

The Likes of Which You'll Never Know

by Kristin

ACT 1

It was dark and rumbling; that was all Natalia knew. Her head swam. The minute a thought was formed, it was just as quickly washed away. She knew she had arms, legs, and a back that was no doubt aching, but for the life of her she couldn't feel them.

Natalia desperately tried to struggle against the confined space. She quickly discovered that every movement was in vain. It was like struggling against quicksand. Even if she had the strength, there was no way to tell which way was up. Her equilibrium turned and her foot caught the sharp terrain below her. She stumbled and flailed out her hands trying to catch herself only to find she was already lying down.

She couldn't shake the notion that she was making her way to an inferno. Was this purgatory or had she simply passed "Go" and been sent straight to Hell? She focused her attention on the rusted iron gates that loomed high above her. They sang out in high pitched wails as they shook from tremors resonating deep underground. Natalia drove her ear against the flat surface below her attempting to muffle the sound.

Her attention was suddenly drawn to a blade of light that cut through the gates. Slowly it engulfed the entrance, illuminating her entire field of vision. This was God here to save her. Natalia's chin shook awaiting His voice. Her steady breaths echoed through the quiet space. A dark figure drifted weightlessly into the white glow above her. As it loomed closer, she was struck by the realization that this wasn't God at all. A mild wave of nausea numbed her lips and everything fell away.

The last time Olivia was here - staring at a wedding dress lying tauntingly out before her - it was much different. It was in a box, for starters. That box was in a room that Natalia single-handedly occupied. And most importantly, Natalia was here with tears in her eyes and professions of love on the tip of her tongue. *She couldn't have the one thing she wanted.* Olivia had no words for how much she wanted to hear that she was what Natalia wanted. Even now, after all they had been through and the intimacy they had shared, that thought turned lazy flips in her stomach.



The sensation was cut devastatingly short by the reality that Natalia was gone... again. Olivia's confession didn't matter. She could have all the words in the world, and they would do nothing but echo in an empty room.

"You okay?" Doris asked as she placed her hands on Olivia's shoulders from behind. Olivia shook her head 'no' refusing to turn and take her eyes off the dress. She felt Doris' grip tighten

briefly as she let out a breath of understanding.

"How long do you get for killing a priest?" Olivia asked absentmindedly as she finally turned to meet Doris' gaze.

"Too long," Doris answered. "Besides, you don't know for sure that he's had anything to do with this."

Olivia rolled her eyes and paced a few steps away. She didn't want to give the slightest acknowledgement that she believed Doris was most likely right. It was easier to point blame at Father Ray than it was to find some equally painful alternative explanation for Natalia's disappearance.

"We don't have the best track record with weddings," Olivia admitted as she placed her hands on the dresser behind her and leaned back against it. "Natalia locked me in a bathroom during her wedding to Gus. Then the Frank wedding, which you know way too well. And now this."

Doris couldn't help but shake her head.

"Ma'am, please don't touch anything," a man's booming voice startled them. Olivia raised her hands suddenly acquiescing to the young officer's wishes. He nodded at her and then headed back out of the room.

"It's not like I moved anything," Olivia grumbled as she stepped towards Doris. "I mean, they're going to find my fingerprints here anyway. This is my room in my house." Olivia's voice rose as she finished her statement. Doris recognized the shift in Olivia's posture. Her

shoulders tensed and her back straightened. It was only a matter of time before Olivia would be lashing out.

“Ma’am,” the young officer said as he moved into the room again.

“Ms. Spencer,” Olivia corrected him immediately.

“Sorry,” he offered unapologetically. “Ms. Spencer, do you have anything we can pull the victim’s fingerprints from to cross check?”

“Ms. Rivera,” Olivia said firmly. The officer stared at her blankly.

“I thought your name was Spencer,” he stated flatly.

Doris could swear she saw steam shoot forcefully from Olivia’s ears as her face reddened.

“It is,” Olivia stated slowly. “The ‘victim,’ as you so caringly referred to her, is named Natalia Rivera. And I think your best shot at pulling Ms. Rivera’s prints is to dust my ass!”

“Okay, okay.” Doris stepped in, pushing Olivia gently away from the officer. “I think maybe we should go. We should give them some space to do their job.”

Olivia scoffed at Doris’ words but allowed herself to be led out of the room.

Outside the farmhouse, it seemed as though the number of police vehicles had tripled. Olivia spotted Ava walking hand-in-hand with Emma by the old barn. There was so much for Olivia to explain to Emma, again. Everything was repeating itself. Even though Olivia was fully aware that this time was much different, those scars of being left before ached.

“Why don’t you go get your girls, and I’ll take you guys to the Beacon?” Doris asked pulling Olivia’s attention back to her. Olivia shook her head and started to back away. “I know Emma could use the rest,” Doris continued.

Olivia swallowed hard and finally conceded with a nod. She walked purposely over to the barn watching her every step. The numbness had started to kick in making her feel as though she was floating to her destination.

“Hey Ava,” Olivia said as she approached her children. “We’re going to go.”

“We’re going to leave?” Ava questioned quickly. “Why...”

“No argument. We should just go and let them do their job,” Olivia responded. She saw Emma staring up at her biting her lip. “Plus, I want to spend some time with my baby.” She knelt down and opened her arms out. Emma ran over and hugged her mom soundly.

Olivia carried Emma in her arms back to the farmhouse with Ava walking closely behind. All Olivia could hear in her head was Natalia reprimanding her for carrying Emma. She knew she partly did it just to see if Natalia would magically appear scolding her for it.

Doris leaned up against a post on the front porch with a phone to her ear. She said her good-byes and hung up as the family approached.

“There you are,” Doris said placing her phone in her pocket. “That was Blake. She said she's willing to take care of Francesca for a while if you need it.”

“Let's just get to the Beacon,” Olivia answered. “I'll give her a call once we get settled in. I think we would all feel better to have her with us.”

“Yes,” Emma chirped drawing everyone's attention down and inciting the first legitimate group of smiles since the news of Natalia's disappearance.

“I need to speak with Frank before we go,” Olivia stated looking over her shoulder at him. She turned back and met eyes with Doris.

“I'll get the car ready,” Doris said shifting side to side. “Come on, girls.”

Olivia stood back for a moment waiting for Frank to finish his conversation with one of the other officers. Patience was something that had never come naturally to her. Natalia had taught her differently, though. Maybe it was never a matter of having that skill. Maybe Olivia never had anything really worth being patient for, with the exception of Emma, of course. She had always been patient with Emma. With Natalia, it wasn't the same kind of patience. Natalia was really the first one to make Olivia wait for what she desired. And for Natalia, she would happily wait until the end of time.

Frank finally noticed her standing off to the side. He walked over tentatively, unsure of what to expect.

“I just wanted to let you know we're going to the Beacon,” Olivia said crossing her arms. “We want to give you some room to do your job.”

Frank could see Olivia struggling with the words of a plan that was most likely not her own. She winced holding back what she really wanted to say. “If you could please call me the minute you know anything.”

“Sure thing,” Frank answered feeling a momentary bit of pride in being in control. His spirits dropped the moment he saw Olivia’s eyes narrow. She wasn’t able to hold back anymore.

“I’m serious, Frank,” she had warned him. “I go too long without a phone call and you might find me wandering the streets of Springfield with a gun in my hand.”

Frank just nodded his head as she stared him down. Olivia turned and walked towards the car. Doris, Ava, and Emma were already inside and ready to go. She eyed Frank one last time and then got in.

The ride over to the Beacon was very quiet. Doris watched as Olivia stared distraughtly out of her window. She glanced in the rear view mirror to find Ava doing the same. Emma was lying down across the back seat with her head in her sister’s lap.

“How’s it going over there?” Doris asked breaking the silence.

“I shouldn’t have yelled at Leyla like that,” Olivia answered without looking over.

“You were upset. It was understandable.” Doris comforted her.

“Maybe she deserved it,” Ava said surprising both women. “Maybe she’s really just a burden for everyone. Maybe she got kicked out of her parents’ house instead of leaving of her own accord.”

“Ava,” Olivia warned.

“No,” Ava responded immediately. “I don’t want to hear you defend her anymore. We don’t know her. We don’t know why she’s here butting into everyone’s life. And now her behavior has gotten Natalia into trouble – injured or even killed.”

