

Murder by Alpha

--SAMPLE ONLY--

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#omegasunite

#murderbyalpha

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Don't criticize what you don't understand, son. You never walked in that man's shoes.

--Elvis Aaron Presley

*I definitely feel closer to the feminine side of the human being than I do the male-
or the American idea of what a male is supposed to be.*

Just watch a beer commercial and you'll see what I mean.

--Kurt Cobain

Murder by Alpha

Maxx

“Mr. Moody,” the familiar voice of Joy Springs rippled through the air. The old crone had the same steel grey fluffy hair pushed behind her head and wore the same wool skirt suits. “So nice to meet you. Please come into my office.”

“Thank you,” he replied, and motioned for Michael and myself to enter her office. My attorney’s grey hair shined under the lights. He dressed to impress in a black suit and tie. A charming smile stretched across his face, dazzling Miss Springs. “This is my assistant, Michael Mundie, and I’m sure you remember Mr. Corbit.”

“It’s nice to meet a bunch of pretty little gentlemen like yourselves, Mr. Moody.” she sang with a wide smile and kept her eyes focused on Laker.

“Oh please, call me Laker. My father loved the team so much he risked his marriage to name his only son after them. We simply cannot call me by another name, seeing as he risked so much.”

She laughed with an annoying southern twang and covered her mouth as if trying to be coy. Her chubby cheeks flushed bright red when she laughed. I thought she hadn’t changed one iota. An overwhelming urge to jump across the desk and beat the blood out of her forced me to keep my eyes to the ground while they spoke.

“Well then, Laker it is. Please sit down,” She gestured to the two chairs in front of her desk. There was another chair to the left of the room and I retrieved it for Michael. As she sat down, Miss Springs seemed to notice me and Michael for the first time. Disdain flashed across her face, quickly replaced by a kind smile. It was abrupt and I almost missed it. One glance at Laker told me he caught the same look. She straightened her spine as if to show the men in the room that she was supreme, not us. With a flat deadpan tone, she said, “Oh... Mr. Corbit. How nice of you to join us. So, what can I do for you today, Laker?”

“Well, Mrs. Springs, I am Mr. Corbit’s current legal representation. The statute of limitations will apply to Mr. Corbit’s case next year and I have new evidence to present in his case. Perhaps I can compel you to agree to an arrest before the limit expires.”

“It’s Miss Springs and I don’t see any reason why we can’t have a conversation. Maybe you and I could go out to dinner afterwards if I’m confused on certain aspects of the case?”

“That sounds lovely. Now, Miss Springs, you said the city of Louise would not be able to prosecute the officers in question due to the lack of evidence?”

“Yes, but you know how girls are, Laker. They’re harmless.”

“But you claimed there wasn’t evidence to pursue the case? Hairs, fibers, fingerprints, nothing?”

“All the evidence we had was accidentally thrown out when officers cleaned the evidence locker. You know, they get rid of the old evidence to make way for the new. Anyway, without it I can’t get a conviction from a jury, let alone a jury from this town. Why those officers are pillars of this community. The Harper family served in the war. Every single one of them. Received a Pink Heart for bravery. Their mother’s been Chief of Police in this town for over twenty years! She took an objective look at the case and didn’t find any evidence to back up Mr. Corbit’s claim those gals raped him. My advice to you, Laker, is to never underestimate anyone’s need for attention. Especially young men,” she scoffed. “Why there’s so much pressure on men to be pretty, to be liked, to... to be the popular one. It’s certainly not fair, but it’s just the way life works,”

"I don't understand, Miss Springs. Are you implying my client made this up to be popular?" Laker asked. He did well in holding back the laughter. Michael, on the other hand, didn't hold back. I hid my smile as he roared with laughter.

"Of course not, but it's not out of character for boys to lie and I don't want our town to suffer because Mr. Corbit can't prove his claim."

"Can't prove his claim? Miss Springs, my client has more than proved his claim of rape."

She closed her eyes and shook her head, refusing to listen. "Everyone loves to throw that term around. Rape. It's very popular. Let me tell you, nothing that transpired that night ever, ever, rose to the level of rape. We can agree on this or not, people have sex. It's the actual force of sex that defines the crime of rape. And you know, it's just not there. I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can take to a jury. Unless you have new evidence, something concrete, then there's nothing I can do. My hands are tied. Now, I'm sure you'll have questions in the future and you can feel free to call. Alright, thanks for stopping by."

