

# CACTUS GEMS

*Tomeka Rocquelle Davis*



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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to Marcial Ramos, Desmond Augustine, Joseph Olidge, and Gina Strong because you all were there for me when I was in California. Most importantly, I would like to thank God for protecting Marcial and I during our cross-country trip to California and while in Victorville, Hollywood, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.



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## FOREWARD



“Nothing like Indian weather, “ Sioux thought to herself as she walked down Melrose while the cool breeze blew her long black hair and her lovely floral pink lace dress—making it cling to her statuesque frame. Living in Palmdale, people know the desert can be quite harsh to live in. Such high temperatures can be damaging to your skin and even your health, but Sioux love the desert because it gave her a sense of solitude—something that Hollywood can really rob you of; especially right here on Melrose Avenue the shopping mega of the city. Although, owing your own store was rewarding in some instances, it can be really disappointing if you don’t have it in the right location. Sioux really lucked out when the owner of the property approved her as the one who would be renting the place out; well the special treatments she gave him might have helped to. It comes with the territory—no matter what profession you are in; she thought to herself. It’s been

three whole years since she stopped exotic dancing and nude modeling. Even though the money was great and addictive, it was time for her to branch out and start some of her own entrepreneurial endeavors. Sioux always wanted to own her own store, and the money she made and saved helped her to do just that. The only sound to be heard was the clicking of her open toe sling- back expensive heels against the sidewalk pavement. Her perfectly manicured toes were painted a bright red. It was still early and there weren't many people or traffic in sight. She loved the mornings. It was deserted here on Melrose, and it always made her feel like the whole street belonged to her and her shop only. Belonging to the Sioux tribe, which she was named after, crystals have always been a part of her family tradition. To start and have her own crystal shop was the only natural thing for her to do. There's Ruby, Amber, Jasper, Sapphire, Onyx, and Turquoise—just to name a few from her entire collection she had in store—literally. Many people asked, “so why did you name your store ‘Cactus’ then?” Even though Sioux loved the crystals, their properties, and what they meant to her and her family, she was amazed at Cactuses and how they grew in extreme hot places such as the desert. It amazed her that in intense heat and without water, these plants manage to grow and even survive. In many ways, the Cactus represented her and all that she stood for. From the look of her, many people wouldn't know that she had been through a lot in her life. They would even make the mistake by even judging her to be a “trust fund baby”, but that was so far from the truth. The green Malachite amulet around her neck and chunky Aventurine copper ring on her finger protected her most of the time. If crystals could talk, they would have a story to tell like all the crystals she owned and carried in her inventory. Most of them were previously owned by people

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who were too eager to depart from them because of all of the energy they stored. They wanted to forget. As a matter of fact, that's what made her store more original than most crystal shops and the fact that her shop had a high patronage from strippers. Well, the correct term is "exotic dancers" and many, who were her friends, would show support by buying her crystals or just donating their own to the shop. Her crystals carried a life embedded in them from their owners. They all had a story to tell, and Sioux was more than willing to share it with any customer that would walk into her store. It was sure to be bought once they heard. A sure 100% safe-guarded sales pitch guaranteed to bring in the money every time.

It wasn't even two seconds before she inserted the key into the shop door to unlock it before Mrs. Purnell, the old rich lady from the valley who frequent Cactus daily, was behind her ready to buy something again. Sioux loved her company because Mrs. Purnell really came just to hear her tell the "tales" of the crystals. She was the only customer that she had to eventually kick out of the store but would continue to listen to her all of the time.

"What you got for me today sweet heart?" Mrs. Purnell said in her squeaky old lady voice.

"Well, I would like to start you out with the story of Sapphire."

And so the story begins....

## SAPPHIRE



Doggy style was preferably her choice. That way she wouldn't have to look at his face. The sight of his dingy socks was in view and all she could think about was stuffing his mouth with them so she wouldn't have to hear his disgusting grunts and moans even it was for a lousy two minutes.

"How did I manage to get myself in this?" Sapphire thought to herself, apparently, oblivious to the man humping behind her.

"Oh yeah, that's right. He's one of my best customers at the club." Sapphire still thinking.

"Uuggghhhh. Oh baby. Yeahhhh baby. Ugggghhhh." Not a second later Fred blurts out. "I came did you hear me Sap? I said I came."

"Good for you. Now can you get off of me?" Not long after that there came a huge noise from inside the room. It sounded like it came from the front door. Sapphire, in the dark, hurriedly scurries for her belongings and tries to put her

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clothes on while Fred is still trying to get his fat ass up off the bed.

“Freeze!” the two cops enter the bedroom.

One cop is short and stumpy and looks like he had way too many doughnuts while the other was tall, goofy, and skinny. Both were quite ugly and look like rent-a-cops. Sapphire’s first reaction was to grab the ketchup bottle from the nightstand and start swinging for dear life. It was there earlier when she and Fred had some burgers and fries because the cheap skate was too stingy to take her out for a real dinner. It was no wonder they wind up back at this low run-down motel in the shitiest part of town, and now she was going to jail again.

“What’s the problem officers?” Fred barely could get out because he was still catching his breath.

“Put your hands up now!” said the fat cop while the skinny cop eyeballed Sapphire’s fine naked body from head to toe.

“Can a lady put her clothes on first at least?”

“No!” yells the skinny cop.

“Haven’t I seen you somewhere before?” directing his question to Sapphire.

“I don’t think so,” said Sapphire.

“No, I’m actually positive that I seen you somewhere before. What’s your name?”

“Alice,” Sapphire quickly lying.

“Well, Alice I am going to need you to come with us down to the station for questioning.”

“If you don’t mind me asking officer, what have I done?”

“I guess bright Fred here failed to mention that he is accused of peddling and is wanted in three states.”

“Fred, is that true?”

“I don’t know what they are talking about. Read me my rights. I want to speak to my lawyer.” Fred said finally catching his breath.

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Luckily for them it was about two in the morning and the lobby and streets in Ventura were pretty much desolate at that hour. “Why didn’t I just stick with dancing at Bucks,” Sapphire wondered. Then, maybe I wouldn’t be here with neantherdal Fred going to jail. Who am I kidding? I don’t make any real money at the club. What’s a handful of dollar bills anyway? Every stripper knows in this town that dating is where the money is at. I had to wind up with Fred, a shoe salesman look-a-like from Echo City. What a fucking douche bag!

Both handcuffed and butt-naked in the back of the police car, Sapphire and Fred head on down to the police station. Neither one dared to say anything to each other overwhelmed by fear and embarrassment. Out of the corner of her eye, Sapphire sees Fred peeing on himself, but she dare acts like she notices. She just keeps looking forward and straight ahead. Meanwhile, the police car comes to a stop at a red light and on the corner there breaks out a huge commotion. Apparently, two drunken bums have gotten into a major altercation and is now yelling and screaming in the middle of the street at one another holding up the car. Both cops get out of the car and leave Fred and Sapphire unattended. This was not one of the best neighborhoods. Matter of fact, it was one of the worst, so why would these knuckle heads leave their car running with both car doors open? This night undoubtedly was going to be a long one because there were two thugs dressed in all black including their knit cap who jumped right in the front seat no sooner than when the cops left it unoccupied. They shut the two front doors simultaneously—the driver anxiously putting the car in gear and speeding off with Fred and Sapphire still handcuffed and butt-naked in the back seat. The cops unaware

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don't even notice that their vehicle has been stolen—too preoccupied with pressing urgent matters with two drunks fighting over a bottle of Wild Irish Rose.

“Please let us go,” pleads Fred.

If it weren't for the glass divider in the car, the laughter would have been deafening from the two car thieves. They laughed so hard it almost looked like they would crash any minute doing 90mph-way pass the speed limit. Finally, they come to a screeching halt in a dark alleyway. They turn and look at Fred and Sapphire—mostly Fred in the back seat.

“What are you willing to do for us?” says the driver to Fred.

“Whatever you want. I'll give it to you.”

“You hear that. He says he will give us whatever we want.” the driver sarcastically says to his buddy.

Sapphire fails to speak and continues to look straight ahead passed the thugs, through the front windshield, and onto a focus point where the only light on the street can be seen four blocks away.

