

Chapter 4

The sun shone through the open curtains, and the room felt nice and warm. It took me a second to realize where I was, the memory bringing with it the previous night's vision. I rolled over and look for Michael and saw that he was sound asleep right next to me, perfectly safe and healthy. There was no blood in sight. The door was locked.

It had felt so real. I had felt the tackiness of ice-cold blood on my hands, and the smell of copper had filled my nose. I was certain someone was here last night, determined to kill me, too. There's no way that was simply a vision.

Or was it?

I climbed out of bed and headed to the window, looking out of the curtains to see the grounds covered in fresh snow. The lake was completely blanketed over, and I couldn't even make out cars in the parking lot anymore.

We were completely snowed in. At first I started to panic, but then the idea of being snowed into a cozy, romantic—albeit haunted—resort with my husband put a smile on my face. If this didn't make sure to repair our broken marriage, I don't know what would.

Just then Michael began to stir, and I turned around to see him watching me with a solemn look on his face.

"You look beautiful," he said.

I smiled. "Come look at the view, it's breathtaking."

"Come here for a second first," he said flirtatiously.

I climbed onto the bed, and he ran his right hand down my cheek, just taking the moment to look into my eyes before leaning over to kiss me—for the first time since that tequila night. The kiss was quick, but I could still feel some lingering passion there. Michael pulled away and climbed out of bed, bracing himself against the frigid wood floor, taking my hand and pulling me up with him. He stood behind me at the window, wrapping his arms around me. We gazed out, taking in the grounds just I had previously.

"Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea . . ." he trailed off as he realized the same thing I had. "Where's the parking lot? Are we snowed in?"

"It appears that way," I replied carefully.

"Sarah! We can't possibly be snowed in. What about work? This was only supposed to be for the weekend, and by the amount of snow out there, it's going to be much longer than that." He

spun me around to face him. "But you knew about the storm, didn't you? You planned this on purpose!" he was shouting now.

"Michael, please lower your voice," I said, trying to stay calm.

"No, I won't. And how are we affording this extravagant stay, anyway? I know what our finances look like, and I know we can't afford this. How are we paying for it, Sarah?" He asked, accusingly.

"Michael, I'm not going to argue with you about this again. We're already here, the room is paid for, we might as well enjoy the time we have together. Why are you fighting it?" I asked pointedly.

"This is insane, Sarah. Why would you do this to us? You know one weekend away isn't going to fix our problems. This is the most irresponsible thing you've ever done, throwing our money away like this and trapping us in this ridiculous resort!" He stalked into the bathroom to get dressed, slamming the door behind him.

I remained there by the window, thinking back to how perfect things were just a few moments ago, before everything was ruined by the snow. If only I had kept my mouth shut. Tears started streaming down my face as a knock came at the door. I

threw my robe on and wiped my tears on the back of my hand on my way to answer it, only to see Stuart.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hull. I'm afraid I've received several noise complaints from some fellow guests on this floor, and just wanted to make sure everything was alright," he said.

"Yes, everything is fine, just a misunderstanding. I apologize for getting loud, it won't happen again."

"Alright, well if you need anything just give me a holler." Stuart turned and walked back towards the elevator. I closed the door, feeling my cheeks flush red hot from embarrassment. The other guests had heard us arguing.

I walked over to the bed and sat down on the edge as the tears flowed. Eight years of marriage—gone, just like that. I had never pictured myself with anyone but Michael, and certainly never thought I would end up divorced. Especially with a baby on the way. This was all new territory for me now, and I had no idea how to begin to navigate it. Michael opened the bathroom door and headed for me, noticing I was crying. He sat down next to me and rubbed my back with his right hand.

"I'm sorry for the things I said, I shouldn't have said them. Not here, not this way. I know how hard you are trying for us, and I'm just throwing it all away. Sarah, you know I love

you, but things have changed. We have changed. We're not carefree and fun anymore. Somewhere along the line, we got swept away by work, and money, and late nights, and let our marriage, our connection dwindle. And then when you brought up having children, I felt like it just pushed us over the edge. You know I'm not that guy, you've always known that. And I can't offer you that. I'm sorry."

It was the first genuine thing he'd said in a year, and I couldn't believe the words coming out of his mouth. He had to do this now? Here?

"Why can't we repair this with date nights and getaways, communication and intimacy, and be like we used to be again? I don't understand why it's too late," I began.

". . . Because I love you, Sarah, but I'm not in love with you anymore," he said, dropping the biggest bomb possible on me. My hand immediately flew to my stomach, and I couldn't help but feel like I had failed this child already.

"Grab our things, because we're leaving. And when we get back to the house, you have three days to move out," I stated coldly as I grabbed myself a change of clothes from the suitcase and started to get dressed for the day.

"Sarah, I'm so sorry . . ." Michael trailed off, but I couldn't hear him anymore. Everything he was saying was just white noise at this point, and it wouldn't matter anyway. We were going back home, and he would be moving out. We were getting divorced, and I would raise this baby alone. That's the new plan.

As I started to tune him back in, I heard him ask suddenly, "Sarah, are you even listening to me?"

"No!" I responded, throwing my nightgown in the bag and zipping it up. I grabbed the room key off the bedside table where I had left it the night before, and headed for the door, slamming it behind me. I pushed the button for the elevator and stepped in when it arrived. As the doors slid shut and I rode down to the lobby, it didn't even occur to me to be scared of a possible replay of last night's horrific ride. I was too upset and pissed off to care. Finally, I reached the lobby, and there's Hillary. Standing outside the doors to greet me, just as usual.

