

Till death do us part

It was around three in the morning and I was sitting at the old bus stop they forgot to destroy when they tore the rest of them down. It was the perfect fall night; the air was crisp and it gave me a little jolt every time it blew through my hair. I kept thinking it might rain from the crinkle of the leaves; I know it may sound silly but I always believed I could tell if it was going to rain by the sound of the trees. I was hoping this time I was wrong, for my sake.

He'd left me there about an hour or so before and I insisted that he just take me home since no bus would stop here this time of night but he told me that just wasn't the truth and to trust him, 'don't you trust me doll?.' No bus had been through, not even one to pass me. I knew that would happen but he has this hold over me I just can't explain. Anything he needs I'll be and anything he asks I'll do; It's a sickness really.

I'd been meaning to end things earlier that day. I'd just gotten home from work when of course he was nowhere to be found. He was supposed to pick me up for our date. He called and said he'd be an hour or so late, which ticked me off. This was not his first time doing this, it happened quite a lot. This time was truly the last straw. I changed from my work clothes into something pink (a colour he's always detested) and waited on the couch for him to ring the bell.

The restaurant was the grandest I'd ever seen. It was pulsing with excited life. Gold trimming on every ivory wall and paintings of angels and birth on every lamp above the tables. There were only tables big enough for two. They were all so close

together it was hard to walk past without hitting someone's elbow. It was still so breathtaking I almost forgot I hated his guts! I swallowed my joy and kept a snooty face like I thought the place was very tacky and maybe it was, who am I to decide what looks Divine?

He ordered for the both of us—lobster and Chardonnay—like he usually does. It had been a mostly quiet car ride; he'd make a joke and look at me to see if I was laughing and when I didn't, he was bemused. He must have sensed something was wrong when I swear I saw him take an unplanned left turn.

"How was work?" He was the first to speak.

I didn't turn to him, not even an inch.

"It was fine," I said, trying to sound aloof.

"Is something the matter?"

"No, no I'm fine."

He looked around him like the couple next to us might have a clue.

"You've got me at sixes and sevens here doll! You're not mad yet you've barely said three words to me all night. Now, what's with that?"

R talked like an old movie star; a little high but with a lot of class. He even looked like Brando—if you looked at him from really far away and at an angle.

"I think I've said enough." I spat back.

He threw his hands in the air like *'kaput'* and rolled his eyes but then he smiled and grabbed something from the pocket of his coat.

"I brought you something." He beamed.

Now I was facing him and could you blame me? I'm only a girl and diamonds are my best friend—I had hoped they were diamonds—so you really couldn't fault me on that. He passed it to me and when I opened the box I had to look away!

“Brighter than the sun.” He said with pride.

“Oh R! I love it, I do! Thank you.” I sang.

I put the bracelet on and dangled it near the light and completely forgot how mad I was at him. He'd done it again and congratulations to him, it's a game we play and he always wins. Maybe it's an unhealthy relationship but I don't see it that way. Sometimes he forgets and sometimes he leaves me at a bus stop but he's never mean, he never raises his voice and he loves me. I know he does. He's a top tier guy, he's too good for me. How could I even think of letting him go?

We were about halfway through dessert when a sudden smooth jazz sound arose from his suit pocket.

“Hello, Sam...I'm at dinner...hm, right this second?...No, no it's fine. See you in ten.”

He put his phone away and looked at me with guilty eyes.

“You've got to be kidding me.” I started to get up.

He followed my move. “Sweetheart I'm sorry, it's work.

I stopped and looked back at him. “Your work.” I pointed at his chest aggressively.

“Is not real work! Why couldn't you have been an accountant?”

“Would you keep your voice down? Let's talk outside.”

“You are something else,” I muttered while we waited for the valet to pull the car around.

The silver sports car rolled up beside us and he walked to his side.

“You're not getting in?”

I crossed my arms and shook my head. He threw his hands on the hood and let out a defeated sigh.

“You can come with me if you want.”

“You really mean it?” I ran to the car excitedly.

“Yes.” We both got in. “But you can't talk. Well, you can say hello but after that, you need to keep your mouth shut.”

I felt like I should be offended but I knew it was for my own safety.

“Where are we going?” I asked.

“You'll see.”

I decide to ask no further questions and just stare at him. He had on a beautiful blue suit that brought out his eyes. I had to look in the rearview mirror to see them, he caught me and smiled.

“No matter what happens tonight, just know I'll protect you.” He patted his chest pocket.

I nodded softly but I was hoping it wouldn't come to that.

We were in a casino, at least 10 miles out of town. It had a Wild West theme; the waiters were wearing cowboy boots and being stopped every second to take photos with tourists. I was frightened; I'd never been with R to one of his meetings. I'd heard stories, some happy endings and some not. I was hoping that night would be a happy one.

“This way.” He grabbed my hand and led us through the commotion and the thick feeling of stress filling up the room.

“102,103,104...” he counted the rooms in a low mumble to himself.

I wanted to ask if he knew where we were going but he told me to keep my mouth shut.

“Ah-ha! 112. No matter the hotel, he’s always in room 112.”

He knocked 4 times and a young boy let us in.

“Finally you’re here! Please, please sit down.” An older man with hair just beginning to grey greeted us. He was sitting at a red table with two men standing at either side, who I assumed were his bodyguards from the way they stood, with their arms crossed and legs apart.

“Hello Sammy, how are you?” R said, sounding more professional than I’d ever heard him.

