

*Hell hath no fury like
a woman scorned*

THRILLING HEAVEN

BOSS'S STORY

A Room 103 Novel

D H SIDEBOTTOM

Thrilling Heaven

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By D H Sidebottom

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*It is better to conquer yourself than to win
a thousand battles.
Then the victory is yours.
It cannot be taken from you,
not by angels or demons,
heaven or hell.
Buddha*

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Prologue

You know that moment in your life when someone turns to you and says 'If you could go back to a point in your life and change one thing, what would it be?'

And then everyone sits there, for like ten minutes, deliberating what moment they would choose? Well, mine wouldn't even take a tenth of a second to determine.

It was nine years ago; nine years, eight months to be exact; September 16th 2003 at exactly 11:20pm.

Precise, you say?

Hell, yes. I'll never forget it because it was the moment that my soul died.

The moment when Kyle told me to choose. The moment when Ethan walked away and left my now husband to say to me, "You choose him and I'll hunt him down, Jen. Hunt him to the ends of the earth and make him pay, painfully, viciously and fucking mercilessly for taking you from me."

Nice, isn't he? Kyle, that is.

He was; when I first met him, when I was a fourteen year old schoolgirl with an arrogance and smugness that the schools hottest boy wanted me.

I was blinded and amazed by his determination to date me; me, a plain, brown haired, grey eye ordinary girl, and him, a tall hard muscled sixteen year old, biker/ footballer that all my friends and every other girl in the school drooled over.

He had done everything to make me his, and to be honest at the time I had relished in it, baked in his relentless pursuit to have me, and believe me, I had made it as difficult as possible for him.

I had purposely ignored him, refused to even spare him a glance and waved him off whenever he would get close as he continued to fight for my attention.

In the end, all it had taken for him to get me was for him to stick up for my best friend Maisie, who was a stick thin, black frizzy haired girl, with cheap NHS glasses and those metal braces that were glued to her teeth.

Some boys had been throwing her bag around the yard and as much as Maisie and I had tried to retrieve it, they just threw it even more, until along came Kyle, caught the bag and handed it back to Maisie before he kicked the shit out of the three fifteen year old boy's.

Swoon! I was his. Any boy that stuck up for my best friend deserved my upmost attention, and that's what he got.

Me! Lock, stock and barrel and within six months we were in love and inseparable.

And, yes, I'll admit, we were the happiest couple around. Everyone was jealous of our easy, happy relationship and it grew even stronger until on my sixteenth birthday, I gave Kyle my virginity. And yes, it was wonderful and orgasmic.

And that was where my first mistake occurred.

He had all of me now; there was no going back on my part. Kyle knew this, knew that as soon as I gave him that part of me then he was mine and I would always be his.

That was just me. I didn't sleep around. I purposefully waited until my sixteenth birthday to have sex for the first time.

Sex to me was something important, at the time anyway, and should be shared between two people who love who were going to be together forever and you wanted to give them your all.

Instantly after that night, Kyle changed, right in front of my eyes.

His cockiness and irritability with me came through to the forefront of his personality. It was like now he had me, he didn't need to try to keep me.

His moods were dark and sometimes volatile but even then, there was still some of the old Kyle left in there; the Kyle who would open doors for me, the Kyle who would bring me a latte and an apple muffin when he picked me up for college every morning and still the gentle Kyle in the bedroom.

But this is also when the arguments started; loud, volatile and sometimes frightening arguments that would often see Kyle storming off for hours, sometimes whole nights before he would come back, tail between his legs with flowers and chocolates.

This is where Ethan came in. He was always the one to pick up my broken heart and fix it back together with his strong arms and his sweet smiles and gentle words as he slowly patched me up and brought back my smile.

He was the most charming, cutest and adorable boy I'd ever known. His patience and gentleness found me slowly falling in love with him and it soon emerged that he was falling for me too.

The sexual attraction between us was the most intense feeling I had ever felt. His naughty little innuendo's and suggestions had an arousal so fierce surging through me that I knew it was inevitable that we would soon give in to the desire.

Even though we both fought it hard and for so long, it was just too strong to deny and the night I gave myself to him was the same night he told me he loved me, just as he brought an orgasm so extreme I couldn't breathe.

The way he told me he loved me will forever stay with me, until I'm old, grey and toothless and my grandchildren cook my tea whilst I watch Countdown.

