

Chapter 11 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

Her cell phone rang, and she made a face at the number. “Looks like he’s done with his morning romp.”

Adil looked at his watch. “Yes. She probably left about five minutes ago.” He nodded at the phone, “are you going to answer it?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want privacy?” Phineas asked quietly. “We can let you talk to him. As much as we really would prefer you wait until tomorrow, in light of the circumstances, I’d understand if you felt the need to tell him you know and you’re not coming home.”

“No. I’m not telling him I know about the cheating. I’ll let you guys do it tomorrow when you serve him my divorce papers. I don’t want to hear him try to gaslight me again the way he did last night.” She declined the call a few times as she stared at the trio who seemed confused by her statement. “Last night I could smell her perfume, and it made me throw up. He had the balls to tell it was the scent of a bathroom freshener from the office. Then he tried to tell me I was throwing up because of the stress of trying to make this baby. If you’d not told me the truth,” she looked at them, “I’d be thinking I was crazy for my reaction to him. He twisted things so easily and so quickly.”

“Asshole!” Benicio grunted furiously.

“What are you going to tell him?” Phineas was confused. “We know you don’t sleep apart. We did our homework.”

She knew their intel likely told them she never slept away from home ever. No business trips away. No weekends with the girls. Her best friend would occasionally spend the night in their guest room but usually, it was the two of them.

She stayed home every night and slept next to her husband. If he traveled, she still stayed in his bed.

“I didn’t want to risk her knowing ahead of time but given the situation,” he waved at her belly, “then I’m okay with you telling him whatever you need to. Truly, Juniper. Do what is best for you.”

She ignored Phineas offer and then looking him right in the eye answered the call from her husband. Her tone was emotional, and she was angry at herself for it.

“Kyst, I can’t talk right now.”

Immediately he heard the tremble in her voice, “baby, what’s wrong? Where are you? Are you at work? I’ll come.”

“No. Um, I just got back from the doctor’s office. I had another miscarriage.”

“What? Baby, where are you? Stay where you are and I’ll come pick you up.”

“Please Kyst. I called my mom and she’s going to -“

“It’s not her job, Juni. It’s mine. It’s my responsibility to help you. Why didn’t you call me right away?”

“Because I knew it was going to happen, okay? The stupid appointment you missed on Friday, well the doctor told me I was pregnant, but I was already cramping before I even left there. I didn’t want to tell you because I knew it wasn’t going to last. I knew it wasn’t going to work. I’m angry and I’m sad and I can’t look at you right now, Kyst.”

“You’re upset because I wasn’t there Friday when you found out.

Oh baby, I am so sorry.”

“I need space please. I want you to just back off and let me breathe through this one on my own.”

“Honey, I’m not comfortable.”

“I don’t give a shit what you’re comfortable with!” she screamed suddenly and the three men in the room all jumped in surprise. “I’m the one hurting. I’m the one standing in the middle of a room bleeding while my pelvis feels like it’s being ripped from my body. I’m the one whose body keeps failing over and over. You don’t get to complain about being uncomfortable when I’m the one who is being torn apart. I want my mom. I want you to leave me alone, just like you did Friday.”

She hung up on him and fell to her knees, sobbing. Why was this all happening at once?

Again, it was Phineas who scooped her off the floor and carried her to a chair and held her on his lap sideways, crooning softly in her ear while she cried like the world was ending against his chest. It felt like hours before her sobs ceased, her throat raw and her eyes burning and swollen shut. Despite the cramping in her belly, the very tangible evidence of her heartbreak staining her pants, she didn’t have the energy to push out of the tight embrace the serious man held her in

“It’s going to be okay, I promise,” Phineas whispered softly his cheek resting on top of her head as he rocked her back and forth.

His hand rubbed circles on her back, and his voice was soft and soothing.

