

A cool wind blew the halo of hair around my shoulders like little spirits dancing in the night. The water looked black as I stood letting my foot trail in the water. I watched the small bubbles disappear as the vessel glided silently through the bay's mysterious corners. A spray of wetness landed on my lips, kept damp only by the slight disturbance the boat caused to the giant collection of water.

An owl made a soft hooting sound and I jumped. My nerves were acting up again I thought, as my heart pounded so fast I thought it would come bursting out of my chest. Glancing up I stared straight at the first sign of land in what felt like forever. I rushed below the deck to the great wooden wheel used to turn the old sailboat. Jackie stood staring out at the water through a sheet of dirty glass, the huge wheel turned only by the wielding of her hands. "Are we there?" I asked excitedly.

"Almost," was her only reply.

People were all over this city, pouring out of stores, strolling down the walkway. This was all so different from our small town, but he had to be here.

My boyfriend disappeared about six months ago and ever since then I had been trying to put together the pieces. Jake was an assistant to the CEO of Isaac Imagery and he was a pretty big deal so I was very proud of myself for getting this far. Sadly the trail ended here so I decided I would poke around and try to find anything that was worthwhile.

The light outside was starting to fade and I could hear my stomach growling like a hungry bear. Pulling out my picture of Jake we started walking toward the grocery store asking everyone we saw if they had seen anyone who looked like this.

With the monster inside of me not growling for food anymore I quickly fell asleep.

The next morning I woke to a tickle on my neck. I giggled and turned over grabbing at whatever it was, my hand closed around the edge of a piece of paper I pulled it in front of my face and brought my eyes into focus. *You're not helping, his situation is just getting worse.* I jumped out of bed like a bucket of ice cold water was dumped on my

head and dove on Jackie. She screamed and I heard shouts echoing through the rooms.

Jackie turned to face me and whispered in my ear, "I don't think that was such a good idea."

I nodded barely registering what she said, "Look at this!" I said breathlessly shoving the slip of paper in her face.

"Wow that's amazing," she said, "you found the toilet paper."

I rolled my eyes and looked more closely at it, realizing what it was written on, "No, look at what's on it."

She studied the white square, "I like the designs, they're very intricate."

I slapped my forehead, "someone wrote," I said and read the curvy handwriting out loud.

"*Oh*, maybe we should leave then."

"You're not helping one bit," I sighed trying to lower the level of my voice.

Another day went by and we were getting no further along. I went to bed early and just as my eyes were about to close I heard a soft shuffling noise in the hallway. I sat up, wide-awake. Trying to find your kidnapped boyfriend is not the most comforting thing to fall asleep with it stuck in your head, the slightest sound woke me up these days.

It was quiet for along time and finally I couldn't keep my eyes open, drifting off into a strange dreamland.

A figure appeared at my window and I quickly turned my head but it was gone. Creaky laughter echoed through the small suite and I stood. They came at me quickly and I barely had time to react. My fingernails raked their faces and I struck out blindly with my arms and legs, desperately wanting them to connect with something. My movements slowed as an anesthetic injected into my neck made its way through my body. Then my world drifted away.

When I started to see light through the small gap in my vision I desperately tried to cling to it but it started to slip away. Blinking my eyes frantically I finally got a clear image, I saw the outside through the glass panel that kept me in the car - an immensely tall fence stood quietly. Beyond the fence, basketball courts with hoops outlining their edges littered the landscape. Silhouettes of figures with sweat gleaming on their backs

danced across the courts bouncing small spheres around their opponents, then darkness enveloped me. My nightmare had become reality.

The room was small with one tiny window covered in thick bars. The window allowed the room to be lit with a pale light and from the faint ray of light I could tell I was sitting on a small cot. There was a metal door in the corner of the room and a peephole that looked out into the hallway. It was exactly what had always imagined a jail cell to look like. The walls were metal and their jagged corners cut into my small hands.

