

Prologue

Chris Westbrook sat quietly in his favorite cushioned chair holding a note left behind by his former girlfriend. Leaning his head back, his mind drifted to all the events which led to her brief departure. Chris knew that he had been good to her. Treated her like a woman, like a queen, but she wanted more. It wasn't money that attracted her. No. She wanted his time and attention. Chris' long periods of absences didn't sit well with her, so she left.

Chris had been in law enforcement before looking for the slower and quieter job in security and became quite good at it. It wasn't until he, by chance, took a job protecting a CEO that he became well known. He slipped onto the radar of the United States Secret Service, who kept their eyes on each of his jobs, until a few years later, they offered him a job working for the government. He had gained so much experience and became so good at his job that he earned the nick name, "*The Bodyguard.*" He was well trained in hand to hand combat and specialized in the use of weapons, making him important to missions of National Security.

Chris met Dawn Scott on one of his assignments. With a little time together, they began dating. And when he came back to Philadelphia, Dawn traveled with him and eventually fell in love. It all seemed so serious, with Chris meeting her parents and gaining their approval, and even toyed with the thought of marriage. It all changed when the jobs started coming in. If he didn't have to travel with the President, then he had national security missions, which put a strain on their relationship. No matter how many upscale places he took her to, or even the influential people she met through him, it didn't seem to help their love. He confessed to her that he could spend the rest of his life with her, but she still left and now Chris was upset and lost without her. He lost the woman he loved and he wanted to go after her and bring her back, and

marry her. Just then his cell phone rang and he quickly answered it, hoping that it was Dawn, hoping he could talk her into coming back home. “Mister Westbrook, I'm agent Green. The President needs you. Come to the usual meeting place and we'll pick you up from there.” Chris sighed heavily and pushed the end button to conclude the call, feeling frustrated and angry. Dawn knew what he did for a living. He never kept anything from her. “Damn it, Dawn! You know I love you and I will find you, when this assignment is over, I'll be right there telling you how much I need you,” he said with a tone of determination.

#

Dawn shut down her computer and made sure her paperwork was neatly put away in her filing cabinet. She worked as a secretary for a pharmaceutical company since moving from Philadelphia over four years ago. She'd all, but forgotten about Chris. Deep down she loved him and wanted to be with him, but she couldn't for the life of her understanding, why she had a need to be the center of a man's attention, especially Chris'. She wanted him to come get her so much, but after how she'd acted, also accused him of neglecting her, made her feel cheap and selfish, when the truth was that no man loved her better.

Moving back to her parent's home in Hampton, Florida, allowed her the time she wanted to get herself together, also a chance for Chris to come find her, but after four years, he hadn't come for her. After securing her office, she walked to the elevator, saying goodnight to her co-workers and friends. Dawn had decided to move on with her life and try to put together the happiness she once had some time before. The elevator doors opened and she got on. She thought that her parents were right. She should have went back to Chris and convinced him that they have something special together, and how much she loved him and wanted to stay with him.

Dawn was leaving twenty minutes early and most of the employees cars were still parked in their spaces. Exiting the elevator, she walked towards her car and noticed a black infinity blocking her burgundy SUV. Frustration set in as Dawn looked around, hoping that driver would magically appear. She stood there a few minutes waiting, before she would call security to have the car towed. Just then, a handsome, tall, brown skinned man walked up to catch Dawn's frustrated stare. She noticed how well dressed he was in his suit and wondered if he worked there, because he should know the rules of the garage. Even though he caught her eye, she wasn't interested and just wanted to go home. It was an hour drive to her parents house and the traffic would be bad enough without getting caught in the rush hour.

“I've been waiting here to get out for the last fifteen minutes. Why would you block me in?”

Looking her over, he saw that she was beautiful. Her powder blue blouse and gray jacket and mini skirt made her look even more beautiful, showing the shape of her hips. Her jet black hair was down to her shoulders and was curled at the ends. Her black purse dangled from her left shoulder and her black framed glasses were pushed up above her brow.

“I'm sorry, but I was running late and had to park somewhere,” he apologized. “I was applying for a position here.” He couldn't take his eyes away from her soft brown eyes and the lovely figure of her body.

“Well, did you get the job?”

“Yes, thank you. I did,” he said. “By the way, you are absolutely beautiful.”

Dawn, out of habit when she flirted, would brush back the hair from her face. “Don't

change the subject.”