“Juniper,” Benicio reached out and touched her cheek when her crying turned into little hiccups. He took in the sight of her swollen eyes, “Oh, sweet girl. I’m so sorry you’re going through all of this. I wish I could fix it for you.” He crouched right down and stared at her, “The shower is all set up for you to get cleaned up. I put out a couple of towels. We knew you wouldn’t want to go home right away so we even have some clothes for a couple of days here for you. I put some pajamas in the bathroom. I just sent Adil down to the pharmacy down the block to get some feminine supplies. Maybe a nice hot shower will make you feel better though.”

“Oh god, I’m bleeding all over you,” she looked at Phineas in horror, surprised she’d been so consumed in her grief while she knew she was bleeding she hadn’t considered it was on him. She also hadn’t noticed Benicio fluttering around the condo or how

Adil left.

“It’s okay. Adil once shat on me when we camping. This is nothing.” He winked at her and nodded, “true story. No matter what he says, no matter how fucking cold it is, do not let him spoon with you after he drank three espressos from a gas station.”

She giggled in spite of her situation, “this is all so horrible.”

“Yes it is. A hot shower, a change of clothes and a cup of the tea

Everyone’s Feeling Bad

I’m making for you, and then your mom should be here by then. Phineas’ Mom is bringing her over,” Benicio caressed the top of her head, his hazel eyes staring concernedly at her. Her phone started ringing again and Benicio reached to grab it off the floor and shut it completely off. He tossed it on a side table. “There is no need to talk to him right now. Come. Let’s get you cleaned up.”

Phineas didn’t let her walk to the bathroom, carrying her all the way through the bedroom to a private ensuite and setting her on her feet. “We made sure all of the body washes and stuff which were in your shower at your place are here now.”

“Adil wasn’t in my house seven or eight minutes. How did he get all this?”

“He’s very good at what he does.” Phineas chuckled and looked at Benicio, “I’ll run over to your place and get changed. I’m sure you can loan me some sweats.”

“You have the keycode,” Benicio waved him off.

“You live close?” she asked him curiously.

“I’m your neighbor, sunshine. I knew this place was sitting vacant and I know the building and the neighborhood. It’s a good one. You’ll be safe in this building.” He winked, “and if you ever need to borrow a cup of sugar, you’ll already know one of your neighbors.”

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“You really live right next door?”

“I do. The other door on this floor is me.” He waved at the enormous shower, “the showerheads are decent, and the water pressure is good. You’ll feel better after a shower. You go on. I’m going to make your tea.” He paused, “um, when Adil brings your products,” his cheeks turned red, “your mom should be here, so I’ll send her in with them.”

“Thank you.” She felt her own skin heating up as she wrapped her arms around her waist. She felt dirty and dingy, and the shower sounded like a personal heaven.

He stepped close, surprising her by pressing a soft kiss to her forehead, “for what it’s worth, Juniper, I am deeply sorry for being the bearer of unwelcome news in this story. I feel absolutely terrible it was our request which precipitated all your pain.”

“My pain is caused because my husband is a cheating asshole, and my body is failing me. I know why he’s an ass, but I really wish I knew why my body doesn’t want to work.”

“Not your fault. You didn’t make your body. It was divinely created, and it is beautiful and miraculous, but it doesn’t always do what we want. Life sucks and it isn’t fair, and people can be horrible terrible beings to contend with but this,” he waved at her, “none of this is your fault.”

She stood on her tiptoes and kissed his cheek, “thank you. don’t know, Benicio. I met you yesterday and yet I feel like we’ve known each other forever. I am grateful for your help.”

He smiled widely at her words. “Come see us when you’re done. We will leave you with your mom for the night but there is one little thing we want to talk to you about when you’re all cleaned up. Nothing bad. Don’t fret about it but something we’ll want you to know.”

“Okay.” She watched as he closed the door behind him, leaving her to get undressed for the shower. She looked at her trousers and decided they were going straight to the trash bin. She stepped into the stall and turned the water on and immediately felt the stinging pelt of the water washing away the stains on her skin. The water-tinged pink, and she choked back another sob at the visible proof of her body’s betrayal.

“Juni?” her mother’s quiet voice called into the bathroom.

She leaned backwards, “Mama.”

“Oh, my love, I’m so sorry.”

