

His booty call By Ivy brown Chapter 41

Reporters are very predictable. I knew this morning I will find them at the campus, waiting to know the mysterious girl in Quinn's life.

I decided to carpool with Oliver, I knew his old SUV that runs on borrowed time and emits smoke as it moves would hide me until I was inside the campus. It worked.

"We'll talk in the evening, if anything happens am a call away." Oliver waves as he walks towards the engineering building.

I look around, no one saw us. I don't want to drag Oliver in this mess I am in.

Am in a damp mood as I walk past the faculty of Finance. Am angry Andre stood me up, he didn't show up, yesterday. I find students crowded at the notice board. I walk past them ignoring whatever has their interest until I see Mr. Marcelo's picture pinned on it.

I can't read what is written beneath it unless I get closer. I start to sweat, what if it is a missing notice or death. What did Quinn do to him. Am relieved as I read that the university wishes to announce that Mr. Marcelo will not be teaching here and his contract has been terminated indefinitely. That is the best news this morning.

"You are the girl kissing Quinn Nickel in the papers." A girl with hair that looks like a burning bush points at me. I back away and pull my hood over my head.

I am forced to keep my head low as I dash into the cla**room. All heads turn to my direction the moment I step in. I pretend to ignore them and feign a confident poise as I walk to my usual seat. Roxanna is not in cla** yet, neither is Quinn nor Ryan. And they never show up throughout the cla** or any other.

My cla**es end at three, I find Andre waiting for me at the parking lot. He has roses on his hand, he is leaning casually on his Ford car.

His face lights up when he sees me. He hugs me once am next to him.

"Are those for me?" I point at the roses.

“Yeah,” He hands them over. “I hope am forgiven for being a terrible friend.”

“Will Isabella not be jealous for giving another girl roses?” I tease him.

“She isn’t the jealousy type.”

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“So we are seeing her again?”

“I have good feeling about her.”

I sit at the shotgun. We drive to Cole’s cafe. Andre chooses the furthest end. He settles opposite me and removes his laptop. A waiter comes to wait at our booth. He jots down our orders and leaves. When I see the Soduku on our table I remember the one Quinn circled with coded message. Luckily I have the same bag I had. I retrieve it and hand it to Andre. He has always been the smart one, more like a genius.

“You do know combination and permutation?”

“mmh” I nod.

“You can try that to see how it goes.”

I nod in agreement and decide i will try later when i have the time.

I shove the paper back to my bag as the waiter places a large plate of fries on the table and chicken wings on the side. We love to eat fries from the same plate since we were kids. Seeing who will get the most curly or crunchy fries.

“How do you want to go about Quinn’s issue?” Andre enquire as he seasons the fries with ketchup.

“We shake the family empire.” I reply.

He tilts the laptop to face me, but it looks straining to work while we are on the opposite sides so joins me the other side.

“I just went through the financial records of the companies you stole from Quinn and the ones his family’s auditing firm released to the public. They released the wrong information. It is either they are trying hide this companies irregularities or

tax evasion or money laundering. All I know there is a reason why. We just have to find it out.” Andre says.

“So this is not enough?” I ask.

“It is not enough but it is something that can discredit the integrity of the Nickels’ audit Firm.”

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I know integrity is the key of any business. And for a firm like the Nickel Audit Firm to have its Integrity questioned it will shake it, as some of its client will lose trust in it.

“Let’s do it then.” I say.

“I just released the records, just sit, wait and see how the information works.” Andre smiles.

I lean on his shoulder with a huge grin. Andre is a library of information. He says better be armed with information than a gun, your enemy will never see you coming, how and when. That’s why he choose to be a computer geek and hacker.

“How are you holding up, after yesterday?” He asks after a while.

“Just peachy.” I sigh. “I pray the world never knows of my ident**y.”

“For now the focus will shift to the Nickel audit firm. Although their is always that reporter that is digging. They may find out about your past life like stripping but I can a**ure you. No one will ever know you are Cara Cooper the daughter of the legendary Cooper, ever.” His eyes turn dark, almost dangerous but he is quick to hide it with a forced smile, “Unless you want them to find out.”

“Not yet, I don’t have a buffer to cushion my a** when I fall and fail to take back what is truly mine.” I say.