We were making love for the first time and he was inside me, so deep inside me as he suddenly stopped moving, cupped my cheeks and said "By the way, Jen...", he then thrust once more and came inside me as he whispered "...I love you."

As soon as it had happened we were both riddled with guilt for what we had done to Kyle and we tried desperately to stay away from each other but it was too strong, our feelings, our love and very soon we were doing everything we could to sneak away and meet up.

Our special place was the field behind Mr Tarney's garage.

Every single time I bounded through the tall grass, looking for the long stick with the small white piece of material attached to it showing me Ethan's location in our own secluded world, my heart would thump so rapidly I could feel the beat in my toes, my soul danced excitedly like a pink aura that would swirl around me and my smile would cheer up the devil himself.

*Because Ethan **was** the beat of my heart, he **was** the aura my soul danced with and he **was** the sun that lit my smile.*

*He **was** my everything.*

But it all slammed to a halt that night, September 16th 2003, when at exactly 11:20pm a drunken Ethan told Kyle “I’ve been fucking your girlfriend for two years, Kyle and I love her and she loves me.”

Bang! Just like that my whole world collapsed.

Ethan announced it to Kyle, Kyle went ballistic and ordered me to choose, Ethan walked out and then Kyle uttered those infamous words.

Two days later, at the age of eighteen, I was sat beside a dark and simmering Kyle, in the front of his clapped out Corsa to start a new life in London and I never saw Ethan again.

Chapter 1

“Nope” I shook my head adamantly at her and she practically growled at me, her eyes narrow and mean..

“Jen, look...” she persisted.

I shook my head again, slowly and sternly and concentrated on the spread sheet currently demanding the taxing part of my brain. “Zoe, how can you pay this much for ink? Surely you can find it cheaper somewhere else?” I glanced at her over the top of the laptop screen as I rapidly changed the subject.

She smiled brashly at me with a twinkle in her eye. “I can. I do. But the taxman doesn’t need to know that.”

I rolled my eyes and tried to set my attention back to Zoe’s tax return, a pile of receipts and paperwork demanding my concentration but my mind wouldn’t shift from last night.

I shuddered and endeavoured to close off his face, his snarl, the crack of his fist but it was there, right on the frontal hemisphere of my brain - and my cheekbone.

That reminded me to pick his dry cleaning up tonight.

Don’t bloody forget again Jen.

Zoe sighed heavily and I lifted my gaze to her, finding her watching me forlornly with her brow furrowed deep, “Okay, Jen?”

I plastered a smile on my face and nodded firmly, “Yep, just struggling with your figures today.”

She gave herself the once over and winked at me. “Nowt wrong with this figure, babe” she grinned as she slipped her hands provocatively over her breasts.

I smirked and shook my head, “You’re not wrong there, treacle” I agreed with an exaggerated wink using the nickname Shane had always used for her.

I rubbed my eyes with the palms of my hands, tiredness and fatigue blurring them and stood to stretch my legs, taking a glance at the clock. “Christ its one, you want a sandwich?” I asked Zoe who nodded absentmindedly from her design book as she sketched something beside an already complete illustration.

“Sure, you know where everything is” she told me without moving.

“I’ll make lunch then...”

She ignored me, her attention elsewhere and I knew when she had her head in her tattoos that I wouldn’t hear or see a peep from her.

I turned to Brett in the corner of the room, his tongue protruding slightly from his mouth as he currently concentrated on the artwork of an eagle on some huge guys back, and I mean huge - sumo size huge.

“Brett?”

He looked over at me and blinked rapidly to adjust the focus in his eyes. “Sandwich?” I repeated and he nodded.

“Sure wren, cheese and tomato, pepper and mayo.”

I snorted at him. “Uhh, I was sure when I last looked this was a tattoo parlour not SubWay.”

He grinned and winked, “Now Wren, you know you love me and those delicate little fingers of yours want to work for me.”

I pursed my lips at him, and then smirked wickedly, “And you know I need your delicate fingers to do my next piercing, don’t you?”

He lifted a brow at me, “Another? Where do you want this one?”

I lifted the corner of my mouth and waggled my eyebrows at him. His own eyes widened before a grin erupted on his face and Sumo stared at me. “Oh Wren, just for the privilege I get to pierce your delicious lady parts again, I’ll take just cheese” he conceded.

