

The Last Hurrah



"Linds!"

Lindsay turned back to the now crowded bar and watched as her tipsy maid of honor pushed through the front doors and all but tumbled toward her.

"I know you're not trying to walk out on your own party," she slurred, pouting.

"More like sneak out, but yeah," Lindsay replied, "Come on Jill, you know that this whole thing-"

"-Is exactly what you need! You're always so... Well behaved! What better night to let loose than the night before you're tied up, locked down to one guy for forever?"

"That's a super fun way of describing my upcoming nuptials."

"You know what I mean! Just, come back inside, do a few more shots, go a little crazy, and I promise I will let you go home and revert back to professional good-girl." Jill clasped her hands together and held them up like a beggar, her pout growing even bigger. Lindsay ran a hand through her long blond hair and sighed, her warm breath shooting out like smoke.

"Jill, it's almost three in the morning, I'm getting married in less than 12 hours. Tonight's been fun, really and-"

"And you're bailing," Jill interrupted, rolling her eyes, "Fine. Every party has a pooper..."

"Don't be mad," Lindsay pleaded, "Really, the party was great. I just need some sleep and a little time to get my head on straight before I'm all "locked down"."

"Okay, okay,. You're the bride after all. But don't say I didn't warn you when you look back and regret missing out on your last hurrah!"

"Who even talks like that anymore? Last hurrah? Just gimme a hug and go do those shots I'm skipping out on." The two women embraced tightly, giggling like children.

"Do you want me to wait with you?," Jill asked as they pulled apart, "I mean, I'm all for heading back to the party but I'm not going to leave you all by yourself in the dark."

"No," Lindsay replied, shooing her friend back toward the bar, "I have an Uber coming any second, the street lights are on, and there are crowds of people still out enjoying the start of the weekend."

"Those people still out are exactly who I'm worried about."

"News flash sister, at the moment, we're those people. I'll be fine." Jill chewed her lip for a moment and then turned away, walking back to the large double doors she had stumbled out of earlier.

"Shout if some creep tries to kidnap you!" She called behind her, "Meanwhile, I have an important meeting with some alcohol. A maid of honor's work is never done." Lindsay watched as her friend pushed her way back into the crowded building and disappeared from sight. Once she was sure her Jill had truly gone back to the party, she turned and headed home on foot.

She hadn't meant to lie, it was just that she knew Jill would never have let her walk home alone, short trip that it was. But right now, more than anything else she needed quiet and time to think, something a short Uber ride was rather unlikely to provide. She pulled the hood of her heavy coat over her head and let her thoughts drift as she progressed along the familiar 15 block trip to her apartment. Now and again, the cold wind whipped at her exposed face and she welcomed it; it helped to center her mind, bring everything into focus.

Contrary to what the cliches dictated, she didn't have cold feet. More than anything, she wanted to marry Jack and to be his wife for as long as life would allow. No, the scary part was after. After they said their vows, and were officially man and wife. Jack would be Jack: sweet, goofy, and just about perfect as far as she was concerned. But what about her? At a glance, she wasn't too shabby herself. Good looks, a position at a top law firm, and she was even better with him, no doubt. But what if it didn't last? What if everything beneath it all, all of the quirks that couldn't be overlooked, the ones she'd worked so hard to control, came marching back once the honeymoon was over? They loved each other, but she wondered about the limits of that love. What if, once they moved into that big apartment together, she slipped up so badly and so often that he found forever with her to be simply... Intolerable? She laughed to herself. Maybe she was a cliché. No, scratch that, she definitely was. Like every other girl in the world, she was freaking out before taking the plunge. And just like all those before her, she was likely worried over nothing. She and Jack had held it together for five years now. If they couldn't navigate their way through marriage at this point, then when? Shaking her head gently, she increased her pace, now eager to get home and sleep off her remaining anxieties.

She turned down a street with fewer streetlights, one she had walked dozens of times on her own, fearlessly. And that's when she noticed it: a figure not too far behind her. Had they been there the entire time? Surely she hadn't been that lost in thought. Perhaps they too were on their way home after a long night and now she was, on top of everything else, being paranoid. Wrapping her arms tightly about herself, she quickened her pace, and focused her eyes on her shadow as it glided across the ground just ahead and to the left of her. After a few moments, when her shadow remained solitary, she began to feel silly. Hadn't she just told Jill that the streets were still full of people enjoying the weekend? And yet here she

was, jumping at the first person she spotted. She loosened the grip she had on her arms and slowed her steps as she rounded another corner. Clearly her pre-wedding jitters had had more of an effect on her than she thought.

"Easy now Linds," she mumbled to herself, "No need to-" The sound of footsteps behind her broke through her reassurances. Whoever had been walking behind her was still there, but closer now. She sucked in a quick breath, shoved her hands in her pocket, and sped up once more. She could feel her heart beginning to pound in her chest, and her stomach twist into a knot.

'Just a few more blocks,' she thought, 'Just a few more and you're home.' Against her better judgement, she glanced back over her shoulder. The figure was a handful of feet back, nearly matching her pace. No question now, she was being followed. She glanced around, looking for any sign of anyone else, someone who could help, or at least some watchful eyes that could act as a deterrent. But they were all alone. A trickle of sweat rolled between her shoulders and down her spine, and her breath quickened. She bit down hard on the inside of her cheek, trying to use the pain to bring everything into focus as she began moving even faster.

Spotting a short cut, she darted between two buildings and broke out into a sprint. Behind her, she could hear the pursuer's feet slapping against the asphalt, drawing closer by the moment.

"Oh God!" she gasped under her breath, "Almost there!" She burst into the alley behind her apartment and pressed herself against the wall immediately beside the entryway. Lindsay closed her eyes, took a breath, and suddenly everything seemed to move in slow motion. Just like it always did.

The figure ran past her, stopping in the center of the alley. As he glanced around, looking for her in every place but behind him, she could see that he was just a man. But that wasn't unusual. Most of them were. Before he could turn to face her, Lindsay crept behind him and drew the folding knife from her jacket pocket. He let out a rough gurgle as she sank the blade into the back of his neck, severing his spinal cord. Her would be attacker crumpled into a heap at her feet, helpless but very much alive. Lindsay stood over him, frowning. It had been too easy, almost disappointingly so. But perhaps it was better this way. Without a struggle, she had a few hours of play-time before she would have to get rid of him and head to bed. She had cut back on these little "incidents" since she and Jack had gotten serious. In fact, it had been months since there had been a disappearance that she was tied to. She hadn't wanted to stop, but she had to think about Jack. When it came to Jack, she would and could do anything. Stretching gently, she moved aside a rotting pallet at the far end of the alley, revealing an old cellar door set into the ground. She unlocked the padlock she had placed on the handles so many years ago and the doors creaked open like a familiar greeting. She turned back to the fallen man and began dragging his limp body toward the now gaping hole in the ground.

Besides, she reasoned to herself as she sent him tumbling down into the blackness, she could always allow herself a little slip up now and again, at least for the first few years while they still lived in the city. And who could blame her for tonight? After all it was just as Jill had said: nights like this were meant for one last hurrah.