“Ava,” Olivia repeated turning around to look her in the eyes.

Emma’s head turned looking back and forth between her mother and sister. “I like her,” Emma said finally breaking the glare between the women.

Olivia looked down at Emma and offered a closed mouth smile. She faced forward again and settled back into her seat. “Me too,” Olivia said softly.

Mel knocked tentatively on the face of the thick oak door before crossing her arms and resting her weight against it. The office door was wide open revealing a full head of blond,

curly hair hovering over a desk. She watched Beth writing feverishly as she mumbled incoherently to herself.

“So now you're a mad scientist?” Mel asked into the room.

Beth looked up with a scrunched brow and then relaxed at the sight of her business partner. She ran her hand around the back of her neck rubbing as she turned her head to the side.

“I didn't know you were going to be here,” Beth said.

“I had to pick up something I left in my office,” Mel responded moving into the room. She took a seat in one of the leather chairs that sat in front of Beth's desk. “I'm surprised to see you here, considering.”

“I know,” Beth agreed as she sat back and let out a breath. “Philip is very worried about them. He's running around trying to secretly solve every problem. You don't mess with his family.”

“Secretly?” Mel asked.

“He has to tip toe when it comes to Olivia,” Beth responded. “I think he'll be forever trying to make up for his past.”

“Ah,” Mel said as she nodded. “So why are you here?”

“I'm mostly just staying out of the way,” Beth stated as she nudged at the paper in front of her. “I'm really nervous about Dinah's trial too. I thought I would come here and just jot down a few ideas.”

“You're going to be great,” Mel offered reassuringly.

“Are you sure I'm the right person to do the opening statement? You have so much more experience,” Beth asked.

“You know this case better than any of us,” Mel responded placing a hand on the desk. “You have the passion and knowledge that will win this. You're Dinah's best shot. If any of us thought any differently, we wouldn't ask you to represent us.”

Beth smiled at her timidly and let out a breath. She shook her head and rolled her shoulders.

“Okay,” Beth said in a sigh. “I should know better than to argue with an attorney anyway.”

Frank leaned back against his car and scratched the patch of scruff already forming along his chin. Today was definitely not what he expected. Here he was again on a wedding day not knowing where the bride had run off to. The only thing he was sure of was that he wouldn't find her stowed away in a gazebo in the middle of a snow storm with tears in her eyes. Some days he felt that Natalia falling in love with Olivia was the worst thing that happened to him. Other days, like today, made him realize how trivial it had all been.

He caught sight of some movement out by the pond. Leyla was walking up to the farmhouse with her arms wrapped tightly around herself.

“Leyla,” Frank called out. “Where have you been?”

Her eyes connected with his for a moment and then she continued on her path walking away from him.

“Leyla,” Frank said again as he jogged to catch up with her. He placed his hand on her arm to stop her. “Where are you going?”

“Don't touch me,” she responded curtly as she turned out of his reach.

“Hey,” Frank offered defensively. “I just wanted to make sure you're okay.” Leyla didn't speak. She turned and looked away. “I know this is difficult right now, but I need to get a statement from you.”

“Oh, I see,” Leyla said as she rolled her eyes. “You ready?”

Frank nodded.

“Fuck,” she said as she pointed deliberately at him. “Off.”

“You remind me of another Rivera,” Frank said placing his hands on his hips.

“Don't talk about my family like you know them,” Leyla yelled.

Frank let out a light bark and looked her up and down. “I know them a hell of a lot better than you do. I've done more than you can ever imagine to help them. And where were you, Leyla? Where were you when Natalia needed you today?”

Frank immediately regretted the words the minute they left his mouth. He just snapped. Between the stress of the wedding and everyone coming down on him to find Natalia, he was feeling at the end of his rope. He watched the hurt dance across Leyla's eyes and moved to apologize.

"Chief," Frank heard Remy call out. He looked up to see Remy and Anna approaching him. When he turned back, it was too late. Leyla was already making her way down the driveway.

"What's going on?" Remy asked.

Frank dropped his head and kicked at the dirt.

Olivia heard a light knock on the door as she was rocking a sleepy Francesca in her arms. She adjusted the girl and then stood up to answer. "Any chance that's your Ma?" she whispered to the child as she made her way over.

Olivia cracked the door enough to see Doris standing on the other side. She closed it and took off the latch and opened it again. "It's just Aunt Doris," Olivia said to Francesca.

"Just?" Doris teased as she came in. Olivia looked up at her with a raised eyebrow. "I wanted to check on you."

"We're okay," Olivia said as she went back to rocking Francesca. "How was your dinner with Blake?"

"It was fine," Doris responded. "We're all pretty somber right now." Doris rubbed her face, finally feeling the effects of the day. "Blake said to give her a call if you needed anything. Or if you wanted her to take Francesca while you got some rest."

"I don't think I'll be sleeping much," Olivia said as she sat down. "I have Ava here to help too, so I think we'll be okay."

"Well, you know Blake and I would do anything for you," Doris offered. Olivia just looked down at her daughter in her arms. She couldn't help the tears. They slid down her cheeks as she closed her eyes.

"I'm sorry," Doris said with a frown placing her hand on Olivia's forearm.

"I'm okay, I'm okay," Olivia said shaking her head. "We'll get through this. Won't we Sweet Pea?" Olivia held the girl to her a little tighter. "This isn't our first rodeo."

"You know, I'd do it all again in a heartbeat," Doris said.

"What?" Olivia asked.

"The nunnery road trip," she answered. "I mean, it sucked watching you in pain like that. But the passion you have for Natalia and the passion I know she has for you, I would ride to the ends of the earth to make sure you got that back."

Olivia's eyes met Doris' and she knew instantly that the woman was telling the truth. If it wasn't for the wrenching pain in her gut, she would have smiled at her dear friend. Olivia felt how much her life had changed and how distant she was from the pain of even just a year ago.

"It's different this time," Olivia stated as she looked into the distance.

Doris hesitated and then simply nodded in agreement.

ACT 2

Anna stood sternly with her hands on her hips on the front porch of the farmhouse. She watched the last rays of the sunset disappear in the western horizon. Things had spun so quickly out of her control since she had gotten to Springfield. That was something she had dedicated her life to maintaining: control. She had felt powerless on the island with her father and now she was beginning to believe she would never escape it.

She turned and watched Chief Cooper push at the tired lines on his face as he instructed one of the investigative officers. She realized that even though she wasn't well-loved in this town right now, she wasn't going to receive the worst of this. Everyone was going to be expecting so much out of Frank. This wasn't just another missing person. This was the mother of his child. And there wasn't much chance the other mother of his child would be too forgiving unless he delivered quickly.

"Hey Chief," Anna said as she approached Frank. "You doing okay?"

Frank watched her for a moment, a little thrown by someone demonstrating compassion for him. He had felt like the town's punching bag from the moment this had happened.

“Yeah,” he finally answered, nodding his head.

“Do we have anything solid yet?” Anna asked hoping to have something to give her focus. Frank shifted a little on his feet and looked past her.

“Eleni said they found some traces of blood on the handle of the back door,” he told her quietly. “They’re going to take a closer look at it in the lab.”

“So there’s a chance she’s wounded?” Anna questioned.

“What do you think?” Frank responded rhetorically. “This has Edmund written all over it. What frustrates me is that our team is going to bust their ass all night to find evidence. And then in the end, it’s just going to point to him. And by then, God knows where he’s going to be or what he’s done with Natalia.”

“I don’t know,” Anna stated as the different scenarios rotated through her mind. She shifted her weight on her feet and crossed her arms. “That just seems too simple. Edmund would have left his mark. His violence has escalated. He would have left Natalia’s body as some cruel reminder of his power.” Anna pulled out of her haze to find Frank staring at her in fear. She could see he was playing out her words in his mind.

“You’ve got to find your father,” Frank said suddenly. “You’ve got to call him and get him to tell us where Natalia is before it’s too late.”

“Are you serious?” Anna asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Yes!” Frank responded. “We can’t waste any more time.” Anna rolled her eyes and shook her head.

“Sure, Chief, let me just do that,” she responded pulling her phone from her pocket. She placed it to her ear and locked her eyes with his.

“Hi Daddy, it’s your estranged daughter. Oh, I’m fine. How’s the grip strength these days? Good. Good. Look, do you remember that girl that I went to school with that was raped and you covered up the assault? Yeah, her girlfriend was kidnapped. Do you think you can tell me where you hid her?”