"Actually, Miss Springs. I do have new evidence for you to consider. There's the video footage from Officer Harper and Officer Goodwin's patrol car."

"No, there ain't. The camera malfunctioned that night. There was a work order for repairs filed by the officers, but you know how small towns are, nothing gets done quickly. We'd live in a perfect world if things were done quickly and right the first time. Wouldn't we?"

Laker took notes on a yellow notepad covering his lap. "The camera was broken? Hmm, interesting. Miss Springs, have you heard of a website called YouView? It's a public broadcasting website for people to post their home videos, favorite movies, that sort of thing,"

"I think I posted some campaign videos online there,"

"Could you please indulge me and type this title in your YouView search?" He gave her a sensual smile when he asked her this.

"What's the title?" she asked and turned around to her computer.

"Fucker gets raped."

Her fingers froze. They stayed suspended over her keyboard for a few moments. No one spoke or moved. I enjoyed watching her become uncomfortable under Laker's questions.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Fucker gets raped. I can spell it for you if you require assistance." He batted his eyelashes at her in a mocking sort of way.

My smile widened and I tried to hide my chuckle, but without success. I reveled at the way they were locked in a stare as if it were an old-fashioned shoot out. I gazed at Michael and saw the same look of amusement on his face. He was smart and stayed quiet through the meeting. I wasn't going to worry that he knew my secret. Right now, I wanted to savor the moment.

"I don't think that's appropriate, Mr. Moody." her chin trembled when she spoke.

"You may refer to me as Laker. Remember? The video pertains to my client's case I can assure you. I can bring the video up my laptop if you're not able," he said. She gave a dramatic sigh and started typing. I heard her muttering something about being vulgar under her breath. "Click on the first video that pulls up."

She sat back and watched the video for a moment. The quality and audio were sharp. When the officers flipped the headlights on, she paused the video. She asked Laker, "Have you and your client watched this video?"

He shook his head slowly. "We have."

"Mr. Corbit, would you prefer me to watch this in your absence?" She caught me off guard with her concern.

“Um, I appreciate your concern. Perhaps you wouldn’t mind watching it with headphones?” I suggested.

She nodded her head and turned around to rummage through the desk. When she found the earbuds, she put them in her ears and inserted the USB plug into the port. Her right index finger clicked the mouse and the video resumed. We sat in silence for ten minutes while she watched the video. I kept my eyes away from the screen. I didn’t want to see one part of it. Michael was respectful and kept his head down the entire time.

“Dear Goddess in Heaven.” her voice cracked when the video ended. I saw her chest rise and fall at a rapid rate. She tried to get ahold of herself by placing her hands flat on the desk, but her entire body trembled.

“Miss Springs, there’s no doubt the man in the video is my client and there’s no doubt the women in the video are officers, Alice Harper and Darla Goodwin. He did not give consent, therefore, he was raped. Now, it is my understanding the evidence in this case was ‘accidentally’ thrown out. I call bullshit. It’s not a coincidence my client accuses two police officers of assault and the evidence to back up his claim is mysteriously tossed out. This video, witness statement, and Mr. Corbit’s medical records are enough to bring this case to trial.”

“Who posted this video? Have you searched the origin?” she asked.

“As you can see on the screen, TruthUnited posted the video one week ago, but this is the fourth time the video has been uploaded to YouView. At least the company has the decency to take it down once it’s reported. I’ve already spoken to their legal department. They’ve agreed to supply names and IP addresses at your request. When can we expect an arrest regarding Alice Harper and Darla Goodwin?”

After a brief pause, she said, “Give me two days Mr. Moody. I’ll contact you then.”

“I’ll be back tomorrow at three o’clock for an update. I’ll come in and we’ll chat about your next course of action. Judging by the horrified look on your face, I expect arrests to be made.” With that, he slammed a copy of my case file on her desk.

As we walked out, I looked at Miss Springs one last time. Her posture portrayed her as painfully constipated. Her eyes didn’t move from the case file on her desk. She looked bewildered as if Laker slapped her across the face with it. For one brief second, I actually felt sorry for her.

I felt relieved when we walked out of her office. I could go home now that I faced my fear. I felt more than relieved. I felt as if I could live again in the land of people and social interaction. I didn’t care who saw me when we left the Louise city courthouse. Instead, I stopped on the steps to soak up the sunshine before we left the city. We stopped at a gas station twenty miles outside of town to fill up the sedan and formulate a plan.

