

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

### Chapter 34

I'm holding my head in my hands. I'm trying to breathe, but I can't. "D-Darius. What do-do I do?"

He comes around the desk and squats in front of me. "Miss Jules, I understand a lot is happening all at once, but you gotta get it together. Sit up and think."

I raise my head. "I have to go, there's no question. But that guy wants me and my husband dead. I'm not a fighter. I can shoot, but that's no guarantee. There's no way I can stop him."

Darius has a look of surprise. "You can shoot?"

I nod. "Of course. My father is ex-military."

He nods. "That is true. I have two little two shot pistols. We'll put one in your pocket and strap the other to you, just in case. You're not going to be alone. Daniel can take the next commercial flight and get there first. He will watch over you."

One guard, even if one more person came it would be better. One more guard. "And Brianna, if she's willing. Do you know her?"

He gets a puzzled look on his face. "Anthony's sister?"

I nod. "She wants to be a guard."

He chuckles. "I taught her how to shoot. Anthony would say otherwise."

I slightly giggle at the thought. "I know she's not trained yet, but the more help the better, right?" Darius nods. I continue to make plans. "Fredrick has a friend there, Jarrett. He has a hotel."

Darius gives me his serial killer smirk. "I got friends there too. You'll be watched at all times. Just do what Jesse says. Don't put on a brave front or he'll know something is up. Also, don't give him any information. I'll take care of you. I like you, miss."

I look up at Darius. "How will I know your guys?"

His serial killer smirk reappears. "You'll know."

Before I know it, I'm at the airport with only my messenger bag. I scheduled the private plane for 1:30am. Jesse would be suspicious if I showed up on a commercial flight. Daniel and Brianna took the 8:27pm flight. They'll be arriving before me and have plenty of time to get things ready. Jarret already set up rooms for the three of us and is awaiting my early arrival. I told him of Fredrick's condition but made him promise not to tell a soul. I'm scared out of my mind. I don't know how Shannon and Corey are doing, or even if they're still alive. Sit up and think. Darius made sure to repeat those words a few times before I was left alone on the plane. I have to stay focused. I have to keep my head. I have to think before I act.

I sleep as much on the plane as possible, which isn't much. It's 5:30am on the warm autumn Las Vegas strip when I arrive. I'm in jeans and a t-shirt with a zip up hooded sweatshirt. I must look a mess, but I don't care. I'm certainly not trying to impress anyone. I exit the terminal and look around. There's nothing out of the ordinary. I call Shannon's cell. "I'm here."

Jesse grunts. "I know. I can see you. Go rent a car and check into a hotel. You're here for your friends after all." He hangs up. I have chills running down my spine and tears in my eyes. He's watching me. I look around, there's no one even looking in my direction. The airport is pretty quiet, being so early in the morning. I wipe my eyes and do what I'm told. I rent a car and head to Jarrett's hotel as instructed. Jarrett is standing in the lobby as I walk in. "Jules." He gives me a hug.

I kiss his cheek. "Hi, Jarrett."

He leads me to the elevator. "I have you in the same room you were in last time you were here."

I semi-smile to him. "That's perfect, thank you."

He nods. "Anything for you. If I can do anything more, let me know." I nod as I follow him to my suite. Once inside, I call Shannon's phone. "I'm checked in."

Jesse laughs. "You really are quite predictable. The same suite even? Come on."

I look around the room, trying to find a camera. "I'm willing to bet there's no camera in my suite. You may have gotten into the hotels security, but you didn't install one yourself."

He chuckles. "Bet, huh? Alright, I'll play your game."

My hands are shaking. I clear my throat. "Oh no, this is your game. You're the one that made up the rules. I'm just in it for the prize at the end."

That really gets him laughing. "The prize at the end of this game is you and your little friends dead. But I will give you a little nugget. You're right about the cameras. I only watched you enter your room."

I let out a deep breath as quietly as possible. "So, what do I have to do now?"

Jesse gets eerily quiet. Finally, he begins to speak. "I'll meet you in the lobby at noon. You are to be alone. If you call the cops, or if I find you with any guards, I will kill your friends." He hangs up and the dial tone sounds in my ear.

I look at my watch. It's just barely 6 am. I have six hours to kill. I call Darius. "I'm at the hotel. I have to wait until noon to meet him in the lobby. He got in to the hotel's cameras and I think, somehow, airport security."