“Thought you might” I chuckled as I made my way into the back of Zoe’s shop.

Zoe had been my brother’s wife for four years, but when Shane died of leukaemia three years ago we had become inseparable, leaning on each other in our grief and we became the type of friends that would die for each other.

She had bought this tattoo shop in memory of Shane. He had made her promise to fulfil her dreams when he had gone and she had worked her fingers to the bone to get ‘Slink’s’ going; the ‘S’ in the name was for Shane, the ‘L’ was for our surname, Linkin, and then of course ‘ink’, but her limit with numbers only extended to her cash till, so I had been doing her finances for the past two years.

I’m sure she only used me to hide her dodgy receipts. Some of them always brought a chuckle forward. I mean, who the hell claims for a Spotify account? But give the girl credit; she got her tax back for it when she declared it as essential, saying she needed the music to calm the nervous customers.

I heard a rowdy group enter the shop as I made the sandwiches and mugs of tea. Stacking the plates on top of one another and grabbing all three mug handles with the other hand, I made my way back into the main parlour.

The plates and mugs slipped from my hands and crashed to the floor with a loud smash when I set my eyes on who had entered Slink’s.

The tea and bread mashed into a stodge on the floor as my heart dropped right there with them. Holy Crap!

All eyes in the shop swung to me, but it was only one pair I couldn’t divert from and I stood open mouthed like a fucking guppy staring at him.

My breathing started to shallow out as my bones creaked under the pressure of the body tremor that coursed its way throughout my body at a velocity that squeezed my lungs on its way through.

“Jen?” Ethan stuttered as his jaw dropped as wide as mine. “Christ... Jen?”

The group he was with eyed us both up and the female lifted her lips in a knowing smile as she tipped her head to me and held out her hand. “Boss seems to have lost his manners, Hi; I’m E. Short for Eve.”

I flicked my eyes to her and they widened when I realised who she was. “Oh... yeah, hi. Jen.” I returned her greeting.

Holy Hell! I realised now that the whole of the rock group, Room 103, was currently stood in Slink’s and it was a shame I was stood like a zombie playing musical statues when the publicity could

have been tremendous for Zoe.

She smiled kindly and elbowed Ethan in the ribs. “Boss...”

He just stood, silent and staring, his eyes roaming over every inch of me until they settled on my cheek and I fought against the blush that was creeping up my face.

My whole soul reached out and I grit my teeth and commanded it back inside, as my body trembled along with it.

My legs were going to collapse any minute, I knew they were and I desperately felt around with my hands for something to support me.

“Jen...” he repeated with a whisper but I still stood silent and in shock as my eyes drank every part of him, like a man dying of thirst after years in the desert. Nine years to be exact.

E huffed and glared at him, “I think we’ve established her name’s Jen, Boss. We need to move on from that now, to something like hello.”

He frowned and turned to E who was staring intently at him. “Fuck, E...” he choked out before he turned and left the shop.

Everyone kind of fell silent and the vocalist of Room 103, Jax I think his name was, lifted his eyebrows at E. “Babe?”

She shook her head at him and plonked a smile on her face before turning back to me. “Boss wanted a tattoo but he’s not very good with needles. Just shit himself there” she tried to defend Ethan and I smiled and nodded, not believing a word she said. I was the only one who knew the reason for Ethan’s behaviour, and it wasn’t a phobia of needles... more a phobia of me.

More uncomfortable silence fell before a tall dude with pure white hair and covered in tattoos sucked air through his teeth and smiled, well I say smiled, it was more of a cringe, “Well, I’ll be fucked if I come into a tat shop without leaving with some new ink.”

Zoe was instantly beside me, a purr vibrating from her as she gestured to the design book, “Would you like to take a look at what you want and I can get right onto that for you.”

I snorted. I bet you will Zo.

E and her husband, I think they were married if I remember from the media coverage of Room 103 sunk into the chairs in the corner of the shop and started a whispered conversation.

“I thought you were in America?” I blurted out randomly and rudely.

Jax raised his eyes to me and E smiled widely. “We were but Jax and I just adopted a baby and I wanted to bring her up in England, so the guys kind of amalgamated groups and took lead, kicked me out of the band and decided we should come back” she said openly with a wide smile and I just nodded dumbly.