“Do you want to go home, Maxx?” Laker asked while Michael pumped the gas. We stood beside him in a triangular formation.

I shook my head. “I think so. I feel fine now, but I don’t know how I’ll feel in five minutes. I don’t want to push my luck. Is that alright with you two?”

Michael and Laker looked at each other. Michael said, “It’s alright with me. I’m here for support, not to sightsee.”

“It’s fine with me, too. I’ll take you two back to the airport. I’ll have my secretary book a flight back to New York. Now that it’s settled, I’m going to use the restroom. You two want anything from inside?” Laker asked.

Michael and I shook our heads at him. I leaned against the car while Michael held on to the gas pump. The hot Texas air blew through the gas station while the tension between Michael and

myself built to explosive proportions. Before, I was too high on pills to realize he would know what happened to me. I don't know if Laker told him the dirty details, but it didn't matter now.

"I hope the meeting didn't shock you." I said.

"Laker gave me a synopsis while you were asleep on the plane. I'm sorry that happened to you, Maxx."

"Yeah, well, it's the reason I wrote VAMA. It happened last summer and they never went to jail. I guess I'll never get over it."

"It's not something you're supposed to get over. It's like a scar. A permanent one. Time tries to erase it, but, you know, it doesn't go away. It's a constant reminder to build your life into something great because you survived something horrible."

"That's a better way to look at things,"

"Been in the business too long. Started when I was in high school. I've seen a lot of cases, a lot of traumatized men. Most of them don't make it out of the darkness, but some of them do. Right after the darkness comes the dawn, just as sure as water rolls downhill. Just hang in there and you'll make it to the dawn."

"Are you going to tell Jane?"

Michael shook his head. "The way I see it this is your story to tell, not mine. Don't worry, I won't breathe a word to anyone."

"The rape left me with severe panic attacks. I didn't know if I could make it through the meeting, that's why I asked you to come along. I needed someone to help me get home in case I couldn't. I didn't realize I had to force my secret on you. I hope this didn't bother you."

"Meh, not to brag, but I've seen worse. It's nothing to be ashamed of, Maxx. Those two women are the ones who should be ashamed. This is their secret. Not yours."

I looked up to see Laker emerge from the convenience store. He shook his head with disgust as he stepped down from the walkway. I smiled at Laker's dismay and said to Michael, "Thanks for saying that. It's tough when people blame me for what happened. Nice to hear you don't."

"For some reason, society is conditioned to blame the victim rather than the criminal. Today, they teach men how to avoid it rather than teach women not to rape. They tell you it was your clothing, your actions, something you did made you ask for it. It's just another form of rape," he paused for a moment before he said, "Of course, you can tell from my opinion, I've spent a little too much time with the statistics and case files. Maybe I'm jaded, but I see the violence against men everywhere. I'm glad you asked me to come along, Maxx. It makes me feel like I'm actually doing something."

"Everything you do for VAMA is making a difference for men. Don't discount that fact." I said as Laker approached the car. I asked him if everything was alright.

"Bathrooms left much to be desired." he muttered as he got back into the car.

Michael finished pumping the gas and we piled into the car. Laker asked if we wanted to stop somewhere before we went to the airport, but I declined the offer. I felt that the only reason my anxiety stayed away was due to the fact I was on my way home. Laker's secretary booked us two seats out of Texas. The plane left in three hours. I would be back in my apartment when the sun went down on the New York skyline.

Laker drove us back to the airport. We parted ways with him after we checked in for the flight. The line at security wasn't long. I expected a long goodbye and couldn't help but feel a little misty eyed when we parted from Laker. I appreciated the way he stood up for me to Miss Springs. No one, aside from Jeff, had stood up for me before.

“Thanks for everything, Laker. I feel like I’m finally taking the right step to duct tape my life back together.” I chuckled.

“Glad I could help. I’ll call you tomorrow and let you know the end results of our meeting. Of course, I don’t know another course of action she could take other than arresting them. It was nice meeting you, Michael. I wish you well with VAMA.” He shook hands with Michael. They seemed to create a bond on this trip and I was happy to see their comradery.

“Thanks, Laker.” he said and leaned in to hug Laker.

