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Where We Parted

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Where We Parted

Author Bio

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Where We Parted

KATHERINE C. CORNET

The bullet in Colt's arm was enough for him to know that this had been their worst robbery. The rain fell in sheets onto the roof of the car.

He could feel the blood rolling down, sticky and wet, making his nerves worse than they already were. His eyes flickered between the road in front of him, the rearview mirror, and Beau. Beautiful Beau who was cradling the duffle bag full of money, cigarettes, and a cheap bottle of bourbon she snagged before the robbery close to her chest. Beautiful Beau who had taunted the police. Beautiful Beau who killed that officer with no signs of remorse on her face. Her hands didn't shake under the weight of her gun and the screams did nothing to wipe away her smirk. Looking at her now, he could see the smeared blood on her cheek blending in with her deep red lipstick. Water from her deep brown hair was dripping onto the sides of the jacket he let her borrow.

"Colt, watch it!" she screamed, a free hand gripping his forearm. He swerved out of the way of the oncoming truck. He cringed at its closeness, afraid of how much damage it was going to cause to their stolen car. Metal screeched, sparks flew, and by the time they had passed it, he no longer had a mirror on his side of the door. Beau hit the dashboard of the car, laughing with every bang as Colt took deep breaths in an attempt to calm down. When it didn't work, he let out a string of curses that had no place being together. That only seemed to make Beau laugh even harder. Normally, Colt found everything about her endearing, especially her haunting laugh. So why did it piss him off so much tonight?

"You think this is funny?" he finally managed to ask after he was more relaxed.

She tilted her head to the side, her eyes gazing up at him. "Careful, your southern accent's coming through. I might start to think you're mad at me."

He didn't speak. She turned to face him.

"Are you mad at me?" Her voice was feigning innocence. That he knew.

He rolled his eyes. "What you did was stupid."

“I was protecting us. You know that.” Her fingers trailed his arms delicately. She fiddled with the fraying strings of his jacket, stopping right where the bullet had pierced him.

“I don’t believe you.” He gripped the steering wheel tighter. Silence fell onto the car.

She shrugged and turned back to the road ahead. “Then don’t.”

“You’re not gonna try to convince me?”

“Baby, you are as handsome as you are stubborn. If you think I’m lying, nothing I could say will change that.”

Colt opened his mouth to say something but thought better of it. He didn’t want to start another fight right now. Instead, he looked at the mirror one more time and when he was sure the distance between them and the police was good enough, he could finally feel himself relax into the seat.

“Are you cold?” Colt’s adrenaline was calming down and he was starting to notice just how uncomfortably his cold, soggy clothes clung to his skin.

Beau shrugged. “Yeah. Do you know how to get the heater to work?”

The car wasn’t exactly the newest. Every knob was the same black color, and nothing stuck out to him as being the right one to give them heat. “I’ll just pick one.”

He turned the knob second to the left too fast and cringed at the voice that filled the car.

“Tonight, detectives are stunned by the escape of the criminal couple that hit Jones Central Bank this evening.”

Colt turned the volume down so low the voices of the anchors on the news could barely be heard. After a few moments, even those whispers were starting to get on his nerves, and he went to turn it off. Beau put her hand out to stop it. “I wanna hear it.”

He licked his lips, as if doing so would wipe away the guilt roiling in his gut. Hearing his crimes on the news always messed with his head. Every station, no matter what he chose, was quick to berate them for everything they stole, but when it comes down to it, who needed the money more? A trust fund baby with deep pockets or a shelter in danger of closing? When he thought about it, they were practically philanthropists, keeping a small percentage of what they stole and giving the rest away to those who needed it. But what Colt’s come to realize is that journalists are great manipulators. And no matter the good that followed, he would always be a villain.

“I don’t want to hear them talk about the person you killed.”

“Just for a few more moments, please.” Beau jutted her lip out slightly into a pout and looked at him with her bold brown eyes. Colt hated it when she did that. How could he say no to a face like hers, even when smudged makeup threatened to ruin it. He didn’t respond and moved his hand away completely instead.

—couple had shown no prior murderous tendencies before their robbery, but tonight they’ve left behind a casualty. What are you thinking Lindsey? You look upset.”

“It’s nothing Stephen. I just hope they know they’re gonna get what they deserve.”

“Well, police will continue to—”

Beau turned the radio off herself. “They didn’t even talk about me. I mean what do other people have that I don’t?”

“A conscience.” Colt felt a sharp pain to his already wounded shoulder. “What the fuck, Beau.”

“I just wanted to see if I’d feel guilty about it.” She placed a finger on her chin, pretending to think about it for a second. “Nope. I feel nothing at all. Maybe I don’t have a conscience.”

Beau pulled the bottle of bourbon out of the duffle and took a few sips. Colt opened his mouth to speak but was cut off by the sputtering engine. The line pointing to the gas was teetering on empty, and the car was slowing down. He turned to face Beau, whose head was tilted toward the roof of the car. Her eyes were closed, and her signature smile played on her lips. She would be no help in this case. Colt kept an eye on every sign that passed, until he finally spotted one, advertising a motel two miles away. The chipping paint and broken lights of the sign let Colt know that practically no one stopped there if they didn’t have to. This was going to suck in the morning when they needed a new car to leave but for right now, it’d keep the police off their trail.