Sammy swiftly grabbed his hand and gave it an aggressive shake. “I’m fine, I’m fine you know how slow business gets around this time and—oh my, this must be the very special lady I’ve heard so much about.” He reached across the table to shake my hand. “You’re a very lucky man.”

I did my best to look polite even though his suave demeanour gave me the willies. Anyone who tries that hard to be charming is bad news and that’s always the truth.

“How this man got a woman like you, I’ll be up all night trying to understand.” He laughed deeply.

I wanted to look to R to see if he might give me an indication if this was a time where I should talk but I didn’t want to make it obvious. I thought I’d just use my best judgement, not that my judgement had helped me much before.

“You’re too sweet, thank you.” I smiled nervously.

“You’re very welcome, young lady.”

The way he spoke and carried himself reminded me of a mall Santa.

“Now.” His face went from friendly Santa to Jack Frost very fast. “Let's get started.”

“Now I just don't see that happening.”

“Are you calling me a liar then?” R said and then laughed to keep the tension from bubbling over.

They had been talking for at least 20 minutes, about a lot of things and people I didn't know. It was like they were talking in code but now I thought I had finally caught up. R had told Sammy one of his boys had cheated him out on a deal and Sammy was telling him it was impossible. The conversation had brought a terrible colour to the room; the neck veins were popping, the smiles had become more aggressive than passive and the bodyguards had moved ever so closer to R and I.

“I'm not saying that R. Did I ever say that? Did you hear me say that Paul?”

The young boy who let us in perked up in his seat and stood. “No sir.” He sat back down again, like a student.

“Exactly R, I don't think you're a liar, I want to help your situation.” He claimed, sympathetically.

R rolled his eyes. “Of course you do Sammy, you're a great guy.”

“What are you after then?”

“You know what I want Sammy. I want my money.”

“Well you know I can get you your money in good time—”

“Two payments.”

“Now R,” Sammy began.

“All cash.” R kept a stern face.

Sammy looked shocked, he turned to his bodyguards and slightly nodded. R took notice and glanced over to me, he then patted his pocket in reassurance but I was still very, very afraid.

“Sammy this was the deal I had previously established with your guy. Hey! It’s not your fault he ripped me off, it’s not my fault either. I just want what I’m owed and I’m sure you can understand that.” R explained.

Sammy shook his head and focused his attention on me.

“I’m real sorry, doll.”

Suddenly he pulled something smooth and lustrous from his pocket and before I could realise what it was, R pulled one out too. The two men (and the bodyguards) were now in a standoff. Paul and I were still in our seats; frozen with fear.

“Is this really how you want this to go? Put your gun down R.”

“What about you then? I’m just protecting her.” He gestured to me.

Sammy thought for a second and pursed his mouth.

“If somebody pulled a gun out with my lady in the room I’d be angrier than a dog without a bone.” Sammy put his hands up and slowly lowered the gun to the table.

“So, let’s put the guns down and handle this like gentlemen.”

R seemed sceptical but followed his move. “Alright Sammy, alright.”

I didn’t want him to put the gun down, I wouldn’t have put the gun down. I wanted to grab it and hug it to my chest.

The room was tense but in another way It was strangely calm; the silence and the hum of our breath were truly relaxing. It had started to feel like we would never leave, like we would spend the rest of time there and I was honestly okay with that.

What would happen next? I counted through all the different scenarios I could think of. Some were happy endings and some not, I was hoping for a happy one.

“Well Sammy, we ought to talk this through.”

“Yes, you’re right.” Sammy agreed.

Now that the silence had passed I wanted to leave, in a nauseating way.

“How much was it you said?”

“Half a million.”

“And you want that in two cash payments?” Sammy laughed.

“Yes, I know you did it for Tommy.”

He stopped laughing. “Okay R, you’ve got me.” He glanced down at the table like he was making a plan of action. “I’ll get you what you want...” He sharply picked up his gun and pointed it to R’s heart. “If I can’t kill you first.”

R reacted quickly and shot Sammy in the arm. Sammy’s arm jerked back and he dropped his gun. The instant he touched his wound, his hand became a deep red; catching pools of blood.

“Oh my god!” Paul cried out.

The bodyguards wrestled R to the ground and he threw his gun between my chair and Paul. I looked at Paul; shocked and sobbing but I couldn’t tell if he was going to move. He caught my eye and shook his head.

“Please” I mouthed to him.

He looked to Sammy, who was slowly pulling himself from the floor and his eyes became angry, but then he looked to R, struggling through the punches and his eyes became sympathetic.

“You have to kill him.” He mouthed to me, gesturing to the gun.

I can't. I couldn't. I wouldn't ever kill somebody. That's not who I am but I reached down for the gun anyways. I stood up from my chair, I closed my eyes and...I pulled the trigger.

The windows were up so the air was thin and all I could smell was blood, it was horrid but I would come to find the smell would never go away.

"I can't believe it," R muttered. "You just..."

"Please R, I don't want to talk about it," I told him, sick to my stomach.

"I'm gonna marry you, Diana. I'm gonna marry you." He chuckled. "Any woman who would do that for their man is the woman you always need by your side. I'm gonna marry you." He said again.

"Okay." He stopped the car and kissed me on the forehead.

I looked out the window and saw nothing but darkness. "What?"

"This is where I'm letting you go, don't worry I'll see you tomorrow."

"Please R, just take me home! It's too late for any buses."

He sighed. "Now that's just not true. You have to trust me, don't you trust me doll?"

THE END.