

2. COMING BACK TO LIFE

Sienna was the passenger in a late model crimson Ford Mustang. It was Lynette's car.

"Thanks, for everything that you're doing for me." Sienna looked over at Lynette.

"It'll be great to have someone to pal around with."

Sienna felt like a big doll dropped off for a young girl.

"What am I supposed to do now?"

Lynette looked over at her. "You don't have to do anything. Just make sure that you're buckled in."

She had the belt pulled tight. She didn't want anyone pulling her out of the car. The hospital was now a memory. One of her few. But she was glad that she was finally able to leave that place. The corridors started to seem like a bad dream. At night when everything became quiet, she could sense the lost souls wandering around.

She looked at the world like a new born child. Everything was a wonder. The colors revolved around her in a rainbow. They drove through Cordelia, and headed over to the highway that would take them to Lynette's place.

"I hope that you don't mind that I live a little ways out."

As she drove along it seemed further than she had thought. Lynette turned onto another road. It was still daylight, but the trees made it seem darker. The drive way was up a steep hill. The house was a small two story place. It was a little quaint, not too shabby.

Sienna needed to be helped out of the car. She couldn't really walk on her own.

"I wish that I had a room for you down here."

Lynette braced her as they made their way up the stairs. The bed was made up with fresh linen. There were towels on the chair. The room had a maple dresser and desk.

"How long have you had this house?"

"I'd been working at the hospital for a few years. I saved up to make the down payment. It's great having my own place. It gets a little lonely now and then. But I love it."

"It's beautiful out here."

The sun shone through the trees. It felt so peaceful.

"I can take you downstairs if you want to watch some TV."

"I'm still pretty weak."

"I'll help you get ready for bed."

Lynette brought her to the bathroom where Sienna washed her face. Then she was led back to her room. Even though it was early, she fell asleep. She needed to get stronger.

All that night, Sienna had gone in and out of sleep. There were weird shadows in her room from the trees rolling in the wind. She felt herself again at the site of her attack. The ground seemed to twist around her. All of a sudden, she was face to face with her assailant. She looked at the face. She was sure that she knew this person. She reached out to touch. She felt herself being pushed down. She was struggling to get away. Knowing what awaited her, she needed to escape. As she ran, she tripped. She could feel someone take a hold of her ankle.

She opened her eyes. She was safe in Lynette's house. But the wind was still rustling in the trees. Sienna half-expected a storm. The outside reflected all the turmoil that she was feeling. She wanted to get up. But she faded again. She was back asleep.

Now she was wandering the halls of the hospital. She had been released, but the place was now in her mind. Even her meager memories were wreaking havoc with her sanity. She tried to collect herself.

Fatigue rolled over her again. From nightmare to helplessness, she could not be liberated from herself.

“How did you sleep last night?”

“I slept. But it was an uncomfortable night.”

“Sienna, it take a while to living out here. All the noises. You always think that someone is in the house. We’re so secluded that no one know we’re here. You have nothing to worry about.”

“I may need something to quiet me down. I’m tired enough to sleep. But I just have this strange feeling.”

Lynette looked around at the medicine, “I thought that they gave you something to make it easier to quiet down.”

“They did. But it hasn’t really done that much good.”

Sienna needed to accustom herself to having someone else around. This actually made her feel safer. Lynette knew the place. She would be the first alerted if something strange was going on.”

“I can get you some breakfast.”

“I’m still having trouble eating too much.”

“I’ll get you some toast and coffee.”

Lynette returned about fifteen minutes later with juice, toast, and coffee.

“I already had the coffee going. I put some butter and jam on the toast.

“You’re making me feel like royalty. Breakfast in bed.”

“It’s not like you’re going to be traveling around the house.”

“I do want to start doing things for myself.”

“Don’t rush you’re recovery. I’m here to help you out.”

“Lynette, do you work today?”

“I have to be in around 3. There’s some things that I need to take care of around the house. Then I’ve got some errands. After you have your breakfast. I can leave you on your own.”

“I’ll be OK.”

Lynette wanted to be helpful, “I can take you downstairs if you want.”

“I’ve got a book to read. I love to read.”

“Well, there’s always television downstairs.”