“Did you have any plans for dinner tonight?”

“Excuse me, but what did you ask me?”

“Do you have any plans for tonight?,” he repeated.

“What business is it of yours?” Dawn was still annoyed, but a part of her was still flattered.

“Because I would love to take you to dinner and talk about the concert,” he offered.

“What concert?,” she curiously asked with her arms folded across her chest.

“The one that I'd love to take you to,” he told her.

“That still doesn't tell me why I should go out with you.”

“Because I'm handsome and you're beautiful,” he told her. “We make a perfect couple.”

“We do?”

“Yes. I'm Allen Hawkins, by the way,” he said introducing himself.

“Dawn Scott.”

“So?”

“Okay,” she said, hoping not to regret the decision she made.

Chapter One

The Summer breeze of June felt good bringing the notion of the warm days ahead. One year had passed since that day in the parking garage and Dawn was now married to Allen Hawkins. They had a beautiful house in Hampton, almost like the one she dreamed of. The white picket fence and the lush green lawn ranch style house that modeled after her parent's house. Their engagement was short before they got married and Dawn's parents didn't approve of Allen, but for the sake of their daughter, they did not voice their opinion. Allen and Dawn still worked at Howard Pharmaceutical, making good money, which let them live a good life style. The only problem was that Dawn's obsessive need for attention stirred up again, putting a wedge between them. Allen became tired of her constant complaining and questioning his love for her. Although he loved her dearly, it was hard to keep her happy. Dawn had fell out of love with Allen and even her sexual desire had disappeared for him. She wanted a divorce and was relieved when Allen agreed to give her one. Dawn knew that she had to change. She had to become a new person, if she wanted to have happy life. She wanted and realized that she needed Chris in her life. Over the years he stayed in the back of her mind and still had a piece of her heart. There were some nights when her dreams were of Chris and a few times she almost cried out his name when she had made love to Allen. It was Chris that became her driving force, but she didn't have the heart to tell Allen.

Allen was in the living room this Saturday evening relaxing when Dawn walked in looking for her car keys. "Where are you going?," he asked watching her. "Shopping," she said finding them in the small table drawer.

"Do you need me to go with you?"

“No, but I do need to talk to you when I come back,” she told him.

#

Dawn was sitting in her car when her cell phone rang. It was her mother asking if she was okay. She told her mother about the divorce and about looking for Chris when it was final. Her mother was excited and happy for her, because she knew how much she loved him. She informed Dawn that she had talked to Chris a couple times a year ago. Dawn's heart jumped with excitement in hearing that he asked about her. She thought he didn't care about her anymore, but now knowing that he did would make it easier for her.

The supermarket was a few blocks away and she enjoyed that time away from Allen, to think about things and make plans. The Nu-way supermarket was quiet and only a few shoppers were in buying their groceries. Two young cashiers stood at the register seven talking and laughing about the young woman, who was working cash register one. They watched Dawn walk in with her cart as she mumbled to herself. She walked over to the far isle looking at the variety of meats. Taking her time, Dawn looked for what she wanted and then checked the prices. The soft music played and she felt more relaxed. Her thoughts of Chris made her smile and it would be easier to tell Allen about Chris. Hearing a man mumbling to himself made her take notice of him. He stood a little further down the isle from her and was very nervous. She shook her head and continued with her shopping.

Paul Rodgers nervously looked down both ends of the isle hoping that he had not been seen going into the supermarket. He knew that someone had been following him, but he didn't know who. He worked in the financial district of Hampton, having a good life, but his greed had gotten the best of him. When the cartel asked him to launder money for them, he thought it

would be a quick way to get rich. Little by little, he kept back some money for himself, tucking it away in a private bank account waiting for it to build up enough so that he could live like a king on some island. He knew skimming off the top from the Rodriguez cartel proved harder than he thought. So much money was passing through his hands and Paul didn't think anyone would notice, but they did. Now his life was in danger and he didn't know what to do. He called the F.B.I., but he knew they wouldn't reach him in time.

Antonio Rodriguez stepped into the isle looking at Paul, who had his back turned to him. His black trench coat draped down like a robe. His dark hair and eyes along with his tanned features made him look very attractive. Growing up in the cartel opened his life to violence in so much that it didn't bother him. His uncle had made him an enforcer for anyone who were trouble. This was his first trip to the States and his uncle wanted that money. He wanted to take Paul alive, but it was too dangerous for him. He hoped he had the information on him, so it would be easy to just kill him.