She gave her mother a sad smile, “me too, Mama.”

Her mother moved a little stool closer to the edge of the shower and shook her head, “you’re losing another baby?”

“Yes. I kind of figured it was going to happen. I was at the doctor’s office on Friday, and it just didn’t feel right. I can’t explain it.”

“The appointment Kyst missed?” her mother said with a bite to her tone.

“He told me his boss gave him a last-minute assignment he wanted to go over. He lied Mama. He was with Phineas’ wife in a coffee shop.”

“I can’t believe he would cheat but to cheat with the wife of Mr. Perez is insane.” Her mother hissed, “what was he thinking?”

“I don’t think he was thinking, Mama. I think he was excited about the prospect of having sex with someone other than his wife. I mean,” she sniffed as she got back under the running water, “he’s only ever been with me. He must have been thrilled to be presented an opportunity to try something new.”

“Bastard,” her mother huffed angrily. “I never saw it coming. I can’t believe he would do something so disgusting. If someone put a lineup of ten men in front of me and I needed to pick out the ones who would be cheaters, he would not be in my top nine, Juni. I’m in shock.”

“I’m not sure I would have believed it, if I’d not seen it for myself.”

“Did you actually see it?” she heard the concern in her mother’s voice.

“I did. I put cameras in my apartment, and I was given a large screen view of it. He,” she cleared her throat, “did her against the door in my apartment and then on my sofa. I left before he carried her to the bed, but I heard the guys whispering earlier and I know he did.”

“I am so sorry, sweetheart.”

A knock on the door interrupted them, “Maeve, it’s Sandra. Adil brought some supplies for Juniper.”

There was a bit of a laugh in Phineas’ mom’s voice and Maeve moved to the door to open it and then frowned.

“What is all this?”

“He wasn’t quite sure what she needed so he bought four different brands of pads in four different sizes each and,” Sandra bit back a laugh, “some leakproof underwear made for old ladies who pee the bed.”

“Oh my gosh.” Maeve shook her head.

“How is she?” Sandra whispered softly, “is she okay, Maeve?”

The boys are really worried about her. Phineas is feeling terrible about his role in this.”

“She’s strong, my Juniper. You can tell the boys, she is strong. This is a blip in her path, but it is not anything which will destroy her.”

Juniper heard her mother’s words and felt a rush of emotion at them. Her mother was her greatest champion and strongest ally. She wouldn’t let Juniper fall apart on her watch. Hearing her mother’s confidence made her lift her chin up defensively.

The sound of the bathroom door closing again and then the sound of a plastic bag shaking as her mother dug through it.

“The boy bought sixteen different boxes of pads,” Maeve snorted. “Three name brands and a store brand name. Everything from a panty liner to overnight pads I think are meant to fit giants.” Her mother opened a box and pulled out one. “These are so big, they look like the ones my mother wore in ninety five-five.”

“Mama!” she giggled at her mother’s words.

Her mother leaned into the shower stall, “look at it. You could drop this in an ocean and the water level was recede three inches.”

She knew her mother was trying to make her laugh, and it was working. Juniper shook her head at her antics and then her mother started giggling again.

“What is so funny now?”

“I would love to see the face of whichever one of those three boys out there who brought these in with the cozy pajamas.” Her mother held up a lacy thong. “Pretty sure this,” she held up the ginormous pad, “is not fitting in these panties. I’ll see if there is anything bigger than this otherwise you might be wearing those incontinence diaper with a pad shoved in it tonight.”

She closed her eyes as her mother marched away, her cheeks bright red at the notion of Benicio pawing through underwear for her and deciding on a thong. This day was getting stranger and more uncomfortable with each passing second. Juniper decided it was time to wrap this day up and get on with it.

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She entered the kitchen with her mother’s arm over her shoulder to find Phineas standing behind his own mother with his arms around her shoulders and he must have said something naughty because she was slapping at him and he was rocking her from side to side with a broad grin on his face which was teasing and light-hearted. This was not in line with the cold, brutish bastard she’d met in his office the day before.

