

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

### Chapter 26

I close down my computer and shut everything off. Julia is spending quality time with Shannon, so I'm the last to leave. I'm meeting up with Corey downstairs to listen to the recordings. I know I'm not going to like what I hear. I send a text to Julia.

Me- *Hey, my beautiful wife. Have fun tonight. Love you.*

She sends me a reply.

Julia -*You miss me already?*

I chuckle because she caught on to my motive.

Me- *Always.*

I step into the elevator just as I receive her text.

Julia-*Don't worry, I'll be back before you know it. Love you.*

I smile to myself and hit the button for the first floor. She has four of her guards with her, so I'm not as worried. I check my emails as the elevator begins to creak and shake. It stops hard in between levels 26 and 25 almost making me lose my balance. I press the emergency button. What the hell is going on? Creaking and grinding noises fill the space around me. I look around for any indication of where the sounds are coming from. The cabin shakes causing my knees to bend under me. I adjust my weight to get better balance. I call Corey. "Something is going on with the elevator. I'm stuck between 25 and 26." The elevator suddenly drops a foot and the power dies out. That can't be good. I tuck my phone away. I open the emergency hatch and pull myself on top of the box. The cable looks like it's been cut, with a single thread remaining. The elevator drops again. I nearly lose my balance. I find the maintenance ladder and head toward it. The elevator drops from under me. I jump toward the ladder, grabbing a rung as I begin to fall. I pull myself onto the ladder and thank God I grabbed it in time. The elevator free falls until it crashes to the bottom causing dust and debris to rise in a cloud far below me.

I don't know how long I've been holding onto the ladder, but my muscles are aching and I'm sweating. I tried climbing down, but my shoes slipped off the rung. I decided it would be best to wait. The doors to the floor below me open up. Corey's head pops in. He looks down then looks up. "Sir?" He yells. There are flood lights at the very top of the elevator shaft providing the smallest amount of orange light.

"Here."

Corey finally spots me. I see him take a breath. "Just hang on. We're coming for you." He's wearing some climbing equipment around his waist. He has someone helping him as he climbs in to get me. They set up a makeshift bridge and attach a harness to me. "Sir, I'm glad you called me. I heard the crash and thought the worst." Corey tells me as I step out of the shaft. There's a group of first responders that surround me, checking me over. After a clean bill of health, most of them head out. The captain stays behind with a few of his guys to check out the elevator. Corey goes over the footage for the day, but nothing looks out of the ordinary.

After about an hour, the captain meets back up with me and Corey in the security room. "The hydraulic piston has damage to it. It looks like it was dented in by a spike of some kind causing a leak. The piston is what keeps an elevator from falling if the cable gives out. That's a safety measure. For both to go out is damn near impossible. This wasn't an accident."

I've heard those words before. Corey tightens his jaw, but doesn't say anything. I tell the captain; "I have an employee that I've been investigating. Continue your investigation, once you've finished, I'll compare it to what we have going." The Captain shakes my hand and heads out.

Julia warned me that Jesse looked like he was up to something. I wonder if his target was me, Julia, or both of us. Thank God Julia wasn't with me. "Do you still want to go over that footage from last night? We can do it some other time." Corey asks me, snapping me back to the present.

"Yeah. I want to know what the bastard has to say."

Corey turns in his chair to pull up the files. "Alright, boss." He clicks on the file and adjusts the sound.

At first it's just footage of Jesse walking up to a condo I don't recognize. "Corey, what is this place?"

He pauses the feed. “It’s Ms. Cavanagh’s home. After Baker went to prison, she lost everything. Her mom got her this place, but she’s still in Milan.” I didn’t even think that Shelby would have to move out of her father’s place.

I tilt my chin up for Corey to continue. The footage changes to a distance across the street. Lewd noises can be heard, but there’s nothing visual except the outside of the condo. Eventually Shelby begins speaking. “Oh, God, I needed that. That asshole. I told you he wouldn’t claim the baby. I bet he didn’t claim that whore’s kid either. You should’ve heard her on the phone today. So pathetic. She sounded like she was going to cry at any second. Boo hoo, my husband doesn’t love me. I lost my baby. He got someone else pregnant and now he doesn’t want me. Ha ha ha. He had her set up our dinner. Can you believe that? He sure puts on a good show. Happily married my ass.” I clench my fists, but continue to listen.

Jesse’s voice isn’t as clear, but still very distinct. “She spends most of the day in his office crying. Who cares. I’ll take care of her soon.”

Shelby scoffs. “I don’t give a damn about her. He’ll drop her eventually. I know he...”

Jesse cuts her off. “You don’t know anything. Do you even listen when I talk? He has her guarded at all times. He’s not dropping her. I’ve already told you that. The only way to get her out of the picture is to take her out completely.” I clamp my jaw. My knuckles are white from how tight my fists are clenched.

Shelby scoffs at Jesse’s words. “Whatever, baby. What’s so great about her? The only one important to that asshole is himself. I’ll make him forget about her.”

Shelby makes a wincing sound as Jesse growls at her. “Don’t for a second think you’ll be taking her place. You’re mine. You and the baby belong to me.”