“Oh.”

“You know Boss?” she asked warmly and I frowned at her. “Boss - Ethan” she rectified.

“Oh - yeah” I bit my lower lip as memories invaded my mind and I swallowed them back and turned to Zoe. “I’m going Zo, see you later.”

I didn’t give her chance to respond before I whipped my bag from behind the counter and left the shop.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I realised the house was empty and hurried upstairs, pulling off my clothes and stepped straight into the shower, needing the hot water to pelt my body and stimulate my brain on something other than Ethan.

'By the way, Jen... I love you.'

'God baby, you're gonna be mine, all mine one day, and when that day comes, when it's just you and me, then I'm dragging you up that fucking aisle, Jen...'

'Don't choose him Jen, please don't choose him. I love you.....'

I closed my eyes to the memory assault and stiffened when the screen door opened and Kyle stood grinning at me, completely naked and obviously aroused if the view of his erect penis was anything to go by.

My stomach dropped through my arse and I frantically fought the urge to pummel this man stood before me, beat him to a pulp for ruining my life and taking me from the only thing in my life I had ever wanted.

"Hey, Darling" he leered as his eyes roamed over my body and then grimaced when he spotted a few bruises.

He swallowed heavily before he lifted his eyes to me and I could see him shake off the guilt as he took a step closer to me.

"I thought you were playing football with Jake?" I asked, hoping he had just forgotten and my reminder would see him belting back out of the shower and disappearing.

Right, Jen. Good luck with that.

"He had to cancel, something to do with Harriet puking..." he whispered against my neck as he nuzzled me and I grimaced when his hand settled on my breast.

My eyes squeezed shut when his teeth dug into the soft flesh under my ear and his cock slipped between my thighs, stroking along my sex slowly.

"You feel so good, Jen. It's a good job you're a great fuck, otherwise I'd have divorced you years ago."

"Yeah" I murmured as I fought the bile that was rising slowly up my throat and I silently wondered if there was any way I could suddenly become a shit shag.

Suddenly I was flung around and pushed into the tiles, my already sore cheek hitting the ceramic with force, before he took me feverishly and violently.

I let him.

I didn't have a choice really.

I never did where Kyle was concerned.

Fifteen minutes later, Kyle held the facecloth to my bloodied nose and rolled his eyes at me humorously. "Fancy bashing your nose on the tiles you daft mare; they're hard you know, Jen."

I gave him a tiny tight smile and nodded, it was easier to just agree. What was I supposed to say 'Hey you great big knob, if you hadn't grabbed my hair and rammed my face into the tiles then I wouldn't have nose bleed right now!'

He tenderly dabbed at my face, gently wiping away the blood as he planted a soft kiss to my forehead.

“Ethan’s back.” I spat out quickly.

What the hell, Jen? What the hell did you say that for?

You know why, so he didn’t find out from Brett and batter you for not telling him, that’s why!

I heard his teeth crack as he ground them together tightly and his fingers curled around the washcloth so forcefully I was glad it wasn’t my neck he had been holding when I told him.

He narrowed his eyes on me “You speak to him?”

“No” I answered honestly. I didn’t tell him I had just stared as Ethan repeatedly announced my name.

He whipped the washcloth in my face angrily, its slap on my skin made me jump, and then exited the shower, snatching up a towel and pulling it around his hips before he slammed the bathroom door so hard the contents of the cabinet rattled.

Well, that got rid of him Jen.

I peered at myself in the steamed mirror, wiping at it to clear a section and frowned when my cheeks had gone from the purple it had been this morning to a black shade now.

My nose was still trickling blood over my top lip and the sight suddenly brought on the ‘*what if...*’ the ‘*I should have...*’ and the ‘*why didn’t I...*’

“Come on Jen, pull it together girl” I scolded myself as I straightened my shoulders and took a deep breath before going in search of my wonderful husband.

Chapter 2

“You gonna tell me what the hell is up with ya’?” Zoe grumbled as I peered at her over the froth of my coffee.

“Nothing’s wrong with me.”

She lifted one of her perfectly plucked brows at me and I scowled back in return. “Jen, listen to me now.”

I gulped at her tone, knowing what was coming and I braced myself for it. She knew a lot more than she let on but so far she had kept her own council, yet today, sat in the little coffee shop we always frequented, I knew it was finally coming.