Benicio noticed her first and pushed away from the island they were all standing around, “there she is. How are you doing sunshine?”

“I feel like I was kicked in the crotch with a pair of size twelves,” she admitted as she let her mother lead her to a high-backed stool and she sat down. “Thank you guys for everything. I do appreciate all your support this afternoon. It’s been really shitty but I’m grateful for you all being here for me. I mean I don’t know four of you in this room but, I’m grateful nonetheless.”

“I’m Sandra Perez,” the woman in Phineas’ arms reached out a hand, “we’ve met briefly before when you were popping in to visit your mom and I was there. She’s enormously proud of you. She talks about you all the time.”

“It’s nice to meet you.”

“Is there anything we can do for you? Anything at all.”

“No. I’m sure tomorrow I’ll be thinking of a thousand questions and feeling too many emotions to deal with but right now, in this moment, I’m feeling overwhelmed and numb. I don’t know where to start or what to do.”

“Well, that’s why we are still here.” Phineas took a breath and then reached behind him to the kitchen counter opposite the island and he slid a stack of documents her way. “First and foremost,

you are now on a paid leave. It is not going to affect your sick bank or your vacation time. This is me, doing my job as the man who selfishly pulled you into his hell, and giving you time to get your head on straight before you come back to work in our offices and, to quote you, need to quit because I remind you of betrayal.”

“You don’t need to do this.”

“Yes he does,” Sandra grunted. “It’s the least he can do.”

“I think he did her a solid, despite how bluntly he did it,” Maeve was pulling drawers and cabinets open. “A girl deserves to know her man is a sniveling worm. Before I moved onto the property, Sandra, I used to invite that boy in my apartment for every holiday and most meals. I gave him love and kindness and he repaid it by betraying my daughter. Pig. He’s going to get my foot in his crotch,” she referenced Juniper’s earlier comment.

Adil laughed, “I like you Maeve. I need to ask, how did you come up with the name Juniper. Was it an old family name?”

“Nope. I met a guy while I was really wasted on gin. Ten months later she was born. It made an impression.”

“Gin. Juniper!” Adil threw his head back and roared with laughter. “Mama Maeve, you’re hilarious.”

Juniper shook her head, “it’s funny to you guys. I’m literally named after the one alcohol she will never touch again.”

“Because I have all the juniper I need right here,” her mother kissed her cheek and set down a sandwich in front of her which Juniper didn’t even see her making.

“How did you make this so fast?”

“I’m your mama. I know what you need.”

The sound of a phone ringing made them all look around and then Sandra looked to her phone and looked at Phineas, “your father.” She answered with a sweet smile on her face, “Hey Phin, what’s up?”

“Hi beautiful. There is a young man at our gate looking for Maeve. I let him know she’s not here and he’s demanding to know where she is. Before I call the cops for a public disturbance, is there anything else I should tell him?”

“Tell him you called me and I’m with Maeve and Juniper and that Juniper is in good hands and she will call him in twenty-four hours. Tell him if he doesn’t give her the space she needs, her mother and I will take Juniper on a resort for the weekend to heal her broken heart.”

“I will deliver this message. He is quite upset. Tears and everything.”

“Are you close to him?” Sandra asked coolly.

“Nope. Just watching him through the security camera and talking to him there. I said I’d get back to him.”

“He cheated on his wife with Denise.”

“Phineas’ Denise.”

“She’s not fucking mine.” Phineas grunted angrily. “I told you and Grandpa she was a nutter but none of you wanted to listen to me. Thankfully, I managed to get the video evidence thanks to poor Juniper.”

“Jesus Phineas, is this why the poor girl is suffering right now? What did you do?”

“I asked her to put cameras in her apartment, and she got front row seats to his cheating with Denise. Please don’t say anything to Denise’s father yet, Dad. I need to serve her in the morning, and I don’t want her to be given a head’s up.”

“And this little fucker outside my house is the one who slept with your wife and cheated on his own?”

“Yup but you can’t say anything to him, Dad. You can’t. He’ll be served tomorrow at work as well. Juniper suffered a miscarriage today after all this shit and she’s hurting. He knows she lost a baby, but he doesn’t know she knows about his cheating.”