We left Laker behind and went through security. Michael ran his duffel back through the x-ray machine and I put my laptop bag through. I checked my luggage when we arrived at the airport curbside check in, so I only carried my laptop bag. Michael’s duffel bag was small enough for him to carry on the plane. When we made it past the security and retrieved our items, we took our time in the airport. Our flight didn’t leave for ninety minutes and I liked taking my time gazing into the shop windows. We decided to stay together. There were variations of places to eat and Michael picked out a busy pub with giant televisions mounted on the walls. It was darker inside and the seats were made out of dark green leather. I picked a stool at the end of the bar. We sat our gear down on the ground and hopped up on the stools.

“Hey, darlings. what can I get you?” asked a lady with red hair and a big smile.

“May I get a dark soda on ice?” I asked first and foremost.

“I’ll have a beer.” Michael said.

“Sure thing. You want something to eat? The burgers are the best.” she asked as she filled a cup with ice and soda.

The pleasant smell of meat lingered in the air along with the smell of beer. The atmosphere made me feel comfortable and I felt my stomach rumble the moment she voiced her question. My diet consisted of alcohol, dark soda, and pills for the past six hours. A change would be nice.

“I’ll take a burger.” Michael anxiously raised his hand like a student with the right answer in the classroom.

“Me, too.” I said.

The bartender slid my drink over, took out a beer, and gave it to Michael. “Coming up. Ya’ll want it cooked a special way?”

“As long as it’s cooked, I’ll be happy.” he smiled.

“Same here.”

She disappeared behind a metal swinging door behind the bar. I drank my cola and turned around to watch what was on television. Pretty much every channel was tuned to a fashion network. I was in luck when I found a television broadcasting a football game on the far side of the room. I didn’t want to move from my spot so I asked Michael if he could see the game from here.

“Oh, yeah. I can see.” he replied.

We watched the game from afar until the burgers arrived. They were juicy and had to weigh at least half a pound with all the vegetables. Damn, it was good. Texas knew how to make a burger. While I ate, I refused to think about Joy Springs or the confrontation until I was home.

“This is a pretty damn good burger.” Michael said and laughed at his own proclamation.

“I wasn’t sure if it was. I haven’t eaten anything since last night. Right now, I’d eat anything.”

“Yeah, well, trust me, it’s good,” He wiped the grease off his hands with a napkin. “What made you come through Texas in the first place? You come here for the barbeque?”

“Work. I got a little lost while on my way home from Nevada. The cops stopped me and accused me of being drunk.”

“Then they lose the evidence and claim the video camera malfunctioned. Everything goes away for them. I hope you win this case, Maxx. Those women need to be in jail, especially that Joy Springs. What a misandrist! She was so smug when she said you didn’t have a case, then she saw that video. She can’t ignore the evidence now.”

“I’m glad I don’t have to think about it anymore. I came back. I faced my fear, so to speak. Now I can go home and try to live again. I kinda feel excited about it.”

“That’s good. I’m happy for you, man.”

“Again, Michael, I appreciate you for coming with me. This trip has done wonders for me. I can’t wait to get back home.”

“Me, too. I’m going to take a shower and have a good night’s sleep with all this meat in my stomach.”

I wiped my mouth with a napkin and asked, “I know we’ve talked before, but only about VAMA. How old are you, Michael?”

“I’m twenty-two.”

“And Jane? It doesn’t matter or anything like that. I’m genuinely curious.”

“She’s twenty-nine.”

“And you have a child, right? My friend Jeff said you two go to the same Daddy and Me class.”

“Yeah. His name’s Lamar. He’s four and knows everything about life.”

“I guess you had him when you were young?”

“Yeah, pretty young. His mom and I aren’t together anymore, but we’re still friends. Her name’s Larissa. She’s probably my best friend. Helped me through a tough time in high school, that’s how we ended up making Lamar. She stuck by me in the lowest point of my life. At least, so far. She’s a good mom and we make it work for him.”

“How did you become Jane’s assistant?”

“It’s a long story, but the short version is I tried to help an innocent man get out of prison. I wasn’t successful, he’s still there. I met Jane at a men’s conference when I was researching his case. We got to talking and she mentioned she needed an assistant. The rest is history. When she hired me, I applied at the school and got in. So, I’m a student and her assistant. It’s a pretty good life for me and my son.”