Her hand slid across the table and settled gently over mine, giving it a small squeeze before she lifted her finger and stroked it across the black bruise on my cheek. “You need a place, babe, then my spare room is all yours.”

I frowned at her and swallowed in defiance. “Why would I need your spare room Zo, everything’s fine?”

She stared silently at me, both of us in a silent face-off until she finally relented. “Why Jen, you’re stronger than this? And what the hell was all that in the shop with the rocker dude?”

I pursed my lips at her angrily, “Zo, leave it. There is nothing wrong and, well, Ethan and Kyle don’t get on, that’s all.”

She scoffed angrily and we both diverted our attention to the happenings in the café to wind in our necks and dampen our anger at each other.

“So,” she yielded eventually taking a large gulp of the frozen lumpy shit she was drinking. “Room 103 in Slink’s.”

I grinned and nodded at her “You do the guitarist’s tat?”

She rolled her eyes dramatically and sighed heavily, “Did I, and on one of his glorious man cheeks no less.”

I smirked at her but she smiled nervously, “He, uhh, Romeo, that is, he uhh...”

“Spit it out, treacle.” I urged, amazed at her sudden nervousness.

This wasn’t Zoe, she was always proud and bold, always the life of the party, bubbly and manic but now she appeared like a timid little girl, caught stealing the last lollipop from the cupboard.

“He wants to see me, uhh, wants to take me out...” she stuttered as she gulped.

“And?” I lifted my own brow at her now but her pain was evident and I took her hand in mine this time.

“Zo, you think Shane would want you to wait until you die?”

Her pale blue eyes lifted to mine, rimmed with tears and an ache so fierce it fisted my heart. “No” she whispered and I smiled at her and nodded.

She took a deep breath and nodded back; both of us silently communicating that she finally needed to move on and start dating again.

“I was thinking of asking him to the birthday party you have been secretly organising for me” she

grinned knowingly.

My jaw dropped open and I stared at her in shock. “How the hell, Zo?”

She laughed at me loudly, “Jen, babe, you are many wonderful things but covert is not one of your talents.”

I shrugged at her.

I had kept the biggest secret of my life undisclosed for two years; so I had thought a thirtieth birthday party would’ve been easy.

She laughed again but grabbed my hand and pulled me off my chair. “Come on, we need to find you a killer outfit for my *secret* party.”

I groaned in frustration. Zoe’s idea of a killer outfit and my idea were totally different, and I cringed at what I would be forced to buy.

I just hoped it would be appropriate for Kyle’s ideas as well.

Kyle entered the bedroom and smiled sweetly at Zoe before placing a soft kiss on her cheek, “Happy birthday, Zo.”

She grinned happily at him, “Doesn’t Jen look gorgeous?”

Kyle’s eyes shifted to me, seated on the vanity stool. He lifted a finger, gesturing for me to stand and I did, standing still for him to inspect me.

“Stunning” he said without any expression and I knew he didn’t approve of the short red dress Zoe had insisted I wear, but he wouldn’t voice that opinion in front of Zoe.

I gave him a hesitant smile. “Zoe said I should wear this” I told him, hoping to defend my actions for showing so much leg.

He just nodded and gave me a stiff smile before turning back to Zoe, giving her his killer smile, the one he used on every other woman except me. His smug demeanour made my skin crawl but I kept that judgment to myself.

“You ready for the off?” he asked as he preened himself in the mirror and straightened his tie.

Kyle had always been good looking and he knew it and used it to his advantage - usually to seduce every woman residing in London, but he didn’t know I knew that snippet of information.

For one, I didn’t give a damn and for two, I secretly hoped he would find one that he would fall in love with and leave me for, but I had never had much luck in life.

His light brown hair highlighted his deep hazel eyes whilst his chiselled cheekbones and jaw gave him that hot bad boy look.

He was a bad boy alright, just not in the way people thought.

Zoe returned his grin with one of her own and nodded excitedly. “Yes, let’s get to this surprise party I’m not supposed to know about.” She giggled and Kyle looked at me with high brows.

I shook my head at him and huffed, “I always said she should work for the MI5!”

He barked out a laugh, an actual real one and I smiled when the sound of his laugh brought back memories from when we were happy, which also brought memories of Ethan, so I pushed that back immediately.