*Sapphire remembers the first night she arrived in Los Angeles off of the Greyhound bus—younger, naive, and homeless with only thirty-five dollars in her pocket. It didn't take long for a couple of girls she met to quickly hustle her into the game. Besides, California is all about hustles, and all you need is one great hustle to make it. She remembers how she conveniently ran into Kimi and Gigi at the Fashion District downtown where she was trying to buy a knock-off Gucci purse. They both came out of nowhere and started talking to her about the different fashions there. Next thing Sapphire knows, she was in the car, a red Volkswagen Beetle, with the two—listening to Gigi talk about how fine her man was, how he had the biggest dick, and how no one she knew could fuck*

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*better than him. They all wind up having a foursome that night making her man, Lee, a LAPD police officer; her first pimp ever. She was dancing and dating in no time. Plus her good looks helped too with her fiery red wavy hair flowing down her back and big puppy dog eyes. Her skin, perfectly tanned from the sun, made her skin and hair glow all the more. She was a winner in this business with the long lean body to match. Not the best tits though. She got breast implants to become a 38D because it came with the territory.*

*Half black and half Korean with long black hair down her back and caramel skin was Kimi. Kimi met Gigi on a Drue Hill video shoot where she was an extra. Gigi was dating the casting agent there so she was picked to be in two major scenes with the popular singing group. Kimi wanted to be in the scenes too, so she was trying to get with the video director there—some white middle-aged Italian guy who knew what power his position held. All Kimi had to do was give him a few looks, but her eyes real quick and they were in a private trailer on set getting it on between takes. It was easy for her 5'2 plump figure to kneel down in front of him to give him a blowjob. About five minutes into it, Gigi walks in, but Kimi did not stop. Instead of being shocked by Kimi's action, Gigi just stared and watched for pleasure's sake. There was no way that she could judge Kimi because there were many times when others walked in on her and Raphael when they were having sex. Not once did they think about stopping. Gigi was an exhibitionist by nature—already having two pornos under her belt at the mere age of nineteen. She loved when people could watch her and her man fuck. After all, sex was her forte, but she didn't want to invite Kimi in for a threesome because she didn't want to share her man. Nor did she want to share her woman when*



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*she was with her. However, she had to break up with her when she found a gun to her head and her girl telling her that she would kill her if she ever tried to leave. It scared Gigi straight, and she hasn't been a lesbian since. She met Lee working as a waitress in a small diner in Compton. He sat at the counter, ordered coffee, and asked her what her name was. Next thing she knows, he was taking her to the Fashion District buying her all types of name brand outfits. He really cared about his physical appearance as well—always wearing the latest trends—Sean John being his favorite. They would always, if nothing, go shopping and eat out. They would frequent Mel's Diner on Sunset or Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles. He had no idea that she was seeing the casting agent nor this other guy who was mixed with Spanish and black and around her age. She dated the agent, of course, for props in the Entertainment Industry. She date the young Spanish guy simply because she wanted sometimes to be with someone her own age. Lee was about twenty years older than her and really did not share the same interests in music, hobbies, or movies. Raphael was an emcee and a Hip-hop junky, and she loved that about him. Furthermore, he was a thoroughbred like her. Raphael had long, pretty, and wavy hair with light-skinned. Gigi found out, to her surprise, that she was redder in tone than he was. She treasured that about herself and others. That's why she really wanted Raphael to be her pimp. Lee was dark-skinned and average looking but three feet taller than Raphael who was five feet nine. Gigi always thought she was too fine to be on Lee's arm—being as though she was mixed with Spanish, Black, and Pilipino with hair down to her butt. However, she enjoyed all of the perks being with him. Raphael, on the other hand, was a convicted felon who just got out of jail after serving four years in prison. He was about to go back if he*

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*didn't decide to leave Detroit and run to California. He also met Gigi at the diner. He brought her home immediately to his house that he shared with his two roommates who would sometimes watch him and Gigi have sex. Gigi has never been to Lee's house because he could not have her there as long as he was married and lived with his wife.*

*To his delight and satisfaction, the director gets up, pulls up his pants, and zips his fly. With a short farewell, he was off to the set again leaving Kimi and Gigi behind in the trailer.*

*"You can't have all the fun now can you?" says Kimi.*

*"Well, I would say not. Although, I'm not so sure that he's going to do what you want him to do."*

*"Why would you say that?"*

*"Come on now! All these girls trying to steal the spotlight! You have some serious competition!"*

*"Well, if you can do it, I can do it."*

*"Sweetie, it's not the same thing."*

*"What do you mean? It's not the same thing?"*

*"Pete loves me, and he's even asked me to marry him."*

*"Well, does he know about Lee and Raphael?"*

*"No! And it's going to stay that way. Got it!"*

*"Sure. It's alright for you to do it, but wrong for someone else to."*

*"Just like I said. It's not the same thing."*

*"Why? Cause he's white and couldn't possibly have the hots for me?"*

*"That's right! And because he is gay."*

*"Oh, so now he is gay."*

*"I swear. Pete told me so."*

*"Hmmm, well, how does he know?"*

*"Let's just say stuff gets around in entertainment circles."*

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*“Or that your man is hitting that too.”*

*“Don’t be ridiculous!”*

*“How do you think he got this gig in the first place? A short, puny, black guy from Compton. He’s hitting that or getting hit.”*

*“Whatever. That’s not true and you know it.”*

*“Well, if it isn’t true, then, what you say about the director isn’t true either.”*

*“I’m done. Just don’t say I told you so when it’s all said and done.”*

*Gigli just had to have it all. It wasn’t enough that she had Lee, Pete, and Raphael. She had to have the director too, but Kimi beat her to it. If only she knew that Raphael was tired of her having it all too because he knew about the other two men in Gigi’s life. Thanks to Kimi. It wasn’t hard for her to seduce Raphael neither. He was too overly anxious to have sex with her, and they would sneak and have their rendezvous at a cheap motel in Victorville—sometimes lying up for days without Gigi ever knowing. She was too wrapped around Lee and Pete’s fingers to notice—and let’s not forget about her psycho ex-girlfriend who stalks her every now and then. Gigi sometimes would have to go on a hiatus with Lee up in the mountains in Malibu. It was a good thing he was a cop which was no coincidence when it came to Gigi.*

*One night, coming back late from Victorville, Kimi and Raphael was in her car driving back to Hollywood when her car breaks down on a bridge going on I-10W. There had been a car accident and traffic was congested. They pushed the car to the area with orange cones where the police had set off for the two cars involved in the car accident.*

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*“You can't leave your car here” said the one officer.*

*“Oh please sir. Can we until we can get a tow truck to come?”*

*“There won't be any tow trucks getting through this traffic any time soon.”*

*“Well, can we just leave it here then?”*

*“I guess it will be alright.”*

*Raphael remained silent the whole time because cops always made him nervous; especially, since he was on the run and that he was fooling around with a cop's girl.*

*“Kimi, is that you?” asked the officer.*

*What do you know? It was Lee, Gigi's boyfriend, the cop.*

*“Oh hi Lee!” Kimi says trying to not act nervous.*

*“Girl, it's hard to see in the dark with all these bright lights in my face. Initially, I didn't know that was you. Who's your friend?”*

*“Oh, Raphael.” realizing it was too late to give a false name for himself.*

*“Well, I tell you what. Since you are a friend of mine, I will have your car towed for free.”*

*“Oh, thank you so much!” Kimi responding quickly. Besides, she didn't have a choice since there wasn't any money in both of their pockets.*

*Lee managed to have their car towed back to the motel in Victorville which was fifteen miles away. Kimi knew it wasn't a good idea to have the car towed back to Hollywood because she feared that she might get caught with Raphael. Lee never mentioned that night to Gigi, and so she never found out about them—to Kimi's surprise. I guess Lee knew more about Gigi than she thought and might was relieved to see Kimi and Raphael together. Gigi was naive to think that she could pull one over on a damn police officer.*

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*With hardly any money, for days Raphael and Kimi slept in her broke down vehicle in the parking lot of the motel—walking to the local dollar store in the desert to buy peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. When it was cool enough to walk, they usually would right before dusk because they were scared that they might get bit by rattlesnakes that nested in the dark there. Finally, Kimi couldn't take it any longer and called the tow people herself—giving the driver a bad check. Consequently, it got them back home without any suspicions from Gigi. Maybe, that was from Lee's doing. They will never know or would they?*

“How much money do you have?” says the driver.

“Whatever you want just take me back to my place. I have the money back at my place.”

“What if I don't want money?” says the thief in the passenger seat who was eye-balling Sapphire.

“Hey honey, you kind of quiet back there. Your boy Fred is doing all of the talking. I want to know what you are willing to do for your freedom.”

Sapphire continues to remain quiet.

“Oh please don't hurt her! Just leave her alone. I have about 50 thousand dollars stashed back at my apartment. If you take me back there, it's all yours.”

“You say 50 thousand dollars!” shouts the driver.