I shook my head. I didn’t question him further since it was a painful subject for him, but it seemed like he managed to pull through something horrible at a young age. I felt inspired to fix my life. I discovered everyone around me carried a secret shame and it was nothing to be ashamed of. We talked about mundane things such as sports and magazines while we waited. All of the serious issues were pushed aside. We watched the rest of the football game and cheered for the better team. Michael was a typical guy who was single. He loved being with his son and working while he contemplated what to do after college graduation. We drank a couple of beers together. My medication wore off, but I felt more like myself, more in control. It felt good for my soul to sit in that small pub and bond with another human being. I kept myself shut away for almost a year and I couldn’t do it anymore. This was the first step in reclaiming my life.

Jeff

“Dad? I think I need, um, sperm...control.”

The words threw Jeffrey Brighton’s life out of control. A heat waded rushed over his body like a tsunami and turned his cheeks bright red. His hands and feet went numb, and he was temporarily lost for words. Inside his mind, he shouted, *Fuck! Be a fucking nightmare! Please let me wake up from this nightmare! Please!*

It was the first time one of his sons required sperm control. Ricky was fifteen and not sexually active. Or so Jeff thought. He was a good looking kid. Resembled his father. Both had short black hair, olive complexions, perfect facial features, and athletically built. Once he took a few deep breaths and got over the initial shock, he realized Ricky was only being smart in asking for sperm control. Currently, Jeff was a happy househusband and adored the role. In fact, he preferred his wife to work while he took care of the kids. When he was a child, he saw a movie about a man who cared for the entire family, from cooking to cleaning. The movie centered on his day as the one who stayed at home, taking care of his wife and children. The notion of it left him wonderstruck. He became enraptured with the idea of staying at home during the day to make the house perfect for his loved ones. Through cooking classes and various other home economics courses, he learned how to run a home like a well-oiled ship. He was meant to be a husband and a dad, but he never expected the problems that came with teenagers.

“Dad? Did you hear me?” asked Ricky in a smaller voice.

On the second floor of their dilapidated townhouse, three of Jeff’s four children fought over a videogame controller. Collene was thirteen, Mikey was ten, and little Cassidy was six. Mikey refused to relinquish the controller to Cassidy. In response, Cassidy hit him. There were plenty of controllers to go around and Jeff felt seriously pissed off at his kids for fighting over the stupidest things. They were too old to fight. His brown eyes rolled backwards with frustration as he struggled to listen to his fifteen-year-old son.

“What the fuck did you just say?” he asked as his eyes widened with shock.

“I said I need sperm control.”

His knees buckled underneath him and dread washed over his body. He sat down hard on a chair matching the breakfast nook. “Wha...please tell me this is a joke.”

“Come on, dad. Don’t freak out on me,” he begged. “You said I could always come to you if I needed help”

“Ricky, you told me you weren’t having sex with Corrine.”

“Oh, I’m not!” he said with wide eyes and shook his head. “I promise. It’s not for sex.”

“Then what’s it for?”

Ricky looked down in embarrassment and said, “Well, um, I, um...”

“It’s okay, Ricky. You can tell me.”

“I have...leakage in the morning.”

“Oh,” he shook his head with understanding. Upstairs, the kids continued to fight over the controller. It irritated him to the point where he shouted up the stairs, “Okay guys, listen up! First off, stop fighting! I can’t take the screaming. Second off, separate. I want everyone to go into their rooms and cool off. And no video games!”

The door opened upstairs. Collene, Cassidy, and Mikey separated from each other as Jeff instructed. He heard their footsteps, whispered words of malice, but the doors were slammed shut. When he was satisfied his children were separated, he turned back to Ricky. The young man really was identical to Jeff in his youth. At one time, Jeff was once considered a hot guy with tight abs, muscled arms, and killer smile. Now, he was a thirty-three-year-old guy who felt

and looked like he was in his last stage in life. His abs were no longer tight, he had arm fat, and his smile turned yellow from all the years of smoking cigarettes. Unfortunately, Jeff turned into one of those parents who live vicariously through their children.

“How long has this been happening?” he asked with a lower tone.

“Almost two weeks.”

“Two weeks!” Jeff exclaimed and immediately regretted his reaction. In a calmer voice, he said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to shout. I was surprised, but now I’m not. So...why didn’t you tell me this before? It’s nothing to be ashamed of, you know? It’s natural and happens to every guy.”

“I know, but the girls make fun of the guys all the time about it. I don’t want anyone to know.”

“Rick, we’ve talked about this. When sperm starts leaking out, we have to find you a guynecologist. This has to be reported. I’ll take you to get the sperm control, but you can’t wait on stuff like this.”

