

## What Happens In Vegas - Free Novel by C. Qualls

### Chapter 21

I'm pacing my office wondering how the hell this happened. My precious wife. My baby. I need answers. Who could have done this to her? My phone buzzes. "What do you have?"

Corey responds. "Sir we caught the bartender on the security cameras. Darius is picking him up now. Do you want to hand him over, or would you like to question him first?"

There's no way in hell I'm handing him over. "Question him first. Then go back over the footage and find out his every move. That son of a bitch killed my baby!"

I hear Julia crying. I rush back into the bedroom. "Julia. I'm here." I lay down next to her.

"Fredrick," she whispers my name and sobs into her pillow.

I run my hand through her hair. "Shh. I know, my love. I know. I'm here."

She cries until there's nothing left in her to cry. "Fredrick, I... I have no words. I feel so empty."

We're laying facing each other with our fingers intertwined. I kiss her forehead. "I love you, Julia. I'm at a loss too. Don't worry about anything. You just take the time your body needs to heal." She nods as a tear slips out. I wipe it away with my thumb. "Can you sleep?" She shakes her head. "Are you hungry?" Again she shakes her head. "Can you walk?" Her eyes look up into mine, then she nods.

I change into a t-shirt and a pair of jeans then help her into some sweats. I lead her downstairs to the garage. "Pick one."

She looks over the cars. "Is the Bel Air ready?"

I open the passenger door and help her sit down. I sit in the driver's seat and turn the engine over. The engine roars to life. She scoots to the middle of the bench. I put the car in gear and wrap my arm around her shoulders, pulling

her closer. She rests her head on my shoulder as I drive out of the garage. "Ocean or mountains?"

She doesn't hesitate. "Mountains."

She flips on the radio and keeps it low. I drive. No where in particular, just up the mountain, away from the city. It's dark and quiet, except for the radio playing on low. Every once in a while she places a kiss to my neck, or sighs. Other than that we don't make a sound.

We reach a rest area just as the sun begins to rise. I pull over and help her out of the car. We sit on top of the picnic table and watch the sun come up. No words are spoken. It's quiet and serene. I just hold her for as long as she needs. After a long while of reflection and solitude, Julia slowly stands up off of the table. "I'm ready to go back." I help her back into the car and we head back down the mountain. I pull over once for gas. "Fredrick, look. There's a diner. Can we get breakfast?"

Anything for her. "Of course."

We sit at a table and I look over the menu. It all looks like the slop Julia normally likes to eat. A waitress in a faded yellow dress asks for our order. "Coffee for my husband please and orange juice for me. I'll have chicken and waffles."

The waitress looks to me. "Denver omelet." I take her hand across the table. We just look at each other. Eventually her lips tilt up in a sad smile. My own lips tilt up in response.

I sip my coffee and take a taste of my omelet. It's not terrible, so I relax and begin to eat more. Julia eats without holding back, which makes sense because she hasn't eaten since yesterday, and that ended up in a bin. She cuts the silence first. "How is your omelet?"

I swallow my bite. "It's fine. Not nearly as good as the one you made for me."

She smiles. "I forgot about that."

I tilt my chin to her plate. "How is your slop?"

She giggles. "Food snob. It's actually really delicious." I steal a bite. "Hey, get your own." It is really good. I steal another bite. She shakes her head and rolls

her eyes with a smirk on her face. We're about half way finished eating when she asks the question. "Fredrick. Who do you think did it?"

I swallow my bite. "I'm not sure. Not very many people knew. Only our staff at home, your bodyguards, your father, and Shannon. Of those people, I can't imagine any of them wanting to hurt you."

She looks thoughtful for a moment. "And Jesse." She drinks her orange juice as if what she just said is irrelevant.

I don't want to alarm her so I try my best to not make a big deal of it. "Jesse knows?"

Her eyes are innocent as she nods. "Yeah. The morning I took the test. You told me you wouldn't deny me anything because I'm..." She closes her eyes and lets out a sorrowful breath. She opens her watery eyes then continues. "You said it just as Corey and Jesse walked up to us. That's how Corey knew." Corey knew because he bought the test, at least that's what I assumed all this time. Jesse. Would Jesse do this? If he has something against her, I am not aware of it. Out of everyone that is aware, he is the one I trust the least. I'm lost in thought when Julia speaks again. "Was whoever did this trying to hurt me or you? Or both of us? If they just wanted to hurt either one of us they could have. This affects us both."

I think about her words. "You really are an incredible woman. I never thought of that."