After she ate her breakfast, Lynette helped prop her up for a shower. It felt great. As the water ran along her body, she experienced a sense of completeness. She let the spray splash against her face, and she was renewed. She loved the water. She relaxed in its flow.

She was coming to know her body for the first time. She loved its form. Its unity. This was where she could reinvigorate herself. This was the source of her memory.

Lynette led her back to the bedroom, “I never knew that a shower could feel so great.”

“The hot water is like an aesthetic.”

“It was definitely like a drug! I’ll take some more”

Sienna lay back on the bed.

“I’ve got to get up. I’ve got make my way around.”

“The stairs can be tricky. Don’t try them without me around.”

“I don’t think that I’ll be trying too much more today.”

The address on Sienna’s license was an apartment complex in Adairsville, The Falls. Warren sent Jerry out there to try to check things out. As he walked up concrete stairs, he hung on to a wrought iron railing. In the winter a nasty wind would rip its way along these buildings.

He went from apartment to apartment adjoining Sienna’s. No one seemed to know her. She had just moved into the complex. Even the superintendent was at a loss.

“I barely remember her at all. She recently moved in. I checked all her references. And she paid in cash. Enough for six months rent plus deposit. I was amazed. Most of the time I have to get after these deadbeats just for their one month. As I said, I can barely remember her face.”

He showed him the picture of the license.

“That looks like her. But I couldn’t swear to it.”

Jerry also showed him a Polaroid.

“Same thing again. It looks like her. But so could a lot of other pictures. I’d like to help.

There wasn’t much to go on in Adairsville. Jerry checked a number of local stores. He even checked a few smaller liquor stores. No one had seen her before. This was probably due to the fact that she was a recent arrival.

Sienna couldn’t help and neither could any of these witnesses.

That afternoon, Warren headed over the house. He let himself in.

“Hello, hello!”

Sienna recognized Warren’s voice.

“I’m up here.”

He trudged up the stairs.

“I thought that I should be the one to come over here.”

“I’m glad that you did. I was hoping that you might be able to tell me some news.”

“Nothing really hopeful. Jerry followed up your address from your license. No one seems to know you at your apartment complex.”

Warren’s news was shocking. She had no choice but to accept her new home for what it was. Lynette offered her a convenient identity. She could live in her place, eat her food, maybe even drive her car. She could assume all the mannerisms which made her welcome in Cordelia. She could frequent the same bars. She could try to learn her customs so that she could integrate herself with the other inhabitants. In essence, Lynette would have a double.

Sienna wanted her independence. For the time being, she saw no way to actually attain it. She was somewhat of an invalid so she couldn’t really set out on her own. She accepted the rudimentary identity offered to her living with Lynette. She would have to accommodate herself to this community. She could hide for the time being.

Lynette arrive home late that evening. She stopped by to look in on Sienna.

“How are you doing, dear?”

“I’m doing great. I even made it down the stairs.”

“That’s fantastic. Jack told me that Warren was here.”

“Yeah, he had some bad news. No one seems to know me in Adairsville. It’s like I never existed.”

“That’s a terrible thing to face. Hey, it gives you the chance to start completely anew.”

“If only there wasn’t someone after me.”

“You’ve been lucky so far. Nothing’s happened since that night. The person could have moved on.”

“I keep thinking that. But the fear is still inside me.”

Sienna’s simple routine became critical for to maintain her sanity. She started with eating and bathing. As time went on, she would take short walks around the house. She learned to manage the stairs with ease. That became an added task. She would not only do the activity.. She would mentally tally it as an accomplishment. It became her form of rehabilitation. When she had built her strength up, she would add walks outdoors to her list. Everything was so systematic. This gave her a sense of accomplishment. She didn’t want to deviate from her schedule. This made her feel like she was slipping backwards.

She wanted new challenges. She wanted to leave the grounds. She wanted Lynette to take her somewhere.

“I’d gladly drive you to town. We can get you some new clothes.”

She had only a few things that Lynette had let her borrow. She wanted to be her own girl.

“I’d love to go shopping. I’d love to buy some things for myself.”

She still had some money left.

“Now that you’re getting your health back, you’re going to need some new clothes. A new image for a new girl.”

She liked that idea.

“I think I’ve forgotten about that part of myself.”