“Um, okay. I guess.”

“My guynecologist is Mark Steadman. I’ve been with him since I was twenty. I’ll make an appointment for you.”

“You will?” Ricky asked with surprise.

“Yeah, but I don’t want you to use it as an excuse to have sex. Do you understand me, son? If things get serious between you and Corrine, I want you to tell me. I won’t be mad, as long as you tell me the truth.”

“I promise, dad. Besides, I don’t wanna have sex.”

“Yeah, that’s what they all say.” Jeff sneered.

“No, dad, I’m serious. I remember our talks about how hard it is being a parent. No offense to you or mom, but I don’t want that for myself. I want to graduate high school and get the hell out of this city.” he chuckled.

“What’s wrong with New York? I thought you loved it here?”

“I do, just not the kids I go to school with. They don’t really like me. And I don’t really like them. Can’t wait to get out of high school.”

“I know it sucks, but high school will end, I promise. I don’t envy you in that aspect. I hated high school. Like being locked inside a prison. I hope it hasn’t swayed you from college.”

“No. I’m actually looking forward to that.”

“Good. Then, I’ll make the appointment for the sperm control. Just remember to talk to me. Alright?”

“Okay.”

“Is our awkward conversation finished?” Jeff chuckled.

Ricky seemed to relax when he made the joke. “I hope so. Um, you’re not going to tell mom, are you?”

“I have to. Her insurance is gonna pay for the pills. Besides, she’s your mom. I think she’ll want to know.”

“That’s what I was afraid of.” he said and ran up the stairs.

It was a shame the day was still young. If it were bedtime, the house would be silent. During the day, the kids were up, usually around the house or in need to be taken somewhere, and Sandie wasn’t there to watch them. So he sat on the couch and waited for his wife of fifteen years, Sandie, short for Cassandra, to come home. Long ago, they were high school sweethearts living a hot and heavy teenage relationship until he impregnated Sandie right after her seventeenth birthday. Back then, teenagers were forced to marry if a girl became pregnant, which

Jeff and Sandie did, however, they were in love and didn't need anyone to tell them to get married. True Love. It was the glue keeping their relationship together, and as the years went on, they needed as much glue as they could muster. After Ricky was born, Sandie went on to get her real estate license and earned enough money to support the family. As each child was born, it became tough for them to maintain financial stability. Student loans, rent, bills, and saving for their retirement kept the family living paycheck to paycheck. His biggest regret was not having the money to create a college fund for their kids.

Their townhouse was cramped, old, and located in a less than desirable section of the city, but the neighborhood was decent and the rent was cheap. It was two stories with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Jeff and Sandie's bedroom was on the main level, behind the kitchen, and the children slept in the rooms upstairs. When Cassidy turned four, Jeff demanded the girls share a room so he could have the last bedroom as an office. Sandie supported his decision, agreeing he needed his own space since he took care of the kids round the clock. The room became his sanctuary despite the noisy neighbors bordering both sides of the house. A young college student with a techno band lived on the left side, however, they didn't play typical techno music. They played one-bit music which was a compilation of computer dings and pings made to music. Then there was the loud newlywed couple that lived to the right.

When Sandie came home, she dismissed her husband with a wave of her newly manicured hand. She didn't care if he was visibly upset. Her arms were loaded with packages from her shopping trip. She sauntered into their twelve hundred square foot house, right into the kitchen.

"Oh, not now, Jeff. I'm in a good mood."

"I can see that. Enjoy spending the grocery money?"

"Ha ha." she replied with a deadpan tone.

"I need to talk to you about something important." he said and grabbed a bottle of cold beer.

She placed the bags on top of the empty kitchen counter and looked at her husband with dismay. "Whatever it is can wait."

"Ricky asked me to get him sperm control." he blurted out.

She turned around slowly to face him. "What did you say?"

He raised his bottle into the air as if he were giving a toast. "Our fifteen-year-old son's sperm is becoming uncontrollable for him. And by law, he's required to get it under control. Because, you know, every seed is precious."

Sandie shook her head with disgust. Her eyes widened and her tongue hung out of her mouth as she moved her head. She looked like a choking alien. He couldn't help but giggle at the expression on her face. She snapped at him. "You think this is funny, do you?"

