

The wooden boards creaked underneath her as she pressed her lips together, trying to stop every noise she made—but it was too late. I could hear her heart beat, the rapid pulsing of her frantic blood within her. I had already found her, so long before she knew I even *existed*. I knew far too much about her.

Jess froze, her body paralyzed as the rush of fear flowed through her. Her finger nails, bound tightly around her arms, pierced the flesh, causing the silent drops of blood to trickle down onto the floor. The anticipation of the attack nearly killing her, the long waiting for something she knew was completely wrong. She knew she'd be dead if she was found.

Before attacking, Xavier let Jess nearly drive herself insane with the intoxicating fear of the unknown. I smiled to myself and watched Xavier and Jess fall into my trap. Her eyes continued to flutter, looking through the small slit of the closet door where even more darkness lurked upon her bedroom. When a few small waves of relaxation slowly began to wash over her muscles, she allowed herself to think that maybe he was gone. But then it happened. He forced the wooden closet doors open with all his might, the snap of wood shattering the silence. He pulled out the sharp blade that he'd wanted to pull on her many, many days ago.

The shriek of Jess' voice cracked with such great terror that she found herself unable to make the slightest peep. Her throat seemed to close in on itself, restricting oxygen that she needed for these last few seconds of her life. The glimmer of the moonlight from between the cracks of blinds shined on the blade, casting an ominous beam on the floor.

She pushed herself back into the corner, the darkness nearly swallowing her whole. Her palms dripped with cold sweat. Her nails scratched at the chipping wood floors, splinters dug into her fingertips and pain already pounded through her body.

He hovered over her, face completely engulfed in shadow as he moved closer. But one thing—just one simple detail gave everything away. The sparkle of a small red crystal dangled around his neck and struck her eye. Jess' mind pulled her back into a moment that she tried so hard to forget...

*Jess stands before Xavier, shaking, her flesh seeming to turn a purple-blue with hypothermia. Her lips quiver as she tries to spit out the words to explain herself. It wasn't as it looked. Jess was innocent—so innocent that it made Xavier's foolishness a complete embarrassment.*

*“You?” his voice shakes as tears rain down his cheeks, “You did this?”*

*“Xavier—I can explain!” She pleaded, trying to catch his hand before he runs off. Dirt and mud covers her soaked skin.*

*“Don’t touch me, y-you killer!” He snatches his hand back before things got worse, his eyes glued to the ground, “You were there! I saw you with her body and burying her alive with your shovel! Her scream is permanently replaying over and over in my head...”*

*“I didn’t do that! It’s not what it looks like... It was someone else!”*

*She looked down, the sadness of not being believed by her own best friend taking over her emotions.*

*“Okay, show me the proof,” he snaps, “Who did it? Who buried my sister alive?”*

*Jess thought, but she had nothing. No proof or explanation of what happened. All she could do was apologize for what it looked like. She couldn’t just keep telling him that it wasn’t her; that would have made it seem even more incriminating. Jess was caught—caught like a fish in a net, unable to escape the panic of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

*“I’m sorry,” was the only thing she could force from her lips.*

*Xavier turns, his back now facing Jess, and the tears still pouring from his eyes. His sister’s red crystal necklace shimmering in the muted sunlight around his neck. She couldn’t do anything. Not one single gesture could help. She’d just have to wait until he found the truth. If he found the truth.*

*A car door slams as Xavier tries to escape the horror. Jess’ tears crash on the concrete sidewalk, a wave of regret of ever going to the cemetery, ever coming here in the first place to meet Xavier.*

But as quickly as that memory had been turned on in her brain, it turned off, and she found herself back in that eerie room, balancing on the razor’s edge between life and death.

“Xavier...” Jess said, eyeing the knife he was now nervously fidgeting in his hand, “you don’t want to do this. I promise you—you have the wrong person...”

His laughter filled the empty darkness, echoing off the walls. She was alone—no one in the house could help her—no phone in reach to call 911. She was going to have to fight... or die right there, right then, for a crime she didn’t even commit...