“Phineas, is this girl okay? She’s Maeve’s daughter and so I know she’s a nice girl. Tell me you didn’t destroy her entire world.”

“No. Not all of it,” he shot a sad, remorseful look in Juniper’s direction. “I’m going to make it up to her though. We put her in a safe apartment where he won’t find her, and Beni and Adil are helping.”

“Beni, you make sure the little prick loses more than his fair share of his assets when you oversee her divorce. Adil, I don’t know what the fuck you can do. You’re good for spying on people and cracking jokes.”

“You wound me, Mr. P.”

“I’ve tried multiple times on fishing trips to do it mortally and yet you still exist.”

Adil grinned at Juniper, “he’s mad because two weeks ago, I dropped his favorite bottle of scotch he’d brought back from Scotland. He said he won’t forgive me until I bring him another one. Do you want to come to Europe with me to pick it up?”

She shook her head, “I think I’ll sit this one out.”

“If you change your mind.” He winked at her playfully.

“Phineas, you make sure your bullshit isn’t going to cause anyone else more grief.”

“Well, I’m sure Denise’s parents are going to be terribly upset when they realize what she’s done, Dad. I simply couldn’t do it without the proof, and I needed the proof. Her friends are going to be quite sad as well once they realize their free ride is coming to an end.”

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“Phineas, you’re going for the jugular.”

“She told Juniper’s husband she was sexually deprived because dick doesn’t work, and I suffer with ED.” my

“Do you? Is it broken?”

“No, it’s repulsed by her completely and tries to crawl back up into my body each time she steps into a room with me,” he ducked away from his mother’s head slap, “but I promise you, it works perfectly fine and someday I will happily provide you the Phineas Perez the Fourth you want so much but it won’t be her crotch goblin, that’s for sure.”

Her father was quiet a moment and then he grunted, “the cheater is still out here whining about letting him into Maeve’s apartment. Hold on a minute.”

Juniper was surprised by the way Phineas’ father suddenly spoke, “hey, kid on my screen. You should know Maeve isn’t here. I called my wife, and she took Maeve to your daughter. They’re taking care of her. My understanding is she needs women around her right now and not a man. They asked me to pass along the request to give the girl some space. She will call you when she’s ready and not a minute before and if I find out you’re not respecting her request for peace, I have a couple of old army buddies who’d be willing to help me teach you a lesson on respecting boundaries.”

“She’s my wife and I need to find her. She’s hurting.”

“Did she ask you for, son? No. She did not. A man knows when to listen to his woman. Are you a man? Clearly not if she asked you to leave her alone and you’re here. Leave Juniper alone. Now get the fuck off my property before I call the police.”

Juniper looked at her mother who made wide eyes back at her and pushed the plate in her direction and waved at her to eat. She took a bite of the peanut butter sandwich and pursed her lips at the nostalgic snack. This was always her mother’s go-to to ensure her daughter was fed and full. Benicio pushed a cup of tea in her way.

“Phineas, tell Juniper, the boy is getting in his car and leaving. Keep her safe, son.”

“Will do, Dad.”

“I’ll be home in a bit, Phin. Love you.” Sandra said with a smile and hung up the call with a shake of her head at Juniper. “They aren’t much for manners or sugar coating anything, but my boys do have good hearts buried in there somewhere.” She patted her son’s chest and then motioned to the packet, “what else is in there.”

“The deed to this place.” Phineas shrugged. “Confirmation of a bank transfer I promised Juniper if she let me use her apartment as the backdrop to my marital demise and in the manila folder there are your divorce papers, Juniper. Beni wants you to sign those before he leaves. He’ll be filing them in the morning.”

“Why don’t you rush her a bit more?” Sandra grunted, “what if she doesn’t want to divorce him? Some women work it out.”

“I’ll kick her ass,” Maeve said bluntly.