He shook his head, but continued to giggle. He made up a lie because he didn't want to admit to his wife he was indeed laughing at her. The secret to their relationship was knowing when to fight and when to fold. He folded. "No, baby. I don't think this is funny. I laugh because I'm glad it's not me in this situation, again. I feel bad for the kid. He's got the rest of his life to worry about this. Since women outlawed masturbation, it's tough being a guy in puberty. Just think about it, if a guy masturbates, aside from his allotted time, then it's considered abortion. At this point, I'm glad I'm fixed."

"Your point?" she waved her hand at him.

"It's tough being a guy in a world ruled by women. I mean, I married you because I truly love you, not because we were forced to. You know?"

"That's nice of you to say." she whispered as she stared out the kitchen window.

"What?" he took a sip of beer.

“You said that you married me because you truly loved me. That was nice of you to say. It made my heart tingle.” she giggled as she folded her hand over her chest.

“Well, I meant it. I never wanted to live another day without you when we found out you were pregnant. I love you Sandie.” He felt her passion for him stir and pulled his wife close for a kiss, but was distracted when he heard his youngest daughter, Cassidy, called for him. He stopped right before he reached her lips. The expression of annoyance was clear as a glass window pane on her face.

“Goddess! What does she want?” Sandie sighed with frustration.

“I don’t know, but parenting calls.” he chuckled and pulled away.

He left the kitchen, rounded the corner, walked down the hallway to the front door, and went up the stairs to his daughter’s room. He left Sandie behind to do her thing, which she normally did while Jeff took care of the children. “What’s wrong?” he asked.

“Collene told me to shut up!” Cassidy wailed. “Then she pushed me aside. She hurt me!”

He gathered his small daughter into his arms. “It’s alright, baby. Collene!”

“What?” Shouts came from the room at the end of the hallway, behind the door leading into the bathroom.

“Get out here!” he shouted.

She threw her door open in exasperation. “What?”

“Did you hit your sister?”

“Well, she wouldn’t move out of my way!” Collene tried to defend herself.

“Oh, my Goddess, Collene. She’s six years old! Apologize to your sister.” he instructed.

“Fine,” she snapped and looked at Cassidy in a mocking way. “I’m sorry. There. Happy now?”

She slammed the door shut on them. The room across the hall from the girls belonged to Mikey and Ricky. They had the door open, watching the scene in front of them as if it were an entertaining movie. All they needed was popcorn. Their expression of amusement mixed with amazement resembled Jeff’s expression. The boys didn’t understand Collene’s moodiness and drama. If her fingernail broke before school started, it was a colossal problem.

He wondered what was going on behind her closed door. It felt like he lived with the little possessed girl in a movie he watched. This was his life, and for better or worse, he loved every second of it.

Taylor

“Tell me the truth. You’re a werewolf. Aren’t you?” Rebecca asked Hamilton with trepidation.

“What makes you think I am a...werewolf?” he whispered.

Rebecca’s velvet red dress hugged her hips, waist, and breasts. It accentuated her voluptuous body and highlighted her long curves. She waved a black satin fan in front of her petite face to prevent the heat from taking over. She replied, “Well, I could be wrong, but, last night, I, I saw you...naked in the moonlight. There was hair...all over your body and...you had long fingernails.”

“Maybe I am a hairy man who likes to be naked when the moon rises,” he said with a cunning smile. He stepped closer to Rebecca. “Tell me, Mrs. Corday, did you like what you saw?”

Her face scrunched with shock. Hamilton laughed playfully at her innocent reaction. Their eyes met and triggered a silent passion. Rebecca’s lingering gaze refused to break away. He took advantage of the moment and slowly took off his tattered grey jacket. He held her eyes as he unbuttoned his shirt.

“Please, Hamilton. I don’t want to hurt my husband.”

“No one will know. I promise no one will discover our secret.” he said as he revealed his bare chest.

“No. I can’t.” she protested weakly.

“I love you, Rebecca. I can’t live the rest of my life without knowing your touch. Please, Rebecca. Come to me.”

Her eyes watered as she took a step towards him. The light from the fire kept their silhouettes hidden safely in the darkness. No one would see them. No one would know their secret.

“CUT!” the director shouted at the top of her lungs. “I think we got that scene nailed, people. Bob, roll that back so I can see the footage.”