Anna held out her phone to Frank and nodded for him to take it. He shook his head as he turned around. He grabbed his coat from the bench and pulled it onto his shoulders. Frank walked past Anna and headed out towards his car.

“Where are you going?” Anna called out after him. He opened the door firmly and glanced up at her.

“Church,” he answered. “You coming?”

Anna shoved her phone back in her coat pocket and ran out to the car.

Eleni approached the square of crime scene tape that marked off a fairly large area just outside the back door of the farmhouse. They had staged bright lights illuminating the area. She watched Detective Boudreau and Crime Scene Technician Burchard in a heated discussion about what appeared to be markings on the ground.

“What’s going on men?” she asked as she placed her hands in her pockets.

“Footprints,” Remy answered.

“And tire tracks,” Burchard followed up. “There are cars all around this property today, but I haven’t seen any back here. I don’t think this is a common place for the homeowners to park.”

Eleni eyed the parallel markings that led through the light covering of wet snow in the back yard to the gravel driveway.

“I agree,” Remy continued. “I’ve never seen Olivia or Natalia pull their car on the grass back here.”

“So if you guys are in agreement, then what’s the discussion about?” Eleni asked moving under the tape.

“Shoes,” Remy responded.

“Shoes?” Eleni repeated. “Isn’t that usually more of a ladies’ territory. Unless you guys…”

Remy just shook his head with a smile. “These markings here. We’re debating whether they’re Nike or Reebok.” He pointed down at a specific impression in the mud.

“Hmm,” Eleni hummed as she bent down to have a closer look. “They’re deeper than I would expect for that shoe size.”

“With the snow fall last night, they most likely wouldn’t have been made until the ground was wet from the melt off this afternoon,” Remy said eyeing the footprint closer.

“Right,” Eleni said standing up. She let out a quick breath doing a visual scan. “Get me full film of the area and cast all the markings.”

Buchard nodded. It wasn't much, but it gave Eleni a little hope that it was at least somewhere to start.

Anna followed closely as Frank strode swiftly up the steps of the church. She checked her watch, noting the church should be just finishing up with evening Mass. As they approached the front, the doors swung open forcefully and a rush of warm air and mixed conversations hit them. Frank looked stunned for a moment. He had been out of it on the way over only saying a few words. He was definitely a man on a mission.

Frank and Anna made their way through the crowd of exiting parishioners. A few stood talking in small groups in the center aisle. Anna trailed Frank as he wove around them and headed straight for the front podium.

“Father,” Frank stated strongly. “We need to speak with you.”

Ray looked up at him for a moment and then his eyes moved to Anna. He watched her hands go to her hips pushing her jacket back and revealing the badge and gun on her belt. He gave a quick nod and then looked back down at a couple of churchgoers that had approached him after the service.

“Well, have a good evening,” he told them. “God bless.” Frank and Anna moved closer to Ray as the parishioners left.

“We need to talk somewhere private,” Frank stated.

“Of course,” Ray agreed and motioned for them to head towards the back.

Ray led them into his office and offered them a seat. It was the same room Frank and Natalia had their pre-wedding counseling before. Frank stared at the matching love seats as Anna found a place on one of them.

“Can I get you two any coffee or tea?” Ray asked as he closed the door.

"No, thank you," Frank answered. He sat down next to Anna only after Ray took his seat on the facing couch. "We need to speak to you about Natalia."

Anna watched Ray's mouth twitch ever so slightly. He finished pouring his cup of tea resting on the small table between them and then looked up at Anna. He motioned again offering her something to drink. She shook her head 'no.'

"I know this must be a difficult day for you, Frank," Ray said settling back into his seat. "You might be in some need of counsel."

"Why's that?" Frank asked.

"What has happened to Natalia shouldn't rest on your shoulders," Ray continued.

"This is my responsibility, Father," Frank said as he shifted forward. "This is the mother of my child and an innocent woman."

"Natalia chose this path," Ray interrupted him. "You tried to help her before, but she wouldn't listen."

"So you're saying I should just give up on her?" Frank asked in confusion.

"No," Ray responded. "But you can't be held responsible for today's events."

Anna's eyes stayed fixed on Father Ray during his discussion with Frank. There was something undeniably smug about his demeanor that made her itch. She had seen this cockiness in interrogations before. It was nothing that a swift kick to the groin couldn't eliminate. Staring at his white and black collar, she understood that this time it was unfortunately not an option.

"Where is she?" Anna asked Ray point blank.

"What do you mean?" Ray questioned back immediately.

"You've seen her today, haven't you?" she asked. "I can tell. You've seen her."

"My meetings are confidential," Ray answered. He shifted his eyes back to Frank. "You know that."

"Not this time," Frank responded. "There are serious consequences here."

"I know," Ray said. "Her sins today have put her in a very precarious position. The church has a specific stance on this and yet she continues to push the limits of our compassion."

Anna's jaw shifted as she studied Father Ray's behavior. The man was no doubt infuriating with his painfully skewed view of the world, but he wasn't downright stupid. She glanced over at Frank who seemed at his wits end with the man.

"Where is Natalia?" Anna asked Ray. "She didn't show at her wedding today, and if you know something about her disappearance, you need to cooperate starting right now."

Ray attempted to stifle a smile as he set his tea cup back on the table in front of him. Anna noticed the gesture and was quickly reconsidering that kick to the groin.

"I wasn't aware that Natalia had left," he said looking back up at Anna.

"We're not saying she did," Anna responded placing her linked hands in her lap. Frank stood up from the couch. "She may have been taken," Anna continued. Frank looked down at her and shook his head ever so slightly. He didn't want to give out any information that would put the people responsible ahead of the game.

"Are you accusing me?" Ray asked feeling a bit threatened by Frank towering in front of him.

"No," Frank answered. "We just want to know if you spoke with her today and if you have any information that can help with our investigation."

"There's a chance you may have been the last person to see her," Anna said prodding the priest.

"I stopped by her house earlier," Ray admitted. "I wanted to give Natalia an opportunity to assess her decisions."

"Did she call you for confession?" Anna asked. Ray shook his head.

"I went over there uninvited. I figured she would need some counseling and direction on this day," he said.

"What did you two talk about?" Frank questioned.

"Not much," Ray responded. "She was busy getting ready for the wedding. She offered me some tea. We spoke about her volunteer work as she prepared it. Then I began to question

her about her intentions with Olivia. Let's just say that she wasn't terribly receptive. We had a few brief words and then she asked me to leave."

"Other than your confrontation, did she seem upset or scared about anything?" Anna asked sitting forward.

"No," Ray answered. "She was a little concerned about her sister being late, but that's all."

"Did you notice any suspicious cars or people anywhere near the vicinity of the farmhouse?" Frank asked.

Ray shook his head again. "No. It was a quiet day. I don't recall seeing anyone on my drive out there," he said.

"Okay," Frank said as he motioned to Anna that they were done. "If you hear from her or remember anything that could be of any help, please call me immediately," Frank told Ray.

Anna stood up and nodded to him. He nodded back. She still didn't care for his demeanor but couldn't find any signs that he was lying to them. She thought he had actually been surprisingly cooperative once the misunderstanding was cleared up. Anna walked over and stood next to Frank.

"I will pray for her," Ray said drawing their attention back to him. "I will pray for her to find the right path. This turmoil in her life should be a sign that she's chosen the wrong one. We can help guide her back."

Frank just stared at Father Ray unsure of how to respond to his deeply inappropriate timing.

"Well, there goes my 'thank you,'" Anna said under her breath as she turned and walked out the door.

Natalia's head lolled to the right as she struggled to focus her eyes. Her surroundings had changed but the confusion and nausea remained. She was sitting on a cold cement floor in the corner of a room. Her back was propped up against a cinderblock wall behind her. Her hands felt slightly numb and frozen. It was a sad improvement from not being able to feel them at all before. She attempted to rub her hands together for warmth when she noticed her wrists had been bound in front of her.

It was a small frustration in comparison to all the horrors of the day, but the futility of the moment made her whimper. She wanted to be unconscious. She wanted to escape. She kind of wanted a donut. None of her desires were of any use to her at the moment. Whatever drug coursed through her veins was rendering her completely powerless over herself. Her head lolled back to the left and came into contact with the wall. She winced at the sensation of the concrete against her temple.