She lays her fork down and grabs her bag. "I need to go clean myself up a little. I might be a while." I stand up to help her out of the booth. "I'm okay." I kiss her lips and watch her as she slowly walks into the washroom.

I make calls as soon as she is out of sight. "Corey. Put a tail on Jesse." I hang up and make my next call. "Darius. What did you find out?" I sip my coffee while he explains the situation.

"He said some chick paid him ten thousand to slip pills into a drink. He claims he doesn't know who the girl was nor the person who gave him the pills. But he said it was a male that slipped him the pills at the gala. He also said he didn't know what the pills were."

I set the mug down. "Is his information reliable? Is he holding on to anything else?"

Darius clears his throat. “No sir, I got everything out of him. He shit himself in the process.”

I watch the door to the restroom as I speak. “Get more from him, then turn him over. Go over the security footage with Corey and find out everyone he talked to from the time he got to the hotel. I want everyone.” Julia exits the restroom and is slowly walking toward me.

“Yes sir.”

I hang up just as she sits down. She shakes her head. “Always working.”

My lips twitch up on one side. “There’s always something that needs my attention.”

She waves the waitress back over. “Can I have a chocolate milk, a refill of his coffee, and a slice of your peach pie a la mode, please.”

The waitress winks. “Good choice. We got fresh peaches in this morning.”

I look at my now empty cup. “Are you planning on staying here for a while?”

She shrugs her shoulder. “I’m not in a rush. It’s peaceful here. Is it okay? We can go if you need to.”

I hold her hand and shake my head. “No, love. There’s no rush. We’ll go at your pace.” She has a look of gratitude as she half smiles at me.

We’re quiet until the waitress comes back with our drinks and a slice of pie. The ice cream has black dots throughout. Julia happily takes a bite. She hums in delight. “What’s with the ice cream?” She has a look of confusion as she licks her spoon. “The dots. Isn’t a la mode supposed to be vanilla ice cream?”

She half smiles. “It’s vanilla bean. I actually prefer it over the other vanilla flavors.”

I scoop some onto my spoon. “There are other vanilla flavors?” She giggles at my ignorance. I put the spoon in my mouth and I’m pleasantly surprised. I take a bite of the pie along with the ice cream. “I have never had a peach pie,” I tell her. After I eat four bites, she orders a second slice.

The ride back is quiet and Julia falls asleep on my shoulder. I carry her to bed and tuck her in. My lack of sleep finally starts to catch up to me, so I lay down

beside her. I wake up to my phone buzzing. I check the time, it's only after one in the afternoon. I got just about four hours of sleep.

I enter my study and return the call from Corey. "What is it?" I sit down at my desk and run my hand through my hair.

"I put Peter on Jesse's tail. He's the best at stealth. I want to add Miguel to Ms. Cavanagh. She wouldn't recognize him even if she saw him and he can pick up when Kyle isn't on her."

I nod. "Do it." I'm about to hang up when I hear Corey say, "Boss, one more thing. I know it's a personal matter, but can I let Shannon know of what happened to Miss Jules? She's been worried sick about her."

We left in such a hurry, of course she's worried. Julia would want her with her at this time. "Leave out the pills. Tell her as little as possible. Julia will need her friend."

I call a certain "friend" of mine, J. He's a corrections officer where Baker is locked up. I've been having him insure that Baker is not having an easy time, if you catch my drift. My guy never gets his hands dirty himself. He let's the other inmates do the dirty work. "Draven. What can I do for you?"

I lean back in my chair. "Has Baker been talking to anyone? I want to know what he knows."

J responds easily. "He don't got friends inside. But his daughter stopped by a few days ago. She sure got a thing for you. She wants to get back at you for ruining her life."

It figures. "Thanks, man."

Julia's POV

I wake up to my nose being tickled. I already know it's Shannon. She's the only one in the world that knows the easiest way to wake me. We figured out that little tid bit by accident. She tried to shaving cream me in middle school, it didn't work. I open my eyes. She's staring back at me with compassion in her eyes. She knows. Thank goodness I don't have to say anything. A tear seeps from my eye. She wipes it away easily. She reaches between us and grabs a tissue from a box and stuffs it in my hand. "The more you cry it out, the better you'll feel. Let it out." So I do.

I cry until my nose is red and my eyes are puffy, and there's nothing left in me. "You look like you've been in a boxing ring." I laugh at her description. "Come on, let's clean you up." She rips the blanket off of me as if ripping off a bandage. She drags me to the washroom and sits me at the sink. She wets a washcloth with warm water and dabs my face. She then brushes my hair and braids it. She grabs my toothbrush and gets it ready for me. "You can do this part, and you need to. Your breath is nasty."