He checked Beau’s mirror, making sure there were no other cars coming their way, then looked at the rearview mirror to make sure no one was following them. Then he turned down the exit and followed the road signs until they got there.

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It didn’t take Colt long to find something good enough to wrap his wound in. There wasn’t a first aid kit in the room, so he ruined a couple of good towels and sheets to get the job done. With a cigarette hanging from his mouth, he went at it, hoping that all the crime shows he used to watch

had some truths mixed in. His pocketknife was sharp enough to cut through the blankets after a couple of tries. When he finally got the bullet out and wrapped his arm in a torn blanket, everything was starting to feel a little bit better. That or he was starting to lose it from all the smoke in the room and the alcohol Beau had convinced him to drink. Letting her do that, he realized too late, was a mistake. The drinks started to taste more and more like he needed some answers from Beau. Why did she have to shoot the officer? Why did she have to choose one of the more popular banks in the area? More importantly, why the fuck did she care more about the cigarette in his mouth than the bullet that was lodged in his arm? He had meant to ask at least one of those questions, but he asked something else instead.

“Do you love me?” He hadn’t meant to sound so hopeless. So desperate.

She grabbed the cigarette from his mouth with her lips. It glowed a bright orange as she inhaled and when she exhaled, Beau blew the smoke into his face. Then, she pushed the lit cigarette into the wooden table and listened as it burned out. “I love us. The things we do.” Beau moved his arms from where they were and sat down in his lap. “We’re better than Bonnie and Clyde.” Her fingernail traced the stubble growing on his chin. “We’re cuter too.”

Colt grabbed her wrist gently, moving her hand away so she had to stop. “But do you love me?”

“Us, you, it’s the same thing, isn’t it?”

“Say it then.”

“Hmm?” Her head cocked to the side.

“If there’s no difference then say that you love me.”

“Okay.” She repositioned herself so that they were facing each other and pulled his chin down so that he was looking her in the eye. “I...love...” Her lips were so close, and he leaned towards her, only stopping when she was pulling back. She smiled then brought her lips to his and kissed him. Colt let her. And for a second, he imagined that she really did love him. That she really cared for him in the same way he did for her. He broke the kiss and watched as her brows furrowed. Usually that worked. Colt would let her kiss take over everything and any argument that could come from it would wash away.

He pulled back from her, surprised that she didn’t lean in further. “It’s not going to work this time.”

“This was never a problem before.” Beau hopped off of his lap in frustration.

He raked a free hand through his hair and sighed. The uncomfortable seat groaned as he got off it. "It's a simple yes or no question."

"Fine! I—" The doorknob rattled, cutting her off before she could continue. Colt didn't turn his body to face the door. Instead, they both froze, unsure if they had really heard it or if it was in their imagination. The doorknob rattled again more visibly this time.

"Great choice," Beau whispered harshly, "This motel doesn't seem so dead to me."

Colt didn't have anything to say. What are the chances, that on the night they needed to stay hidden, to disappear, is the night where they are moments away from being caught.

"Hurry up, Donnie!" came a bubbly laugh from the other side of the door. Thunder boomed and she screamed, causing whoever she was with to laugh in response. Colt raced to turn off the lights and hid behind the door. He was expecting Beau to follow him, but she never came.

"I'm trying," Donnie's voice barely carried over the rain. The door opened, almost hitting him in the face and slammed shut.

"It's pretty dark in here, Shelly. See if you can find the lights." Donnie said. There was a pause and Donnie spoke up again, "Found it."

When the room filled with light, both Colt and Donnie stood in shock. Beau had a gun pointed right at Shelly's head and a wolfish grin on her face. Shelly whimpered but couldn't get any words out. Colt needed to do something, but his knife was still on the table next to the bloody towel and what was left of the sheets. He had a feeling Donnie noticed it too.

"Stay still or your wife dies," Beau said.

"Nobody needs to get hurt. You can just let us go and we'll leave here. No one has to know." Donnie put his hands up to show he meant no harm.

"Except you've seen my face, and I'm pretty sure you recognize me from the news."

Donnie shook his head no. Shelly's eyes weren't on him anymore, they were on Colt. Donnie turned his head, only to meet Colt's fist. He fell to the floor while Shelly screamed.

"Shut up!" Beau brought the gun down on Shelly's head. She waited for both of them to look at her before she spoke again. "Take everything out of your pockets." When nobody moved, she cocked the gun and took the safety off. "I'm not gonna ask again."

They took out their phones, wallets, and Donnie added car keys to the mix. Colt picked them up, keeping his eye out for any sudden movement. He put the wallets and one phone on the table but kept the other and

the keys in his pocket.

“What are you doing? Smash the phones,” Beau said. “We can keep one, as a burner. Just in case.”

“They can use it to track us.” She paused for a second too long and shot right at their feet.