“Look who’s awake,” a high pitched voice rang out in front of her. Natalia squinted her eyes, willing them desperately to focus, but all she could make out was a fuzzy dark figure in the distance. “Can I get you something to drink? Coffee, tea... perhaps a horchata?” The words rolled off her kidnapper’s tongue menacingly and then turned into a fit of laughter. Natalia heard a deeper voice rumble followed by another laugh. She cast her eyes towards the dark corner of the room searching for another figure.

“You thought you could just leave?” the higher voice asked as it approached her. The single light source in the small, windowless room hung high above. As the figure hovered over her, she could see a glow emitting around the kidnapper’s head but the face was still buried in shadow. “Always just running away. No idea what you left behind,” the voice continued. “I had to make up for your mistakes.” There was a familiar shake in her kidnapper’s voice.

“Leyla,” Natalia attempted to say. Her voice was muffled and strange. Natalia clenched her jaw biting at the rag that been tied around her mouth and rested between her teeth. “Ley...” she tried again.

“No, no, no,” the figure approached her. “It’s still my turn. You see, you’ve already had all your turns. You took them all at once. Everything is about you, isn’t it Natalia? It always has been. When you left on your terms to live your life, who do you think they punished?” The figure swayed a little and threw her head back. “You know Papa. Someone had to pay.”

“Leyla, please,” Natalia cried out through the gag.

“No!” Leyla called back again. “You see, Natalia, it worked out for the better. Because I didn’t make your mistakes. I didn’t repeat your sins. Papa showed me the righteous path. He saved me.” Leyla approached Natalia and kneeled. She placed a hand on her cheek softly. “And now I’m going to save you.”

Natalia sat frozen in place by her sister’s words. Her touch felt cold and distant. She flinched at the feel the clammy skin against her face.

“But where do we start?” Leyla asked standing abruptly. “So many sins and so little time. It was bad enough that you were a whore so young, but now you want to offend God and his

followers by betrothing yourself to a woman. This, of course, only after you've collected a sufficient number of bastard children." Leyla shook her head disapprovingly. "You've done so much wrong we're past the point of saving. We just need to wipe the slate clean."

Leyla's eyes danced as they studied Natalia. She offered a crooked smile.

"So let's just go back to where you went wrong the very first time," Leyla whispered.

"Have you met Marco?" Leyla turned and called out, "Marco!" Natalia heard a shuffle from the corner she was watching before. A large figure made its way towards them.

"Polo," the deep voice answered as the man wrapped his arms around Leyla's waist from behind. He rested his head on her shoulder and gazed down at Natalia.

"Surprise," Leyla chirped out.

Natalia felt her heart race and her stomach twist painfully. The world tilted and turned as she stared at the man before her. She released soft whimpers from her trembling lips. Then her stomach lurched again. Leyla moved quickly down releasing the rag from her mouth. Natalia leaned over to her right coughing and spitting to her side. It quelled the nausea for a brief moment. Then she felt her eyes water and her body ready, but the bile remained in her stomach. She sat back against the wall taking in deep breaths. Natalia raised her joined hands and wiped at her mouth.

"That happy to see me?" the man asked shaking his head.

"Nicky?" Natalia cried softly.

"Hi," he responded with a smile and a small wave. He then tightened his grip on Leyla and glanced sideways at her. "This one turned out nice, hey?" Nicky kissed Leyla on the cheek and released his grip giving her a quick slap to the bottom. Leyla yelped in response and swatted at him. Nicky moved around her and squatted down in front of Natalia.

"Long time, no see," Nicky said to her softly. "Well, I've been seeing."

"You're alive," Natalia whispered in disbelief.

"Yeah," Nicky said flatly. "I see the drugs are making you a little slow on the uptake." He shifted sitting down in front of Natalia. "I'll just cut to the chase then. You're broken and I'm here to fix you." Nicky spoke the words slowly and deliberately as though he was speaking to a child.

"Your family warned me about you, but I fell for it anyway. I fell for the good little church girl just trying to do her best. You lured me into a marriage that I thought would correct all your mistakes. But it was just a set up, wasn't it?" Nicky rubbed at his neck and looked away. "You tried to whore me out to the first bidder. And when that didn't work, you ripped my heart out of my chest and gave it to her!"

"Nicky, it wasn't like that," Natalia pleaded.

"You're damn right it wasn't!" he yelled back. "Did you think I was going to fall for that? That I was going to be another pawn in one of your sinful traps? I mean, what the hell, Natalia! You were just so hard up to help her, weren't you? You were so worried that you'd miss your turn on the town bike. And now you've manipulated her into sharing a home and a bed. You've stolen her business and you have her raising another man's child. When is it going to stop, Natalia?"

"No," Natalia cried out covering her face.

"Now you want her hand in marriage," he continued. "You want to condemn her to an eternal hell just like you tried to do to me! I see you, Natalia. I see you for who you really are." Nicky's hands suddenly wrapped around Natalia's wrists pulling them forcefully to his chest. He scoffed at her soft cries as she struggled to pull away. "Come on my little whor...chata," Nicky taunted her. Natalia heard the high laugh burst out behind him. He turned to glance back at Leyla. "That joke just doesn't get old, does it?" Nicky's grip grew stronger as she struggled. Her strength was fading quickly. This was too much for her to handle. The tears streamed down her face blurring her vision.

"Stay away from my mother!" Natalia heard Ava scream out of nowhere. A sudden blinding white light and piercing sound filled Natalia's head. She lost all connection for a moment and then the world softly faded back into view. The room was silent. There was no Ava or Leyla or Nicky.

Natalia heard solid footsteps approaching her, but couldn't see who they were from.

"I have to applaud your efforts," she heard a male voice echo. "But your threats were a waste of time." The footsteps came to a stop. She could finally see a pair of legs before her, but she was too exhausted to raise her head. "You were the only one to figure me out. Perhaps we're kindred spirits." The man reached down and tilted her chin up to look at him. Natalia recognized him immediately. "But I will have my way with Olivia again whether you like it or not," Jeffrey commented. "This time... this time I think she will like it."

ACT 3

Frank pushed open the door to Company and scanned the room. All the tables had been cleaned and the chairs put up. There was a bit of an eerie quietness around the restaurant.

"Hello," Frank called out into the empty space as he took a few tentative steps.

He heard a noise from the back and turned just as Marina made her way through the dividing door.

"Hey, Daddy," she responded as she came over to give him a hug. "How are you holding up?"

"Hey," he replied as he hugged her. He took a seat at the bar as she moved behind the counter. Marina searched his face while she started wiping down the condiment containers in front of her.

"It's been a rough day," Frank admitted as he rubbed at his forehead.

"So, no news yet on Natalia?" she asked.

Frank just shook his head 'no.' The frustration of the day was pushing him to his limits. He felt the tears prick at the corner of his eyes. Marina noticed the shift in his demeanor and placed her hand on top of his.

"I'm sorry," Marina offered. "Everything has been so crazy. I know I haven't helped in that department. But you'll fix it. I know you will." She watched her father swallow back the emotion that was so close to the surface. Frank shook it off and then placed his other hand on top of their joined ones.

"Let me fix you a sandwich," Marina said suddenly, pulling away.

"Marina," Frank called stopping her. "I hate the thought of even asking you to do this, but..." Frank's voice trailed off as he watched his daughter already readying herself for a fight. "It's just that the evidence may indicate that Edmund could be involved. Considering everything that's been going on at the department and what you've told me, we might need to bring you down for questioning."

"Is that really necessary?" Marina asked obviously annoyed by the implications.

"We just need to solve this as quickly as possible," Frank answered shaking his head. "I need to show that we're leaving no stone unturned."

Marina stared at Frank for a moment and then looked away placing her hands on her hips.

“Okay,” she agreed. “I’ll do this for you.” Frank nodded in thanks.

Marina headed in the back to make her father's dinner. Frank watched her disappear behind the door and then let out a breath. Sometimes dealing with her felt like trapping a wild animal. He knew his daughter was a good person, but she had a temper that burned.

Frank's phone let out a sharp ring that startled him. He pulled it from his belt and placed it to his ear.

“Chief Cooper,” Frank spoke into the phone.

