a gorgeous smile too.

"What about you? Why are you here sitting alone?" I asked, as he turned his gaze to the water, contentment clear in his expression.

"I had to let her go" he looked down and chuckled without humor "It was probably the hardest thing I ever had to do, but I had to do it; for her. I love her more than I thought I could love anything, she suddenly appeared and

everything made sense, everything had meaning. But there was no way an angel like her belonged in my dark world”

He smiled sadly “I knew she wouldn’t be able to remember me; somehow that made me feel better, anything that would ease her pain and help her move on. I too thought of getting my own memory erased; but how could I when being with her was the best time of my entire life? I wanted to perfectly recall her beautiful eyes, smile and delightful laugh” he smiled to himself.

“I’m that smitten, and you wouldn’t blame me; she’s amazing” he said

I chuckled at how he threw my own words back at me.

“What do we do now?” he asked, shifting his gaze to me,

I leaned to him and grabbed his face in my hands. “We need each other Jesse, we can’t be apart; it’s not fair to either one of us. I say we fight; we fight for our love, for us to be together. I want to fight by your side, let me.”

He nodded reverently cupping my face in his hands and kissing me with urgent passion and adoration. I knew I would die if I didn’t have this for the rest of my life.

“I’ve been fighting my whole life little one, not really knowing what for; but now I do,” he breathed into my mouth. My heart felt as though it would burst; I would never have to let him go, ever.

He finally released me and my head was swimming; I shook it as he chuckled smugly.

“How did you manage to get away from them? I know they didn’t just let you walk away,” he asked, gently caressing my cheek.

“They didn’t, I used the bathroom trick and made a run for it” I said giggling

I couldn’t believe they fell for it, though I made no intention of escaping,

“Ah classic” he said smiling.

His expression turned to concern then he sighed.

“Bill won’t be happy about this, none of them will. This was standard procedure, were practically breaking a very serious law” he said.

“Do they always erase the memory of their clients?” I asked, hoping this wouldn’t jeopardize Jesse position in the agency.

“Yes, security reasons for the agency and its agents, that’s how they can keep our identities a secret” he said, his eyes narrowing in thought.

“You think they will come after me?” I asked, suddenly catching why he was so worried.

He slowly nodded “They will, we can’t stay here; this is the first place they will look” he eyes burnt into mine as he saw the fear in my eyes.

If they found me they would forcibly take me away from Jesse and that would hurt more than I can ever fathom.

“Don’t worry little one, I won’t let them take you away from me- no one will” he said with fierce determination.

I nodded a little comforted “We fight” I added

“Exactly” he chimed smiling at my brave façade.

“What are we going to do?” I asked

“For the moment we run. Just until we figure out what to do next” he said thinking for a moment then he smiled “How about I take you on a real secret vacation?”

My eyes widened “What? Where?”

“Isle Lucky, if I remember correctly I did promise to take you there, and there’s no time like the present,” he said excitedly.

I couldn’t help but get excited too; somehow the thought of running away to a far away island with Jesse was exhilarating,

“Let’s do it,” I said smiling, feeling like a kid.

He lifted me off the ground carrying me to the castle. There was a time when I thought life was going to be nothing but bleak and monotonous, but now life with Jesse by my side would be an adventure to last forever.



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