

Midnight 35

Debt Chasing

Savannah clenched her hands, "Uncle, I... "

"You can tell me, I already know. I saw the news this morning. They were talking about a girl and, even though there were no pictures, I know it must've been you. Am I right?" He didn't pause for an answer, instead of rushing on to praise him. "Mr. Sterling is really nice to you to take you out to a place like that." A glint sparkled in his eye, and an uneasy feeling grew in her stomach. Was it the tea?

He nodded, quick to push the subject aside.

Dalton continued, "Savannah, since Mr. Sterling treats you well, I was wondering, can you do me a favor?"

There, he said it. Her heart gave its last pulses as it sank, like a sunken submarine tumbling to the black-depths. She remembered what Dylan had said and hated him at that moment. Why did everyone know better than her? "What is it?" she said quietly.

"Well, I mentioned it before; I'm out of debt thanks to Devin, but then you left him... Two days ago, some men came to our house and threatened to hurt me - to hurt our workers - unless we pay back what we owe." His eyes were like saucers of cool blue glacial melt. "Can you ask Mr. Sterling to help your family? You're all we've got."

Savannah was so defeated by the time he'd finished speaking that she had barely listened to a word. She wasn't sure how to respond. Instead, the same incessant thought kept spinning around her head. They don't really care about you, and they never have. They just want to use you... "Dylan will not lend me any money." She said, after what felt like a long time.

Dalton, visibly irritated, pushed harder, "Why not? He took you to live together and go out together. He clearly cares about you. Why not call him now and at least ask - it's nothing to him, and I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

Savannah stood up, "Uncle, I'm sorry, but I have to go now."

"Go? You can't go!" Snapped Norah rushing out of the kitchen and into the living room with a spatula held like a knife. She verged on mania, "Your uncle is almost driven mad by those creditors, and you won't help him?"

Savannah looked at their greedy faces, a wiriness in her tone. "What, do you think I'm some sort of cash-machine? Go and ask him yourself. Look, I came here because I thought uncle was sick, but that's clearly not the case, so I'm going to leave now." With that, she headed for the door.

"You horrid girl! What did we ever do to you? Too good to help your only family but not to sleep with the entire Sterling family! Whore!" Norah shouted, chasing Savannah to the door, Spatula raised to strike down on her but stopped at the last moment by another's turner hand. Looking up, Norah saw a man in the shadows of the doorway, his eyes ablaze with fury.

He stepped forward. The man in front of her was dressed in a tailored black suit, over six feet tall, and had wide shoulders. His piercing grey eyes struck Norah dumb, and she shivered. "Who the fuck are you?" Norah shrieked, pulling hair hand free and falling backward.

Dalton rushed in behind them and, recognizing the figure, pulled his wife back. "... Mr. Sterling... "

Norah froze in his arms. Panic pulled her face into moan to droned on eerily in the background. Surprised, Savannah spun around, "Why are you here?" She demanded.

"You're making me look weak, being bullied like this." He said, pushing pulling her to his side. "I can't have you doing that - making me look weak."

Biting her lip, Savannah looked across at her aunt and uncle, cowering in each other's arms. Then, with a powerful grip, she was dragged behind him, his back sheltering her from her family.

Dalton approached Dylan, stooped over, and smiled apologetically, "Sir, don't get me wrong. We daren't bully Savannah. We're simply discussing family matters."

Dylan raised his brows, "What matters?"

Dalton winked at Savannah.

"Debt chasing," said Savannah. "He wants me to borrow money from you."

"Sir, I believe that you won't refuse me, as you are with my Savannah. It's just fifty-thousand, less than one of your suits." Dalton boldly replied.

"Just fifty-thousand?" Today fifty-thousand tomorrow five-hundred-thousand! And he didn't intend to borrow, but take! Dylan flicked out his checkbook and pen, turned to them, "I can give you the money. However, it is up to Savannah.

Dalton's eyes lit up, and his gaze fixed onto Savannah. As he'd expected, Mr. Sterling doted on Savannah.

Savannah wanted to leave and tugged on Dylan's hand, desperate to be outside and away from everyone, but she was shackled in place by his iron grip.

"Savannah, please." Dalton pleaded.

"It seemed that you had annoyed Savannah." Dylan smiled, and lifted Savannah's chin, looking into her eyes.

"Savannah, say something to Mr. Sterling... Please." Dalton begged again, and his whole face broke out in a nervous sweat.

"Savannah, it's all my fault," Wailed Norah. "You can't simply stand back! Please, help your uncle!"

Savannah felt disgusted. If Dylan hadn't held her in place, she would have left.

Dalton and Norah were almost working themselves up into a growing mania. The longer she stayed quiet, the louder and more erratic it became. She half-expected them to start clawing at their faces removing their clothing as the mania became chronic.

Dylan felt her hand tremble in his. "You've made her unhappy, make her happy." He said.

They froze for a moment, "What do you mean, sir... "

"Simple. Make her happy, and you will have your money."

They looked at each other in surprise.

Well, for the fifty-thousand!

Dalton dropped to his knees, pulling his wife down with him "Savannah, I'm sorry, we shouldn't have treated you so badly. For your family's sake, just open your mouth, let Mr. Sterling lend us the money... "

"That's all?" Dylan asked sternly.

Norah began to cry, slapping herself hard on the cheek, "Savannah, you are the bigger person. Please, don't blame us anymore!"

"That's enough... make them stop." Savannah murmured. Dalton was her uncle, her family, and she didn't want to see her last family bowing and scraping like this.

"You'd forgive them so quickly?" Dylan asked..

She bit her lip and nodded.

After a long time, Dylan stopped them when Norah's face was swollen, "All right."

The couple immediately looked at the man in front of them eagerly.

Taking flipping through the pages, Dylan detached a check from it, wrote a number, crumpled it up, and threw it on the floor. "Thank your niece," he said in disgust.

Dalton and Berry turned to Savannah, said fawningly, "Savannah, thank you, thank you very much."

She left as soon as Dylan released his grip, ran outside under the shade of the tall oak trees, and took breaths in the relative silence of suburbia. Footsteps approached behind her.

"Darkness in my heart?" Dylan put his hands in his trouser pockets, and his voice was somehow soft.

Savannah was weeping with red-rimmed eyes. He'd warned her about her uncle, but she didn't believe him. She was so naive.