

12. HUSH, HUSH, SWEET DARLING

Once her room had been invaded Sienna didn't feel safe anywhere. Even her dreams weren't any help. She couldn't just hide under her bed and hope that things would get better. There was no clear hope. Even as her new life closed in on her, she barely had any clues about her old self. They were these characters hanging around, each with a threatening presence. Ray, Jack, the man at the gas station. She thought this was a new start. But she was being shut down before she had a chance to begin.

Sienna figured that her days with Lynette were numbered. She had strained the relationship with Jack. But at this point, she still had nowhere to go. She thought that it would be a good idea to keep away from Jack for a while. She had learned too much about him, and it hardly worked in her favor. She crossed her fingers that Jack wouldn't just invite himself over. But Lynette was his cousin. What could Sienna really do?

She'd soon be out of money. She felt like she owed all this money to Lynette. But Lynette wouldn't hear of it. Maybe it was time to get a job. To just strike out on her own. She was totally recovered physically, but she still felt constrained by her experience. She wasn't yet better.

Sienna needed to stop by at the sheriff's. She wanted to see if Warren had been making any progress.

"Next time that you see me, I'll have that list of names."

"Great!"

Warren told her more, "We're closer than we think. We just have to pry one stone free, and the whole structure will come on down. I feel that we're almost there now."

"I hope so."

She wanted to believe him. She just wasn't sure which stone he was talking about. For the time being she was the only structure that risked coming apart. The promise was that the more she learned about the case, the more she would learn about herself. But maybe it would just work the opposite way. She would only come unraveled with the more that she learned.

As she headed out of the station she ran into Jack.

"A sight for sore eyes."

"Sienna, I'm sorry that I was such a jerk the other morning."

"I told you that it was all moving too fast."

"Maybe we could go get some coffee?"

"Aren't you on duty?"

"I have a break."

Jack took her to the same place where she had eaten ribs with Lynette. They stared at each other, an awkward moment.

"I'm sorry. I know how messed up things became. But maybe we could try it again."

"Jack, I was right from the beginning. We should never have become involved. We're not really good for each other."

"I really enjoyed being with you."

"I did too. But I'm really going crazy. The last thing that I need is a relationship."

"We could take it slow."

“Jack, I’m sorry that I went to Rome. That was wrong for me to do. But I had to know things about you. Just to settle something about myself.”

“What have you figured out?”

“That I can’t be what you want me to be.”

“What is that?”

He looked mortified. He wasn’t ready to hear her news.

“Jack, I can’t be your fresh start. I haven’t even started for myself.”

She had entered his world. He felt like he had been invaded. Now she wanted to retreat. He didn’t want to let that happen.

“What can I do to stop you? What can I do to change your mind?”

“I’m not here to be convinced. I’m trying to understand you. But I know what I have to do for me.”

“Maybe you don’t know.” She resented his persistence.

“You have to watch out here. You don’t know Cordelia. Some of these guys don’t take kindly to teasing. That’s my professional advice.”

He had pushed her to a breaking point.

“What am I supposed to say to that? That I need police protection. That sounds more like a threat to me.”

“I’m just offering you some friendly advice.”

“That’s a friend with a gun!”

Jack tried to keep an even tone, “Sometimes you need to protect yourself.”

She wondered how to get out of this conversation. She imagined vaporizing away. There was no easy exit.

She smiled for him, “Thanks, Jack. I’ll keep my eyes open.”

“Just remember that I’m on your side.” She wondered what it would be like if he wasn’t.

That evening she wanted to try a little experiment. After dark, she asked Lynette to stand in the same spot where Sienna had stood the night before. The light was on just as it had been. Sienna went outside and positioned herself where the shooter had been. She looked up so that she could see Lynette in the window. She was now at the exact vantage point of a killer. She surveyed the scene just as her pursuer might. As she watched, she made mental notes. She was two people at once. She was simultaneously the killer and the victim.

She became the cold-blooded assassin. As he watched Sienna in the window, he salivated. She could deny him from her distance, but she was now his target. This gave him an intimacy that she lacked. He could make up for the distance. In the trigger sight, he was so close to her. He went beyond making up for her rejection. He could monitor every detail of her being. Everything that she was now boiled down to the life that she gave him. And in a snap he could take it away. He assumed the role of God in her universe.

She was taking back her life from this monstrous creature. Now Sienna completely exposed her assailant. All the person’s frailties were in the harsh light of Sienna’s analysis. She was withdrawing the killer’s privilege. She was taking back her life. She saw him pathetic as he was. She reduced him to the whimpering vermin begging her for some attention. He thought that his threats could bring her down to his level. It only uncovered what a slime he was. He couldn’t take her life away; he could only show himself for the weakling that he was.

She felt that she could crush him. He didn't know her at all. She knew him with perfect intimacy. He disgusted her. He could never have her. He couldn't kill her. He needed her alive. Then she was hit by the frightening possibility, that she was only one among many. For the time being she preoccupied his thoughts until his desire became so great that he couldn't hold back any longer. He would have to act out all the rage that he had stored up. What had taken him up to this point was only a prelude to a more guaranteed acting out of his plan.

As long as she didn't know who the assailant was, she was helpless to prevent a future attack. She believed that the person might have some answers. If she could just pull off the mask, then everything would make sense to her. She felt married to her killer in the hope that his mission was the inverse of hers. He wanted to destroy her identity for good due to what he knew about her. She wanted to live her life to the fullest which required the knowledge that he had.

She thought she heard a wild dog deeper in the woods. She turned towards the house and started to make her way inside.

"How did it feel?" Lynette asked. "I hated being a sitting duck like that."

"That's how I am twenty four hours of the day. I don't know if I can sleep tonight. I'm so on edge."

"I brought something from the hospital that should quiet you down."

"That's what I'm hoping for."

Sienna lay on her bed in cold fear. Her eyes were open. The excitement caused the excitement to send the blood pulsing through her body. She thought it would be a long night. Then the medicine took over. It took over completely and she passed out.

She had slept but she felt that she hadn't processed everything that had happened on the day before, her body was rested, but her mind felt like it had just been shut off. It still needed sleep.

Her run in with Jack had been terribly unsatisfying. He hadn't seemed angry. But his undertone was menacing. She needed his help. She needed someone to protect her. But now Jack only seemed like one more thing to fear. After plotting out the shooting, she recognized how vulnerable she was. She could take baby steps. Try to not leave her cocoon. But she had already been cast out into this eternal darkness. For a while she had thought that she was safe during the daytime. Now, she realized night and day were only illusions created by her pursuer to lull her into a false sense of safety. He could strike at any time.