Zoe held out her elbow to me and I hooked my arm through hers. “After you birthday girl” I

gestured with my free hand and she nodded respectfully as we descended the stairs and made our way to a night that would change my life.

The room was buzzing when we arrived, everybody having arrived before Zoe to surprise her. She did a good job and acted amazed at the attention. Kyle chuckled beside me as he snaked his arm around my waist and pulled me close.

“Why the fuck are you wearing that fucking dress? You look like a whore!” he hissed in my ear and dug his fingers into my hipbone.

I flinched and swallowed back the pain. “I didn’t have a choice, Zoe bought it for me especially. What was I supposed to say?”

He plastered a false smile on his lips and nodded to a passer-by before his smile dropped again and his teeth clamped my earlobe. “Say, fucking no thank you. It’s fucking simple, Jen.”

I winced at the pain but he removed his bite before he drew blood, becoming an expert at knowing when to pull back before it left a mark.

I turned my head to see Zoe approaching, her dark eyes narrow on Kyle and I knew she had witnessed his small discipline but she smiled as she got to me. “Dance, babe” she ordered as she pulled me onto the dance floor.

Manoeuvring her lithe long body behind me, she draped her arms down the front of me and we rocked together as she rested her chin on my shoulder.

“He does that again, I don’t give a fuck where we are, I will rip his bloody knackers off and feed them to that doorman over there” she whispered in my ear as she tilted her chin towards a huge guy stood watching us both dance.

I presumed he thought we were gay the way Zoe was grinding her hips into my arse and I stiffened slightly with her words but I didn’t give her a response.

She lifted her hands and cupped my tits as she gave him a wink. “That’ll give him something to look at” she snorted in my ear before she spun me round and cupped my arse.

“Will you stop” I chastised but struggled to hold back the laugh, “you are so bad!” She winked at me and narrowed her eyes, “Don’t tell me you’ve never thought about it, Jen.” “You’ve had too much to drink, treacle.” I giggled but she suddenly pressed her lips over mine.

The shock of it had me stood solid, not moving a single muscle as her lips moved over mine. She reared back a little and gazed at me before she cupped my chin and came down again.

What the hell.

You only live once.

So I gave it her back.

We were both laughing as we pulled apart and the room exploded in cheers.

I shook my head at her in humour when she winked at me. “That’s what I call a birthday kiss” she smirked as she raised her arms in the air and started swaying to the next track as she bumped her hip into mine.

A body appeared behind me and I was suddenly sandwiched between Zoe and a tall dude covered in piercings and I mean covered, they were everywhere; his brows, his nose, his ears, his lips. He even had some dermal piercings down the side of his neck.

His chin rested on my shoulder and I turned my head slightly to look at him. He grinned at me and could tell he was plastered, “Hey.”

“Hi” I smiled back as Zoe nudged further against me and the wicked smile she displayed would see me slapping that arse of hers when we got out of here.

“Bulk” he introduced himself and I grinned and gave mine and Zoe’s names.

“Now this is a better sandwich than the shit ham over there” he smirked and I raised a brow at him.

“Think you can handle us both do ya’?”

The roguish tilt of his lips had Zoe laughing even harder. “Did you seriously just ask a bloke whether he can handle two women, Jen?”

“Oh Shit” I breathed and Bulk stiffened when Kyle barged through the dancers and glared at me from behind Zoe.

“Hey, babe” I smiled nervously and my dance partner had the perceptiveness to shift back.

“Jen” Kyle practically snarled at me and I swallowed harshly as his wild eyes settled on Bulk moving slowly back off me.

Suddenly we were surrounded by about five rockers and I flashed Kyle a warning with my eyes and a faint shake of my head to back off before he started something at Zoe’s party.

Zoe swung round and grabbed Kyle’s hands, “Dance with me, Kyle.” She smiled brightly as she started moving her hips against his and he looked down at her, before his killer smile erupted and he grabbed her hips, pulled her into him and gave her his best moves.

God, I loved this girl.

“I’m gonna grab a drink” I told Kyle who still continued to glare at me but gave Zoe his ‘come fuck me’ eyes.

Seriously, my best friend?

I trusted Zoe impeccably, knowing she would never do that to me, but my husband, who thought it was fun to flirt with her in front of everybody just to humiliate me for what had just happened, would

What the hell. Go for it jerk!