“It's all yours. Just take me back to my place!” screams Fred.

Fifteen minutes later the police car arrives in front of Fred's house. It didn't take long by the way they were driving. The two thugs hastily get out of the car, drag Fred from out of the back seat, and leaves Sapphire in the police car by herself.

“If you try anything funny, we'll hold girly here hostage.”

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says the driver to Fred.

“Yeah,” says his friend.

They both return five minutes later with a big paper bag in each of their hands, gets back in the car, and speeds off with Sapphire still in the back seat. Sapphire is still unwilling to say a word. After a few minutes which seemed like forever, the driver finally breaks the silence and says, “Count the money man”. His friend pulls out the stacks of cash from the bag and begins counting.

“It’s all here just like he said it would be.”

“Fifty thousand?”

“Fifty thousand—all one hundred dollar bills.”

“Yo, divide that shit up now. I want my part of the money now.”

“Here you are. Here is your seventeen thousand and my seventeen thousand.”

They pull up on the street where the fat and skinny cops are, park, and leave the vehicle running with the car doors open.

The fat and skinny cops get in and drive off leaving the thugs on their own without saying a word about anything.

“How are you doing back there young lady?”

“You alright?”

Sapphire still refuses to say a word. Finally, after miles of driving, it seemed to look somewhat familiar to Sapphire as she stared out of the window.

We are back at the motel again. She thought.

The two cops get out, drag Sapphire out of the back seat, uncuff her, and hands her a paper bag.

Sapphire stares at them—stiffly clenching the bag.

“You have a good night Saph.” says the skinny cop.

“Yeah, we’ll see you at the club next week Saph.” says the fat cop.

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Once the police car pulls off Sapphire rushes to the motel room, not in fear that someone would see her naked but to make sure all of her money was there.

(Talking out loud)

“Sixteen thousand just like they said. Wow, that may have been the most money I’ve made by taking my clothes off. Besides, Fred wasn’t anything but a fucking cheap skate anyway.”

Sapphire grabs her clothes off the floor, dresses, and then goes to the lobby to make a phone call on the pay phone.

The taxi didn’t take long to arrive. Sapphire jumps in and tells the driver, “LAX please. I’m off to New York City.” She further says, “Hey, don’t you just love those plain clothes detectives. They’re the best!”

 JASPER

Speeding on Pacific Coast Highway, although beautiful, was a very scary thing with narrow roads, without any railing, and great heights and depths below. Anyone could make the mistake of driving right over the cliff to their deaths below. Jasper held onto the back of his boy's seat, Sean, who was the maniac driver while Jasper's girlfriend, Dawn, clenched onto him with her eyes shut tight. Sean's girlfriend who was on the passenger side remained calmed and collected since she was use to her boyfriend's driving. Dawn couldn't wait until they arrived at the Bay where they would shop and see the seals. They wouldn't see Alcatraz since her boyfriend didn't think it was such a good idea to visit a famous prison. "What's the fun in that?" Jasper asked.

They did take a break from the roller-coaster ride to stop at a park along the way to smoke some weed and gaze upon the Pacific Ocean from the edge of the mountainside that hovered above the beach's shore. Jasper loved the contrast of mountains



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and beaches together, and that's why he decided to take a trip to visit his friend Sean out in the San Francisco Bay Area. It had been five years and Sean had changed a lot. He was no longer the tall lean athlete he knew but a robust over-indulgent lazy out-of-shape guy with a Dutch girlfriend to match. "When did Sean ever like Dutch chicks?" he wondered. Upon their arrival, Sean immediately popped in a couple of DVDs, all porn, and insisted that they all watch it together. Afterwards, Dawn kept asking him why all the anal sex with the females in the video. Jasper could only guess that Sean was into that and that is the type of sex him and his girl was having. To the disagreement of her parents, Bee continued to see Sean. However, her parents continued to pay for all of their living expenses anyway. No wonder Bee and Jasper did not have to work. A one-bedroom apartment is not at all cheap in San Fran, so her parents had to be well off. The wind was blowing pretty hard in the park and they could barely keep the blunt lit. Jasper, horny from watching the porno, wanted Dawn to fool around with him a little in the park. While kissing, she couldn't shake the feeling that Sean was constantly watching them—not paying any attention to his own girlfriend who really seemed like his mother. It was apparent that Bee over-indulged Sean and pacified him endlessly—as her own parents did her. Bee thought it was only natural. However, it seemed that there was something she couldn't give Sean and it showed at the park that day. Jasper was pleasing to the eye no doubt. Handsome as he could be—looking like a model host from MTV. It was only right that he have a model-looking girlfriend such as Dawn who would complement him. It was easy, no doubt, to persuade her to be with him since her affair with the married man went sour. Thank God she didn't have his baby, which she aborted upon the wishes of the father—the married

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man. After the abortion, she stayed with him because he kept telling her that he was going to divorce his wife and marry her. Jasper never forgot the night when Dawn invited him over to her parent's house where she was staying so he could listen and bear witness to the events at hand. Apparently, he got caught and Dawn had his wife and some other girl he was sleeping with on a three way via speaker phone so Jasper could hear everything. Later that evening, she asked Jasper to come along with her while she went to the married man's house to give his wife a tape and copy of her husband's phone calls, conversations, and emails. Jasper sat in the car while Dawn knocked on the door of this mansion looking home—the wife willingly letting her in immediately. Thirty minutes later a cop car pulls behind Jasper as he is in the car and the police officer gets out and is greeted into the home as well. Another thirty minutes later, the wife, Dawn, and the officer come out of the house. As soon as they approach Jasper, still sitting in the car, the wife and Dawn begin to yell and point, “There he is!” to the police officer. The cop runs in front of a white vehicle that they both claim is the husband's, in time to stop it and have the driver get out. It definitely was the husband and he definitely was going to jail for the cop slammed him face first in the hood of his own car so that police officer could handcuff him. The husband was taken away that night to jail because he violated his wife's restraining order which she had put on him after he beat her up. He didn't spare Dawn any leniency either because he was accused of trying to choke her to death preceding threats he made to her over the phone. Every since that night, Dawn and Jasper were an item and quickly wed at the Justice of the Peace.

Jasper never forgot that look on Dawn's face the night she busted the married man and the same look was on her face right now.

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“Why is he staring at us?”

“Who is staring at us?”

“Sean. Why is he staring like that?”

“I don’t know. Why don’t you go and ask him? You can be so suspicious sometimes; especially, when you are high. Let’s just keep kissing.”

“Your boy seems very strange.”

“Strange how? You’re paranoid.”

“He is just weird.”

“Okay. Now you have ruined the moment.”

Still fixated, Dawn still goes on.

“What’s even weirder is now his girlfriend is looking too. What’s up with that?”

“You’re just hopeless. You know that?”

Night after night during the stay, Dawn would find Sean staring at Jasper and it made her very uncomfortable. Jasper, always unsuspecting, would ignore Dawn’s comments about his friend. Yet, it became clear to Sean that she didn’t like him and he became irritated around her. Therefore, Sean, Jasper, and Bee would go out and leave her at the apartment. Dawn wouldn’t object—knowing how she felt about her husband’s friends. She was agreeable and stayed by herself.

One night before the others had returned, Dawn fell asleep early from smoking a joint. She wakes up in the night from the shaking of the furniture in the apartment. Dawn still in a stupor from her sleep asks out loud.

“Is there an earthquake?” Her first reaction was to get up and go find the others, but before she could, Bee sits right next to her on the couch where Dawn was sleeping.

“Are you okay?” Bee asks.

“What just happened? Did you feel that? Was that an earthquake I just felt?”

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“What earthquake? You must have been dreaming, girl.”

“Maybe. Where did you guys go tonight? And where are Sean and Jasper?”

“They’re in the bedroom.”

“Doing what? Is that where you just came from?”

“Uh, I was in the kitchen.”

“Oh, where you guys go tonight?”

“We went to the Bay again.”

Dawn thought that this was the perfect opportunity to pry some more and get some information from Bee, so she continued her questions.

“I hope you don’t mind me asking, and please tell me if it is inappropriate, but do you have anal sex?”

“All the time.” Bee said without any hesitation.

“How do you like it?”

“With a lot of Vaseline, it feels really good.”

“Is all that thumping from you and Sean?”

“Yeah.”

“And you’re not in pain? I mean you can go right to the kitchen and start cooking?”

“Exactly.”

