

The little town wasn't much different. A new mall, not very big, but very busy. The roads were in better shape, and the city limits were a bit farther. The biggest difference was the old buildings. They were gone. Mrs. Estrild's house was gone. The one where I saw the little boy be born. The famous blind little boy— famous in the county, at least; he acted as though he could see everything. I winced at the thought, and then I sighed. In seven years they tore down every old building and replaced them with suburban restaurants, or fancy new malls.

"Excuse me, is everything alright?" The man in the chair next to me asked. He was an attractive man, about my age I guessed. He had these amazing blue eyes— the kind you couldn't help but stare at. His beard was trimmed to the perfect length, just a little bit of stubble, and his facial structure was pleasing to say the least. Very prominent cheekbones and every part of his face was proportional. To top it off he had this adorable short, brown, curly, hair.

"Oh, nothing," I smiled at him politely, "I'm only remembering the last time I was here."

"When was that?" he seemed genuinely interested.

"It was about seven years ago; I used to live here. I left and swore I'd never be back. Unfortunately, here I am."

"Oh, well what brings you back?"

"My parents. They passed away about a month ago. Since all their relatives had disowned them, they left everything to me."

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry."

"It's okay. I guess they got what was coming for them. I do wish I had talked to them more though. I feel bad taking all their money when I haven't talked to them since last year when my dad called begging me to bail him out of jail. I did, but I hadn't said a word to him since. They send me Christmas and birthday presents every year." Just as I finished my sentence the real estate office receptionist popped her head in and said a man's name, "Mr. Branson."

"Well, if you ever need anything or want to go out for dinner, just give me a call," he handed me his business card, winked, and then walked away.

I sat around for about another fifteen minutes, watching people come and go. A few I recognized, but most of the kids I grew up with left once they turned eighteen. Just like me.

"Ms. Liliana. We are ready for you in Mrs. Johanson's room," I got up and went to my

new real estate agent's office.

"Hello! My name is Mariah Johanson. You may call me Mariah. What brings you here?" She said in an obnoxiously bubbly voice.

"My parents recently passed away and I would like to sell their house— 213 22nd avenue. They have 3.26 acres, the house is 1200 square feet. I haven't been there recently so I'm not sure what condition it's in."

A look of practiced sympathy crossed her face. "I'm so sorry for your loss. How about we set up a time and place to meet at the house? We can then decide how much it's worth."

"Yeah, that will be fine. I'm free everyday all day. What would work best for you?" I asked her. She pulled out what looked to be her planner.

"Well, I'm completely booked for the next three days, so how about Friday, say at," she paused, reading her little pink book, "one o'clock in the afternoon?"

"Perfect, thank you for your time." I told her the address, and then I got up and left.

I slowly typed the number into my phone. (540) 298-3626. Contact name. I thought a second. His business card didn't have his first name, and I can't recall him telling me it. So I just wrote Branson. I pressed call and he picked up on the third ring.

"Hello?" he asked.

"Hi... Umm, it's Jada. The girl from the real estate agency?"

"Oh, hello Jada, it's nice to hear from you. Since you're calling I assume you're taking me up on my offer for dinner?"

"I am indeed. Tonight possibly? I'm desperately in need of a good night."

"Okay then, I'll pick you up at seven," he said.

"What should I wear, Fancy or casual?"

"I'd go fancy. I'm going to make reservations at a special place," his voice was mischievous.

"Do I get to know this special place?" I inquired.

"I'm sorry ma'am, I'm afraid you do not," he said as if he was in an old western movie, a thing I would soon come to realize, he does a lot.

"Fine, I guess I'll live with that. I'll see you at seven." And then we hung up.

I danced around my room to music that was only in my head. Trying on dresses, then

taking them off when they didn't meet my standards. I tried on six dresses, twirling and dancing around in each of them before settling on a knee length, tight red dress. I caught a glimpse of the clock, 6:30. Crap. I hadn't done my hair or makeup. I rushed to the bathroom and swiped on some black eye liner and smoky eye-shadow. I put on some foundation and topped it off with two layers of mascara. I put three-quarters of my hair into a high ponytail, leaving a few pieces loose in the front. I curled them then put some deodorant and perfume on. I strapped on my gold high heels and some gold hoops to match. I went down the stairs just in time for the doorbell to ring. I grabbed my purse and rushed to the door.

His lovely face greeted me. When I saw it I grinned, like a fool I'm sure. "Hi there," he said, returning my smile.

"Hello," I said, perhaps a bit too enthusiastic, I tried to tone it down.

"Wow," was his response. I could feel him giving me the 'up-down.' I blushed, "You look fantastic."

"Well thank you, you don't look half bad yourself, shall we go?"