“Hey, it's me,” Eleni said. “I need you to come down to the lab. We have some test results in from what we pulled from the farmhouse today.”

“Okay,” Frank responded. “Have you spoken with Anna yet?”

“I’m calling her next,” Eleni reassured.

“Good. I’m headed your way,” he told her and then hung up his phone.

Frank stood up from his seat and made his way into the back. He saw Marina standing at the food prep counter putting the finishing touches on his sandwich.

“I’m going to need to get it to go,” he said as he approached her.

“Sure,” Marina responded and pulled some plastic wrap from the top shelf. “Is everything okay?”

“Eleni called. We have some evidence to go over,” he said quickly. “Can you meet me at the station tomorrow morning?”

Marina handed him the wrapped sandwich and nodded with a smile.

“Thanks sweetheart,” Frank said as he took it from her. He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek and headed out.

Eleni stared at the results on the computer screen in front of her. What she was able to ascertain from the evidence review was still yet to produce any solid leads in her mind.

She thought it best to pull Frank and Anna in to get their read on it. She knew this was bothering Frank deeply, not only from his obvious connection to Natalia, but from his behavior since the investigation started.

“Knock, knock,” Anna said as she stepped into the lab. “What’ve we got?”

“Not much,” Eleni responded as she pulled the glasses from her face. “But I think it’s enough to help us paint a picture of what happened today.”

“Well, we spoke with Father Ray and confirmed that he was at the house,” Anna stated. “I don’t know if that’s any help.”

“We did pull his prints off a tea cup,” Eleni replied. Then she pushed on the desktop and stood up.

“His prints are in the system?” Anna asked.

“Ray Santos has an interesting background,” Eleni said as she leaned against the desk and crossed her arms. “His family is very heavily involved in the mafia. He’s done his best to stay out of it, but family ties are hard to break... even with God on your side.”

“I guess that’s one way to explain his arrogance. Sounds like it’s genetic,” Anna commented.

“Hey ladies,” Frank said as he entered the room. “Sorry I’m late.” He approached the women and stood next to Anna. He and Eleni eyed each other for a moment. Anna watched the exchange closely.

“What did I miss?” he asked breaking the stare.

“Part of your sandwich,” Eleni replied as she pulled a small piece of lettuce off Frank’s jacket. He blushed a little wiping at his lapels.

“So...” Anna said attempting to move the awkward exchange along.

“So,” Eleni picked up. “The big star of the day is phenobarbital, also known as Luminal. It’s a sedative and hypnotic used to control seizures. We found traces of it in the blood sample we pulled from the door handle.” Eleni turned pulling a few papers from her desk. “The specific type was phenobarbital sodium and my best guess is that it was injected.”

“Why do you say that?” Anna asked.

“Mostly because of the ratio of blood to phenobarbital,” Eleni explained. “If that percentage had been in Natalia’s bloodstream, I think we would have a body on our hands. We also weren’t able to identify any specific evidence that there was much of a struggle or any other spots of blood indicating a cut. I think the sample we pulled was most likely off a used syringe or something similar.”

“So there’s strong evidence that Natalia was drugged,” Frank stated.

“Yes,” Eleni confirmed. “But that’s not all...”

“Reebok!” Buchard exclaimed with his hands in the air as he entered the room.

The three turned their heads to look in his direction. Buchard smiled at them in victory.

“Have you found Ms. Rivera yet?” Eleni asked. His smile dropped immediately. “So put your hands down, Buchard,” Eleni stated and turned back to Frank and Anna.

“Sorry,” she continued. “As I was saying, we found a few other things. About 8 feet outside the rear door of the house we found some tire markings and footprints. Unfortunately, the tire treads matched up to a pretty common tire type so they won’t give us much to go on.” Eleni sat back down at her computer and pulled up a few photos from the crime scene. “The footprints were a little more interesting. Other than being made by Reebok, as Buchard so eloquently stated, we found the displacement to be somewhat unique.”

“Meaning?” Frank asked.

“The shoe size is relatively small, but the impressions were quite deep. So either we’re dealing with a small, heavyset person or someone small carrying something heavy,” Eleni explained.

Frank turned to Anna eyeing her for a moment. “How tall is your father?” he asked.

“Around 5’6,” Anna replied. Frank nodded his head knowingly at her. “This isn’t him,” she continued. “He doesn’t need to use pheno... whatever to kidnap someone.”

“Maybe this time, he did,” Frank responded. Anna rolled her eyes at him.

“How easy is it to get a hold of this stuff anyway?” she asked Eleni.

“Fairly easy,” Eleni answered. “It’s a common drug. It would be accessible in hospitals or even veterinary clinics.”

“So this is pretty much as useless as the tire tracks?” Frank asked. Eleni narrowed her eyes at him unhappy with his implication and tone. “I apologize,” he backpedaled quickly. “I’m just tired.”

“It’s okay,” Eleni said as she relaxed into her chair. “Both of you should go get some rest. It’s been a long day.”

Anna ran her hand up through her hair and offered a closed mouthed smile. “See you tomorrow,” she said as she turned on her heels and headed out the door.

Frank watched her leave and then turned back to Eleni. “You did a good job,” he said sheepishly. Eleni stood again and did a quick scan of the room to make sure they were alone. She placed her hands on his shoulders. “A great job,” Frank continued as Eleni leaned in and gave him a quick kiss.

“We’ll see about that, Chief,” she responded.

Farley’s was busier than expected, especially for this time of night. Jonathan scanned the room as he held the door open for Leyla. She had called him unexpectedly this afternoon, mostly just needing a shoulder to lean on. He suggested that he take her to dinner. She hesitantly agreed expressing that she wouldn’t be much fun right now. They had a casual meal and then decided it might be nice to go get a drink and blow off some steam. Both of them were hoping that the town bar would have cleared out a little by now.

Jonathan watched Leyla’s expression drop as she took in the full room. “We can go somewhere else if you like,” he suggested.

Leyla smiled at him appreciatively. It made her feel safe that he was so aware of her emotions.

“No, it’s okay,” she finally responded. “It should be fine.”

Jonathan reluctantly agreed as she passed by him. He followed her into the main room. Just as he cleared the threshold, she grabbed his hand and pulled him along behind her.

“Let’s go play pool,” she insisted making her way.

Leyla tried to stay out of sight choosing a small table in the back corner behind the pool table. She watched Jonathan head up to the bar to get some drinks. It seemed as though he couldn’t make it two feet without someone stopping to hug him or catch up. She knew

small towns had their reputations for everyone being in everyone else's business, but this place was just ridiculous. She was starting to miss the anonymity of the city.

"Here we go," Jonathan said as he placed two beers on the table. Leyla reached out and took a swig from one as she stared straight forward. Jonathan watched her closely, a little scared to say anything. In his brief absence, she seemed to have developed this shield around herself. He knew tonight would be a rollercoaster of emotions. He just wanted to give her a chance to escape the horrors of the day.

Leyla ran through her drink fairly quickly as she watched the room in front of them. Jonathan volunteered to go grab them some more, hoping the second beer would help her loosen up. When he returned, she was standing by the pool table.

"So you boys gonna give up the table any time soon?" she asked trying her best to stay polite. One of the men eyed her and then smirked.

"I don't have any big plans to," the man responded.

Jonathan approached Leyla's side brushing up against her to let her know he was there. He handed Leyla her drink as he surveyed the situation.

"Perhaps we can play in," Leyla suggested.

"You going to make it worth my time?" the man asked.

Leyla smiled and then looked up at Jonathan.

Olivia turned in her bed, patting firmly at the pillow beneath her head. She didn't know why she even bothered trying to sleep. In a moment of exhaustion, she had convinced herself to at least change into her pajamas and lay down. After flipping through the channels over and over again, she gave up and turned it off. She felt better in the silence anyway.

She caught sight of the familiar picture of her family sitting on her night stand. "How am I back here again?" she asked herself as her eyes drifted over Natalia's face. This was all too much. It was like a nightmare repeating itself. Olivia knew she was trapped in her own personal version of hell; the absolute hopelessness of it all consuming her.

Her head fell back against the pillows as the tears started. She held herself, attempting to quell the sobs rising from her chest. "Not again," she whispered and then covered her mouth.

A sudden wail pulled Olivia up from the bed. She moved quickly over to the crib. Francesca was sitting up staring at her. Olivia scooped her up into her arms and held her close.