“I see.” Dawn’s thoughts were still foggy from her sleep, the joint, and Bee’s responses all at the same time. She decided to abruptly end their conversation. She yells for Jasper and when he doesn’t come right away, she gets up to go to the bedroom. Before she can, she is confronted by her boyfriend, and he immediately embraces her into his arms. Bee, who remains sitting on the couch, stares at them with a sly grin on her face. The next few days the guys decide to leave Bee and Dawn at home and go out for a guy’s night out on the town. It’s been a week and Dawn hasn’t seen much of the city. It seems she is always in the house, and they have only one more week to go before they return to Connecticut.

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“Did you know that Jasper is thinking about staying here? I mean relocating and getting a job?” says Bee.

“Huh, what are you talking about? He never mentioned anything to me about that? When did he say that?”

“Oh, the night of the earthquake.”

“I thought you said there wasn’t an earthquake?”

“I mean the night you thought there was an earthquake.”

“There wasn’t one right? So why did you say that it is when it wasn’t then?”

“There wasn’t one.”

“So why did you say that? Forget it.”

“You are paranoid just like Jasper said.”

“Ya know what. I am going to ignore that comment because there are a lot of things that I can say about you, but I won’t say it.”

“Say it,” Bee egging Dawn on.

“No, because you allowed me and my husband to stay here as guests and I don’t want to disrespect anyone in their own apartment.”

“No. Just say it.”

“Let’s just drop it, okay?”

Changing the subject, Dawn offers Bee to smoke a joint with her, the one of many that Jasper left with her.

Bee greedily agrees because she knows she can’t turn down a good high. Shortly, they both pass out on the living room floor. The shaking of the furniture in the room awakens Dawn again—Bee obviously still passed out—her big self laid out on the carpet. Dawn sits up and asks, “Is this another earthquake?” However, Bee is oblivious to Dawn’s question because she is comatose. She smoked rest of the blunt damn near by herself. Dawn stands up and walks to the bedroom door quietly. She puts her ear to the door so she could hear

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Sean and Jasper who are whispering among each other in the room.

“What if they find out?”

“Who finds out? My girl is alright with it.”

“What about my girl?”

“Hey, didn’t you give them that blunt I gave you? They will be knocked out all night. That is some serious powerful shit.”

“I guess you’re right then.”

“You know I’m right. Just chill. I got everything under control.”

The next morning Bee awakens to an empty apartment. She is there alone and is really puzzled by the others absence and wonders about their whereabouts. Knowing how Dawn is so suspecting of Jasper and Sean’s friendship, how could they have all gone out together? She looked in the parking lot to see if the car was there. No. It still had not arrived. It’s been three hours and still no word or phone call from anybody. “What the hell is going on?” she screams. She ponders and wonders until her brain begins to hurt from all of her thinking. Therefore, she decides to call her parents, and they agreed to drive an hour from Richmond to be with their daughter. Bee sighs a relief. She couldn’t stand being alone one more minute, but before her parents could arrive, there was a knock at the door. Thinking it was her parents, Bee races to open the door only to find out that it was a police officer there. Bee gasps from the sight of him and her skin turns a pale ghostly white.

“Mam, there has been an accident.” says the officer.

Bee couldn’t stand to hear the bad news. She immediately began to cry uncontrollably. The officer tries to console her but to no avail. Her parents walk up right in the nick of time because their daughter had fallen to the floor on her knees. Bee

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was screaming, pleading, and asking God “why”. Eventually, Bee and her parents follow the police officer to the scene of the car accident. To get there, they had to literally drag their daughter in the car with them—kicking and screaming like a fat spoiled-rotten brat that she is. Apparently, the accident was off of Pacific Coast Highway where Bee’s vehicle literally was driven right off of the cliff where it exploded from impact. The police couldn’t quite decipher the human remains because of the extreme fire, so they were still investigating thoroughly.

“I can tell you this,” one of the officers said to Bee and her parents, “It seems to have been only one person in the vehicle. We just don’t know who.”

A look of hope appeared immediately on Bee’s face.

“Maybe, Sean is still alive!” she said.

Well, if he was, he sure hasn’t called her yet. Something as serious as her vehicle being involved in an accident, should have led him to have notified her by now.

*After Jasper witnessed the married man getting locked up, Dawn and him quickly wed. There was no doubt in his mind that her affair was over. How quickly did she prove him wrong. Instead of going to work as usual, something told him to follow Dawn one day. He followed her to an apartment complex unbeknownst to him. He had no idea why his wife would be visiting these apartments. He knew she didn’t work and had a lot of time on her hands, but she always said that she would be working on the computer or watching TV. He parked in the parking lot and waited to see when she would come out. She did—six hours later and right in time for her to get home, so she could greet him when he came back home from work. He waited while she drove away because he wanted to pay this person a visit too. He walked up to the apartment door that*

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*Dawn came out of and knocked on it. To Jasper's surprise, the married man answered the door.*

After months from not hearing from Sean and not knowing if he was dead or alive, the accident still remained unsolved—a complete mystery. Bee finally asks her parents to hire a private investigator so she can find out exactly what happened to her boyfriend. Bee knew deep down in her heart that Sean didn't love her the way she loved him, and her money had a lot to do with him being her boyfriend. Regardless, she had to have him. There wouldn't be anything that she would deny him. She was use to getting her way, against all odds. Sean became her boyfriend after she promised to always take care of him. It didn't matter that he didn't want to fuck her in the pussy—always in the butt. She knew that he had tendencies, but it wouldn't stop her from pleasing him. She was there at his beck and call—his every whim. When her parents threatened to cut her funds off, she threatened to kill herself because she knew that would be the end of her and Sean's relationship. Even with all her money, she could see in Sean's eyes that he was growing tired of her and would want the “real thing” real soon. Since he always spoke of Jasper in such a fond way and expressed how much he missed him, it was only the best thing for them to invite him down to visit. Bee and Sean had no idea that he would want to bring a girlfriend let alone his wife. Sean wanted his friend to come anyway—desperate for his company nonetheless.

After months, the only information that the PI could gather was that the \$86,000 life insurance policy on Dawn had been collected. The only person that could have done so was her husband, Jasper, but the PI still did not know his whereabouts.



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That meant that Jasper had survived, was still alive, and Sean was with him. Now that Jasper had money, Sean wouldn't need her anymore. What would be Bee's point of tracking him down? She knew that Jasper was the love of his life—money being his second love; and now he had both. What would he want with Bee? Surely, her parents could top any life insurance policy with all the money they had, but she knew it wouldn't matter. Jasper is the one he wanted. The nights preceding the accident, Sean confided in her and told Bee that Jasper was tired of pretending and wanted to move to San Francisco where he could be free and truly live his life. Bee quickly agreed to Jasper living with them if it meant that Sean would continue to be with her. However, there was the question of Jasper's girlfriend. Surely, she wouldn't take it lying down like Bee would—to say the least. Even though Bee agreed, she couldn't help but feel jealous and betrayed, so she decided to tell Dawn her hubby's plans to stay in San Francisco. She knew, deep down inside, that would sabotage the whole plan, and she would continue to have Sean all to herself. She played the passive-aggressive to a "tee" to see how things would play out. In the end, she was left by herself—even with all of the money she had. It was an open and closed case. Therefore, both investigations had ended—for the time being anyway.

## MOONSTONE



Sabrina arrived in time for what had seemed to be a fire alarm. All of the dorm residents were gathered in front of the tall towering building with nothing but their pajamas on. It was freezing outside in Pittsburgh. Sabrina was only too thankful that it wasn't snowing when she got into town. Pittsburgh can be known for its harsh winters—with lots of snow. Due to its mountainous region, it can make it very dangerous to go outside, whether on foot or by vehicle. Sabrina had to haul her big bag and suitcase up an excruciating hill to get to the dormitory. She was surprised, when she reached the top to see all of the residents outside in a hustle and bustle. She made her way quickly to the entrance—having to maul her way through the crowd. She was tired from the trip and was more than in a hurry to get settled in and get some sleep before the first day of class began on Monday. To her surprise, when she tried to enter through the front entrance, the Dorm Advisor stopped her.

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“Honey, you can’t come in here.”

“Why not? I am a new student and—”

“No one is allowed in the building. There has been an unfortunate incident.”

“What type of incident?”

Before the Advisor could respond to Sabrina, a girl from the crowd spoke up.

“More like a suicide.”

“Can someone please tell me what’s going on?” Sabrina growing more impatient.

“One of the residents jumped out of the window from the 59th floor—plunging to his death.”

What?! Are you serious? Why?”

“We don’t know yet. All anyone knows is that until the police and the paramedics do what they have to do, no one is allowed back in the building. We’ve been out here since morning too.”

“I just got into town, and I just want to lie down and get some sleep.”