“Am always here for you.” Andre says, though his tone is off.

Oliver’s cla**es end late in the evening. He finds me waiting at the parking lot. He looks unusually happy.

“Andre has already left?” He enquires.

I nod and stand. “And we finally released the first bomb to explode at the Nickels face.” I announce.

“Count me out of it.” He says and unlocks the SUV door by kicking it. Oliver has countlessly expressed his exclusion from my vengeance plan. He believes in Karma, i don’t.

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“Dinner at my place.” He says as we board the dying car. “I have a surprise for you.” He adds and grins.

“I hate surprises.” I remind him.

“I know but you will be proud.”

It takes a while before his engine comes to life. An hour later we are driving at Unfamiliar neighborhood. However i keep my silence to see his surprise. We stop outside an apartment building.

“Where is the surprise?” I ask as we alight.

“I live here now.” He points at the apartment. It looks quite expensive.

I follow him to the elevator. My eyes skimming every inch of it.

“How can you afford it?” I am still confused.

“Don’t worry.” He shrugs.

This time am not letting him off the hook easily. Something is off and i am going to get to the bottom of it.

The elevator stops and we get off.

“The other surprise is that, Nimo moved in with me.” As he finishes talking. The door to his apartment opens and the witch herself appears with a smirk on her face.

Thanks all for the wishes am well now and we can resume uninterrupted with our story.

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I follow Oliver inside his new apartment, my head reeling with questions. The inside is really fancy, there's a huge photo of Nimo dangling next Oliver's favourite grandfather clock.

"Can we talk?" I don't wait for him to get comfortable after pecking Nimo who throws me a nervous look. "Now!" I order.

He shrugs nonchalantly and follow me to his kitchen.

"I need an explanation and this time you aren't going to just give me some lame answers." I say as soon as we are alone.

"What do you want to know?" His demeanour turns serious.

"Where you got the money to afford this apartment and what exactly happened to the mechanic shop?"

"I used my saving and for the shop, like I told you it burned down." He doesn't blink as he says this. His face is hard, the same face my father had when he was close to breaking.

"Am still not convinced." I say.

"Sorry siz, my mission wasn't to convince you but tell you the truth. How you decide to Interpret it, it's your choice."

I heave a sigh, "Fine." I surrender.

"The food is getting cold." Nimo pokes her head. The nervous look on her face I can tell her main mission was to confirm if I had told Oliver about her affair with the older man at the police station.

I exhale, "What are we having?" I ask. I might as well give the girl a chance, after all Oliver is crazy about her. I should be happy for him.

"Oliver told me your favourite, Rosemary Chicken and flat bread. So I made it." She says with a huge genuine grin.

She's a jolly, I get why Oliver likes her.

He's yet to get a dining table so we occupy his leather sofa. Nimo has placed the food on the chest that acts as the table. I focus my eyes on the 7pm news.

"Cara, Oliver has told me so much about you." She breaks the silence and I turn to face her. There's a huge scar just above her left eye. She is average looking with voluminous curly hair, a round face adored with a delicate nose and big puppy eyes.

"Like what?" I ask. People always says that when they don't know anything about you.

"You have been more of a mother than a sister since you lost your parents. He talks about you with so much pride." She says and my heart does somersault that Oliver is proud of me.

I am about to answer when my phone rings, it is a private number. Only one person calls me with a private number. I hope this is not a b*****.

I pick it and stay silent waiting for the caller to answer.

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"Are you okay?" Quinn asks his voice full of concern. That's new.

"What is going on?" I match his worry. Oliver's brows creases.

"Are you at your apartment?" His breaths are uncoordinated and fear sips into me.

"No."

"Don't go there it is dangerous. I will come get you wherever you are." He speaks in a rush manner and I hear him cuss.

"No." I haughtily say. "Listen Quinn," Oliver eyes darken at the mention of Quinn. I told him how Quinn kept on blaming me. "Whatever games you are playing I will not be part of them." I hang up before he can talk.

"What does he want?" Oliver enquires.

"Don't know, Don't care."

Nimo asks, “Is that the same guy you were kissing in the papers?”

I keep forgetting that my face is printed everywhere with all sorts of names.

I nod dutifully, “He’s and he is an a**.”

That earn her a chuckle, “He is hot too.” She adds.