Paul nervously walked over to Dawn hoping that she could help him. It was the only way to ensure his life. Bumping into her, he whispered, "Please help me." Dawn looked at him seeing how scared he was and believed that he could be in trouble. "Are you alright? Is something wrong?"

"I need your help to get me out of here," Paul nervously told her.

"I can walk you to the front if you like," Dawn offered.

Just then Paul spotted a man standing in the isle with them and made his way into another isle.

"Paul," Antonio whispered.

Slowly turning around, Paul froze in seeing the man who could and would kill him. The man he was first warned about if he tried anything and now he was face to face with him.

“Antonio, look. I was going to see Michael.”

“Sure you were my friend. Sure you were,” Antonio said. “That is why you ran.”

“I was scared. I thought you wouldn't let me explain before I saw him,” Paul said.

“You stole our money and he doesn't want to see you. If you give me the bank account, maybe I'll feel generous to let you live,” Antonio said reaching into his pocket. “I never did trust you. I knew you were a greedy coward.”

“Antonio, I'll get the money. Just let me live,” Paul pleaded as Antonio pulled out his gun.

“You should have thought about that before you stole our money,” Antonio said, his accent was thick and heavy. He smiled ever so slightly before firing two shots into Paul's chest. Falling to the floor, he attracted Dawn's attention, causing her to come into the isle concerned about his fate and bumped into Antonio. She stared into his face, taking in his features. The way his hair was combed, the small scar on his right cheek.

A witness was something that wouldn't be tolerated as Antonio pointed his gun at her. She didn't see the gun at first, but realized that she was only seconds away from death, until a stock boy ran into the isle receiving a shot to his chest dropping him quickly. Dawn screamed and Antonio fled as she slid down to the floor crying.

Allen impatiently paced the living room floor waiting for his wife to return. He knew it didn't take hours to do her shopping. It never took her that long before, so he knew that something was wrong. He also knew Dawn wouldn't run off with anyone, or by herself. The telephone rang and he quickly walked over and answered it expecting to hear Dawn's voice.

“Hello. Is this Mr. Allen Hawkins?,” a man's voice asked.

“Ye...yes.”

“Your wife has been involved in a incident and we need you to come down the eighth district police station.”

“Sure. Sure.”

“The station is located on the forty-two hundred block of Spain Street, at the corner of Irving.”

“I'll be right there.” Allen hung up the phone, feeling awful about what his wife could be going through.

#

Dawn sat quietly in an interrogation room. The walls were painted a dull gray color and the small metal table in the middle of it made her realize the seriousness of her situation. The vision of the two men laying dead on the floor of the supermarket played havoc on her mind. She tried to ignore it as she picked up her cup of water. Her hands trembled, spilling a little. Her heart was still racing a little thinking about the man who wanted to kill her. When she was told who he was from her description, she almost fainted. Dawn knew that he would come after her and kill her. They assured her that they would keep her safe and that they contacted the F.B.I.

Allen walked into the police station looking around for any sign of his wife. He walked up to the main desk and stood there.”

“Excuse me, are you Mr. Hawkins?,” a man's voice asked.

Allen turned around facing a man wearing a sweat shirt and a pair of jeans. His blonde hair was pushed to the side and his blue eyes sparked from the light. "Who are you?" Allen asked.

"I'm detective Brian Richardson," he said extending out his hand.

Allen shook it, but his mind was on his wife and her safety. "Can I see my wife now?"

"Yes, but I need to talk to you first," Brian said nodding over to an empty bench. "Do you mind if we sit?"

They walked over and sat down as Brian thought of what to say. He was a eight year seasoned vet, knowing how to handle different situations. "Mr. Hawkins, your wife witnessed a murder that almost cost her life," he told him.

"Oh my, God! Is she okay?" All kinds of thoughts were running through his mind.

"She's shaken up, but other than that, she is fine. She helped us identify the person, but it's now more complicated."

"I don't care about all of that. How is my wife?"

"I assure you that she's alright," Brian said.

"I would like to see her now!"

"Sure," Brian said standing up. He wanted to make sure that every fact was known, but with Mr. Hawkins' impatience, it would be impossible.

Allen followed detective Richardson down the hall to a room, marked interrogation room one. He became upset, but quickly calmed down seeing his wife sitting at the table. They walked in, shutting the door behind them. Allen looked at her sitting there crying with her head on the table.