"Ay, Mami," Francesca said softly. Olivia looked into Francesca's eyes, watching her brow scrunch in the same familiar way Natalia's did when she was confused.

"I know, baby," Olivia said giving her a kiss. "I miss her, too."

Olivia carried her over to the couch and sat down. She lay back against the cushions and rested Francesca against her chest.

It was going to be a long night for both of them.

"Hot damn!" Leyla's new pool buddy yelled out. "Where did you learn to shoot like that?"

"It's a family secret," Leyla replied stretching her arms over the table to set up another shot. Jonathan watched her with a smile. Maybe this was a good idea.

"I brought shots," their other new pool friend said as he approached the table. Leyla struck the cue ball hard landing the 8 ball in the pocket.

"I think that deserves one," she said as she grabbed a glass and tossed back the liquor.

"Whoa, Leyla," Jonathan called out moving to her quickly. "I don't know if we should, you know, mix it up like that."

"It's fine," she responded rolling her eyes. He watched her with concern. "Look," she whispered moving closer to him. "This is the most fun I've had in a while. It's really helping me take my mind off things. I feel like my old self again."

Leyla pouted at him and batted her eyes. Jonathan started to laugh in response when he was pulled down firmly into a kiss. Leyla took her time, drawing him in closer and licking at his bottom lip. When she released him, Jonathan was a bit disheveled.

Leyla turned away eyeing her new friends. "Okay," she said. "Who's my next victim?"

Jonathan watched Leyla closely as she flirted and chatted her way through the next few games and the next few shots. He was trying to be the responsible one in the situation, but Leyla was proving to be quite the charmer.

"I'm going to go to the bathroom," Leyla said, handing Jonathan her pool stick at the end of their third game. "I'll be right back." She gave him a quick kiss and then made her way to the back of the bar.

Leyla was a bit drunker than she originally intended, but right now it felt perfect. She needed the escape. It was bad enough that the whole town insisted on blaming her for her sister's disappearance, but what really hurt is that she agreed with them. Although she knew better, she felt the burden of Natalia's absence throughout her childhood. What if somehow it had been her fault? What if her inability to be there for Natalia back then was the same reason things turned out the way they had today?

She stood at the bathroom sink washing her hands, and then splashed some water on her face. She watched herself in the mirror for a moment as she patted her face dry with a paper towel. Then she took a deep breath and headed back out.

Leyla heard her name called out as she passed the bar on the way back to the pool table. She unfortunately recognized the voice.

"Frank," she responded turning to face him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"What does it look like?" she questioned back not in the mood for his questions.

"Olivia is looking for you," he said. "I called her earlier to update her on the investigation. She was concerned because she hadn't heard from you."

"You want to take me downtown for that, too?" Leyla laughed shaking her head.

"Leyla," Frank said as he slid off the bar stool. He placed his hand on her shoulder, rubbing it gently. "I just want to make sure you're okay."

"What is it with you?" she asked, moving closer. "You just can't keep your hands off me, can you?"

Frank removed his hand, holding it up. "I didn't mean it like that," he said attempting to move back from her as she advanced. He was trapped against his bar stool.

“Oh, come on, Papi,” Leyla slurred out as she grabbed his shirt. “You know what they say? Once you go Rivera, you never go back.”

“Hey there, Leyla,” Anna said as she draped her arm across her shoulders. Frank’s face was frozen in fear over what had just transpired. Anna had caught the whole scene from the corner of the room and came over to help. She couldn’t suppress her smile at Frank’s obvious discomfort.

“Are you having a good time tonight?” Anna asked hoping to pull her attention away from Frank. She did admire the girl’s tenacity in messing with the man.

“Yes, yes I am,” Leyla answered, moving her arms around Anna’s waist. She let her head fall against Anna’s shoulder as she slouched into her arms. Perhaps Leyla was a little drunker than Anna realized. “You smell good,” Leyla slurred out, burying her nose into Anna’s neck. “Do you wear men’s cologne?”

“We should probably get you home,” Anna said, suddenly feeling a little awkward herself.

“Oh, I see,” Leyla responded lifting her head with a smile. “I like where you’re going with this. Who hasn’t had an Asian lady fantasy? Am I right?” she said, nudging Frank in the ribs.

Anna looked up to see Jonathan staring at the unfortunate trio.

“I’ll take it from here,” he said as he pulled Leyla into his arms. “Sorry,” he muttered to Anna and Frank as he wrapped her arm around his shoulders. “Come on, Leyla.”

Leyla made it to the end of the bar before she launched into protests about leaving. Jonathan closed his eyes in frustration. He partly blamed himself for taking this on tonight, but he couldn’t seem to shake his irritation at Leyla’s behavior.

ACT 4

Olivia stroked Francesca’s hair softly as she lay against her chest. She placed a kiss on her temple and hummed in a way she had heard Natalia sing to her before. She knew this had to be more confusing for Francesca than the rest of them. A soft noise kept buzzing in Olivia’s ear. She felt the vibrations like a bug moving around her head. The noise got louder and louder.

Olivia looked up to see Ava entering the room. She was carrying something in her arms. As Ava got closer, she realized it was Francesca. Olivia looked down quickly checking for where Francesca was before.

"That was Natalia on the phone," Ava stated as she walked across the room. "She'll be back soon."

Olivia stared at her for a moment confused and asked, "What?"

Olivia opened her eyes slowly taking in her surroundings. A noise from outside her door drew her awake. She wasn't even aware she had fallen asleep. She heard the noise again. It sounded like a light scratching on the door and muffled steps and voices. She shook her head to clear the thoughts of her dream.

Francesca was sound asleep lying on her. Olivia moved slowly to an upright position and then stood with her daughter in her arms. She went to her bedroom and placed her down gently in her crib.

Olivia walked over to the front door quietly and peered through the peep hole. She let out a breath and then opened the door slowly.

"Oh, hey there," Frank said as he fumbled with a box. Olivia brought her index finger to her lips.

"Shhh," she said. "Francesca is asleep. What are you doing out here?"

"I put together some things for you," he whispered holding up the box. She nodded for him to come inside. "I wasn't sure if you had everything you needed for the baby," he continued. "It's just some extra bottles, clothes, and toys."

"Well, thank you, that's very thoughtful," she said motioning to where he could put the box down. They stared at each other for a moment.

"I was just going to leave it, because I wasn't sure if you were up yet," Frank said putting his hands in his pockets.

"Yeah, well I didn't really sleep much," Olivia replied. "You want me to order some coffee up?"

"Nah. I need to get to the station," Frank answered. "How are you doing, Olivia?"

That was a bigger question than she was ready for. Olivia ran her hands through her hair and let out a breath. She plopped down on the couch behind her. Frank sat down next to her tentatively.

"It's hard," she finally said. "It's really hard not knowing." Frank nodded in agreement. "You know what's weird? I don't even want a drink. I don't want to eat bacon or lash out or fall back on any of my old vices. I just... I just want her back."

"I know," Frank said softly. "I want that, too." Olivia watched him as he stared ahead. "I loved Natalia. She was my friend before she was more to me."

"She's kind of hard not to love," Olivia said drawing his eyes over to her. Frank nodded again. "Believe me, I tried to not love her."

"I know," Frank said patting Olivia's hand.

She stared into the distance lost in thought of how hard she tried to fight them being together.

"I turned her down," Olivia said mostly to herself. Frank watched her closely. "Not the time after the retreat," Olivia continued looking forward. "It was after your wedding fell through. I finally told her I was in love with her and she told me she was in love with me. And then I told her that we could never be together."

"Why?" Frank asked.

"There would be too many problems for us," Olivia answered. "I didn't think she'd be able handle people's reaction to our relationship. I knew there was a problem with her religion. I told her we had to forget our feelings for each other and move on. We had to try to just be friends."

"What happened?" Frank questioned.

"The same thing that happened when I tried to get her to leave me alone after my heart surgery. She stayed persistent until I gave in to her love. What a pain in the ass," Olivia said with a sad smile.

Frank laughed lightly at her comment and put his head down for a moment. Then he stood.

"Alright, Olivia. Call me if you need anything," Frank said checking his pockets.

"Is there any chance we'll be able to get back in the house soon?" Olivia asked.

"I'll do my best to finish up and get my team out of there," he answered.