"Oh yes, of course." He took me by the elbow and we walked to his car. Once there he opened the passenger side door for me, I smile graciously and got in.

The car ride was mostly silent. We listened to music in awkward silence. It felt different than at the real estate agency.

"Are you alright? You seem, a bit, tense," I asked carefully.

"I'm fine." He said it tightly though.

"Fine." Silence. For ten more minutes. "What's your first name?" I asked abruptly.

"Jack. Jack Branson." I didn't respond. I didn't know how too. There was this atmosphere in the car, like at any second he'd lash out and hit me. It scared me. Fifteen more minutes or silence then we pulled up to my old house. My parent's house. I was stunned

"What are we doing here?" Memories flashed back into my head, "How do you know I lived here?" I demanded.

"Shut up," Was his response.

"No, get me out of here right now you stalker!" I shrieked. My head flung backwards into my headrest. Tears flooded my eyes.

"Bring. Me. Home!" I ordered. Terrified, I glanced at Jack. His eyes were the color of the sky at midnight, and not in the pretty way.

“Jack, please,” I muttered. I closed my eyes, attempting to hold back the tears. Once he didn’t do anything, I opened the door and got out. “We’re done.”

“Come back here Jada. I didn’t say you could leave.” He followed suit and got out as well.

“Leave me alone.” I broke into a run but in my heels he was much faster than me. He pushed me over onto the ground. Then he was picking me up. Carrying me into my old house. I tried to fight it, but it was no use. Every time I fought, he held me tighter, making it close to impossible to breathe. I gave up. Once we were in the house he laid me down on my old bed.

“How’d you know this was mine?” I wondered aloud.

“I know a lot about you Jada,” he whispered back in response. My eyelids fluttered.

“Jack, let me go,” I said forcefully. He slapped me.

“Stop saying that!” he screamed, and then spit in my face.

“Screw you!” I responded. I punch him in the nose and tried to scramble away. I was at the door when a book flew into my ribs. He ran over to me and tried to pin me into the corner. I fought back as hard as I could. His face was the color of a tomato. I slapped it. He stumbled back so I kicked him further back. He ran out of the room. I was terrified.

Adrenaline was pumping through me. I stood up slowly. I was sure that the book broke one of my ribs. I winced at the pain that shot through my torso. I walked through the door cautiously. I heard the floorboards creak. They creaked all around me. I couldn’t tell where he was. I slowly walked to the kitchen, I knew everything was still going to be there. Left of the stove, top drawer. I opened it and grabbed the knife. It was big, I took a deep breath. I made myself promise that I wouldn’t use it unless necessary.

"Put the knife down Jada. Don't do something you'll regret." Tears were streaming down my face.

"I will do it. I'm serious. Leave me alone you crazy bastard."

"Shh, don't worry bout a thing babe." He started taking slow steps towards me.

"GET AWAY FROM ME!" I screamed. “I’m not your ‘babe’.” He tried to take a cautious step towards me. I lifted the knife. It was a game of cat and mouse. He was teasing me, daring me to do it, and it made me mad.

“I doubt you’ve ever even killed a fly,” he taunted me.

“I’m sure I’m capable of doing it though,” I responded. He rolled it eye carelessly. I kept

my eyes on him and took slow steps toward that drawer that I got the knife from. I felt around for what I was looking for. I found it and picked it up. Very quickly I grabbed it and threw it at him. The fork hit his thigh with amazing accuracy. His hand went to the fork and he cringed in pain. A blood-curdling cry came from him. He pulled it out and his face changed. It changed from anger to hatred. I knew I wouldn't be safe from him ever again. He would do whatever he could to get rid of me.

He grabbed the fork and stood up, I guess the adrenaline made it easier for him to ignore the pain. The feet slowly shuffled towards me. He lifted his hand and threw the fork back, I tried to dodge it, but I couldn't in time. It got me in the shoulder. I cried out in pain. I knew better than to pull it out though. Done with this, I ran at him. My hand plunged forward, with the knife, into him. He collapsed to the ground. There was so much blood. It started to come out of his mouth as well, but he didn't move.

"Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god!" I buried my face in my hands. What did I do? I fell to the ground. I knew I had to get both of us out of there. I ran upstairs and found a suitcase. I stuffed his lifeless body into it and rolled it to his car.

I had no clue what to do with his car. I decided to worry about that later. I drove for a while, until I was in very rural country, then, I buried him. I left his car there and started my way back to the house. I was sweating and bloody. I called my real estate agent and canceled my appointment. I said I was going to keep the house, but I had different plans.

I stood there like a crazy woman, putting kerosene all over the house. I lit three matches and watched the house get engulfed in flames. I ran away as fast as I can. Running to the hotel, packing my bags, and leaving. No one was going to find out that I killed a man. I would not go to prison.