Oliver clears his throat, “He’s the devils son, if you knew half what he’s capable of.” He spits, “As long as you are with me, am the SI unit of hotness.” He pulls her closer.

“Whatever you believe,” She leans and plants a chaste kiss on his lips. I look away, they Look head over heels in love.

Nimo stands, “Cara can you help me in the kitchen with the dessert?”

I nod in agreement.

“I want to thank you for not telling Oliver about that man I was with the other day. I ended it” She puts a slice of red velvet cake on a saucer.

“It is your confession to make.” I say.

“I think am in love with him.”

“Then don’t break his heart because you will have me to deal with.” I mean every word.

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“I won’t.” She smiles. “You are protective of him just he’s to you.

A thought pops into my head, “Why don’t we go shopping sometime, I would love to know you more.” I offer.

That excites her, “How about tomorrow?” She suggest.

Tomorrow I have to go talk to Ryan after he has ignored all my calls.

“How about Wednesday?” I ask.

“Sounds like a plan.”

Oliver walks in on us with my phone. “He won’t stop calling. “He hands me my phone.

“What!” I bark once I answer it.

“Am here, come out.”

“Where?” I ask confused.

“Outside your brother’s apartment.” He answers.

He’s unbelievably pushy. “How did you know where to find me?”

“I am a man of many connections. The more you delay the more danger you are putting your brother in.” He warns and that gets me all worked up. I turn to Oliver who is wearing an impatient look.

I know Quinn never bluffs but he did tell me yesterday at the Ranch that I will pay. Can i trust his motives?

“Don’t m***** up there to get you.” He threaten when I don’t reply immediately.

I have had enough of his b***** for long, “Go to hell Quinn.” I say and hang up.

As soon as I do that, there’s loud banging on the door.

“You got to be kidding me.” I mutter as I move to open it. I swing it open. Quinn is standing there in all his glory and arrogance.

“You told me to stay out of your life but seems like you can’t stay out of mine.”

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“Get out of here.” Oliver lunges at Quinn. Compared to Quinn he is shorter. He has always had an athletic body and am afraid what Quinn might do to him. He gather a handful of Quinn’s designer shirt in his fist. “Leave my sister alone. Your family has done us enough damage already.”

“What are you trying to say?” Quinn asks.

“Oliver!” I shout his name, I cannot let him tell Quinn everything.

The neighbours peer through the doors to see the cause of commotion.

“Should I call the cops?” An old woman in her seventies asks us.

“No.” I say. “Yes.” Oliver says too.

“Everything is fine.” I assure her. She looks between Oliver and I before she goes back inside.

“I just want to keep your sister safe. Bad people are after me and to get to me they will use her.”

“So you are just trying to protect yourself?” Oliver pins him on the wall.

“And her. I promise I will keep her safe.” I have never seen Quinn masked in such worry.

“Why should I believe you after everything you have put her through.”

“My word is enough.” He stares down at Oliver whose face holds no humour.

Oliver releases him and huffs, “It is her decision to make, but dare hurt her and I will s***ter your bones throughout each state.” He points at Quinn. He turns to me with a questioning look.

“I will go with him.” I say.

“I wish I had two men who loved me this much.” Nimo whispers to my ears. I roll my eyes and asks Quinn to wait as I collect my stuff.

“Use this if he tries anything.” Oliver gives me a penknife my father got him for his birthday. I hesitate knowing how sentimental it is to him. ” He pushes it to my palm and I hug him goodbye.

“Take care of her.” He shouts at Quinn as we walk down the hall.

“How do you intend to protect me?” I ask Quinn.

“You will live with me.” He says.

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“Am not going to live with you!” I half yell. He turns and c***s an eyebrow.

I roll my eyes.

“Am not enthusiastic about it either.” He continues to walk.

“I don’t care what you have to say Quinn, am not living with you. I agreed to come with you cause i didn’t want to be around Oliver and his girlfriend.”

“Some family you are!” He presses bas****t on the elevator.

“Atleast we get along unlike yours.” My tongue slips, he back is on me. I don’t get to see his reaction.

“Am sorry i didn’t...” He cuts me.

“You didn’t mean to say that...” He sighs frustrated. “Don’t be sorry for what you mean.”