“Well, you won’t be getting any sleep anytime soon. A student is dead. No one will be getting sleep tonight.”

It was around 2:30pm when Sabrina arrived, and they were not allowed in the building until around 6pm that day. To Sabrina’s surprise, her room was on the 59th floor. Not a good sign for her first time there. In her room, 5901, there were the four of them in the two bedroom studio apartment—two students to a room. The apartment was really simple, neat, and clean with crosses and crucifixes all over the walls in the bedrooms. Could today get any stranger? In the living room, there was one big window revealing the city view. The apartment had a turquoise monochromatic coloring on the couches and carpet throughout the apartment. The kitchen

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was very practical and extremely small and it could only hold about two people at the same time. Sabrina was not getting a warm home feeling from Tower View Residences. There was really something strange about this place—a suicide and the crosses. Sabrina could wait to meet her roommates to say the least. She quickly settled into the bed that she guessed was hers since it was the only bed without any blankets or sheets. She took the empty dresser next to it—emptying her suitcase and bag in a hurry. She will have to wait until tomorrow to purchase some sheets. In the meantime, she just lay fully clothed on top of the bed to get some shut eye before she met her roommates. She was exhausted and fell asleep fast.

Sabrina wandered the residence hallways. She was apparently lost and couldn't find an exit nowhere in sight. The corridor got longer and longer. The lights grew dimmer, and it was more imperative that she find her way out before she wouldn't be able to see in the halls at all. She spot a guy and waved and yelled to him to get his attention, but he just kept walking slowly away. He didn't even bother to look back. It was as if he didn't even hear her. Sabrina cried after him again. "Hey, excuse me. Can you tell me?" Before she could finish, the guy had disappeared behind the door. Sabrina decided to follow him because she thought that may be the door to exit that he went through. She turned the door knob and the door opened easily. To her surprise, it was only the stairway leading to all the floor levels. She was on the 59th floor. There was no way she was about to walk down 58 flight of steps. She spotted the guy again walking down the stairs a few levels down. He was a slim white fella. There was nothing distinguishing about him. He had on a green polo shirt and a pair of navy blue sweat pants with some dirty white sneakers. He could have

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easily been mistaken for a shadow—his appearance really murky and dark with a slow moving pace as if he wasn't walking at all but sort of gliding or floating. It became clear to Sabrina that she needed to follow this guy to see where he was going. She was curious as where he would lead her this time. If she walked fast enough, she could catch up with him by the pace he was walking. She went down and down and around and around so much that she started to become dizzy because the staircase was a spiral one. She stopped to gain her balance, and she looked down over the rail to see where this mysterious fellow was at this time. She didn't spot him. However, she did notice that on the wall it read "40th Floor". She decided to keep walking down since she came this far. She began to hear footsteps which she thought were her own, so to make sure she stopped dead in her tracks. But she kept hearing them even afterwards. They were coming from behind her. She looked up over the rail, and she spotted the same guy walking down the steps. She yelled at him, "Hey, how did you get up there?" She stood frozen in her tracks because she felt that there was something strange about the guy. She decided that she didn't want to know about him anymore, so Sabrina started to walk away from him down the stairs. His footsteps became distinctly closer and closer until he was right behind her. Sabrina turns around to see him reaching out to grab her and she screams.

Sabrina lying in a cold sweat was awakened by her roommate, Sally.

"Girl, you was screaming in your sleep."

"I must have had a nightmare."

Sally was a beautiful, busty, and slim blonde who looked like a cheerleader. Sally was now lying on her back on her bed

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staring at her poster on the ceiling, a red corvette, while she smoked her joint.

“I have a really bad tooth abscess and marijuana numbs my pain. By the way, I hope you don’t mind if I have the fan on. I can’t sleep unless it is really cold in here.”

“It’s below zero degrees outside.”

“I know, but I still need the fan on.”

Sabrina quickly surmises that Sally isn’t all that bright though beautiful and knew right away that it would be a challenge rooming with her. The weed had taken full affect on Sally, and she continued to run her mouth.

“Jessica and Elaine are your other roommates. They aren’t here yet, but they will be soon. You’ll like Elaine. She’s black too, and she’s the reason why you were placed in our room. She specifically requested a black girl, so we could have two black girls as well as two white girls in our room. Jessica is a health nut, and she always makes sure that the refrigerator is stocked with healthy fat free food. Help yourself. She really doesn’t mind and actually recommends it. Elaine has lost five pounds since converting her diet to all healthy fat free food. That’s really good because as you will see, she is a big girl. Those Jamaicans love to eat—a bad habit Elaine really had to break. For the life of me, I don’t know why Jessica diets. She is so freaking thin. I mean just bones. By the way she eats, you would think that she was obese.”

“What’s up with the crosses on the walls?”

“Feel free to help yourself to anything of mine except my weed.”

“I don’t smoke.”

“Just so you know because it’s medicinal, and I have a doctor’s note to use it for my tooth.”

“Got it. Hey, what’s up with the crosses?”

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“We’re not supposed to talk about that.”

“Why? What happened?”

“Well, we’re not supposed to talk about that to no one.”

“But I’m your guy’s new roommate. You can tell me.”

“Well, alright. One night we got really bored so we decided to play with this Ouija board that we found in storage in the laundry room in the basement, and that’s all that I am going to tell you.”

“Still. What does that have to do with the crosses on the walls?”

“That’s it. I said enough. If you want to know more, ask the others.”

“Ask us what?” Elaine said as she barged into their room.

“Oh nothing. I was inquiring about you girls’ crosses on the walls.”

Elaine, not at all timid, ignored Sabrina’s comment and got right to the point.

“You know why you’re here right?”

“Uhhhh, because you picked me?”

“That’s right, and we are going to be best friends. You’ll see.”

“Uhhhh, okay.”

“What size do you wear? I got some really nice clothes that I can’t fit anymore that I believe you will fit.”

“I am a size nine or ten.”

“For real? Oh my God, so am I! You can just wear my clothes then. We can dress alike for Monday night’s party. Is that all your hair?”

“Yeah.”

“Wow, it’s long. We can do our hair alike too.”

“You guys are almost the same brown-skinned complexion too.” Said Sally awakening from her stupor. However, it was

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clearly obvious that Elaine was two shades darker.

“I know we are going to get along just fine.”

It was pretty damn obvious that Elaine was bossy, and she wasn't making any apologies about it. Sabrina begins to wonder why she even chose her as a roommate. What was Elaine's real reason for having Sabrina here?

“Who was the guy that jumped out of the window?”

“Pierre Sanders—a freshman who was from some other country. I believe France.”

“Why would he kill himself?”

“Girl, he was some kind of nerd or something. He really didn't have a lot of friends. Enough about him. What about you? What's your major?”

“Journalism. I use to write for my high school newspaper.”

“Interesting. Maybe, you can write a story about all of us in our apartment.”

“Yeah, I guess, but Pierre's story sounds a lot more interesting to be honest with you.”

“I highly advise against it. You don't want to go digging up something that was meant to be buried.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Just what I said. Don't dig up the past! Got it! It will be better for all of us. Take my word for it.”

It was clear to Sabrina that the crosses, Pierre, and the Ouija board was all somehow connected, and she was going to use her clever reporter skills to get to the bottom of it.

Throughout the night, Sabrina kept waking up from the noises she heard in the night—noises that sounded like knocks on the door or walls perhaps. One time a knock was so loud



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it scared Sabrina so bad that she jumped across the room into the bed with Sally who was oblivious—passed out from the entire joint she smoked.

“Did you hear that? What’s that?” yelled Sabrina.

She gets up to go get something to drink in the kitchen and she bumps into Jessica—the roommate she hasn’t met yet.

“Oh, oops. I’m sorry. I didn’t see you.”

“It’s okay. I’m Jessica by the way.”

“I kind of figured that.”

“Did I wake you?”

“No, I was already up from the noises.”

“What noises?”

“Did you hear the noises? It sounded like someone was banging on the door, wall, floor, or something.”

“Oh yeah. Strange.”

“Well, I am going to try and get some sleep now. We’ll talk more in the morning?”

“Oh, for sure. Nice meeting you and please help yourself to anything you like in the fridge.”

“Awww thanks.”

It was hard to see or even determine in the dark, but Jessica appeared to be nothing but skin and bones, and she had dark circles underneath her eyes which made them look extremely caved in. It looked as if she was starving herself to death. Jessica looked as if she was malnutrition even though she was supposed to be the health nut in the place. What was going on in room 5901 where no one could talk about the crosses on the walls and the crazy attempt to fool around with an Ouija board? Sabrina had to get answers, so she decided she would do some research on exactly what was an Ouija board.