Shelby’s voice softens. “Of course. I want you baby, we’re yours. It’s only a trick to get back what’s rightfully mine. You know the baby is yours. I told you I used a condom when we drugged him. He can’t remember anything. What was it you had Jeremiah slip him? It was really good.”

Jesse’s voice sounds clearer as if he’s moving around. “It was just E. Dumb ass Jeremiah. He drugs Mr. Stick up the ass, but gets caught slipping those pills in the bitch’s drink.”

Shelby laughs. "Yeah, your brother is an idiot."

A loud diesel truck roars by. Sound comes back in to Jesse talking. "... my half brother or I would've kicked his ass myself. Did you take care of Calloway yet, or is he still giving you trouble?"

There's some clanking in the background. "He agreed. It just took a little persuasion." The feed starts to gain static, then goes silent.

"What happened?" I ask Corey as he closes everything down. I'm livid right now.

"Kyle lost it at that point, he was so pissed he dropped the amplifier. There's video later of Jesse coming out, but by this point we had everything, so I called it. I had Miguel stay on Ms. Cavanagh. Kyle was ordered to stay away from Jesse. I told him we would handle it and that I don't want Jesse to know we're on to him. Kyle is taking a week vacation starting Monday if he can't keep a poker face."

I lean back in my chair and take a deep breath, I am furious. "Corey, I need a drink before I break something or someone."

Corey stands up. "Let's go. I'll take you somewhere I know." I toss him my keys, there's no way I'll be able to drive home.

Corey takes me to a bar I've never been in. It's a nice place as far as bars go. We sit at a booth and order drinks. Corey orders some wings and loaded spuds. I down my double scotch and order another. Corey doesn't say anything, he just sips his beer and munches on his food. I order a third scotch and I'm finally beginning to feel calm. "I want to kill him. The elevator was for her. The Hummer, my breaks, all of it. He's trying to kill Julia. Even if the guards are around her, he can still get her."

Corey shakes his head, "Boss, we'll keep her safe. Trust us. We know what we're doing."

I take a drink. "I trust you Corey. But he was trained the same way you all were."

Corey chuckles as he takes a swig of his beer. "Yeah, he was trained with us, but we all knew things before working for you, boss. Darius alone has some ties I have no idea about. Ivan can drive her out of any situation, especially in

a fast car. Li can kick all of our asses combined. Jesse's skill isn't as great as the rest of us. Remember you hired him because he was good at surveillance. I'm guessing that's why he hasn't been caught on any cameras, until now." I finish my scotch and order another. Corey pushes his plate toward me. "It's not terrible. You're going to get sick if you don't eat something."

I grab a spud covered in cheese and bacon. I eat it and wipe the grease from my fingers. "I wonder if I should play into their scheme. Keep Julia away from me for a while."

Corey shakes his head. "You're letting that alcohol get to you. I would just hand them over. It may not be as satisfying, but you won't have to worry about Miss Jules. Besides, you know you can't be without her. Plus that would break her heart. Then I'd have to hear it from Shannon." I play with the glass in my hand. I down it and get another. Corey is still working on his first beer. He's right, but I'm not ready to let it go yet.

"I've never seen you drunk. I wonder if you'll get a hangover." My Angel's voice sounds from behind me.

My eyes bug and I look behind me. She's standing there with Shannon. Her guards have taken up positions around the bar. She giggles and kisses my cheek. I pull her onto the bench with me. "Hello, my wife. I don't get hangovers." She strokes my cheek and smiles. Shannon takes the seat next to Corey and plants a sappy kiss on him. Julia orders a water. She pops off the top, takes a drink, then places it in front of me. I chuckle as I drink it down. "What are you doing here?"

She waves her phone at me. "I got a text warning me that my husband is getting hammered." I glare at Corey. He shrugs his shoulder and finishes his beer.

"What happened tonight? Why are you drinking so much?" Julia asks me. I don't answer, just take another drink of my scotch.

Corey speaks up. "Just some trouble with a soon-to-be ex-employee."

Julia looks at me confused. I finish my drink. I go to wave for another, but she takes my hand and orders water instead. "How much have you had?"

I shrug my shoulder. I lost count a while ago. She looks to Corey. "Five doubles."

## Julia's POV

Fredrick's eyes are red. He's slurring his words and he's wobbling a little. I was drunk once, I can't imagine he's feeling very good right now. "Are you ready to go home, or do you need to chat some more?" I ask just to check. I have every intention of getting him home. The sooner the better.

"I guess we can go." Fredrick says as he leans in to my ear. Corey gives Ivan a set of keys. We pile in to one of the SUVs with Anthony and Li. Everyone else makes their way to the other cars. It's a motorcade to get us home, but I'm getting used to it. I know Fredrick has his reasons.

I strip Fredrick down and get him under the cool water. His arms are banged up. "Fredrick what happened? Your arms are covered in bruises."

He looks over his arms and shrugs his shoulder. "I have no idea." He wobbles slightly under the shower. I wash him and get him dried off. His eyes are starting to droop, so I put him straight to bed. I go to tuck him in, but I'm pulled on top of him instead. "You're quite pretty." He tells me as he thumbs my cheek.