“Bud, please” I told the barman who smiled and reached for the bottle, popping the cap expertly as he hand slapped a tenner on the bar and I turned to see Bulk stood beside me.

“An apology for stirring things with your boyfriend there, little lady” He smiled and I realised how good looking he actually was, his teeth white and near perfect as a dimple appeared in his chin, giving him a cheeky look.

I shook my head at him, “Don’t be silly, you were just having fun. It’s not like you touched me up or anything.”

He grinned at me as if telling me that would have been his next step and I shook my head and laughed.

“Does he do that a lot?” he asked and I frowned in confusion.

He cocked his head towards Zoe and Kyle “Give you shit for dancing with someone, and then feels your friend up in front of you?”

“Kyle’s... Kyle” I tried to explain.

Bulk took a pull on his own bottle before his eyes caught mine and I shivered as his gaze seemed to bore through me and read everything inside me; my thoughts, my mind, my soul and my heart.

“How long you been together?”

“Thirteen years” I told him as I took a hefty drink, my nerves at this man’s canny ability to scrutinize every part of me knocking up my need for a diversion.

He nodded slowly and sucked on his lips, “And how long have you been unhappy?”

I stared widely at him but he just held his own, no show of remorse or apology at his question.

“Excuse me, but I really....”

He lifted a brow at me, a silent dare to deny his perception but I just swallowed and sucked on my own lips.

He nodded as if I had given him an answer before he leaned forward towards me. His eyes swept the area around us as his mouth settled against my ear, “You need to get out sweetheart, before he destroys that tiny flicker of a flame you have left.”

I coughed and stepped away, lowering my gaze on the floor, not wanting him to see the truth in his words behind my eyes.

“I should go” I whispered before I swung round and banged straight into a hard muscled chest.

“I think it’s about time we went” Kyle growled as his eyes rested on Bulk.

I nodded, knowing any argument would make my night worse.

Bulk slid off the bar stool he was situated on, “You gonna be okay, sweetheart?”

I nodded but didn’t turn to him and Kyle tilted his head malevolently, “You got a problem, mate?”

“I don’t have a problem – *mate*, but the little lady here might.”

Oh bloody crap and bollocks!

Kyle stepped forward and the evil grin he donned had my blood pounding in my ears and my hands sweating. “Kyle, don’t” I warned as I placed my hand on his chest.

He looked down at me and narrowed his eyes before he grabbed my hand from his chest and lowered it between us.

I tried to stand as still as possible as his death grip actually cracked my fingers but one of my legs instinctively flinched as I clenched against the pain.

“Okay, it’s my party and I don’t wanna end up crying at it!” Zoe bounded up to us and God bless her, she slid her hand between us and took my hand from Kyle. “Come on Kyle, I need a lift home.”

Kyle and Bulk stood their ground, both of them daring each other to make the first move until Zoe grabbed Kyle’s forearm and pulled him across the room.

I shot an apologetic glance at Bulk but he shook his head and slipped a piece of paper in my hand “You ever need me, little lady, you have my number.”

I gazed at him, astounded by this man’s gentility and ability to grasp a situation without being on the front row.

I smiled a thank you and he nodded before I scurried off to catch up with my wonderful best friend and my arsehole husband.

Chapter 3

He threw his car keys on the hallway table and I quietly closed the door behind us. My throat started to close in when he turned the music on, loudly.

I pulled in a huge breath and followed him into the lounge, knowing I was in for a long night as soon as the music was pumping. There was only one reason he played it so loud, and it wasn't to dance to.

It was to drown out the noise.

"Drink?" I asked, trying for ignorance.

He laughed manically and my hands started to shake as he turned to me with menace and disgust visibly displayed on his face.

"Did you want to fuck him?" he spat out.

"What? No, we were just talking."

He ventured across the room and pulled out the whisky from the cabinet, his shoulders stiff and hunched as he poured himself a large measure.

"You have a thing for rockers though, don't you Jen?"

"Kyle, please. Don't do this again, it was nine years ago."

"Never quite forget it though, can we? Especially when his mates eye fuck you all night." He scoffed and I bit my tongue.

"He was just being friendly Kyle, nothing more."

He scoffed loudly before he downed his drink in one and slammed the glass on the highly polished table. My eyes settled on it and I wondered if I would be able to remove the stain with the new stuff I'd bought from Asda last week.

