
Lucinda eyes Mandy as she paces the length of their living room to and fro, making her slightly dizzy.

She groans, facepalming.

"Will you stop pacing and tell me what I did wrong this time?" Lucinda questions, but her friend ignores her.

Instead, she continues to pace, murmuring incoherent words.

"Mandy?"

She stops in her tracks.

"What?!" She snaps.

"Why are you acting like I went to see some devil?"

"Exactly!!! You went to see the devil!! I mean, how could you? Why didn't you inform me before leaving?" She stops pacing and faces her, hands on both sides of her waist, awaiting an answer.

"You weren't here, and I needed to see how he was doing,"

Mandy scoffs.

"Don't you see what he is doing? He's gradually succeeding in gaining your sympathy. Hell!! I think he already has. Can't you see he's playing mind games on you?"

"No. I think you're being paranoid!!!" Lucinda fires back.

"You're so damn naive!! Well, I don't blame you. That's the same thing he did to..." She trails off.

"Same thing he did to who? Complete your sentence, Mandy. Who?"

"No...no..no one, Luci. No one," she breathes heavily, trying to still her fast-beating heart.

"No, tell me".

"Stop insisting, Luci. Just know that I've warned you. He's not as innocent as you think. He's going to destroy your...." She pauses when her phone begins to ring.

Without checking for the caller ID, she swipes on the green button and presses the phone to her ear.

"Hello?"

Silence.

"Hello?"

Silence.

"Hello?" She calls again, beginning to get irritated.

Another silence.

Extremely annoyed, she made to hang up when the voice startles her.

"You open your mouth to say another word against me, and you're as good as dead,"

She recognized the owner of the voice immediately.

Tyler!!

Fear crept up her spine as she rolled her eyes.

Was there a hidden camera somewhere?

How did he know what she was saying?

"I have my eyes on you, Mandy. You better keep your shit together and shut your mouth else. I don't need to spell it out what I'm capable of, right?. Good, I like the panic and fear I'm seeing in your eyes,"

With that, the line went dead.

"Who was that? Why do you look so scared?" Lucinda queries, concern laced her voice, but Mandy had long drifted off.

"Mandy!" Lucinda shouts, snapping her back to

reality.

"Huh? Yes??" she shrieks, her eyes glistening with unshed tears

"What's wrong with you?"

Without answering her, Mandy runs out, banging the door behind her as Lucinda stares at the door, her brows furrowed in confusion.

Smiling victoriously, Tyler pulls out the drip from his wrist, and climbs down the bed. He stretches and walks over to the window.

He pushes the partition to one side and watches the nurses, doctors and some patients moving about in the spacious visitor's lounge of the hospital.

He shuts both eyes and inhales deeply.

"I love the smell of hospitals," he chuckles.

"Oh, my sweet Lucinda. You have no idea what you're in for,"

He grins, recalling the events earlier in the day.

TWO HOURS EARLIER...

Lucinda opens the door to the hospital ward and sees him lying on the bed, a bandage tied around his perfectly toned stomach.

He was shirtless.

On another day, she would have found the sight extremely attractive. But right now, her heart only bled for him.

She moves to his side and takes a seat, gently taking his hand in hers so as not to wake him up, but he stirs awake and stares at her, a sad smile breaking across his face.

"The last person I was expecting to see was you," he says weakly, and she squeezes his hand in response.

"Shhh. Don't speak. How are you feeling?" She inquires

"How did you know I was here?" He asks, ignoring her question

"I overheard"

"Hmm. Bad news travels faster than good news, huh?" He chuckles and frowns as if he was in pain.

"You okay?"

He nods.

"Why did you do it, Tyler?"

"I had no choice,"

"Suicide is never a choice to consider, Tyler."

"I know. I now under

stand. I have a lot more to live for,"

She smiles.

"You have a beautiful smile, Lucinda," he says and

watches her blush.

Damn!! This wasn't so difficult, was it?

And to think she was calling him all sorts of names a few days back.

Good job, Tyler.

He commends himself mentally.

"It doesn't suit you when you try to be cheesy," she mocks, causing him to chuckle.

"I'm serious" the smile disappears from his face.

"You do have a beautiful smile. And you're beautiful too. Too beautiful that I still can't understand why you're here. Aren't you mad at me?"

"Not anymore. I understand circumstances pushed you to do it. Just concentrate on getting better, okay,"

"You're very kind, Lucinda,"

"Well, I'm not a bad person either. I just wanted to see how you were doing"

"I'm good, thanks," he replies as he strokes the insides of her palm with his index finger.

Lucinda stares at their entwined fingers and sucks in her breath.

Tyler's eyes follow her movement as he smiles inwardly.

She wasn't so difficult to get to, after all.

Suddenly, she yanks her hand away from his grip.

"Umm, I have to get going now. I'll see you later."

She gets up.

"Umm, okay,"

She walks to the door and grabs the door handle,

"Lucinda? " he calls out, and she turns

"Yes?"

"Thank you,"

"You're welcome. Speedy recovery," she answers.

Pushing the door open, she walks out.

"Tyler?" The voice jolts him out of his thoughts. He turns to find Austin staring at him angrily.

Tyler groans.

He could already tell what he was about to say.

"Let me guess, you're here to give me a long lecture, right? Let me take a seat first," he walks over to the bed and sits.

"Go ahead, Monsieur,"

"This isn't a joke, Tyler!! Stop being sarcastic and get serious!" Austin bellows.

"Don't you talk to me in that tone, Austin!!" Tyler grinds out.

"Unlike the rest, you know perfectly well I'm not scared of you,"

"Yeah. The disadvantage of having you as a friend,"

"Will you drop the sarcasm, Tyler?!"

"Fine. Speak, Monsieur"

Austin groans.

He knew Tyler was trying to get on his nerves with his extremely annoying attitude, but he wasn't going to let it get to him.

At least not until he had said everything he came to say.

"What do you think you're doing, Tyler?"

Tyler shrugs innocently.

"What?"

"Quit playing dumb with me.

You know why I'm here,"

"Elaborate"

"Why the hell did you have to fake your arrest and then fake a suicide?"

"Are you going to ask me questions to which you already have answers?"

"You don't have to do this, Tyler. Just let this issue slide. Don't destroy an innocent girl's life just because she spoke the truth which no one has dared to say,"

"Truth? What are you implying, Austin,"

"Just let this issue slide, please,"

"No way!!! You know that once I make a decision, I never change my mind," he yells.

"Well, you can at least make an exception. Let me guess, your ego and pride won't let you, right? You feel she has bruised your ego, isn't it? Don't go ahead with this ridiculous plan, Tyler, don't!!!" Austin fires back.

"No, Austin!!! Drop it!!" Tyler thunders.

"Why? Because your ego and pride are more important? This stupid ego of yours is going to be the end of you one day, Tyler!"

"Don't cross your limits with me, Austin! I swear I will

forget you're my friend and bang your head against the freaking wall!"

"So do it, damn it! Do it!"

The door bursts open suddenly, and a fair petite nurse walks in.

"Keep your voices down, gentlemen. You're in a hospital, in case you've forgotten,"

Both men turn to stare at her, their eyes throwing daggers.

"Get out!!" Both men yell at her simultaneously, and she scurries away immediately.

Austin turns to face his friend.

"I don't support you on this, Tyler. I never will. I know how such games as this end, and they don't end too well. When you need someone to talk to, you know where to find me,"

And with that, he walks out without bothering to shut the door.

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