

What Happens In Vegas - Free Novel by C. Qualls

Chapter 22

It's been a long day. I can't wait to get back home to Julia. I'm walking to my car when I get stopped by the parking attendant. "Sir."

I turn to look at the young kid. "What is it?"

The kid is a little intimidated, but eventually he speaks up. "There was someone hanging around your car earlier. I told him I was going to call security, so he left."

I look at my car then back to the kid. "Do you have a description?"

He shakes his head. "Sorry, sir. I didn't see much. He was wearing a hoodie and sunglasses. He was white, about my height. That's all I got."

I nod to the kid. He's not short, only about 2 inches shorter than me. "Good work. What's your name?"

He stands a bit straighter. "It's Scott." I shake his hand. I send a text to the head of my payroll department. -*Give parking attendant Scott a \$1000 bonus.* I call Darius down and have him take care of my car. I have Corey come pick me up.

Julia is in the kitchen with Shannon and Mrs. Graham. Julia is on the counter with a half smile that doesn't reach her eyes. She's listening to her friends while they're laughing and chatting away. Julia jumps down from the counter and rushes up to me. "Fredrick! You're home." She throws her arms around my neck and crushes her body to mine. She whispers in my ear, "I'm so glad you're home. I missed you."

I hold her tight letting her find the comfort she needs. I rest my head on her shoulder and breathe in her intoxicating scent. "Are you a sight for sore, tired eyes. How are you?"

She softly smiles. "Shannon was a good distraction. I'm alright."

I can see the heartache she feels. I caress her cheek. "What are you all doing?"

“Gossiping,” Shannon blurts out, followed by more giggling.

Mrs. Graham wipes her hands on her apron. “Dinner is ready to be served, Sir.”

I nod to Shannon, “Are you joining us?”

She shakes her head. “Nah, I have plans with Corey.” She hugs Julia and heads out.

After a quiet dinner, Julia showers and goes straight to bed. I’m in my study when Darius calls me. “Sir, your break line was cut.”

I pull up the footage on my home computer. I’m done with this. Too many things are happening. I watch as the parking attendant, Scott, chases the guy in the hoodie out of the parking garage. I rewind the footage and watch it again frame by frame. The guy has light brown hair under his hood, just like Jesse’s. I pull up the footage of my father’s car being tampered with. The guy looks to be the same person. I call Peter. “What do you have?”

Peter doesn’t sound very confident when he says, “not much sir. After he left work he went to a bar. Last night he was home.”

I tap my knuckles on the desk while I think. I look at the time stamp on the footage. “What about while he was at the office?”

Peter clears his throat. “I’m sorry sir. I wasn’t watching him during his shift.”

I close my eyes and rub my temple. “Tomorrow, I want eyes on him at all times. Get Mitchell to watch him if you get busy.”

I hang up the phone. I need more guys. I’ve got five of my guys looking after Julia. Darius is reviewing tapes, Kyle and Miguel are on Shelby, now Mitchell and Peter are watching Jesse. Jesse needs a job. Something to keep him busy. Something I can keep track of. There’s the new guy, Ben. I have an idea. I’ll work on it tomorrow. I shut everything down and turn in. I need to figure this out. I need to keep my goddess safe. I lay down and pull her to my body. I wrap my arms around her, protecting her from the world.

I dream of Julia. The sky is gray and cloudy. We’re outside in the gazebo, but the twinkle lights are gone and the vines are dry and dead. She’s not sunshine and smiles. Instead, she’s a gray empty shell, like a hollow statue mounted on

a pedestal. She's unmoving and silent with her sad eyes looking down. Her hand holds a black and white photo, the one she called gummy bear. I take the steps slowly to her statue. I go to touch her, but she turns into ash and blows away in the wind, leaving behind only her wedding ring.

I wake with a start. My heart is racing and my head is pounding. I'm breathing hard and I'm covered in a layer of sweat. A set of gentle fingers caress my chest. "Shh, it's okay. I'm here. I'm here, honey." I look at the angel laying next to me in a white cotton nightgown. Her eyes are sad, but still full of love. My breathing and my heartbeat calms at her touch. It's still dark and all is quiet. I take her hand and bring it up to my face so I can rest my cheek in her palm. She continues to comfort me. "You had a bad dream. You were screaming my name, saying don't go, come back." She tells me, then kisses my sweat covered forehead and pulls my face to her breast. She soothes me with her fingers running through my hair, "I'm not going anywhere. I love you, Fredrick. I'm here."

My arms wrap around her holding her to me as tight as possible, refusing to let her go. I swallow and finally whisper. "Promise me?"

She kisses my head then tilts my chin up to look her in the eye. "I promise you, Fredrick." With Julia's fingers running through my hair, I'm able to drift back to sleep.