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The next day, early in the morning, Sabrina decided to get up before anyone else did to go the computer lab which the students had 24 hour access to. It was only quarter of seven in the morning, and it was one other student in the lab beside Sabrina when she arrived. She didn't waste any time sitting down and immediately typing the word, "Ouija". She wanted to Google it to see what websites would appear. However, she noticed on the screen there was a dialog box prompting her to put in her password which she didn't have yet since she had arrived late to campus. Moreover, the suicide delayed things even further. She wouldn't get access until Monday. She decided to turn around and ask the guy behind her, but as she was about to, he got up and walked out of the lab. Sabrina runs after him, so eager to get some answers as soon as she could. "Excuse me. Can you tell me your password to the computer?" But the guy kept walking away as if he did not hear her. He had on a green polo shirt with navy blue sweats with some run down white sneakers. He could have easily been mistaken for a shadow—his appearance really murky and dark moving at a slow pace as if he wasn't walking at all but sort of gliding or floating. He disappears behind a door. Sabrina follows him and goes through the same door, and it led to the stairway. All of a sudden, Sabrina gets a case of *déjà vu*.

"Where have I seen this before?" she asks herself out loud. She suddenly remembers. It was a dream. It was in her dream that this very same thing happened. She panics, and runs back to the door to leave, but it's locked. She screams for help, but no one comes to her aid. Sabrina becomes really scared and she starts to cry and plead for help.

"Sabrina wake up!" yells Sally who is literally jerking her off of the bed.

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“Wake up! You’re dreaming again!”

Finally, Sabrina awakes in a cold sweat in her bed staring up at Sally who looks terrified.

“Oh my God! What happened?”

“You were screaming again in your sleep.”

“I can’t believe this. Why am I having these nightmares?”

“I don’t know, but I’m calling the Priest again.”

“There’s this guy. The same guy in my dreams.”

“What did he look like?”

“He was tall, scrawny, and white with a green polo shirt with navy blue sweat pants.”

Sally gasps really loud.

“What? What is it? Do you know who I’m talking about?”

“I have to call the Priest immediately. He will know what to do.”

“What? I don’t get you. What would a Priest know what to do about my dream?”

Sally doesn’t hear her. Instead, she runs off to telephone the Priest, and there was no time for wasting. Sabrina needed to get to the computer lab as fast as she could. There were too many questions, and things were getting pretty scary.

Sabrina types in “Pierre Sanders” and clicks on images. His picture appears, and at the dreadful sight of him, she is just completely shocked. It’s the guy from her dreams.

Father David was just finishing blessing the apartment when Sabrina got back. All of her roommates were present, and they seemed to be happy by the expressions on their faces.

“Hello, you must be the fourth roommate, Sabrina. I am Father David. It’s a pleasure to meet you young lady.”

“Same here,” Sabrina said although not really caring.

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“I blessed the place with holy water again and anything that is unholy will be gone and not welcome here any longer.”

“Why would you do that Father David?”

Baffled by her question, Father David answers anyway.

“To remove the bad spirits that have been plaguing your girl’s apartment. Don’t you know?”

With that, Elaine, Jessica, and Sally immediately said their farewells to Father David, so that he could leave the apartment right away. Sabrina tried to hurry up and speak to him before he was out the door, but the girls were successful in getting him out the place before she could.

“Why you guys rush him out? I mean, I had many questions to ask him.”

“It’s not your business,” quickly spoke up Elaine.

“Why isn’t it my business? I have to live in this apartment just like you do. It’s definitely my business if evil spirits are lurking in the dark in this place.”

“Well, you weren’t here when it started, so you won’t be apart when it ends. Got it? Now, let’s drop it!”

Sabrina stunned by Elaine’s rudeness walks away to her room, goes in, and shuts the door behind her without saying anything further to any of her roommates. She decides on Monday she will put in a request to transfer to another dorm on a different floor. Sally comes in the room, so Sabrina decides to tell her, her decision.

“On Monday, I am putting in a request to be placed into another room.”

“Oh no! Please don’t!”

“Why not? It seems as though you guys are in something that I will never be a part of, know, or even understand.”

“Don’t take it personal. We are just trying to protect you.”

“Protect me from what? And another thing, why didn’t you

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tell me that you knew who Pierre Blanc was? Ya know he is the guy from my dreams.”

“I figured as much when you described him to me, but I didn’t want to scare you anymore than you had been already.”

“How is Pierre connected with you guys in this apartment?”

“If I tell you, will you promise not to say anything to the others or anybody else?”

“I promise. I swear.”

“Well, Pierre had a major crush on Jessica. I mean he was stalking her.”

“Okay, so why didn’t she report him?”

“Because she felt sorry for him, and didn’t want to cause any problems for him. She thought he was a nice guy but a bit too strange for her taste.”

“Well, how did she get rid of him?”

“She didn’t. Once he realized that he didn’t have a chance, he just stopped coming by.”

“And that’s when he killed himself?”

“No, not exactly.”

“Then, what happened?”

“Jessica said she went to go see him, and he wouldn’t open his door. She guessed that he wasn’t home.”

“Then, what happened?”

“She decided to do some laundry, so she went to the basement where she ran into Pierre.”

“What he say?”

“He showed her the Ouija board, and told her about it.”

“Yes, the Ouija board. I know all about it....port of evil, door to hell. I had the chance to look it up online earlier. So then what?”

“He gave it to her and said that we should play it.”

“And did you?”

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“Yes, unfortunately. Every since then, things haven’t been the same. In fact, they have been worse. I mean, I have never been so scared in my life. The furniture was moving by itself, the lights were flickering on and off until they just stayed off.”

“Then what happened?” Sabrina so anxious now to know the rest.

“Finally, when they came back on, Jessica was the only one passed out on the floor. When we woke her up, her eyes were red as fire, and she didn’t remember what happened.

“Was Jessica as skinny as she is now?”

“No, she gradually started to look and feel bad, and that’s when Pierre jumped from his window.”

“Actually, that’s not what happened at all,” Elaine interrupting.

“It’s okay. I eavesdropped, and I heard everything. Sally, I want to set the record straight. That day Jessica went to go visit Pierre, he was there, and he invited her in and she went. She said he was really sad and really needed her comfort, so she said she stayed with him—holding his hand.

Surprisingly, she let him kiss her. One thing led to another, and to make a long story short, they wind up having sex. Afterwards, he later confided in Jessica that out of loneliness he played with the Ouija Board, and he started to feel so bad that he had thoughts of suicide. He said he would have these constant nightmares.

“What happened to the Ouija Board then?”

“He gave it to Jessica to dispose of, but instead she brought it to our apartment. Out of curiosity, she wanted to try it out. Therefore, we played the game. After that, you know the rest.”

“How many days was it after you played the game before Pierre killed himself?”

“Two days.”

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“What did you guys do with the Ouija Board?”

“We burned it in the cellar located in the basement.”

“Okay. I read something about evil spirits entering one’s body when you open the port of evil. If I had to guess, I would say the same evil spirit that tormented Pierre is now also in Jessica. Instead of Father David removing the evil from the apartment, he needs to perform an exorcism on Jessica before the same thing happens to her as with Pierre.”

“How do you know all this?”

“Yeah, how do you know all of this?”

“I told you. I read up on it online. If your body is open to it, a spirit can enter and even take up presence there for as long as it wants until it is run out.”

“I need to call back Father David.”

“Yeah, do that.” said Elaine.

“In the meantime, I am going to find Jessica. Where is she?”

“She said she had to run out and purchase a few things,” said Elaine.

“In the meantime, let’s wait for them both.”

The girls go into the living room and start to watch television. Elaine picks up the remote and turns to the news. To their surprise, the newscaster reports that there is a major snow storm coming their way and that it would be best that everyone stay inside and remain from going out. Sabrina looks out the window and notices that the snow has already started to come down. She turns to Sally.

“Have you called Father David?”

“Yeah, but he wasn’t there. All I got was his voice mail, so I left a message for him to call us back asap.”

“Now, all we can do is wait then,” says Elaine.