*Death*—what a terrible word. It was something indescribable, non-tangible and so hard to wrap her head around. Jess despised that word, yet she was about to experience the stinging pain of it firsthand. A fresh wave of cold panic washed over her and the sound of Xavier’s laughter made her stomach feel suddenly sick. How was she going to escape the blade? How was she going to get out of this mess and prove to him that it wasn’t her?

***Rewind.***

*A walk through the park to clear her senses, the fresh, soothing breeze brushing against her face. Looking around, her ears catch something her eyes haven’t. Was it a scream? A very distant, muffled scream? She turns around to look, but sees nothing. Where was it coming from? Had she heard it at all, or was it her imagination? It was almost unnoticeable, but the more she stood there the more her senses could hone in on it. There was a thudding coming from under her toes, and the sound of what seemed to be far-away cries for help. And then she notices the rock, a dark streak of drying blood slowly inching its way towards the ground. Elizabeth.*

*“No...” She whispers, it all starting to make sense, “No!”*

*Jess falls to her knees in the moist soil, her hands fisting the dirt away. Her heart pounds so loud she thinks even the dead might hear it.*

*“If I stay here and dig Elizabeth out by hand, it will take forever...I need to run home...”*

***Fast forward.***

*No more than twenty-five minutes later, the rain pouring and Jess is back, digging up the thick mud with the living girl underneath.*

*The freezing metal handle of the shovel stings her hands. Thunder echoes against the cold black clouds that fill every inch of the sky as far as the eye could see.*

*Jess’ hair was long past wet, and her clothes clung tight to her skin. Her arms raise the shovel high in the air and then bring it down, crashing into the soil. She tells herself she wasn’t crazy; she is convinced she heard the cry of a girl come from under the turned earth.*

*And she still hears it—whether it was there or not; the constant piercing scream of murder. Someone had buried Xavier’s sister alive... No wonder she went missing earlier that morning.*

*Still digging, she finally hit a hard, wooden casket, every speck of dirt she cleaned off. She opened the lid, a cold silent body, her eyes stained with the pour of mascara, her fingernails jagged and bloody.*

*“Elizabeth!” She screamed, shaking the lifeless body violently by the shoulders. This couldn’t be right—Jess heard it. She knew she did. Tears spill over her best friend’s sister completely eliminated from the world.*

*Just before closing the lid, a stain on Elizabeth’s shirt caught her eye. Red—the dark stain of blood right through her heart. Someone stabbed her. Someone got away with killing Elizabeth, not to only punish her, but to punish the people around her as well. Jess didn’t save her...Elizabeth was gone...for good.*

***Pause.***

“Xavier, please...” Tears of the memories spilled down her face, “Xavier, you can’t do this. It’ll do you no good.”

He choked on his own words that he had to force out, “I—I trusted you. I actually *believed* you. You were my best friend, Jay—Jessica.”

He had to forget the nicknames and good times he had with her to face the lies he believed in. After all, she *killed* Elizabeth, and he knew it was impossible to go back to the point in time where there was still trust, still friendship.

Xavier so full of anger, so full of hate and sorrow, thinking of the one person besides Jess that he loved with all his heart—gone. He takes one more step closer, cracking the boards on the floor. The rush of adrenalin fills within him. The urge to kill her, yet the fear of losing her at the same time. But with one last gasping breath, Jess she was dead. The knife had sunk deep into her chest and pierced her heart.

“You’re wrong...” Jess whispers with her last breath

With that Xavier fell to his knees, the truth slapping him across the face now that it was too late to do anything differently. He *was* wrong. More tears filled his eyes, completely

blurring his vision. It sickens him to realize that he didn't just lose *one* person he loved—but two. One of which he got rid of himself.

He would have to live with the fact for the rest of his life that he killed his best friend. *At least he'd be a live with the thought for a little while...long enough to have the guilt fill him up with so much regret that he'd physically, mentally and emotionally hurt from.*

He tried to wipe the tears away, but when the kept falling, he finally gave up. He got to his feet, feeling the overwhelming need to run away from Jess' corpse. As he turned to leave, my shadowy figure moved as I stepped forward into the moonlight.

A chuckle escaped my lips as I slowly pointed my gun toward him.

“Oh, how wrong you were, Xavier. *So* wrong.”