Julia is not ready to come back to work yet. I'm not going to rush her. She's safer at home anyway. My guys are able to perform their regular duties while she's away. I call Ben into my office. He's anxious to prove himself and get working. "I have a job for you that I need you to take extremely seriously. I'm going to have Jesse training you, but that's not what's really going to be happening. You're going to be on him at all times. If he goes to the washroom, you do too. If he takes a coffee break, so do you. I don't care if you get on his nerves, stick to him like you're a lost puppy. You're young and smart, I trust you can pull this off. I want a daily report to either me or Corey of everything he does. Including every phone call he makes, everyone he talks to, every where he goes. He is not to know anything. Understood?"

Ben nods, "Understood, Sir." I sit back in my chair. "I'll have him meet up with you later today. For now continue your duties assigned by Corey."

I wait until after lunch to call Jesse up. I push all emotion aside. It may not be him after all. If it is him, I don't want him to know I'm on to him. I hope it's not him. "I'm putting you in charge of training the new guy for the rest of the week.

He's young and he seems to be a little clingy. I want you to make sure he's reliable, he's still in his probationary phase."

Jesse nods. "You got it, boss." I dismiss him to his duties.

I lean back in my chair and think of Julia. Her sad eyes haunt me almost as much as my dream. I send her a quick text.

Me- Hey, my beautiful wife. Are you having fun playing hookie from work?

I get a reply almost instantly.

Julia-No.

That's it?

Me-What are you doing?

I await her reply, which is almost as quick as before.

Julia-Just watching old movies.

Come on my angel, talk to me.

Me-Anything good?

Another quick response.

Julia-I guess.

-I'm not really getting into them.

I rub the back of my neck.

Me-I love you.

I can imagine her half smile as she replies; *love you too.*

My wife is heart broken. I know it, but how do I heal her broken heart. I go online to search forums. I can't believe I'm relying on the opinions and ideas of strangers, but they've been where I am now. I find a lot of answers of; 'it takes time', and 'you never get over it'. I don't expect her to get over it. I'm not over it, but I have my wife's safety at the forefront of my mind. She's my focus

right now. Gosh, I hate that she's not with me right now. Even if she were just outside my office door at her desk, I would feel better. I spin my wedding ring on my finger and an idea strikes me. I enter a new search and get busy.

Julia's POV

I can't focus on anything. Really, I would just rather not. I want my baby. I want to hold it and feel it in my arms. I want to hear it's cries and wrap it in soft blankets. I want to feel it's soft tiny body and give it hundreds of kisses. But it's never going to happen. My precious little baby was ripped from my body. I don't even know if it's a boy or a girl. Or, I should say was, was a boy or a girl. My stomach churns and I rush for the nearest toilet. I retch just the same as if I were still pregnant. Fredrick said I would still have symptoms of being pregnant. I wish I were still.

I lay back down on the couch in the entertainment room. I don't even know what's playing. I put on the classic movie channel when I came in here. It doesn't matter anyway. I turn off the movie I'm not watching and cover my head with the blanket. I feel better engulfed in the darkness. Fredrick's scent wafts over me. I love his scent. He brings me comfort. He works so hard. I want to be close to him, I miss him when I'm not with him. He gives me a strength I never knew I had. I feel so empty and alone. I need him.

I wake up when my blanket is pulled down to uncover my head. Fredrick is sitting on the ottoman in front of me. His finger pushes a stray hair over my ear. "Have you eaten today?"

I shake my head. "Not since breakfast."

He looks disappointed. "Julia. I know this is hard on you, I can see the sorrow in your eyes. But you have to take care of yourself. Please. You're my world, my everything. I love you. I don't know what I would do without you."

A tear seeps down my cheek. He wipes it away with his thumb. "I love you Fredrick, but it hurts so much. I feel so empty, I just want my baby." My tears begin to leak down my face in full force. Fredrick picks me up off the couch and brings me onto his lap. I curl up and let his body comfort me as I continue to silently sob.

"I know it, love. I want our baby too. I want to see it's tiny face as you hold it to your breast. I want to hold it and kiss it and tuck it in bed at night. I'm sorry that this happened. I know you feel the pain far worse than I can imagine." He

breaks out his handkerchief and dabs at my face. I take it from him and begin wiping away. I know I must look terrible, but he looks at me like I'm a precious gem. He kisses my forehead and cheeks and doesn't say another word until I'm calm and no longer blubbering.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a little, black velvet box. He places it in my hands. I look up at him in confusion. He knows I'm not a jewelry person. He gives me a soft smile. I open the box and look at the dainty ring inside. It's a pair of angel wings cradling a diamond heart. It's beautiful, but more importantly, it's special. "Look inside" My hands are shaking as I pull the ring out of the box. Fredrick had it engraved. On the inside of the band, written in an elegant script, are the words: *Alex, Forever in our hearts*. My hand goes to my mouth and I cry again. Not tears of sadness, but tears of comfort. It's a sweet way to honor my little baby. Fredrick helps me place the ring on my right hand. It's a perfect fit. My little angel baby is memorialized in a way I can feel and look at everyday. I kiss Fredrick in gratitude. He's so good to me.