Darius humphs. "He's going to take you somewhere. Make sure you see Shannon and Corey first."

I shake my head. I'm about to slip into full on freak-out mode. "I don't know if I can do this. He wants us all dead."

Darius gets my attention. "Miss Jules, focus. Everyone is counting on you. You can do this. Remember, you're not alone. Brianna and Daniel will meet you in the lobby. Don't worry, Jesse will have no idea who they are. Take the time to calm yourself down. He's trying to get in your head. Don't let him."

I take a deep breath. "Thanks, Darius. I don't know what I would do without you."

He gives me a small chuckle. "I like you, miss. Try to rest."

I humph. "Fat chance. Bye Darius."

I lay out on the bed and close my eyes. I think about Fredrick and the fun we had together in this room. I set the alarm on my phone for 11:30 and 11:35. You know, just in case. I lay back and kick my shoes off. My mind begins to wander and I can't relax. My stomach growls, so I sit up. Staying in this room is not helping my mind. I slip my shoes back on and grab my bag. I head to the rental car and drive down the strip. I find a diner and order breakfast. I take my time, trying to stay calm. This is insane. There's a crazy man waiting around to kill me. And here I am sitting around eating breakfast. Honestly, what choice do I have.

I head back to the hotel and strip down. I lay out in the giant bathtub. I remember making love to Fredrick in this tub. I miss him so much. I just pray that he wakes up soon. He'd be furious if he knew I'm here right now. Oh well, there's nothing I can do. Even Darius understood that I had to come. I step out of the tub and wrap a fluffy towel around me. I lay on the bed and let my eyes rest.

My alarm is blaring in my ear. I turn it off and roll over. I realize I'm not in my bed. I jolt awake and look around. My situation rushes into my mind. I jump out of bed and quickly dress. I strap a pistol to my ankle and put the other in the pocket of my jacket. I leave my bag and grab my phone and car key. I text Darius. I'm heading down now. Wish me luck. I take a deep breath and leave the safety of my hotel room.

Jesse is standing outside my door. I almost jump out of my skin when I see him. Jesse laughs. "Miss me?"

I glare at him. "Not so much."

His hand goes to his chest. "You hurt me, Jules. Truly." He steps forward and pulls me to him. I hold my breath as he runs his hands over my rear, then brings his hands around to the front. He pulls out my cell phone. He gets to my jacket pocket. "Tsk, tsk, tsk. Getting brave, are we? I doubt you even know how to use one." He pulls the pistol out of my pocket and stuffs it in the pocket of his jeans along with my phone. I'm shaking with fear. Now he's armed and it's my fault. He takes my elbow. "Let's go."

He leads me to the elevator. Stay calm and think. I take a deep breath. He wouldn't hurt me in public, in front of people, on camera. I look over my shoulder to where he's standing. "So who died in the Hummer?"

Jesse looks calm when he replies. "Some bum I found begging on the street. I gave him a hundred bucks. Can you believe what people will do for money?"

I almost choke. "What about you? Aren't you doing this for money?"

He shakes his head. "This is more for retribution." The elevator opens. He gestures for me to exit first. I swallow and exit. We step into the lobby.

"Jules! Is that you?" Brianna is all smiles with Daniel standing beside her.

My eyes bug. "Bree?"

She rushes up to me and gives me a hug. I feel her slip something in my pocket. "How've you been? I haven't seen you since graduation."

I smile back at her. I am so happy to see her. "I've been doing alright."

She takes Daniel's hand. She has a rock on her finger. "This is my fiancée, Dan. I heard you got married too. To a billionaire, if I'm not mistaken." She looks at the man standing behind me.

"I did. I'm Mrs. Draven now."

She nods. "Is this him?"

Jesse steps up. "No. I'm her guard. Mrs. Draven has somewhere to be. Please excuse us."

Brianna hugs me again. "Of course, I won't keep you. Keep in touch, huh."

I nod as Jesse discreetly leads me on. "Of course, take care."

Jesse grips my arm. "Where's your car?" I point to the pearl white Camaro. Jesse takes the key. "At least you got good taste in cars. Men... that's another story."

I scoff. "Oh really?"

He shrugs his shoulder. "If it wasn't for him, It would be some other chick in your place. I honestly have nothing against you."