She looked at herself in the mirror. She liked what she saw. She wanted to show off. This was what her health had made to her. She had been denying herself. She felt that she had done something wrong. Now she wanted to show off her body. She needed a little flattery to make her feel herself again.

“I hope that I wasn’t vain in my past life.”

“You just have to show ‘em what you got.” Lynette gave it some body motion.

Sienna shook her ass, “How’s that for a little greased lightening?”

They both broke out laughing. Lynette slapped her on the rump.

“Sometimes you just have to flaunt it!”

“I feel like I’ve been held prisoner in a convent school.” She wanted to correct herself, “I don’t mean to say that I feel that you’re doing something bad, Lynette.”

“I know what it is to miss the touch of a man.”

“I wish that I could figure out my identity on my own. But I feel that need. I’ll only really know myself when I get back with a guy again.”

Lynette agreed, “I know what you mean. It has nothing to do with the guy. Not really. It’s how we test ourselves. How far we can push. How we can just let go. That makes us who we are.”

“I still like it when it’s like this now. We can pretend that we’ll never need that touch

again.”

“I hate it when you try and act all independent, and then you just melt for some jerk who just takes your heart away.”

Just talking about men made her hunger for affection. Sienna didn't want to lose herself in the flesh. She was just starting to understand the balance.

As Sienna lay in bed that night, she started to take stock of who she was. There was part of her that was almost back to normal. She had most of strength back. She was ready to know the world. Then there was that part of her that was nowhere to be seen. Her mind was now working a millions miles a minute. She was trying to slow it down. She would never be able to sleep as long as her thoughts were this active. More than ever she was her new adversary. She would have to struggle against her thoughts.

The sheriff's investigation had exposed what had been her hidden world. No one really knew her in Adairsville. She could have disappeared there without any problem. If she was anonymous in the apartment complex, then she would be perfectly safe. Even a police investigation had turned up no links.

On the other hand, the police had brought the spotlight on her Adairsville self, the Sienna of the Falls. Now she surely couldn't go back there. The investigation pointed to her how easy it was to break down her secret. And then there was her complete uncertainty. One person may have already known everything about Adairsville. And that person was waiting for her to return. Once she came back to her place, some guy might be there waiting. The attacker could even be a next door neighbor. What might have been a plan for escape would turn into a plan to get found in the worst way.

She acted like she was in her fortress. Lynette's place was off the beaten path. There was no other neighbors watching her. You couldn't even get there from the main highway. No one would wander upon her. She felt completely safe. Safe from what, she was safe from herself. She needed to face danger if she was ever going to know who she really was. But the danger of being killed meant that she might never know what had happened that fateful night.

Adairsville and Cordelia now were intimately linked for her. Two sides of her personality were tied together into one. This is how it must have been that night. She had already established Adairsville as her residence. Here she was in Cordelia taking care of her business. But the fact that Adairsville had no roots said something about her. She had always been living the same way, try to create an amnesia for herself, trying to erase her past. Now she had erased all of her past. She had done what she had always wanted to do. And she hated it. She wanted her past back. She needed it to be herself.

Even thinking about her circumstances, Sienna was getting to know herself again. She had a vanity that she had forgotten in the hospital. She had to catch herself from always looking in the mirror. Always trying to adjust her image. Image was everything to her. It allowed her to live in the world with others. She would need to enhance her image if she was to come out of her shell. She'd need new clothes to suit her identity.

She also understood her need for privacy. Even when she had a public identity, she had tried to hide herself in a place where no one knew her. In satisfying that wish, she realized how she had sapped her ability to affect what others thought about her. She had recently discovered what her self meant just to her. But she still knew very little about what her self meant to other

people. To someone out there it meant more than her attractiveness. For that person, her only attraction was death.

The shock reverberated her. She had been thinking abstractly. She had subdued her imagination. Welling up from her logic was the same ghosts that had been haunting the shadows for weeks. This was her new horror. As much as she could learn about herself, she knew nothing about this ultimate challenge. She shared this connection with her pursuer that could only be resolved in Sienna's death. She needed to avoid this end.

She looked at the clock in her room. Her mind had been ticking away for hours. And now her fear had returned. She pulled the covers over her head and tried to sleep. She couldn't do anything about it tonight. She again told herself that she was safe in this house.