"Frank," Olivia said looking up at him. "Thank you for everything. Really."

"No problem," Frank responded. "We'll find her."

The tires crunched against the gravel as the dark sedan slowly made its way up the farmhouse driveway. Jeffrey scanned the area looking for any officers. Noticing that the area was all clear of life, he pulled the car to a stop. As he climbed out, the only sound he heard was the light tapping of the crime scene tape against the front door.

Even though he wasn't feeling very welcome in this town or especially in this home, he had to know. If there was any sign of Edmund, he had to find it. This would always be his responsibility. He just wished more people understood that.

Jeffrey made his way to the back of the house and walked around the marked off area careful not to disturb anything. He let out a sigh. It was never simple.

"Natalia, Natalia."

She heard a soft voice calling her name. Natalia struggled to open her eyes. She felt something against her mouth. Water spilled from the cup between her lips. It tasted sweet and very welcome. She lifted her head from against the wall and tilted it towards the cup.

"There you go," she heard the voice say.

"Olivia?" Natalia asked pulling back from the drink.

"Yes," the voice answered.

"Olivia, I had the worst dream," Natalia continued as she peeled her eyes open. A dark figure was crouched before her holding out the cup. "They took me away from you."

"It's okay," Olivia hummed. "You're right where you belong."

Natalia felt herself relax at the words. She wanted so badly to reach out and touch Olivia's face. As she stretched out her hands, she realized they were still bound together at the wrists. "Olivia?" Natalia questioned in confusion at her discovery.

“You said you wanted to do something different for our honeymoon,” Olivia answered low and deep.

She suddenly moved closer straddling Natalia's lap. Natalia took in a sharp breath at the friction of Olivia's thighs sliding against her own. Olivia lifted herself slightly and then ground down harder into Natalia. Her lips were right beside Natalia's ear, and she could feel the heat across her neck.

“You know, I'm all for following your heart, babe. But you follow your heart all the way to the altar. You run away. You pretend like it didn't happen,” Olivia whispered hoarsely.

Natalia let out a low grunt that was a mixture of excitement and confusion. She felt as though she was being picked up by the waves again. Her sensibilities were being tossed about. The sensation of Olivia moving in her lap overwhelmed her in so many ways. Yet she couldn't fight this needling feeling that she had experienced these words before.

“You commit to Frank. You commit to the family. You commit to me,” Olivia continued. Natalia let out a cry as she realized that these weren't Olivia's words at all. These were Buzz's words. And she was still there, trapped on that cold concrete floor.

Natalia rolled her head back against the wall overcome by the confusion, nausea, and fatigue. She just wanted the seemingly endless hallucinations to stop. She didn't know what to believe anymore. Her mind was working against her torturing her every second she stayed trapped in that barren room. She whimpered in exhaustion finally succumbing to the feeling of hopelessness. The tears fell like rain down her face. Her soft cries echoing against the walls.

“Stop it!” a voice screamed out.

Natalia flinched, shutting her eyes as tight as possible in an attempt to block the sound.

“I said 'stop it!'” the voice called out at her again.

“No!” Natalia yelled back unwilling and unable to stop her tears. She felt a cold hand grab her jaw and hold her head firmly up.

“You stop it,” the kidnapper said through clenched teeth. She went quiet for a moment listening to the heavy breathing of her tormentor. She felt the rag being pulled up around her mouth again.



“It’ll all work out,” the voice said softly. Natalia felt a hand stroke her cheek. “Saint Natalia will pay for everyone’s sins. He’ll decide what do with you when it’s done.”

Anna looked up from the two-way mirror in front of her to the security monitor in the top right corner of the room. She let out a sigh as she watched Frank come rushing through the door that led into the hallway outside. She quickly reached for the door handle hoping to cut Frank off before he burst into the adjoining interrogation room.

“Chief,” she called out sharply as she stepped out into the hall. Frank froze in place and turned his glare from the door to Anna.

“You want to tell me what the hell is going on here?” Frank demanded. He moved closer to her as he placed his hands on his hips.

“Yes,” Anna answered simply meeting his eyes. “Marina came in this morning looking for you...”

“And you just threw her into an interrogation room and gave her a polygraph?” Frank asked shaking his head disbelievingly.

“I did this for you,” Anna replied. “I wanted to remove any suspicion.”

“That’s no excuse for this,” Frank said forcefully. “You should have checked with me first.

“I thought you’d be in before her,” Anna defended.

“Did Marina agree to this?” Frank asked.

“Sorta,” Anna answered casually as she let out a breath and looked away.

“Sorta?” Frank questioned.

“I told her this would be a step in the right direction. You know, as far as us being lenient in other legal matters that concerned her,” Anna replied. Frank lifted his chin as he closed his eyes. This was going to be such a big mess. “Come on,” she continued as she opened the door.

Frank stepped into the dimly lit room tentatively. He glanced over at the two-way mirror and caught Marina staring right at him. His eyes stayed locked to hers for a moment until he reminded himself that she couldn’t see him through the mirror. Anna leaned over and adjusted the volume on the intercom so they could listen in

“Do you know the current location of Edmund Winslow?” the polygraph examiner asked.

“No,” Marina responded calmly.

“Did you assist Edmund Winslow in his plans to kidnap Natalia Rivera?”

“No.”

“Did you assist Edmund Winslow in capturing Natalia Rivera?”

“No.”

The interviewer stopped for a moment assessing the reading. He fidgeted with his glasses and then continued.

“Do you know if Edmund Winslow intends to murder Natalia Rivera?”

Marina shook her head slightly. The interviewer looked up from his computer.

“Ms. Cooper, please answer the question verbally.”

Marina eyed him closely and responded firmly, “No.”

“Call me when this is over,” Frank said quickly drawing Anna's attention from the window. He was out of the door before she had a chance to reply. Anna shook her head and sighed.

Anna could tell the questioning was winding down. The examiner was asking a few control questions and noting down Marina's level of response.

“Okay,” the examiner said standing. He walked to the other side of the table and removed the measuring device from Marina's arm and index finger. “They'll send an officer for you when you're ready to be moved.” She nodded almost imperceptibly and then crossed her arms.

Anna turned off the intercom and stepped out into the hall.

“Lorenzo,” Anna greeted the examiner as he closed the door to the interrogation room behind him.

“Li,” he responded back. “Do you want to go over it now or wait for the Chief?”

Anna moved her hands to her hips. “I'm going to play it safe with this one and wait,” she said and nodded for Lorenzo to follow her. They walked in silence out to Chief Cooper's office.

Anna knocked softly on the door. She could hear Frank inside on the phone.

“I don't care,” she heard him say into the handset. “If you're done, get it cleaned up and get out of there. It's been hard enough on the family without them being kicked out of their own home, too. Call me when it's done.”

Frank looked up at his door as he hung up the phone. He motioned with his hand for them to come in.

“So what does it look like?” Frank asked, shifting his papers nervously.

Lorenzo was sitting in a chair in front of Frank's desk, holding tightly onto his briefcase. He looked back at Anna, who was standing behind him. She nodded for him to speak as she closed the office door.

“She's clear,” Lorenzo said flatly. “Her blood pressure is a little high, but it's consistent.”

Frank nodded.

"There were no abnormalities, so I would have to conclude that she's being honest," Lorenzo said.

"She's always been honest with me," Frank replied. "Even when she was involved with Edmund, she owned up to it. That's why this is not okay."

Anna leaned back against the wall and fought to not roll her eyes at the impending speech.

"You're not going to tell Chief Andros, are you?" Lorenzo asked. Frank just stared blankly at him. "No offense, but she's scarier than you." Frank's jaw worked as he tried to suppress a smile.

"Let's just assume that Detective Li coerced you into this," Frank answered. "And you won't let it happen again."

"Understood," Lorenzo answered quickly.

"You can go," Frank dismissed him. He got up and headed towards the door. Lorenzo gave Anna a quick nod and then slid out. Anna closed the door again behind him.

"What did you think you were doing?" Frank asked her as he stood up from his chair.

"Compiling evidence," Anna answered.

Frank grabbed his jacket from the back of his chair and pulled it on. He picked up his cell phone from his desk and dropped it in his pocket.

"You stay here," he told Anna. "I'm going to release Marina. I don't want you anywhere near her."

Frank strode past Anna out of his office. He entered the hallway to the interrogation room and stepped purposefully towards her door. He hesitated as he grabbed the handle and took in a deep breath.