My jaw drops. My mind is blown right now. "So if he married Shelby, she would be the one here right now?"

He nods as if it were obvious. “Why do you think I was sleeping with her stupid ass.”

We make it to the car. Jesse is about to open my door. “Hey, you got any spare change? I’m trying to get money for the bus.” A man approaches my car. His pants are sagging and his t-shirt is white and oversized. His shoes are nice and he has a sideways baseball cap and gold chains. Jesse gives the guy a dirty look. I reach in my pocket and give him a five dollar bill. “Thanks a lot. You’re the first one to actually help me out. Everyone else I asked gave me shit. I like you, miss.” The guy winks at me and I feel a huge surge of relief. Darius said I would know.

Jesse opens my door and pushes me toward the seat. He walks around to the driver’s seat and starts the car. “Where are we going?”

He pulls out of the lot. “Don’t you want to see your friends?”

My heart sinks. “Yes.”

He smirks. His smirk reminds me of Fredrick, but a sinister version. “Then buckle up. We’re going for a ride.”

I shake my head. “I’m not exactly thrilled to be driving to my death.”

He swerves around a slow car and pulls onto the interstate. “Don’t worry. I don’t plan on killing you today.”

I roll my eyes. “That’s comforting.”

He continues speeding toward California. “It should be. I have a plan in mind. You’re going to give me Draven Corp. So I need you alive for now.”

I cross my arms. “Why on earth would I do that?”

He clicks his tongue. “You wouldn’t want to disappoint Shannon and Corey, would you?”

Jesse continues to drive for about a half hour. Knowing he needs me alive calms me just slightly. The only thing I see out of my window is desert. Brown, hot, desert everywhere. There aren’t even cactus. Just ugly barren bushes. I sigh at the sight. “Why would anyone want to live here?”

Jesse chuckles. “Not a fan of the desert?”

I shake my head. “Nope. Give me mountains any day.”

He shrugs his shoulder. “I’m used to it, but Red Rock and Mt. Charleston are really nice in the summer.”

I quickly make a realization. “You grew up here?”

He nods. “Yep.” I point out the window. “Where are all the cactus?”

He smiles. You’ll find Joshua trees and yucca here and there, but it’s mostly creosote in this area.”

There are a few travelers on this stretch of road, mostly big diesel trucks. It’s nothing like city life. It’s so empty. A Chevron sign pops up out of nowhere. Off in the distance, a lonely hotel/casino sits by the side of the road. Jesse turns onto an old road and continues driving. “What is this place?”

He squints at me. “Why? So you can tell your little guard dogs where you are?”

I give him my best ‘you’re a dumb ass’ look. “You took my phone, remember. I have just never seen anything like this.”

He eyes me for a minute, then replies. “Sloan, Jean, whichever you prefer.”

I knit my eyebrows. “Which is it?”

He points in the direction of the road we just came from. “Jean is basically that truck stop. Sloan is the area from that last truck stop before this one. It’s the area.”

I miss Fredrick. My eyes begin to mist over. I sniffle it away before Jesse can comment. Screw him. I don’t care if he sees me cry. I’m not some heartless person. I let out a breath and swipe at my tears. Fredrick, please wake up. I miss you. I need you. Jesse chuckles beside me. I just ignore him. He’s a coward and a jerk. Retribution. How did Fredrick ever wrong him? He’s been nothing but good to him. I roll my eyes and stare at the depressing landscape.

Jesse continues to drive. It’s hot, but I leave my jacket on. It gives me comfort. I remember that Brianna slipped something in my pocket. I look in the mirror for any vehicles. There is literally no one else on this god forsaken road to nowhere. I guess it’s a good thing, that means Jesse won’t see if anyone is

following me. We come up to a tiny cemetery. It's so tiny, I almost missed what it was. On the left of the road on a tiny hill is a single house.

I feel like I'm in the twilight zone. On the other side of the hill more little houses and trailers start appearing. We pass an old building with the sign pioneer saloon painted on the top. Next to it is another old, smaller building marked Good Springs general store. Did we just take a turn into the old west? What the hell? More tiny dilapidated cabin structures are scattered between houses and more trailers. Jesse makes a few turns before pulling up to a single wide trailer. He parks the rental car under a bunch of low hanging bushes. "We're here. Let's go."