“Dawn, are you... Are you alright?,” he asked softly.

She looked up at her husband and instantly leaped up and held him, sobbing. She was going to divorce him, but with what she'd been through. She was happy to see a familiar face. She tried to speak, say a word, but nothing came out. Allen held her tightly as she released her tears.

“I need to talk to you both, if you can sit down, I'll make this quick,” Brian said.

Dawn grabbed a few tissues from the box on the table and sat down along with her husband. Allen wrapped his arm around her and held her close as detective Richardson leaned on the table.

“The captain called the F.B.I. And they will be sending an agent to take Mrs. Hawkins into protective custody,” Brian told them.

“What does that mean?,” she asked.

“Antonio Rodriguez is the nephew of Michael Rodriguez and he runs one of the largest drug cartels in Columbia. You are a threat because you can put Antonio away. So they will do anything to get you out of the way.”

“When will he be here?,” Allen curiously asked.

“Sometime tomorrow afternoon,” Brian said.

Dawn held her head wondering how everything went so wrong so fast.

“Why so long?,” Allen asked.

“They have to get a hold of him. He is the best in the business.”

Dawn thought about Chris and suddenly felt a warmth go through her. Her feeling of dread was drifting away. She wondered if it would be him.

“Mr. Hawkins, we will do the same for you. Even though your wife is the main target, they

may come after you to get to her. So you'll be going with our officers and they will take you home to pack, but right now there are officers at your house gathering clothes for you, Mrs. Hawkins," Brian explained.

"So, this is happening," Dawn commented. "This is a nightmare and I don't know when this will end."

"It'll be alright, Dawn. You'll make it through this," Allen told her.

Chapter Two

The early morning sun was just over the Philadelphia skyline. The streets of West Philadelphia was set with people heading for work, shopping, and neighborhood stores either opened or opening. A brown and white two story house was at the corner of Simpson Street in the Overbrook section of the city, were Chris Westbrook lived. The house was nicely decorated, but really needed a woman's touch. Plaques and awards hung on the walls in the living room and on his coffee table sat his weapon, fully loaded. The sun light peered in through the window waking him. He opened his eyes slowly feeling the pounding in his head. He glanced around seeing empty bottles of beer and a couple of liquor bottles, along with a couple of pizza boxes with a few half eaten slices. The wall clock chime told him that his flight would be leaving in a few hours. He did not want to go, he had to be on that plane. Joseph Henderson, his long time best friend had spent the night offering condolences over his new assignment. Sitting up, Chris decided that since he had to go, he might as well get it done. Staggering in the kitchen, he made himself a pot of coffee, then jumped into the shower. After getting dressed, Chris looked into the mirror seeing how tired he looked. While brushing his teeth, the thought of seeing her again troubled him. It had taken a lot to get over her, even though he could never truly keep her out of his mind, but now they would be forced to be together.

Chris had been working for the government for the past eleven years guarding important people, including the President of the United States. Being labeled as the bodyguard, Chris knew what it took to be the best. He never let his feelings get involved with his assignments, and now he wasn't sure if he could complete this one.

After cleaning the living room, he sat down with is coffee. His ride to the airport would

arrive soon and his suitcase was already packed and sitting by the front door. Glancing at the photo he had on his counter, he saw how happy they once was. It had been taken two days after she moved in with him. He'd never been more excited, with this new relationship, and how she wanted to see every sight in the city. Chris was however curious to know what she had been doing since she left, besides getting married. He also wondered how he would react to seeing her again. There was knock at his door, taking him away from his thoughts and questions, leaving a lot of blanks in his mind. Chris sigh and grabbed his coffee cup, finishing the last of it, before taking his suitcase and leaving.

#

Dawn sat at the table I the interrogation room. Brian thought it would be the safest place for her just in case the cartel decided to come for her there. The station was on high alert and everyone was watching for any signs of trouble. Dawn felt alone since Allen was whisked away by federal agents. They let her take a shower in the locker room and change clothes, but being escorted around and being watched made her feel very uncomfortable, but she knew it was only for her protection, so she didn't complain. Looking down at her tray of uneaten food, Dawn thought about her plans that were not going to happen. She wanted to get her divorce and go to her parent's before looking for Chris. "Oh, God. My parents." They needed to know what was going on, but they wouldn't let her tell them. It would jeopardize their lives as well as hers. Pushing the tray from her, she didn't feel like eating. Besides the fact that the food didn't look appetizing at all. All she wanted was this nightmare to be over and wake up to the beautiful life that she had planned all along. Not being a prisoner.