"Marina," he said as he stepped into the room. She didn't say a word. She just sat still in her chair staring forward with her arms crossed.

"Marina, I'm so..." Frank started.

"Don't," she cut him off. "I thought you trusted me." She stood up suddenly and eyed him. "I'm your daughter."

"I know," Frank responded. "There was just a misunderstanding. After what happened with Edmund, we can't take any chances."

"Maybe that's the problem with us," she said looking away. "Maybe I need you just for once to take a chance on me. To trust me to help you. I'm not a helpless child. I'm not a burden. I'm your family."

"Marina," Frank pleaded.

"We'll talk later," she said pushing past him and heading out the door.

Beth looked down and adjusted the alignment of her pencil. She pushed at the pink eraser with her fingertip, working to make it perfectly parallel with her notepad. She lowered her hands in her lap for a moment and then nudged at it again.

"A little anxious?" Mel asked as she glanced over at her partner.

Beth let out a breath and turned to look back at the court room pews behind her. There were a few more people here than she was hoping. She turned back around and pinched the pencil between her index finger and thumb adjusting its placement again.

Mel reached out and placed her hand on Beth's forearm. "You're going to be fine," she offered.

"Sorry," Beth whispered. "This is just like a nightmare scenario. I've got public speaking, my first court case, and I'm the judge's first exposure to our new law firm. It's just a lot."

Mel watched her friend closely considering the stress she was under. She knew Beth would have no problem once things got started, but that certainly didn't help with first time jitters.

"Well, look at it this way," Mel said meeting Beth's eyes. "At least you're not on trial for murder."

Beth let out a small nervous laugh and then smiled at Mel.

"Speaking of which," Mel said, turning her attention to the double doors that led into the courtroom.

Dinah was being led in by an officer. She had a navy pant suit on and her hair and makeup were tastefully done. The officer took her over to the defense.

She hugged Mel and then Beth. Dinah took a seat next to them and then glanced over at the prosecution.

"You ready?" Dinah leaned over and quietly asked Beth.

"Yes," Beth answered. "I'm a little nervous."

"Don't worry, you'll be fine," Dinah offered reassuringly. "No one's accusing you of murder."

Beth winced in response to Dinah's words. "Mel already beat you to that joke," she said.

"Figures," Dinah responded leaning back a little in her chair. "She always was too smart for her own good." Mel smirked in response and then looked back at Beth.

"All rise," the bailiff called out drawing their attention to the front of the courtroom. "The Honorable David Grayson presiding."

Beth watched as the judge made his way slowly up the steps to his seat. His reading glasses sat on top of his head and he was holding a stack of folders under his left arm. She always wondered why judges looked like disheveled scientists that had been interrupted half way through a creation to come look at something real quick.

Perhaps that was the trick of it. Maybe these proceedings were just a bit of science. She just had to get the chemistry right.

"Be seated, please," Judge Grayson called out. "Defense, you may begin your opening statement."

Beth took a deep breath and placed her hands on the desk in front of her. She glanced at her notes quickly and stood up.

"Here we go," she muttered under her breath as she stepped out from behind the desk.

Olivia glanced in the rear view mirror to check on her girls sitting in the back seat. Emma had her hand dangling over the side of her baby sister's car seat. Francesca lightly held on to Emma's finger. As soon as she appeared disinterested, Emma would pull away and

wiggle her fingers. Francesca would smile and grasp for them again. Olivia smiled lightly in response and then refocused her eyes on the road.

The sun was setting behind them as she drove her family slowly out to the farmhouse. The day had whisked by quickly without much action. Everybody was being very quiet and calm. The shock of Natalia's disappearance left the family somewhat numb.

Frank had called while they were having an early dinner to let them know it was okay to go back to the house. Olivia struggled with the decision briefly, but then decided they would all be better off in their home.

Olivia noted the dark SUVs that sat at the far end of the property as she entered the driveway. Phillip had called her earlier letting her know that he had set up an enhanced security detail for the house. Olivia wanted to argue with him, but she couldn't. She couldn't muster much of anything today. She just simply went through the motions.

Emma helped her mom unload Francesca and their things from the car. Their interactions were mostly silent. Emma's recent defiant behavior had calmed considerably. Olivia knew that Emma was taking cues from her. It hurt to see her own depression reflected in her daughter's eyes.

Once they got inside the house, Emma quickly made her way up to her room. Olivia adjusted Francesca on her hip and paused for a moment to survey the otherwise empty kitchen. Natalia had made this the heart of their home and now it felt cold and abandoned.

Olivia took Francesca upstairs to change her diaper and dress her for bed. She settled into the rocking chair and fed Francesca a bottle. Francesca went to sleep without too much protest. Olivia laid her down and stepped quietly out of the room. As she closed the door softly behind her, she noticed Emma's bedroom light on.

Olivia went back downstairs and quickly made some hot chocolate. It felt strangely like a peace offering, but Olivia couldn't pinpoint the battle she was fighting. She made her way back up the stairs and knocked on Emma's bedroom door.

"Come in," Emma answered softly.

Olivia turned the handle and pushed at the door, revealing the dimly lit room. Emma was sitting on her bed, reading a book. The only light on was a lamp on her nightstand.

"I brought some hot chocolate," Olivia said holding up the cup. She offered her daughter a closed mouthed smile.

Emma reached out her hands and took the cup. Olivia made her way around to the other side of the bed and took a seat. She watched Emma blow lightly across the top of the drink and take a sip. Then she rested the cup on top of the book in her lap.

"You okay, Jellybean?" Olivia asked, reaching out to brush a strand of hair back from Emma's face.

Emma nodded her head lightly.

"I know this is hard," Olivia said. "I want you to know it's okay to feel sad or upset." Emma continued to stare at the cup as her mother spoke. "And I know I've been really distracted. But you can always talk to me about anything. You should never be afraid to tell me how you're feeling."

"Mom," Emma whispered. She paused for a moment and then met Olivia's eyes with her own. She didn't have words for what she felt. She just knew that if anyone hurt her Ma, she would use everything Anna had taught her on them.

"What is it, sweetie?" Olivia asked, noticing her daughter's hesitation.

"Your hot chocolate isn't as good as Natalia's," Emma finally said, holding it up.

Olivia wrapped her hands around the cup and took a sip. She stared down into it.

"You're right. This hot chocolate sucks," Olivia stated. Emma's brief laugh filled the room as Olivia turned and smiled at her. "Don't tell your Ma I said that word."

Olivia set the cup on the nightstand and slid down to rest her head against the headboard.

"Come here," she said to Emma, pulling her daughter into her arms. "I want to tell you something."

"What's that?" Emma asked as she settled by her mother's side.

"A couple years ago, after we moved into the farmhouse, I was in the kitchen with your Ma. I was supervising her dish stacking. You know how she needs some guidance in that department," Olivia said and looked down at her daughter. Emma nodded her head in agreement. "I was telling her about how we went down to the pond to feed the ducks and our clothes got all muddy. Do you remember that?"

"Yeah, you slipped and fell when the mother duck quacked at you," Emma recalled.

“Thanks for the reminder,” Olivia responded. “Anyway, Natalia and I were talking about how much you loved it here and how well you were adjusting. And you know what she said about you?”

Emma shook her head ‘no.’

“She said, ‘I can’t imagine this house without her.’”

The sum of Natalia’s previously spoken words resonated in Olivia’s head causing her to take pause. What would this house be without Natalia? What would her life be without Natalia? This wasn’t just some surprise pregnancy or unfortunate life-threatening surgery. Natalia had become her soul. There was no convenient transplant to replace everything that Natalia was to her.

There was a chance that she was gone forever; that someone had stolen her life. She hadn’t thought of that possibility yet. Olivia was convinced that if Natalia left this world that the very second it happened she would feel it in her chest. She knew Natalia had to be somewhere fighting and persisting. Olivia closed her eyes for a moment to hold back the tears.

“Do you think she’s hurt, Mommy?” Emma asked as she raised her head up.

“I don’t know,” Olivia responded honestly.

Emma placed her head back down on her mother’s chest.

“Is it okay if I sleep here tonight?” Olivia asked.

“Can we keep the light on?” Emma questioned back.

Olivia simply nodded as she squeezed Emma tighter.

The End.