Donnie jumped and Shelly screamed; she had blood dripping down her face from where Beau hit her. “Or were you thinking about just killing them now? We could even call the cops just to taunt them. Imagine how deflating it would be for them. To know they could have prevented this if they stopped us at the bank. *FBI Most Wanted* here we come.”

“We’re not going to kill them,” Colt said. He turned to the couple. “We’re not going to kill you.”

“We’ve got to do something. This way, no news anchor will even dare to gloss over the things I do.”

“You’re crazy!” He shouted. He could see it in the way she stared the couple down. Like a predator ready to attack its prey.

“That’s what you love most about me. Isn’t that what you always tell me. You weren’t lying to me right, Colt? You’d never do that to me, right?”

He stuttered as he tried to come up with the right words to say. “I’m...going to the bathroom,” is all that would come out.

Colt splashed some cold water on his face and stared at the mirror. He didn’t recognize himself anymore. Things had gone so wrong. So, so wrong and maybe it needed to end. He pulled the man’s phone from his pocket and slid to the emergency call. His heartbeat was so loud and thundering he felt his ears pulsating to it. What could life have been like without her. Without her wolfish smile, her Cheshire cat eyes. He wouldn’t be in this mess that’s for sure. He wouldn’t be holding on to the hope that the girl with a monstrous grip on his heart won’t shoot the couple who managed to stumble into the wrong place at the wrong time. But he also wouldn’t have met the only person who seemed to speak his language. Who knew all his inner thoughts and deepest desires. Colt typed the numbers slowly. 9. 1. 1. If he hadn’t met Beau, life might be boring, an unassuming puzzle he had no desire to solve. Yet, Colt knew deep down, that he’d also be free. He took a deep breath, looked at himself one more time, and hit call.

The phone rang once. Twice. And before he could hang up, he heard it. “911, what’s your emergency?”

My Emergency? He thought. *I’m in love with a murderous socio-path who can’t love me back.* Colt punched the mirror in front of him. Glass fell from it like rain, painted with his blood. He sucked in the air through his teeth.

“Hello? Are you okay? Should I send an ambulance to your location?”

“I.” He paused, holding the phone in his uninjured hand. “No. I’m sorry I shouldn’t have—” The gunshots went off before he could finish.

“Sir! Are you alright? Sir....Sir!”

Colt let the phone drop from his hands. Everything he did felt like slow motion. He turned the knob to the bathroom door slowly. Standing in the middle of the room was Beau, pointing her gun at the couple. Their bodies laid on top of each other, their blood was pooling out around them.

“Why did you do that?” Colt was in disbelief.

“He charged right for me.” Beau smiled.

She was lying to him. That he knew. Because if Donnie really launched for her, his body wouldn’t be under his wife. Colt didn’t think he could outrun a bullet if she decided to shoot him too. But if the police were on the way, he’d be as good as dead. So, he bolted, and he kept his head low as the shots began to fire. Colt didn’t look back when pain started to shoot through his left shoulder. She chased him outside but did nothing else as he got into the car. Beau only stared him down. He fiddled as he got the key out of his pocket to unlock the door. Once he did, he opened it and froze, staring at Beau. This was it. His only chance to make it out of this alive. Should he ask her to join him? Would she join him if he asked?

She leaned against the door to the room and shrugged. Then, folded her arms across her chest. Even in the pouring rain, Colt could see the challenge on her face. Beau was daring him to leave. Maybe because, deep down, she knew he never would, not alive. He could never part from her and remain whole. But tonight had showed him that, even fractured he wanted to survive. And right now, he couldn’t survive with her. He slid into the car and drove off. The only thing he heard was the pounding rain on the roof and Beau’s monstrous scream.

He didn’t know how long he was on the road for. His fingers had gone numb, and his eyes were burning from the lack of blinking. Colt could only stare forward, only focus on the road ahead of him because if he didn’t, he’d turn around and go right back to Beau. Music was droning on in the background, but a new voice broke through his thoughts.

“Wasn’t that a hit folks? Before we move into another great song, we’d like to let you wonderful people in on some breaking news. After responding to a 911 call, police found the bodies of three people in a motel room. An older couple and what appeared to be one half of the crime spree couple Beau Richards. Police are unsure of what went down or where her accomplice Colt Andrews is, but they will continue to look. Now back

to—”

Colt turned the radio off. Then he screamed and banged on the steering wheel as the car began to swerve. Didn't he know that could have happened? Hadn't he known that once he left without telling her what he did, she'd end up in that mess? Colt took a deep breath. He glanced at the rearview mirror like he had always done whenever they had stolen another car. Then to her seat. He almost screamed again when he saw her.

She was paler than before. The moonlight shined straight through her. Instead of smudged make-up and stringy wet hair, Beau looked perfect. Everything was exactly like the day they first met. Except for the red bullet hole at the side of her head. Colt couldn't help but stare. He found himself paying more attention to it than the road.

“Together forever,” she mouthed.

He could do nothing but nod, unable to talk back. He only stared at her, even as the sound of a horn filled his ears. Even as headlights filled the car.