I shiver when we get to the bas****t. It is dark and isolated. I Fall into steps behind him, making sure to stay close to him as possible.

He still has the blue old chipped truck. He reaches for the door and i stop him.

“Am still not going to live with you Quinn. The only place you are taking me is my apartment.” I make myself clear.

“It is not safe.” He insists.

“That could also be a lie. I don’t trust you.” I narrow my eyes at him.

He chuckles humorlessly, “Says the girl with me in a dark, isolated bas****t.”

He’s right, i dart my eyes from him.

He coughs, “I don’t trust you either, i never have.” His eyes hold intangible intensity. “You are too mysterious to be trusted.”

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His confession automatically makes my hand drop.

“Get in!” He orders. “I will take you to your apartment.” He surrenders. “I don’t even know why i care.” He mutters under his breath.

“You’re right. You should care more on what happens to Courtney.” I snap at him.

“I do. That’s why am marrying her.”

The door to my apartment is open. Was Quinn right?

He does me the honor of pushing it further open. My heart is threatening to jump out of my rib cage.

The inside is turned upside down like the perpetrator was trying to look for something or sent a message.

I jump when Quinn phone rings behind me. He turns yo face the other way as he answers. I walk further into my kitchen. The fridge is open. Foodstuffs thrown everywhere. Am glad i keep valuable doc**ents like my ident**ies in a safe. Nothing is stolen.

“Stay away from her, it is me you are after.” Quinn says over the phone, his voice stern and unshaken.

He puts his phone away, a**ess the appearance in the kitchen for a moment.

“Collect what you can, we leave.” He says.

“I...” He shuts me by raising his index finger.

“I don’t have time to argue, for once stop being stubborn.” He shakes his head.

“Under one condition and you have to promise.” I haughtily say.

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He stays silent, thinking. He clenches his jaw. He stare down at me and i maintain eye contact. He won't intimidate me anymore.

He breaks our contact, "Fine. I promise. What is it?"

"You be honest and tell me what is going on."

"I promise. Now move."

Quinn takes me to his penthouse, the same one he took me some days ago.

It looks the same as before. After i have showered and changed into sweats. I find Quinn on the coach, with his laptop. He still wearing what he had before. He places the laptop on the table. It is an articles from the wall street about his family's firm and the scandal surrounding it. A part of me feels fulfilled to see the impact of what Andre and I did. The other remains unchanged...numb.

I pretend not to have seen the article, and turn to face Quinn. He looks tired and lost. I want to feel victorious seeing him like this. His family made my brother and i to live in the streets for months. Fight for garbage food with other homeless kid for survival. We lived in fear, felt worst, we lost everything. I remind myself. I blink several before my tears spills. I always never want to remember those years.

"You will be safe here." He places his hand on mine. I pull it back. I have gone down this road. Being his b*****, only made me procrastinate my vegence, not again.

"You owe me an explanation." I remind him.

"I do. " He nods, "The guys that are after me, are the same ones that stabbed me. The time i showed up at your apartment."

I remember Oliver's words, "He will bring trouble to your doorstep." Which he did.

"Why are they after you?" I ask him.

“Am involved in underground street fighting. It is a deal gone wrong.” He says and stares down at his laptop.

I want to enquire more on the deal gone wrong, but i know Quinn. That is his version of 100% truth.

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His phone starts to ring, his body relaxes when he sees the caller.

“Hi buddy?” He answers.

He chuckles to whatever Theo says.

“I will be there to put you to bed.” He promises before ending the call.

He unceremoniously stands, “I have to be on my way.” He says apologetically.

“Don’t you live here?” I ask.

“I live at the manor, i come here once or twice a month.” He says.

I knit my eyebrows in confusion, “I thought you said, i was going to live with you.”

“Just wanted to sweetened the deal.” He smirks. “And am taken.” He adds.

I want to smack him across his face. I watch him pack his laptop and a novel i don’t get to see the name.

“So...” I take a long pause, “I will be living here alone and for how long?”

“I will be visiting occasionally and for as long as am done with those SOB”

I lean back to relax.

“I will pick you up tomorrow for school.” He says before walking out.

I scramble every corner of Quinn's kitchen. There's no food, plate, cup or even sp***. My stomach grumbles and I yawn on top of it.

The elevator opens and a muscular guy with a weather beaten face steps in.

