

AMBER

She looked at the coffee brown door with the number 25 painted black. This was it. She tightened her suit and brushed the petty crumbs off her pants. She stiffened her knuckles and lightly hit the door. No answer. She tried again. Still no answer. She pressed her ear to the door but heard nothing.

“This is just what I need,” she mumbled under her breath.

She gripped the rusted knob and jiggled it. It’s unlocked. She opened the door following a slow creak that echoed through the narrow hallway. Curiosity seem to always seep into her but she could never find the answers she hoped for. Amber thought that if she could be a realtor she can somehow find hidden answers or secrets of her mother’s death. She was a sucker for hope. She stepped inside and slowly closed the door behind her. *My new place. Only for a little while.* She placed her leather handbag full of crinkled documents of the apartment onto a small end table near the entrance. She took a long examination around the room. The floors were disguised with dingy old carpets scattered about the room, hiding its true potential. Large industrial windows were cracked with smeared dirt painted across the panel and red curtains dangled above the windows so elegantly letting the bright light escape into the room. Amber let out a humble smile. She always loved the sun. It reminded her of her ambitious dreams she frequently had but felt discouraged from them with guilt. She continued to look around the room to find the light floral wallpaper that covered the walls of the compact room and the furniture hidden with ghostly white sheets. The white sheets. Her lips shifted as a tear fell down her troubled face. She started to remember.

My mother laced in wires and poked with needles laid on the white sheets of the hospital bed. Her pale face showed that she couldn’t stand the hold as the plague within her clasped her faint breaths. I touched the blond strands of her hair. They were so thin and only a few were left standing. I was not ready to let her go not yet. I needed to hear her voice just one more time. She was leaving me far too soon. The doctors said it was an unexpected death.

She quickly brushed the tears off her face and gathered the papers for the apartment. It was time to work. It wasn't the time to cry. She walked her way to the kitchen and into the small dining room where he planned to meet. As she turned right from the living room she saw a lean man who sat on a crooked chair. His jet black hair complemented his cobalt eyes. He brought his gaze up to her.

LUCAS

He saw the number 25 stained black onto the muggy brown door. This was it. He placed the golden key into the door and opened it. He was nervous. He hasn't been in this place for a year and it has always haunted him. He hasn't been eating as much lately either. He was sick. He was sick of the encouragement people gave him when there was no hope for him. He became a skeptic. This was his only chance to get rid of this place. He never wanted to it see again. He opened the door following a low creek that screeched through the crooked hallway. He stepped inside hesitantly and closed the door far too quick for anyone to see him. The room was dark and he could only see a glimpse of light sneaking its way through the red curtains. His father bought those curtains specifically for that room when he was seven. Red is Lucas' favorite color. He trudged his way through the floors he had once walked with disgust. With each step, glimpses of a broken memory fluttered in his head like puzzle pieces. He gripped the two ends of the curtain and opened them letting the sunlight escape. The puzzle pieces finally added up. He remembered.

"Where were you last night?" questioned my father with such stern in his voice.

"I-I-I was..." I staggered in confusion.

"You were what!" he exclaimed in rage. His breath smelled of cigarettes

and beer. He was drinking. I have never seen him this drunk before. I couldn't take it anymore.

"I was working. Working for the bills you owe! All you do in this stupid place is nothing. You just get yourself drunk." I looked into his cold blue eyes and saw nothing. I left the compacted room. I left the hope that he would someday stop. I left his eyes. I slammed the door without another word. It was the last time I saw him. The doctors said it was an unexpected death.

He brushed the silly tears off and try to quickly forget the tragic incident that happened a year ago. There was no point for him to cry at that moment. It doesn't change anything but it seems to always hit him with regret. *How can I not think of him? He was my dad.* He sat down onto a dark wooden chair that daintily sat on the yellow laminate floors that went throughout the kitchen. The empty round table sat in front of him and he waited. He was numb. Footsteps echoed through the room and he finally saw the realtor. She wore a crème tailored suit and her blond hair was up. His face blushed and he was nervous once again. *Is this a good idea? Should I do this?* His palms started to drench in sweat and so he quickly closed them.