"Hello Mrs. Hull, how can I help you?" she asked.

"My husband and I would like to check out, and we need the SUV brought around as well, please," I make my request as nicely as possible, but there's no mistaking the tension.

"Oh, I'm afraid that's not possible, Mrs. Hull. The storm has everyone snowed in. We're not able to get to the vehicles. Not even the plows are able to reach us right now. They are anticipating we'll be waiting for a few days," she said.

"A few days? No! That's unacceptable. There must be some way out of here!" I exclaimed.

"Mrs. Hull, if you could please lower your voice. You're startling the other guests" Hillary said, pointing behind her. I looked over by the fireplace and saw other couples huddled together, reading the paper or playing board games with each other, all staring at me.

"Hillary, there has to be a way out of here. We can't stay here together another minute. Please understand," I begged.

"I do understand your situation, Mrs. Hull, but the roads are blocked, as are the vehicles. And as I've said, the plows can't even get through. Unless you have access to a private helicopter, there's no going anywhere for any of us," she chuckled smugly.

I slammed my hand down on the desk, about to give her a piece of my mind, when Michael came up behind me and pulled me away.

"Excuse us please," he crooned at Hillary with a smile on his face.

"I checked the local news report, and she's right. There's no way out of here for at least a few days. Tuesday is the earliest anyone can get to us, so until then we're going to have to suck it up and hunker down. No losing our cool anymore, and certainly no more fighting. We can get through this, Sarah, it's only a few more days," Michael said soothingly.

Looking down at the ground, I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes again. But I refused to shed one more tear—definitely not in front of Hillary—so I held them back. "Fine," I replied, walking around Michael and back to the elevator.

Later that evening, I decided to go downstairs to the Resort restaurant and have dinner alone. Halfway through my mocktail, Michael showed up and took the seat across from me.

"What are you doing here, Michael?" I asked, shortly.

"I'm having dinner with my wife," He replied.

"Don't you mean your soon-to-be ex-wife?" I fired back, coldly. Michael let out a deep sigh and grabbed my hand from across the table, refusing to let it go when I tried to pull it away.

"After everything we've been through together, do we really need to end everything so cold and abrasively Sarah? Don't we owe each other more than that?" he asked.

"Honestly, Michael, I don't owe you anything anymore," I raised my glass to take another drink, and pulled my other hand back from his grasp.

Just then, the waiter came over and read us the specials for the night. I ordered the lobster ravioli, with Caesar salad to start. Michael decided to stick to whiskey, neat. It remained quiet between us for the rest of the meal, just the scraping of our utensils on the flatware and the clink of ice in Michael's old-fashioned glass. Once the check arrived, I handed the waiter our credit card and just sat back to stare at Michael—working on his fourth glass of the night.

"Should you really be drinking so much?" I asked him.

"Apparently we're on vacation, so why the hell not!" He gulped down the remaining contents of his glass and slammed it down on the table.

Michael stood up, a little wobbly at first, and grabbed his sport coat off the back of the chair before heading towards the lobby elevator, not saying another word to me as he left. I could see the other guests' eyes on us. Certainly, they could

feel the tension building between my husband and I, but at that point I didn't care. We were trapped there, in that horrible situation, and I was forced to deal with it the only way I knew how. My behavior might have appeared a little hostile to our onlookers, but he was refusing to even try to repair our marriage. He could deal with a little hostility from me for the next few days. It wasn't like it was going to kill him or anything.

The waiter finally came back with the credit card, handing it to me with a receipt and his thanks for dining with them—as if we had lots of other options in this weather. I feigned a smile and signed my name at the bottom of the slip, then got up from the table and headed towards the lobby elevator.

With a ding, the doors opened wide and I walked inside. The doors slid tightly closed behind me. The elevator started to rise up through the floors, when suddenly it came to a screeching halt on the third floor and the lights flickered out. It was completely dark, and soon became ice cold inside. I began to shiver. I started to rub my hands over my arms to generate some heat, stopping only to press all the buttons, but it was no use. The elevator was dead. Even the call button wasn't working. All I could think about was how I was going to freeze to death,

while Michael would get to go on living his life, happy and free.

After five minutes, I was already pacing the elevator, increasingly horrible thoughts racing through my mind. Thoughts of him cheating with someone younger, prettier, with more energy. Images of him with a new wife, vacationing on some beach somewhere we've never been before. Flashes of him making love to her—with more passion and desire than he ever gave to me. And then I was angry. No, I was enraged. And jealous, even though I knew it was crazy because this was all in my head.

It was this damn elevator, it does something to you once you're inside of it. I had to get out of there.

I started banging on the doors and yelling for help with as much energy as I could muster, but the drop in room temperature stole most of my alertness from me. I was quickly becoming exhausted, and my eyes grew heavy. I could barely function properly, but still I was yelling and shouting for help.

After what seemed like hours, I stopped.

"What do you want from me?" There was nothing. "Whatever you want, I'll do it, just let me out of here!"

The elevator jumped to life again: lights bright, the temperature already beginning to warm up, and the classical

music playing again. The floors started passing me by, and I finally made it to number thirteen. When the doors opened up and I stepped out, I couldn't help but feel like I'd made a deal with the Devil himself. A debt was owed.

I kept looking back at the elevator the entire time I walked towards our room, but the doors never shut. It was watching me, too. I put the key into the suite's door, unlocked it and stepped inside, and took one last peek down the long hall at the elevator. Still open, still watching, still waiting.