"Mr. Nickel asked me to pick you up." He is direct with no formalities.

"Who are you?"

"His family driver and bodyguard." He stays at one position.

"Where is he?" I ask.

"He apologises, he had errands to run." Not a muscle on his face moves as he speaks.

"Alright, I will pick my bag."

"I will be waiting ma'am." He says.

Ma'am? "Call me, Cara." I say as I leave and he nods.

The ride to school makes me realise that Quinn's apartment is closer to school compared to mine. The ride is consisted of me trying to have a small talk with the driver/bodyguard, which he just nods and never speaks. He is gone the moment I step out. Few glances are directed at me at the parking lot, the scandal of Quinn and I is still a hot topic despite the one facing his family. I sling my other backpack s***** my shoulder. I hate carrying a laptop cause I have to carry it in my backpack. However, I have a test tomorrow and failure isn't a flair I posses.

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Before I can exit the parking lot, I see Quinn's red Lamborghini wind up in. The students at the parking lot stand and anxiously stare, especially when I see Courtney step out. I guess Courtney was the errand he was running.

I turn the opposite side before they spot me. Sadly, the universe has other plans. "Cara!" Courtney calls out my name.

I take a monologue moment whether I should run like a guilty person or face her. The later wins.

“Huh?” I breath out.

“The cla** is the other side.” She says. “let us go.” Her tone is friendly.

Am not surprised. Courtney has always been modest. It is not her style to act out in public. I look around, the student eyes are glued on us, expecting something dramatic.

I nod and change my route. I neither need drama.

Her lavender scent fills my nostrils as I get close to her, “You better watch your back. I will smear your name all over the papers with whatever dirt I will get” She whispers to me. Quinn is few steps ahead of us, trying to avoid me.

I huff, “Bad move, are you sure you want the world to know the modest Beauty queen Emerson heiress lost her man to a nobody. Who will look like the loser?” I raise my eyebrows. That gets to her.

I don’t even know why we are having this fight. Quinn choose her. Moreover, we both should be angry with Quinn. He has never verbally said what he wanted or who. Not that I want him. I just find it stupid fighting over a guy who doesn’t know what he wants himself.

The cla** is half empty as we walk in. Roxanna and Ryan show up today. Ryan is seated where Roxanna normally sits vice versa. Quinn casts me a quick glance before we part ways and I walk to my usual seat.

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Ryan speaks first as I sit, “Hi?”

“Hi,” It comes out as a whisper. I can’t tell if he’s mad at me or not. I would be. We never dated but I feel like I owe him an apology and explanation.

“Am not mad at you, am just heart broken. Am more mad at Quinn. Best friends don’t do each other like that. I confided in him. I really liked you.” He mutters.

It stings to hear him speak in past tense. I open my book randomly. “I should have told you.”

“How long had it been going on?” He turns to me.

I decide to be half honest, “Before I met you.” I say.

“Wow! All those times you both pretended to hate each other. It was an act to fool me.” He raises his voice.

“I do hate him.”

“And you loved me that’s why you never wanted to be my girlfriend.” His voice is high, the cla** goes silent and they turn to face us. “I thought I was okay but am not.” His picks his books and walks out.

The walls start to get smaller for me and I begin to get uncomfortable. I pick my book and bag and walk out too, heading to the library.

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I decide to go back to my apartment to pick my Audi and some plates and cups. Only animals can survive in Quinn’s apartment.

I know Quinn warned me about coming back here. He doesn’t own me, I can do what I want.

I meet with the caretaker at the lobby, the way he’s staring at me, it is obvious. He isn’t pleased.

“If you weren’t my favourite tenant, I would kick you out regardless of the lease contract. Do you know the amount of damage in your apartment?” He spits. He is a bald short man with a bad att**ude to compensate.

“I will make sure I repair it.” I promise.

“Some guy in a red Lambo and rotten att**ude came early in the morning and said he will bear the expense.”

It is Quinn, so he really had errands to run. I can’t help myself but smile.

I briskly walk to my apartment. The door is locked but still broken. It creaks as i push it open. The moment I take the first step in. A hand is wrapped around my neck and am pushed inside. I don’t get the room to scream as another muffles me.

“Cara Cooper, am here to kill you like I should have ten years ago.”