“I’d kick my own,” Juniper retorted. “I love him. God knows I love him, and this hurts more than I care to admit. It hurts so bad it feels like my lungs are on fire and my skin is burning, and my entire world is crashing down on me, but I’d rather die from the pain of heartbreak than forgive this. He knew I valued the fact we were each other’s only. It was important to me. I know it’s not realistic in today’s world, but it felt so special to me that for all of our lives I would be his and he would be mine. Then, if it wasn’t bad enough,” she wiped away an angry tear as she shredded her sandwich on her plate, “he brought her into our home, into our bed. What the fuck is wrong with him he couldn’t do it in a hotel or a motel like any other cheating bastard? Why my bed?”

“Because he could get caught in a hotel or motel,” Adil said quietly. “We’d never be able to get into our apartment to get our proof. She could be going to any floor on the building, and it would take some strategic planning. If you weren’t going to agree to the plan, I was going to rent the unit below you at the end of the month when the tenant moves out, but Denise knows my face. We would have needed to use someone else from my company to catch them and they aren’t as good as me.”

“She knows you’re a PI.” Juniper nodded with exhaustion as it dawned on her, “she knew her husband’s best friend is a PI and it’s why they were discrete the way they were. If we’d not put the cameras in, I’d never have known.” She looked around the room angrily. “I want justice. They don’t deserve to be this sneaky and conniving and to get away with it.”

Phineas nodded, “justice for Juniper is going to be our motto for the next little while. Part one is going to be you, laying low, getting rest, and not going to work. Avoid the places you usually go to and only meet with him with Beni present. We’re going to protect you Juniper, but we all saw things today in his behavior which left us disturbed. Until we know what we’re dealing with, don’t meet with him alone.”

Whoever said things look better after a good sleep was a fucking liar.

Juniper slept like a log when she slept but it was interrupted sleep full of heartache, pain, and misery.

Her mom slept curled right next to her and hugged her tight through the night and held her when she woke up sobbing over her losses. Maeve brought her acetaminophen when her pain was excruciating along with a hot water bottle and whispered promises to stay at her side.

Now it was morning, the worst of the worst was over, in terms of her physical symptoms of her miscarriage. The rest though? The destruction left in the wake of Kyst’s betrayal, and the agony of her heartbreak was leaving her struggling to even want to move on with her day.

Her mother was up long before Juniper, making breakfast and getting ready for the day.

Now Juniper was sitting in her new living room, curled up with a blanket which was not the one her grandmother made her and wishing she could forget the events of the last forty-eight hours.

“You need to call him,” her mother spoke softly from the kitchen. “You told Mr. Perez you would let him know when you called Kyst to tell him you’d meet Kyst at work. It’s already almost seven-thirty.”

“I know Mama, but I don’t want to call him. I’m really angry. Fourteen years Mama. We’ve been together fourteen years and I’m livid.”

“I know but if we want to get the movers in to quickly pack your stuff, you need to get him out of the apartment and the best way is to send him to work to wait for you there.”

“Fine.”

She turned her cell phone on, ignoring the flurry of text messages and voice mails which popped up on the screen. She dialed out the number and he answered on the first ring.

“Baby, where are you? Are you okay?”

No. She wasn’t but she would be, eventually, especially with her Mama pushing her forward. “I’m fine, Kyst.”

“Where are you?”

“Mrs. Perez put me and Mama up in a hotel,” she told another lie. “I needed to breathe, Kyst. Are you on your way to work yet?”

“I was hoping you were coming home. I’ll stay home with you today and-“

“No.” She cut him off. “I need things to return to normal as soon as possible. I need it to. Go to work. I’m going to do my job, and I need you to do yours.”

“I need to see you.”

“Fine. I’ll see if I can take an early lunch. Maxine was feeling pretty badly for me yesterday so I’m sure she won’t mind. I’ll be at your office by eleven. Meet me in the reception area.”

“Promise? I’m so worried for you.”

“I’m strong Kyst. Mama told me I’m strong and I’ll get through this, and I will.”

“Stop. I don’t want to do this right now. I need to finish getting ready for the day and heading to the office. Mama is going back to work at the Perez’s house.”