"Hello, I'm Amber Joy," she said far too quickly for him to get his mind on track. "Is this your place? The door was unlocked and so I um..." she declared with no hesitation.

"No, no, no it's okay. It's my fault, I didn't lock the door." He shook his head foolishly as he stood up and locked his stare at the floor. He finally looked into her eyes.

"I'm Lucas Hassle," he added awkwardly as he reached his hand. She gripped his hand firmly and replied, "Hello Lucas Hassle. Nice to meet you."

She smiled but only for a small moment. He let go of her hand and answered.

"Um, it was actually my dad's place. He died about a year ago. I just want this place to be gone."

He felt his eyes turn in utter rage. He never liked talking about his father but somehow he did anyway. He felt something was going to come out of this. Something good. Was it hope?

“I’m sorry.....” “She looked down at the floor. “I know how it feels. My mom actually died a month ago and it’s been tough.” she explained with sadness expressed in her eyes. He felt the pain too.

“What happened?” He asked with curiosity. He desired her pain. He felt that she truly felt his agony as well and he wanted to know if it was true.

“The white sheets covering the furniture reminded me of her in the hospital.... I still can’t believe she’s gone. I haven’t brought up about my mom’s death for some time. I try to ignore it but it always hits me at the end,” she responds with no hope in her voice but just guilt.

He felt guilty too. He couldn’t leave the apartment without something in his hand. He needed something.

She changed the subject quickly,” I have the paperwork ready and I just need a couple of signatures so the apartment can be up and running and into the market,” she expressed with unexpected enthusiasm.

AMBER

“Hello, I’m Amber Joy,” she said. “Is this your place? The door was unlocked and so I um...” she stuttered in embarrassment. *What was I thinking? I’m an idiot, I should have waited outside like a normal person. Ugh.*

“No, no, no it’s okay. It’s my fault, I didn’t lock the door.” He shook his head and stood up. He dropped his gaze to the floor casually and he finally looked into her eyes and continued.

“I’m Lucas Hassle,” he added as he reached his hand. She grasped his warm hand and replied,” Hello Lucas Hassle. Nice to meet you.” She let out a small smile.

He continued, “Um, it was actually my dad’s place. He died about a year ago. I just want this place to be gone.” His eyes suddenly turned cold.

“I’m sorry……” she looked her view down to the floor. She has never been this uncomfortable before. “I know how it feels. My mom actually died a month ago and it’s been tough.” she explained.

She didn’t think it was the right time to bring it up but she felt like it was in a way. She believed that something would come out of it but guilt overcame her. *What’s to hope for anyway? There’s nothing to find.* She thought in disgust.

“What happened?” He asked. She was surprised. No one has ever asked her what happened to her mother.

She always kept her to herself and never had the confidence to open up. *He understands! Should I? But... I can’t....* She continued anyway and ignored the useless thoughts. She finally let go.

“The white sheets covering the furniture reminded me of her in the hospital.... I still can’t believe she’s gone. I haven’t brought up about my mom’s death for some time.”

She changed the subject quickly. She has said far too much.

“I have the paperwork ready and I just need a couple of signatures so the apartment can be up and running and into the market,” she exclaimed.

She was always good at changing the subject.

“Ok, sure,” he responded slowly.

She gave him the pale paper with the list price of the apartment they agreed upon. He looked at it with determination. With only a few seconds he signed the paper smoothly with a black pen.

He looked up as if he figured something out and asked an unusually question, “What were you looking in those white sheets?”

His blue eyes glowed with answers and hope. It was something she desired. “I’m not sure, something, I guess,” she responded in confusion. *This is silly? What does he mean?*

“The red curtains reminded me of my dad,” he added as he pointed the direction of the living room.

She was still puzzled. He continued, “I think it’s funny how the little things and even those sad moments seem to always hit us at the end when we ignore them.

“Amber looked at him with curiosity. “But...no matter how hard we try, we will never find answers hidden under white sheets and red curtains.