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NB: Zac is Oliver. He changed his name after the tragedy.

Ten years ago

I can't fall asleep. I move Zac's leg from my body and step out of his bedroom. He recently has been having trouble sleeping alone. Just like how recently things have been changing. My mother has turn into a zombie, a drunk zombie. We are strangers to her, strangers living in the same house. Silent and stolen gazes along the hallways. Holding her bottle close to her chest, like it will fill the emptiness in her eyes. She misses him. We miss him. It is eight months since we buried my father. The wound is still fresh, with the blow that we faced two days ago. The court dismissed the murder charges we pressed on the Nickel's. There wasn't enough evidence to show they had the motive or the killed my father.

Am on the last step of the staircase when I hear noises in the kitchen. Probably my mother, opening the cabinets to find more alcohol. I deter from my mission to walk in when I hear manly voices.

“The order was clear make sure, the girl is dead. She's the priority before we kill the rest of the family.”

I slap my mouth before I gasp loudly and move a step back to hide.

“I have the blueprints for the house, I will find the safe. Roby, you go finish the kids and mother and Penguin, you leak the gas. Once we are done we blow this mansion to dust.

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I move backward and the back of my leg hits a stair and I fall with a thud. The voices in the kitchen hush and I know they heard me. I stand and start running back to my brother's bedroom.

“Get her!” one of them yells after me. I run calling out my mother, but who am I kidding. She's a drunk and already pa**ed out. I find, my brother still asleep. I shake him. I can hear the steps nearing. I shake him harder, he doesn't wake up. I

then realise we have no way out. I rush to lock the door before he gets it. Where is the family's security.

“Open the door, kid. We aren't going to hurt you.” The man lies and kicks the door. It is too strong for a single kick to bring it down. Either way I know we are still going to die when the house blows up.

“Cara!” Zac calls out my name, he moves to stand under my arm, he's shaking in fear. The door is kicked again. I go through the drawers to find my Nokia phone and call police. I find it, I dial 911, The man keeps on kicking and the door loses the first hinge, it is a matter of time before he gets in. And we don't have time. I put the phone away. I open the window. We are one floor away, I can jump but Zac can't. I take many bed sheets I can and tie them together and on the window pane.

“You trust me, don't you?” I calmly ask Zac. He nods his head in fear.

I tie him around my body. The man decides to shoot the the door and I take that as a clue as we jump through the window. Another bullet follows as we land on the ground and it comes into contact with my body. A sharp pain spread from my inner thigh throughout my body.

Zac unties us when he sees the blood tickling from my leg. Another bullet follows but misses me by an inch. I grab my brother and we run towards the only SUV parked outside. I break the window and we get in. This was my father's SUV, Zac rode with him always and he's quick to start it with the wires. I have never driven in my life. I step on and just hold on the steering wheel. We don't get far before the house we called home goes up in flames. And the life we knew burn down with it. The next day, the papers report our incident as an homicide. A mental mother who killed her children and killed herself by burning down the house. My aunt and Uncle are everywhere in the television. Filled with crocodile tears. a**uring the public they found our bodies and how sorry they are it had to end that way.

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I a**ure Zac as we drive to a new town. “It isn't the end.”

“It isn’t the end.” I whisper to myself as the man chokes me depriving me of oxygen.

“You weren’t suppose to live that day.” I can’t see his face the afternoon sun is only shining on his lower body.

I struggle but he’s strong. Is this how it ends?

“Wh..o” struggle. “Se..n..t.” Tries to find something to defend myself. “Y..o..u?”

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He pushes me back until my back hits the wall, His hands never leaving my neck. He’s determined to finish his work this time. And all I can see is Oliver, the malicious world ready to swallow him. I failed him. It is the end. My hands fall to my side as I stop struggling. A scary darkness is enveloping me, for the very first time over the ten years, I feel peace within me.

Someone rushes in, my vision is blur and I can’t see my saviour clearly. He grabs the man from me, my body feels lighter and I slide to the floor.

Everything around me is whirling. My head is spinning and all I feel is dizzy...

A gun shot is heard. All is silent.

“Zac!” I shout, am taken ten years back. The pain of a bullet going through me.

“Cara,” The voice is familiar. “It is me, Andre. You are alright now.” I feel his arms hold me.