I waited there a long time slipping in and out of sleep before anything happened. The floor creaked like it does in an old house and the door in the corner opened a crack. The pudgy face of a middle aged man peeked in. The opening between the door and wall yawned and the man's whole body appeared. He was an ugly guy with rolls of fat spilling over the edge of his jeans, his shirt was slightly shorter than was pleasant and a bit of unwanted skin peeked out from beneath it. I glared at him not speaking. He just stood there and we stared at each other for a long time.

"Well, well looks like you're as dumb as you are ugly," I spat the words at him breaking the silence, "cat got your tongue?"

As he turned around to leave something fell heavily to the ground making a sharp noise he didn't seem to hear.

The key was wrapped in a crisp white handkerchief and was painted a dashing red. Its notches were curved and it looked like no other key I had ever seen. Walking to the entrance I tried to jam it into the slot but it would go in no farther than the width of a books page. Twisting the key frantically around I tried to make it move somewhere, anywhere but it wouldn't budge.

The door abruptly flew open and I jumped back in surprise. The man, ignoring what I had been doing before, replied, "He wants to see you," grabbing my arm he pulled me down the gray hallway and into a small room, full of carefully embroidered drapery.

A young man sat in the center in a throne like chair. He held out his hands and my escort planted my fingers in his palm. He leaned forward and kissed my elaborately painted nails, now covered in grime.

“It’s such a shame to hold someone as pretty as you in such unwanted quarters,” he said with a grin, “I know someone who would be pleased to see you.”

I glared at him with a steely gaze, refusing to open my mouth.

“Jake is not who you think he is,” he said, waiting for it to sink in; but nothing changed my demeanor. “He is Berlin’s most wanted criminal.”

I ran toward him only to be pulled back, kicking and screaming.

“Would you like to see him?”

I finally calmed down and stood stock still, just looking at him. He was waiting for a response, which I did not want to give him. Finally I couldn’t stand it any longer, surprisingly I shook my head, no I couldn’t trust anything he said.

“Aaron take her,” he said disregarding my response, “I want her to see this.”

The whole maneuver was fast paced and within seconds I was out the door again, being dragged down the hall and into a small conference room. Jake was tied to a wall. He had tape over his mouth and rope threaded through the holes in the slated grate that lay against his back, strapping him in place.

He started fighting with the restrictions as he saw me and as I came closer I saw my reflection in his eyes. Aaron took a few strides and ended up face to face with Jake. I watched as he took his hand and tore it across Jake’s face, giving him a hard slap. It was as if his voice had been given back to him. It came roaring out of his mouth and filled the entire room. I just stood there like an idiot, watching the events play out. A lever was pulled and electric currents entered Jake’s body, raking it with shakes.

My mouth opened but no sound came out. I wanted to scream, to fight my way out of this miserable life but I was stuck here. Under my eyes the world began to fall apart. The electric currents entering his body didn’t stop coming, even though I was wishing with all my might they would pause for at least a second. Jake’s body was starting to slow. He was so close to dieing.

My nightmare had begun. I ran toward the lever but Aaron grabbed my arms, pulling me away from the room. I struggled, forgetting everything but the need to get away. I twisted my arm, loosening his grip, then as fast as a whip I thrust downward breaking his wrist against my knee, it snapped backwards with a crack and he yelped,

staggering. In this moment of weakness I hit him across the head and he fell on the ground lying still. I didn't want to see what I had done so I ran back to the room.

Jake's body lay unmoving. He was hanging limply and I rushed to the lever finally flipping it off. I flew to him and felt his chest. His heart was silent. I cried out in pain at the loss and fell apart; sobs raked my body as I lay in a heap on the floor.

Finally I came to my senses, Jake would want me to get out of here. I stood, my face must have had a crazed look because I didn't feel tame inside.

Staggering into the hall I looked back, his eyes were still open, staring into the world he could no longer see. The sight was too heartbreaking, so I turned to the only place I could go and started wandering down the maze of gray hallways.