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The girls sat in the living room until they all fell asleep on the couch—waiting for Jessica who was a no show. They awakened the next day at daybreak when the only thing bright outside was the snow that still was coming down. A lot of it had begun to stick which was apparent outside their window. A full moon was apparent outside the window as well and the light from it glared inside the girl’s apartment. Its light was bright and strong and its gleam was frosty and cold. The snowstorm was definitely on the way. Sabrina was the first to awake and chose to wake the others immediately when she didn’t see any sign of Jessica. The weather man said to remain inside, but it was becoming clear that they would have to take the chance and go out anyway—even if classes were cancelled. Snow storms were a big deal in Pittsburgh and no one wanted to play around with them even when there wasn’t any school. Today was Monday and tonight was the big “Start of School” Party in the lobby ballroom. Most likely, all the students would be preparing for that in-doors. The girls didn’t even bother to shower. They kept their clothes on that they slept in and bundled up in their warmest coats to go out and look for Jessica. They took the elevators down and there wasn’t a soul in the lobby—not even the Room Advisor who should have been stationed at the front desk. Sabrina guessed the school figured there was no need for one on a day like today. The campus was deserted. Their fresh first set of foot prints were the only ones in the white snow that lay all around. The snow plow trucks hadn’t even had a chance to clear the nearby streets yet. All that could be heard were their heavy breathing and their boots penetrating the snow—making a soft crunching sound. Their breaths creating fake smoke from their mouths. Even though they had their wool hats and gloves on, the snow settled on their eyelashes which made it very



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difficult for them to see where they were going. Sabrina was new to the area so she was relying on the others to lead her.

“Where did you say she went again?”

“She said she was going to the store. All the students go to the nearest drug store to buy things.” Said Elaine

“I’m hot.” said Sally whose comment didn’t surprise anyone.

The girls had to climb this steep hill to get to the store and they were slipping and sliding on the slushy snow there.

“The drug store is right at the top of the hill.” said Elaine who always was so sure of herself.

When they got to the store it was closed due to the inclement weather. All the stores were closed for that matter. Only white extended for miles and no sign of people or cars. It was completely motionless outside. The cars that were parked were completely covered in snow. Suddenly, Sabrina spotted something.

“Did you see that?”

“What?” Sally and Elaine said at the same time.

“I thought I saw someone running.”

“Wait, I just saw it too. Are you sure that’s a person. It’s hard to see with all this snow coming down.”

“Okay. Now, I just saw it too.” Said Sally lying

There was what appeared to be a person running across the street about four blocks from them, and the girls start walking towards the person. As they got closer and closer it was apparent that the person was a girl. It was Jessica.

“Hey guys! What yall doing out here?”

“What are you doing out here is the question.” Said Elaine demandingly

“Yeah. Where have you been?” asks Sally

“All the stores seem to be closed and I desperately need to

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get some things. Things that I really need. There's got to be a store open somewhere. You guys want to come with me to help me find one?"

"Sure, since we all are out here. Lead the way." Sabrina said

The girls started to follow Jessica who didn't really seem to be dressed as warm as the others and had only a sweater under a grey petticoat without any gloves or hat on. However, no one questioned her apparel or her whereabouts since last night. They were just glad they found her and she was alright. They completely forgot about how urgent it was for them to get back to the apartment before the storm got worse.

*Back at the apartment....*

*The girls sleep soundly on the couch while Jessica stands over them with arms stretched out on each side, head back and eyes close. She chants something.*

*"Souls be free. Come to me. Let the blood of your life leave and be reborn. Let our spirits become one."*

*The lights flicker on and off until they stay off. Outside the window, the wind picks up speed and begins to sound treacherously strong and wild, pushing really hard against the glass, and making a howling and screeching sound in the process. The snow roars, spins and twirls uncontrollably while the full moon glares its light in through the glass window.*

The girls have been walking in the snow for what seems to be about an hour.

"Do you know where you're going?" asks Elaine

"I know of a little corner store on the corner of Boulevard of the Allies and Smithfield Street. It should be open."

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“Are you sure. I’m hungry now, and I want to see if I can get something to eat there.” Said Sally.

“Guys, shouldn’t we be heading back now. The snow is coming down faster and harder. Soon we won’t be able to see anything at all.”

“What is it that you actually need from the store, Jes?” demands Elaine

“It’s complicated.”

“Why is it complicated? What do you need?”

“Ummm, some medicine for my inhaler.”

“Inhaler? When did you get asthma?”

“I’ve always had it. Hey guys. I need to stop for a while. It’s hard for me to breathe now.”

“Oh my God! What’s wrong Jes?” Sally concerned

“I just need to sit for a while and rest.”

“Why don’t Elaine and I go the rest of the way to the store while you and Sally sit here. That way you can rest and we can save some time.”

“That sounds good. Sally, will you be alright staying here with me?”

“Of course, Jes. What are friends for?”

Consequently, Elaine and Sabrina went ahead while Sally and Jessica sat on a bench at a bus stop terminal so that Jessica could catch her breath.

*Back at the apartment....*

*The girls sleep soundly on the couch while Jessica stands over them, arms stretched out to each side, head back, eyes closed, while she chants.*

*“That’s right Sally. Stay with me. Come with me. I need you. I want you. Your sweet, sweet soul is so precious. Let our spirits merge. Your spirit and my spirit becoming as one.”*

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Elaine and Sabrina arrived at the corner of Smithfield and Blvd. of the Allies but there wasn't any sign of a drug store—no store for that matter. “Okay, so where is this damn store she was talking about?” questions Elaine.

“I don't know. Is there any reason why she would lie?”

“No. I don't think so. I mean, I really don't remember her having asthma. Jessica can be a real story teller at times.”

“I think we better hurry back. I have a really bad feeling about something.”

“Me too. Let's hurry.”

The snow is now up to the girls' ankles and it is accumulating extraordinarily fast. It's hard for them to walk fast, so they take big, slow steps. Elaine falls and Sabrina runs to her aid

“Are you okay? You think you can get up and continue to walk? Can you make it?”

“Make it? I think we passed where they were.”

“Are you sure? I mean the snow makes it hard to see or recognize anything.”

“No, I'm sure of it.”

“So why aren't they here? This can't be the place.”

“Look. It is. Here are Sally's gloves.”

Elaine emerges the gloves from the snow and hands them to Sabrina. “Why would she leave her gloves? And why would they leave anyhow?”

“I'm not sure, but I can continue to walk. Let's walk a few blocks down this street to see if they just left to find another store.”

“Hey guys!” From behind, Jessica approaches them alone.

“Where's Sally?” Elaine and Sabrina say at the same time

“She decided to go back to the dorm after I showed her I was better.”

## CACTUS GEMS

“Why would she leave you like that?”

“I’m okay. Really. I assured her that it would be okay. Do you guys have my medicine?”

“No, because there wasn’t any store open there.”

“Are you sure? I’m almost certain that there was one there.”

“No, there isn’t. You might have to wait later to get it. Elaine fell and it is getting just too rough out here. I think it’s best that we all go back to the apartment now—together.”

“Well, you guys go on without me. I really need to get my medicine before it is too late.”

“But Jes, there aren’t any stores open. We need to get out of this snow—this storm!” yelled Elaine

“Well, I will find one by myself. I really don’t need your help. I was fine out here by myself before you guys showed up.”

“Alright. Alright. We’ll come with you Jes, but I’m telling you there aren’t any stores open.”

“Whatever. You guys ready?”

Sabrina and Elaine sluggishly follow behind Jessica who was determined to be out in the storm to find an open store.

*Back at the apartment....*

*Elaine and Sabrina sleep soundly on the couch while Jessica stands over them now with Sally by her side. Both of their arms are stretched out to each side, head back, and eyes closed. The wind growls, screams and hurls at the window until suddenly it breaks—glass shattering in a million pieces. The snow rushes in with the wind and overtakes the apartment from the force. The full moon is closer than ever before.*

*“Go my child.” says Jessica. With head back and eyes remaining closed, Sally, in the same manner, moves closer to the window. The lights flicker on and off.*

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Father David arrives in the lobby in time for what seemed to be a dance. All the students were gathered, conversing, laughing, and drinking among themselves. They were either making their way to the ballroom or coming from it. Unaffected by the crowd, it was only urgent that Father David make his way through the students to the elevator. He desperately needed to get to the 59<sup>th</sup> floor.

“The elevator doesn’t work because of the snow storm. The power lines are being affected because of all the snow piling on them.” said a student passing by. Father David should have known better because he had tried to reach the girls by calling them. He repeatedly dialed their number all day but did not receive an answer. Finally, he decided to take a chance and just come out and see them. He was really worried about them and needed to know if they were alright. The last message he got sounded as if they had another emergency.

“How do I get to the 59<sup>th</sup> floor then?”

“You’ll have to take the stairs.” Suddenly all of the lights went off and there was a scream. It was a bunch of screams that followed, but not screams of fear but excitement. The students were mainly intoxicated or high and could care less about the cares and worries of Father David. The lights came back on.