I laugh at that, but get up and brush my teeth. "What time is it?"

She checks her phone. "It's 9:30 am. Fredrick is already at work. He called me over before he went in. He said he didn't want you to wake up with no one here." I've been asleep that long? She goes into my closet. "Damn girl! I want this closet. It's awesome and you still have room for more. Let's go shopping." She tosses clothes at me. "Hurry up. Corey already brought your guardians over."

I let loose my hair and take a quick shower. I throw my hair up in a messy bun and I'm ready to go in the clothes she picked for me. Downstairs Shannon is waiting with Corey, Anthony, Li, James, and Ivan. "Um... are we all going shopping? I'm not sure we'll all fit in one car..."

Everyone stands up. Corey is the first to greet me. "Miss Jules. We have two vehicles ready to go. You'll be riding with Ivan today. The rest of us will split up." He leads us outside to two black Escalades with tinted windows.

"Where did these come from?"

Corey opens my door for me. "Sir bought them yesterday while you were still asleep."

"Wow, over protective, much?" Shannon says as she sneaks past me and scoots into the middle row.

Corey whispers in my ear. "She is not aware of the circumstances that led up to... what happened Saturday night."

I nod. "Thank you Corey. I'm grateful that my husband cares so much for my safety."

James rides shotgun as everyone else piles in to the other SUV. "Did you enjoy the gala?" I ask Shannon as we're riding along.

“It was incredible, right up until the time you disappeared. Corey said you got sick, but when he said he had to leave, I knew something was up. We did get in a few dances before he took off. Ivan drove me home in the Rolls. So it wasn’t too bad. You know, except for being worried sick about you. BT-dubs, you looked amazing. That dress was killer. Where did you get it?”

I smile at her compliment. “Fredrick got it for me. He had it and the gloves in a box with a ribbon.”

She shakes her head. “Damn. That man has got good taste.”

Corey walks next to me while the other four surround us. It feels awkward and uncomfortable, but I am comfortable with these guys. It’s the attention that’s getting to me. “Shan, I don’t know if I can do this. I’m not comfortable.”

Corey clears his throat. “Miss Jules. I can have the guys further away if that would make you feel better.”

I nod. James takes the spot beside me and takes my arm with his elbow. Corey escorts Shannon and the rest of the guys are somewhere behind us. “Much better. Thank you guys.”

Fredrick's POV

I check my text from Corey- *Shannon was able to get Miss Jules out of the house.*

I nod then put my phone away. “My number one concern is loyalty. Do you have any comments about that?”

Ben, my newest recruit is answering my interview questions. I meet and screen all of my recruits before I send them to Taiwan, with the exception of Corey’s brother and one more that Corey sent. This is the final formality before they’re offered a position. “Sir, I am so thankful for this opportunity. You’ve pulled me and my family out of hard times. I will forever be grateful to you for that. You can count on me.”

I nod. “Very good. Meet up with Darius. He'll get you squared away.”

Ben leaves and Kyle comes in with a file. “What is it?”

Kyle sets the file on my desk and steps back. "Sir, it appears Ms. Cavanagh is expecting. She has visited with an OB/GYN and is showing symptoms."

I sit back in my chair. "Continue to tail her. Find out if she's keeping it."

Kyle nods. "Yes Sir." He leaves my office before I open the file.

My mind keeps going back to Jesse. Would he want to hurt me and Julia? I don't think he has any reason to. I'm fairly certain it was Shelby, but she wasn't at the gala. Also, how would she know about the baby? Who is the man and why would he knowingly go up against me? He has to know who he's messing with. It's likely the same guy that took out my father. A knock sounds at my door. "Enter."

Mrs. Harvey walks in with a stack of file folders. "Hello Mr. Draven. Mrs. Draven not feeling well today? She looked so beautiful at the gala."

I smile. "She always looks beautiful. I'll be sure to let her know you said so. No, she's not feeling well."

She takes the top file and hands it to me. "Darius asked me to give you this one. He said it's urgent." I nod and I hand her some files. She continues to speak. "I hope she feels better soon. She's such a delight to have around here."

I smile. "Thank you, Mrs. Harvey." She smiles and exits.

I go through the list of names. Jesse's name is on the list, but so are about a hundred others. It's not really anything to go on. I call Darius. "Is there any footage of the bartender getting the pills?"

Darius sighs, "no, sir. Nothing clear anyway. There are a few that look like something, but those could just be tips. I'm looking through different angles now."

My hand goes to the back of my neck. "I want a list. Let me know what you find out."