“You should eat something. You've gotta keep your strength up,” Brian said shutting the door. He was wearing a dark gray suit and a white pressed shirt and black tie. His hair was neatly combed, not looking at all messy as it did yesterday.

“I can't eat this. I'm sorry. I just wish he would get here. I'm getting restless sitting here.”

“He'll be here in a few hours, Mrs. Hawkins, don't worry.”

“Brian, do you know who this agent is?”

“No, but he's suppose to be good,” Brian told her.

“I was just curious ,” Dawn said with a sigh.

“You shouldn't worry so much. We'll catch hi and you'll be back home in no time. Just try to relax and I'll get you some real food. How's that sound?”

“That sounds good,” Dawn said sitting back in the chair.

#

The jet that the F.B.I. Used was an hour away from landing at Hampton airport while Chris thought about the meeting he had with Matt Johnson, his supervisor. Matt was a twenty four year agent and this case would add a shinning pin to his career. Bringing down the Rodriguez cartel would advance him in ways that he could not imagine.

Chris sat in the chair facing his desk looking around. He had only been there a couple of times briefly, but now he had to wait for him to arrive. The Secret Service offered a lot, but he enjoyed the freedom of not living in Washington D.C.. Johnson's office always stayed neat without the piles of paperwork on the desk like the other agents. The window gave a splendid view of Independence Hall. There was a blue folder in the center of the desk and Chris was curious to know if the folder had something to do with his new assignment. It would take him

from Philadelphia and he looked forward to it. He needed a change of atmosphere, which would help him keep his mind off of her. Matt Johnson walked into his office looking Chris over. His black plain suit was neatly pressed, his shoes were shined to perfection.

“Do you why you’re here, Agent Westbrook?,” Matt asked as he sat down.

“Yes. You have an assignment for me,” Chris replied.

“This is no ordinary assignment, but the most important one for this office.”

Chris sat up in the chair, more curious and attentive.

“Have you heard of Michael Rodriguez?”

“He's the head of one of the largest drug cartels in Columbia,” he answered.

“Very good,” Matt said with a nod of his head. “Yesterday in the small city of Hampton, a woman witnessed Antonio Rodriguez kill two people. One of those people was Paul Rodgers and the other was a stock boy,” Matt told him.

“Antonio is Michael's nephew I think, but Paul is just a petty crook,” he said.

“Agent...” Matt waved his hand dismissing what he was about to say. “Chris, your job is to protect this witness until we catch Antonio. And if we're lucky, he'll lead us right to Michael.” Matt slide the folder over to him. “This contains all the information about the witness and where you will taking her,” he told him.

Chris took the folder and opened it. After reading a page, he looked at a photo and sighed heavily.

“Is something wrong?”

“I can't except this assignment, Sir,” Chris informed him.

“Why not?,” Matt asked, now sitting up in his chair.

“Sir, I know her. We used to be together and it didn't end well,” Chris explained.

Running a hand over his head, Matt tried not get too upset. The bureau had been working on bringing down the Rodriguez cartel, but until now they had the best lead and no one wanted to pass it up, especially Matt. “Look, Chris! I don't care how you know her, or even how you feel about her. I need this witness to stay alive and you are the only one who can do that. They will come after her and that makes her the most important woman on earth! This is your assignment!,” Matt told him.

“I don't want it. Besides, you have other qualified agents who can handle this,” he told Matt. “Why can't you give it to Lloyd or Woffard?”

Matt stared at him a moment. “I'm only going to say this once! You are the best at this, Westbrook, and I don't care what you have to do, but you will do your job. This comes from the director himself!”

Chris knew there was no way he could get out of it, or avoid it. “Since I can't this, I'll do my job!”

A smile crossed Matt's face. “There is a map. It will show you the way to a private cabin about an hundred miles outside of Hampton. Only a few agents know of its location, so follow it precisely,” Matt explained. “Now this cabin is supplied with everything you'll need for at least a month.”

Sighing, Chris asked, “Who do I report to?”

“When you get on the road and just before you reach the cabin, you'll call agent Henderson. Are there anymore questions?”

“Yes. Who do I see when I get there?”

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