"Thank you, Fredrick." I kiss his lips and roll off of him. His eyes close and he's soon breathing heavily. I give Corey a call. "Sorry to bug you, but what happened to Fredrick's arms? They're covered in bruises."

Corey clears his throat. "There was a mishap with the elevator. He's fine though."

I roll my eyes. "Corey. What kind of mishap with an elevator results in bruises?"

I can tell he's avoiding telling me what happened as much as possible. "Mr. Draven can explain it better than I can. I wasn't there." I guess I'll just have to accept that they're not going to tell me. I lay in bed next to Fredrick. I close my eyes and join him in a peaceful slumber.

I wake up on my own time. Fredrick is still in bed beside me. He's facing away from me with his covers in a mess. I get up and get ready for the day, it's already after noon. I fetch a glass of water and some acetaminophen. "Fredrick, take this." His eyes open slowly. He rubs his forehead with a grunt. "Fredrick. Are you alright? I have some medicine for you."

His eyes are half lidded as he takes the pills and drinks down half of the water. "Thank you, love." He adjusts his pillow and closes his eyes.

I set the water down and kneel down beside the bed. "What happened? Why were you so upset that you needed to get drunk?"

He grunts and keeps his eyes closed. I lay my hand on his cheek. He half opens his eyes. "Not now." He closes his eyes and refuses to respond. I stroke my fingers through his hair until he falls back to sleep.

I'll have to tell him that he does get hangovers, just in a different way. I call Shannon. "Are you busy today?"

I can hear the noises of people in the background. "Sorry girl. I'm meeting Corey's family today."

I am shocked. Shannon doesn't meet the folks. She never has. "Shan...?"

She sighs into the phone. "I know, I know. I can't help it this time. I actually like Corey a lot. Shit, bitch I may even love him. It's all your fault, you know."

I giggle at her revelation. "Well, good luck with the family. Let me know how it goes. Love ya."

"Right back at ya."

Now what to do? I go to the kitchen to find it empty. Where is everyone? I call for Mrs. Bailey. She quickly appears in the kitchen. "Yes, Miss?" She always has a smile on her face.

I return her smile and ask "Where is Gerry?"

She pleasantly replies. "She went for her weekly grocery run. She always goes on Saturday. I expect she'll be back shortly. Would you like me to fix something for you, Miss?"

I shake my head. I guess I haven't spent many Saturdays at home. "I'm alright, thank you." Mrs. Bailey nods and leaves the kitchen.

I didn't realize I was hungry until Mrs. Bailey said something. I pour a bowl of cereal and sit at the kitchen island to eat it down. Gerry returns just before I'm finished. She gives me a perplexed look and shakes her head. "Of all the things you know how to cook you pick cereal."

I giggle. "Sometimes it hits the spot." She rolls her eyes. I help her put the supplies away and take the time to catch up with her. "Why are you always here? Doesn't your husband want you at home?"

She shakes her head as she rinses the vegetables. "He was killed in Iraq."

I almost drop my spoon. "Gerry, I had no idea. Do you plan on staying single then?"

She shrugs her shoulder. "I never thought to try again. Maybe someday. I'm only 34. I still have time."

I grab a mug and turn on the coffee machine. I'm sure Fredrick could use a cup. "You're not going to find someone stuck here all the time."

She dries off the produce. "I'm not worried about it. If I meet someone, I meet someone. If not, oh well." I pour the coffee and think about Fredrick. I don't think I could want anyone else. If, heaven forbid, anything were to happen to him. The thought of losing him breaks my heart. I let the thoughts go and decide to enjoy every moment with him I can.

Fredrick is still in bed when I return to our room. I place the mug by the half glass of water. I gently kiss his lips. He hums into my mouth. "I brought you some coffee."

He opens his eyes and smiles. "Hi my beautiful wife." He reaches for the coffee and takes a few sips. He rolls back on the bed. He takes my wrist. "Come here, you." I giggle as he pulls me on the bed on top of him. He kisses all over my face and runs his fingers through my hair. He rolls me over so I'm laying in my usual place while he's looking down at me. "I'm sorry for getting so drunk last night. I just got angry about everything that's happening."

I wrap my leg around him. "What is happening?"

His eyes go hard. I can tell he doesn't plan on being very forthcoming. Instead he just says. "Disgruntled employee causing trouble."

I'm sure that's true, but I know there's a lot more. "Like with the elevator?" I raise my eyebrow at him.



He buries his head between my breasts and hums. "Your breasts feel great on my pounding head." I giggle, but refuse to drop it. "Fredrick. Talk to me. Don't make me ask someone else what's going on."

He grunts then says. "I know who drove the hummer. I'm not going to say anything more for now. I don't want you worrying. I'll fill you in once everything is squared away. I promise, love."

I run my fingers through his hair. "Should I be worried?" He props his chin up to look at me. "Not as long as you have your guards with you at all times." Fredrick's revelation doesn't exactly put my mind at ease. Am I really in danger? Ms. Cavanagh already took my baby. Does she want my life too? And what's with the whole Disgruntled employee thing? I trust Fredrick, so I unwillingly let it go... For now.