

Emily glanced at the dashboard clock as she waited for traffic light to change. It was nearly one o'clock. In the hour since she left Dr. Lerner's office, her entire world had collapsed around her, and she wasn't sure where to go next. Should she get a hotel room? Or would she be better off staying with her father? Granted, he'd never been fond of Jesse, but he wasn't one to say I told you so either. The light turned green. She sighed and pointed her car toward her father's house. Ten minutes later she pulled into the driveway.

The house looked quiet. Her father didn't get off work until five o'clock, and Susan worked until seven, assuming today wasn't her day off. With any luck, Emily would have the place to herself for a few hours. She still had the house key her parents had given her when she was a teenager. Hopefully, Susan hadn't changed the locks. She put her key in the lock. It turned. As she stepped into the foyer, she got an enthusiastic greeting from Lurch. Lurch was part sheepdog, part collie, and part something else though no one knew exactly what, but whatever he lacked in pedigree, he more than made up for in love and affection. He put his big paws on Emily's chest and she wrapped her arms around him.

"I know, buddy. It's good to see you too."

She gave the dog a pat on the head and stepped into the kitchen. To her relief, Susan was nowhere to be found. She fixed herself a glass of ice water and headed into the family room. A number of family photos stood on top of the mantle. She picked one up and gave it a closer look. It had been taken at the University of Arizona, shortly after the commencement ceremony had ended. Jesse stood in his cap and gown, his face beaming as he held up his diploma. Emily stood at his side, her face glowing as she showed off her engagement ring. She let out a sigh.

"I think we can safely throw this one away now."

She took the photo from its frame and ripped it in half, taking its remains back to the kitchen and dropping them into the wastebasket underneath the sink. She refilled her water glass and took it down the hallway to her old room. Her posters had all been taken down and replaced with other artwork, but it still had the furniture she grew up with. A framed photo sat on the nightstand. It had been taken shortly after the family had moved into the house. A fourteen-year-old Emily sat next to her mother on a chaise lounge by the pool. She picked it up and caressed the glass over her mother's face with her finger.

"I miss you, Mom. Everyday. And most especially today."

She set the photo down and plopped down on top of the bed. Lurch came up and joined her. She wrapped her arms around him and burst into tears.