“How do I get to the stairway?”

“Right down the hall.”

Father David gets to the stairway and starts to make his way up 58 flights of steps. He was a middle-age man who hadn’t been to the gym in quite some time, but did the girls have the time that it would take for him to reach them. Slowly but surely he climbed the steps. The lights go off again.

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Sally moves closer to the window. The wind is so strong that it pushes her thin frame back and it makes her move slowly—the wind blowing hard at her hair and clothes. Her eyes are still closed but she knows where to go from the sound of Jessica’s voice.

“Go my child! Go and be free!”

A big gush of wind nearly knocks Sally on her ass. She stumbles a little but remains to keep standing and pushing her way to the window or where there use to be a window. “Go my child! Go and be free!” Jessica who is persistently urging her on.

“Hold up! Enough is enough. Where the hell are we going Jes?” demands Elaine. After walking in the snow for what seem to be entirely too damn long, the girls grow colder and more tired.

“It’s time that we go back now. The storm is not letting up and we really should get back inside.” says Sabrina worried.

“Just a little further please. I really need my medicine.”

“Since when did you get asthma? I don’t remember you ever having asthma in all the time that I’ve known you. You sure you’re not making this up just so you can have your way and get to a store?”

“Clever girl.” snaps Jessica “I did make the whole thing up. I even made up the whole story about Pierre too.”

“Jessica, no.” Sabrina responded surprisingly

“Yes. I made the whole story up. Poor Pierre. He didn’t have a chance against my powers. His soul was doomed from the start.”

“You killed Pierre then?” asks Sabrina

“He had to be sacrificed so that I could excel to greater dimensions.”

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“So it was you all along, you bitch! You brought the Ouija Board so you could get us to play.”

“It was the only way I could have dominion over your apartment.”

“Why Jessica? Why?” asks Sabrina

“Jessica is no longer here. Jezebel resides in this body and will forever.”

“I want my friend Jessica back. Give me Jessica. Jes, can you hear me in there? It’s Elaine. Don’t give in sweetie! Hold on!”

“It’s too late. I have total dominion!” exclaims Jezebel.

Father David huffs and puffs. His chest burns from exhaustion even though he is only on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor. He sits on the steps to catch his breath. “Halfway there.” He thinks out loud. The lights are still off and his eyes have adapted somewhat to the darkness. He thinks he seen something move—a student perhaps he thinks. The lights come back on just in time for Father David to see Pierre reaching out to him. He screams and falls back on the floor. However, Pierre disappears and Father David is left shivering. He is scared shitless. “Pierre where are you? Is that you? I want to help you son?” he barely mumbles.

The girls relayed the story to Father David that they thought the spirit in their apartment may have been the spirit of the dead student, Pierre who they got the Ouija Board from. Father David quickly rises and starts to climb the steps once again. He had enough rest and was seriously anxious to get to the girls. If Pierre has taken presence in the stairway, most likely, he is back and haunting the girls’ apartment to terrorize them. He feels for his crucifix and holy water in the inside pocket of his cloak. He definitely will need that if he wants to cleanse



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the girls' apartment for the third time. It should have worked the first time. Father David wasn't so sure that it would even work this time, but he still had to give it a try.

Sally's hair is flying everywhere, but she has stopped in her tracks. She doesn't move any closer to the window, and it's because she doesn't hear Jessica's voice any longer. Jessica remains silent and has a disturbed look on her face. Elaine and Sabrina, who remain sleep on the couch, toss and turn about.

"It was really my idea, not Pierre's, to play the Ouija Board. He was such an amateur, and he had no idea what hit him."

"Why would you play the game?"

"I needed to know what it felt like—what it would be like. He was weak and had the hots for me or Jessica I should say, and basically he would do anything I said. He didn't feel a thing; I'm sure, when I told him to jump from his window."

"Oh my God! You're insane!"

"Why Jes? Why?"

"I needed his soul just like I need all your souls, and I will have them. I will have them all!"

"Pierre! Pierre, my son. It's Father David." Father David, apparently out of breath, tries to reach out to Pierre. However, he is still on a mission to reach the girls' apartment. Slowly he ascended to the thirty fifth floor—his legs like molasses. He ascended slowly to thirty five flights, thirty six flights, thirty seven flights, thirty eight flights, thirty nine flights. "Forty flights. I am on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor. Only nineteen more to go." Father says out loud.

"You are a real bitch! Ya know that?!? You have the nerve to drag us out here in the snow—in a snowstorm at that. We

risk our lives for your crazy ass and you double cross us like this?! Plus, on top of it all you admit to killing poor Pierre. You crazy ass bitch. It's time I give you an ass whooping." Elaine said as she charges toward Jezebel.

"Elaine no! She's not worth it! Let's just go. We have to find out what she did with Sally. Remember Sally." Sabrina says trying to hold Elaine back, but Elaine much bigger and stronger than she is jumps on skinny Jessica who falls to the ground. Elaine is on top of Jessica wailing her in the face with her snowy gloves—throwing snow with punches. Sabrina tries to grab her off but slips herself and falls in the snow.

*Back at the apartment...*

Jessica is on the floor throwing punches in the air and wilding back-n-forth. Sally is still frozen in her steps while the wind hurls through her hair, clothes, and throughout the apartment. Sabrina and Elaine are shadow boxing—fighting in their sleeps on the couch.

Father David, sweating profusely, takes off his jacket and collar. He sits on the steps to catch his breath again. The lights flicker on and off for a minute. He thought he might have seen Pierre, and he did. Pierre approaches him closer and closer until he is right in front of Father David's face. Pierre opens his mouth to say something but no voice comes out. Father David reads his lips and makes out what he says. "Help me." Father David says out loud. "Hold on son, just hold on. I will help you. Just hold on." Father David gets up and continues to ascend the steps once again. Fifty one, fifty two, fifty three, fifty four, fifty five, fifty six, fifty seven, fifty eight, and fifty nine! Before he makes his way out the door to the floor, he

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takes a rest on the step. He knows he will need all the strength he can get to tackle and defeat what lies ahead of him.

Father David makes it to apartment 5901 only for the door to be locked. He bangs and yells ferociously for the girls to answer but no one opened the door. He put his ear to the door to somehow hear what might be occurring behind it, yet all he hears is the wind. He could feel a heavy breeze on his feet from the crack at the bottom of the door. He knew there was something wrong. No one would even have their windows open in such a nasty storm. He had to find a way to break in. He breaks the glass of the handle for the fire alarm and extinguisher which he uses to bang away at the doorknob. However, the thick steel door doesn't even budge. There was only one thing left for Father David to do.

The fire truck engines roared in the night. Because of the storm, its red lights flooded Tower View Residences' parking lot unnoticed. Outside it was now dark and there wasn't any sign of any pedestrians in sight. The firemen immediately bombarded the lobby and crowded ballroom where the students were. They were met with gazes of bewilderment and baffled expressions because of the firemen's presence.

"I want everyone to clear out of the building right now!" one of the firemen yelled to the students. Without any hesitation, the students rushed and stormed the entrance—emptying the ballroom in a hurry and scurrying and pushing like little ants trapped like sardines in a can. "Do not panic! Calmly and orderly exit the building! I repeat! Do not panic just calmly and orderly exit the premises immediately." shouts the fireman.

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Elaine, still on top of Jessica, has her hands on back of her head—grabbing handfuls of Jessica’s hair while pushing her face in the snow. Each time Sabrina tries to pull Elaine off, she pushes her back—making her fall on her ass in the snow. Jessica manages to yell, “Sally come to me!” Sally moves slowly through the hurling wind. She moves closer and closer until there is no more room to walk. Sally falls head first. The girls who are still shadow boxing in their sleeps are oblivious to what has happened. In spite of this, Sally awakens on a big inflated bed with many students surrounding her along the sides. She is startled to see everyone, including herself, outside. “Oh my God! What happened!?”

“Miss, you fell 59 floors out the window. Thank God we put this cushion up—and right in a nick of time too.”

“Where are my roommates?”

“My fellow fireman will bring them down one by one by ladder.”

Sally watches as Sabrina is carried down, then Elaine. Finally, Sally sees Jessica being carried down by the fireman but something stops them. Jessica is seen falling from the embrace of the fireman on down onto the inflatable cushion. She tries to get up and run but is met by Sally, Father David, Elaine, and Sabrina who holds her down while Father David administers the holy water along with his crucifix to conduct the exorcism on her while all of the students witness the act. It was quite a spectacle, but worth it after the girls informed him of Jessica’s actions.