Kyle turned to me, his eyes fierce and wild as he just stood still and silent, regarding me intensely with his head tipped to one side.

"I'm gonna go up, Kyle." I tried quickly as I spun round and made for the stairs.

I made it up three before his fist gripped the back of my dress and pulled me back. My chin hit the step forcefully as I went down under him and my top teeth sunk through my bottom lip.

As soon as the first thump hit me I retreated back to the tall grass, its delicate blades blowing against the gentle breeze; Ethan whispering in my ear as his hands explored my body tenderly and as the sun started to set, he slid into me so lovingly it stole my breath.

By the way... I love you, Jen.

You are so fucking beautiful, baby.

God, you feel like silk around me, so smooth and glorious baby.

Don't ever leave me Jen, I couldn't live through it.

I swirled the whisky around the glass, staring at the liquid through the dimness of the small corner lamp.

I refused to cry. The only time I had cried in the last nine years was when Shane died, and I wasn't about to start now.

He didn't deserve my tears. Ethan, yes. Kyle, no. He had taken that part away when he uttered those words and dragged me hundreds of miles away from the man I loved with more than just my heart.

Ethan hadn't changed; he still had that cheeky face, his bright twinkly eyes still held you hostage under them. He still wore his blonde hair back in a pony and his chin was still dusted with a couple of day's stubble. His body still appeared mean and hard and he still looked at me like I was his everything.

My phone beeped and I squinted at the ceiling, hoping it hadn't woken Kyle as I scooped it out of my bag and frowned at the text;

Unknown:

Hey, you okay little lady?

I knew it was Bulk as soon as I read the words 'little lady' but what I didn't know was how he got my number.

Me:

How did you get my number?

Bulk:

Romeo got it from Zoe, hope that's ok, don't wanna get you in more trouble.

Me:

No, it's fine.

Bulk:

Well?

Me:

Well what?

Bulk:

You ok?

Me:

Yes.

Bulk:

Why do I get the feeling you're lying?

I didn't answer him, he was getting too close to the truth, so I left it and pulled my broken body off the sofa and made my way into the kitchen.

I placed the glass in the dishwasher, wincing at the pain in my stomach when I bent just as my

phone rang.

I groaned at Bulk's name on screen before I declined.

I didn't need to deal with this now, what the hell did he want from me?

My phone then alerted a text and I rolled my eyes;

Bulk:

If you don't answer your phone, then I'm coming round to yours.

Me:

WTF! What do you want from me?

Bulk:

The truth, little lady!

Me:

I'm fine.

Bulk:

Then answer your damn phone!

Right okay, that's the way he wanted to play, I rang him.

I sensed his smug grin as soon as he answered and it brought my own smile when I realised I'd fallen for his trap.

"Hey." He chirped at me and I sighed, suddenly relaxing at his calm tone.

"What do want, Bulk?"

"Just checking in on you, little lady. Your boyfriend seemed a little... irate when you left."

"I'm fine." I lied.

"I don't believe ya', baby." He whispered and I swallowed heavily.

"Look, Bulk, I know you mean well, really I do, but you need to... back off. Kyle doesn't mess about. You need to ask Ethan about him and just leave me alone."

He was silent for a while before his next words shocked me. "I have asked Boss about him and I don't particularly like what he told me and I'm a little worried about you. Can't help that, little lady, just how I am. Now you either tell me the truth or I'm gonna come round there and drag your boyfriend out by his fucking hair and rearrange his fucking face. You got me, sweetheart? You understand me now?"

I swallowed heavily and stared out of the kitchen window. "Why?" I whispered.

I heard him inhale deeply as though sorting through his next words before he sighed again "Meet me tomorrow?"

"What, why?" I asked with confusion. What the hell did this man I barely knew want from me?

He was pushy and too shrewd but there was something about him that made me like him and want to trust him.

"Fine," I relented "will you leave me alone then?"

He laughed a little and I couldn't help smiling at the deep rumble. "Sure, but I doubt you want that

as much as I do.”

I rolled my eyes at his overconfidence. “Right, when and where?”

“Uhh, Madeline’s? Twelve?” he asked and I agreed before ending the call.

What the heck are you doing Jen?

If Kyle found out, his shit would hit the roof.

“Just make sure he doesn’t find out then Jen.”

So simple.

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