

Midnight 25

You're A Smith

Kevin knew a little about Dylan.

Dylan had studied and worked in London, managing the Sterling Group's European offices and factories. He rarely returned home to manage the domestic American market, which had been the Sterling's group bread and butter since its inception. However, when the financial crisis of 2008 hit, it decimated their domestic business, and they soon became reliant on overseas markets in Europe and Asia, markets that Dylan had been partly responsible for forging. He quickly rose to seniority in his family, using his advanced knowledge of the market to further their business goals.

Soon after, Old Sterling decided to retire, abdicating his position as CEO to Dylan. Under his leadership, the company clawed back the losses of 2008 and then some. He possessed strategic thinking, something that had been sorely missing before. He was shrewd and cunning and decisive and compared to his father, much sterner and tougher.

But why was Savannah with him?

Kevin followed Dan out of the Police Station. It was dazzlingly bright, clear blue sky and the sun directly overhead. Ahead waited for a grey limousine surrounded by several black-suited security persons. The oldest, a middle-aged man with thinning brown hair, walked over and shook his hand.

"Master Smith." He said. Now he was closer, Kevin could see a stubble gathering on his jaw and black rings under his eyes. How long had he been waiting here?

"It's Kevin Wills."

"Why didn't you tell us you were in custody? If Mr. Smith had known, he'd have gotten you out days ago."

Dan nodded, looked at Kevin. "I fucking told you so! Hubris, Kevin, hubris!"

"Oh, fuck off Dan," he said, shoving him. He fixed the security guard with the coldest stare he could muster. "Please tell Mr. Smith it is none of his business. I am not his concern."

"With all due respect, sir, you are his son. You're a Smith! Which may be a boon for you sooner rather than later." He opened the car door for Kevin and Dan. "The man you hit is the grandson of Old Sterling, the head of a very powerful family in L.A. Mr. Smith can speak to Old Sterling and smooth over the whole thing if you let him. Why not come and see him today?"

"I don't know how I can make myself any clearer. I want nothing to do with him." He climbed into the back of the car with Dan. "Let's go," he said to the driver." The Guard watched and sighed as the limo pulled away.

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Days had passed while Savannah lounged about Dylan's villa. Fortunately, Dylan had been away on work the entire time, so she pretty much had the run of the place.

Today, a few clouds hung low in the sky, soft and white, skipping over rooftops. She gripped the balcony rail and took a deep breath. She heads Garwood approaching but didn't turn. "Savannah," He announced. "For you." She turned. He held an envelope in his outstretched hand. Her monthly allowance and the first (or was it the second? That damned outfit he made her wear) transaction of their agreement.

She opened it. Inside were credit cards and some cash - \$2000, to be exact. Garwood told her that funds would be limited, and anything over \$2000 would have to be cleared with Dylan. "In principle, Mr. Sterling will not limit your actions. But every time you go out, you shall tell Judy. Please call back every three hours and be back before nine o'clock in the evening... Oh, and..." he emptied out his pocket into his hand, gave it to her. "this is your new phone, the phone number is the same as before."

She thanked him. It was a Samsung S9. She turned it on and flicked through, frowned. "All my contacts, they're gone." Creepily, only Dylan's contact remained.

"Mr. Sterling thought you wouldn't need to contact others as you seem to have few friends. It's enough to keep his number only."

Savannah felt a flush of embarrassment and anger flicker through her. It was true, she didn't, but it hurt being told that anyway. "But that doesn't make any sense. They can still message me, my phone number is the same, and then I'll have their contacts again." Garwood shrugged and winked in response, and left, leaving Savannah to fumble with her phone.

Then, as if on cue, her phone started to ring. She answered it.

"Savannah?"

"Kevin?"

The day before, Dylan had come to Savannah's bedroom and told her that Kevin had been released. She heaved a sigh of relief but didn't dare call him out of fear of being questioned by Dylan.

She remembered being stood in her nighty, and her hair was a tangle about her scalp, and it was hot so she had thrown open the balcony doors and a breeze billowed about her, making her nighty undulate and making her look like a translucent ghost standing at the foot of the bed.

Dylan, on the other hand, stood rigid by the door in his starched, charcoal grey suit. He was incessantly polite and revealed nothing about what was going on behind his dulled grey eyes. And then, and this is why she can remember this, he has done something so utterly out of character that it left her a little stunned.

He turned to leave, hesitated, doubled back to her, and planted a light kiss on her forehead. Smiled and left. She watched, ruffled and confused, and touched the spot where he had kissed her. It was still a little moist.

She didn't know what to make of that; he was a hard man to read.

In her experience, there were three kinds of people, some were an open book, eager to share. Devin was an open book. Living around him was to live with the constant threat of blunt force emotional trauma. Dylan, on the other hand, was a closed book. He gave nothing and shutdown conversations that might peek at what was between his covers. Like a steel bear trap clamping down on the conversation, eviscerating an arm or a leg in the process.