“How’s my makeup?” Rebecca asked her assistant after the cut was called. She spun around and sauntered from the set, her breasts bounced in a tight corset. Her real name wasn’t Rebecca, it was Sally Anderson. Her character, Rebecca Corday, was the most popular character on daytime television. Hamilton Ledger, played by the smoldering Brad Whymer, was her tortured lover. When her assistant verified her makeup was still perfect, she asked, “Where’s Taylor?”

“I’m here.” Taylor Garcia said as he walked onto the stage.

“How did I look? Was I on point?”

“Don’t worry. You looked beautiful. Your cheekbones were so high! And you really brought Rebecca to life.”

She asked him with doubt. “No way.”

“I felt like I was actually watching the real Rebecca.”

She let out a sigh of relief. “Okay. Thanks, T. I’m going to watch the playback.”

Sally and Taylor worked as actors for the popular daytime soap opera, *Life in the Moonlight*. He played a small role that paid the bills and made him happy. She was on the cusp of becoming a major star with a lead role on the show. Their backstories were far from similar. Taylor moved from San Antonio, Texas to New York at the age of eighteen with dreams of becoming an actor and Sally was a New Yorker born into privilege. His family breed from a strong Hispanic heritage, so leaving his family in Texas was difficult. Every Sunday and Wednesday, he called his family to check up on them, and he traveled to Brooklyn every Sunday morning to take his only living grandmother to church and spent the day with her. Sally only spoke to her parents if she found herself in desperate need of money. Taylor was particularly close to his father, Manuel. His mother, Sonja, brought him up to be a strong and respectful young man. His sisters,

Valencia and Lucia, were older and lived close to their parents. His strong Hispanic heritage was evident in Taylor's looks. He had shiny black hair, dark brown skin, brown eyes, and spoke with a slight Hispanic accent. When it was required, he wore old fashioned black rimmed glasses. The first half of his life was spent speaking only Spanish, something his mother preferred. She didn't want him to lose sight of where he came from, so she insisted he retain the knowledge. He never met Sally's parents.

Two years after moving to New York, he was hired as a small bit player for a movie. It was great experience for him to add to the old resume and his parents were impressed with their son. A couple of years later, Taylor auditioned for a role in *Life in the Moonlight* and won a small part on the soap opera. The leading actress, Sally Armstrong, seemed to like him so they went out on a couple of dates. She made him laugh all the time. It was a wonderful friendship that made him happy despite the pain of being homesick. Two weeks after meeting, Sally declared her love for him. He did love her, but only as a friend. To avoid losing Sally and their friendship, he declared his love for her in kind.

After the director called an end to the day, Sally pulled him aside and they left the studio together. When *Life in the Moonlight* became the number one soap opera, the studio provided Sally with a personal limo she used at every opportunity, even to retrieve her mail. Anytime Sally received special treatment due to her star status, she simply beamed with pleasure. In the limo, she spoke of nothing but her career. Her long curly blonde hair nestled perfectly against her milky white skin and she pursed her lips at him seductively. In an instant, she was in his lap and kissing his lips.

She moaned and said, "I'm going to be so fucking famous, baby! This show is going to make my career. As soon as a movie deal comes in, and it will, I'm going to quit that stupid little soapy show and move into the big leagues!"

He smiled sincerely at her. "You deserve it."

"And you're going to be famous, too. Everyone's going to know we're together. They'll want to talk to you about me. Can you image the interviews people will want?"

"I think I can handle it."

Sally rubbed her face on his neck and whispered, "Oh, T. Tell me I get to ride that when we get back to the room."

"Oh, you can ride it." he laughed.

They made out until the limo reached the hotel entrance. The paparazzi wasn't there, much to Sally's dismay, but Taylor assured her flashing lights and reporters stalking her every move was in the immediate future. They got into the elevator and Sally took off her clothes before the doors closed. Taylor shouted with fake embarrassment as she unbuttoned his pants and got on her knees. When the doors opened, Sally pulled up his pants and practically dragged him to her door. She slid her card key into the slot, opened the door when the light turned green, grabbed him by his shirt, and pushed him inside the room.

She commanded him to get on the bed and went into the bathroom. Normally, Sally didn't stay in a hotel, but she insisted the show pay for it since she was scheduled to appear on a talk show the next day. When she finally emerged, she wore lacey white lingerie with a garter belt. It took his breath away to see Sally's slim body in such revealing lingerie. His eyes focused so much on her body that he almost missed the small digital camera in her hands. He recognized the camera as the one he gave her as a present.

"What's up with the camera?"

"I want to record this, baby." Sally whispered.

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