Fredrick pulls me up and takes me to the washroom. He washes my body with gentility while my arms are wrapped around his neck. He steals a kiss every now and then. He washes and conditions my hair. He gets clothes for me to wear while I dry myself off. I look at my ring almost constantly as my hand gets accustomed to the feel of it. I dress and accompany Fredrick to the dining room. Gerry already has dinner waiting for us. I pick at my food while Fredrick eats. "Would you be willing to accompany me to work tomorrow? You don't have to work, I just want you near me. I don't like being away from you."

I was already thinking about doing just that. I don't like being away from him either. I nod, "I will, but I want to ride with you when you go."

He smiles his gorgeous smile. "Deal." He steals a bite of my dessert and I laugh, while I unsuccessfully smack his hand away. Already, I am feeling much better.

We arrive to the office before everyone else. Fredrick drove the Lexus today. He likes to spoil me, he knows I love that car. He greets the parking attendant by name and we take his private elevator up to his office. I go straight for my spot on the sofa as he sits at his desk. Fredrick takes off his suit jacket and hangs it up. He sends a few text messages then turns on his computer. I make my way to the break room and get him a coffee. I set it on his desk and sit back on the sofa. I pull open the laptop with earbuds and turn on Iron Chef America. I'm not even dressed for work. I'm in a t-shirt and jeans. I kick off my sandals and curl my legs under me.

A knock sounds at the door. "Enter."

Fredrick looks to the door as Mrs. Harvey walks in. "Oh, Mrs. Draven. I'm sorry to interrupt." I smile at the matronly face.

Fredrick leans back in his chair. "There's no interruption. Julia is only accompanying me today. She will not be working. Please continue."

Mrs. Harvey has a confused look on her face, but lays files in front of Fredrick. "It's good to see you, Mrs. Draven."

I smile as she exits. "Fredrick, does everyone know?"

He tosses a file aside. "No, no one knows except for your guards and Darius. He's looking into the situation." I nod, thankful for that. I lay out on the sofa and switch to a movie.

Fredrick is left alone for the most part. Usually he has people coming in and out of his office. My stomach begins to growl. I look at the time, it's already after one. "Fredrick, you haven't taken your lunch yet."

He gives me a smirk, "neither have you, my love."

I get it. He's trying to prove a point. I need to take care of myself too. I know he worries about me. He's not overbearing with me, though. I'm very grateful for that. "Do you want me to get something for the both of us?" I ask him as I close my laptop.

He shakes his head. "Why don't we go somewhere for lunch."

I stand up to stretch and ask. "Do you want to walk somewhere close by? There are tons of places to choose from." He smiles at me, stands up and slips on his jacket. I step in front of him and slip my hands under his jacket. I slowly slide his jacket down his arms. I step back to look him over. "Much better." He pulls me into his body and plants a hard kiss on my lips. We're both breathless when I finally pull back.

We find a restaurant that is not as busy. It's a Japanese restaurant that serves something I've never heard of before, Shabu Shabu. Fredrick doesn't know what it is either, but we didn't want to be around a crowd. The server is a tiny, but pretty Japanese woman. She explains how to order and what to do. She sets out a giant metal pot, that is sectioned in two, on top of a heating plate. It

has a green piece of seaweed in the water on both sides. Fredrick orders the Kobe beef, while I get plain beef and chicken. "Food snob. I bet they taste exactly the same," I tease him. He chuckles and shakes his head. The food is amazing! I definitely want to come back. Fredrick and I debate about the beef the whole walk back to the office. There is no difference in flavor, but he swears there is. He's holding my hand as we're strolling along.

"Darling! I've been trying to see you." Fredrick grunts and closes his eyes as Ms. Cavanagh exits the store we just passed.

"Shelby, I have nothing to say to you." Fredrick puts his arm around my shoulders and leads me away from her.

"Well I have something to say to you. I'm pregnant." Fredrick doesn't pay her any attention. "It's yours. You're going to be a Daddy." Fredrick stops in his tracks. He doesn't turn, just closes his eyes. I don't say anything. I'm just trying not to hyperventilate. Ms. Cavanagh takes the opportunity to get in front of us. She pulls out a black and white picture that looks just like my gummy bear. "I'm 13 weeks. Finally. The morning sickness was terrible." She's only 2 weeks further than I would be.

Fredrick finally opens his eyes. "It's not mine." He pulls me with him as he walks on.