

Shadows on the Street

by [Daddycums](#)

MF, F-solo

If anyone had seen Michael Gillian sitting in his parked car in a shadowy corner of a dark street two blocks from his ex-girlfriend's apartment, they would immediately think that something sinister was about to happen. They would be right.

The failing sunlight and the subsequent lengthening shadows of evening helped to hide him from unwelcome eyes. He certainly wouldn't want a certain person spotting him here; if she were on to him, it would spoil everything he had been planning for the past two weeks. Maybe tonight would be the night. Maybe not. It all depended upon her being in the right place at the right time.

This was not the first night that he had parked here in the evening, waiting and watching. After two weeks of surveillance, it was getting to be like a second home to him. He was beginning to wonder if the events he had predicted would ever unfold, if he would ever get his chance to put his plan in motion.

It would almost be a relief to give up. He wished to be rid of this burden once and for all. It would be so nice to just pretend this wasn't happening, to go home and get on with his life. But he knew better. The only way to shed the burden was to see it through.

He leaned over and opened the glove box, running his hands over the revolver he had stashed away in there. It was almost an absentminded gesture, a reflex born of habit, a comforting action to reassure him that he had everything under control. He knew that before this was all over, he would have need for the weapon. It would no doubt mean the difference between the success and failure of his plan.

As an older couple passed his car on the opposite side of the street, he slouched down in his seat. An empty car parked here in the shadows would arouse no suspicion, but a man sitting in that car for hours on end would certainly raise a few red flags. The last thing he needed was for the cops to show up with a bunch of questions. Until this was all over and he had put the job behind him, the police were no friends of his.

Ironically, he felt a bit of empathy toward them. This must be what it was like to go on a stakeout. A lot of waiting, a lot of boredom, a lot of sitting and hoping something would happen. Although he dreaded the confrontation that would end this, he hated the waiting even more.

It wasn't even the anticipation. Anticipation implied excitement, and for the first couple of nights, that excitement kept the job interesting. But now days had turned into weeks, and the anticipation had gradually given way to boredom and even lethargy. More than once, he had worried that he had been mistaken, that all his planning and waiting had been for nothing. He had lost two weeks of his life already. How many more would he give up before finally admitting defeat?

But he was confident that he was right. He could not afford to miss this opportunity. And in the end, whether it took two weeks or two months, it would be worth it.

That didn't mean he was enjoying himself in the mean time. Boredom was taking its toll on him, and he found his eyelids growing heavy. *Don't fall asleep!* he told himself. *You could miss everything!* Unfortunately, that kind of self-talk never worked. His last thought before drifting off to sleep was that he

would have to get a new car. This one was just too damn comfortable.

He opened his eyes and stared up into the bright sunlight. He had a moment of disorientation until he recognized his surroundings. It was that dream again, the one that haunted his nights with increasing frequency lately. Tonight he was aware that he was dreaming, and from what he understood, that awareness gave him a kind of power over the dream. He could literally change anything he wanted, but the truth was that he didn't want to change a thing.

Michael relaxed on a secluded beach beside a large lake, lazily watching fluffy white clouds drift across the sky. He enjoyed the feel of the hot sun on his face, tempered by a cool breeze off the surface of the lake. It was the kind of vacation that he enjoyed most; an opportunity to do absolutely nothing.

Just then, he caught motion out of the corner of his eye. Turning his head, he was delighted to see a beautiful woman approaching, dressed only in a tiny bikini and carrying a shoulder pack in one arm and a lawn chair in the other. She had dark brown hair and an incredibly gorgeous body, the kind to make any man want to take a long, hard look. Being a gentleman, he turned away long before he had seen enough to satisfy him. He didn't want to be caught staring, after all.

She set down her bag and unfolded the chair not far from him, sitting down facing the lake. She turned to the side and started rummaging through the bag, obviously looking for something. Michael risked another glance at her, trying to make it look casual. Fortunately, her attention was absorbed by her task, giving him plenty of time to let his eyes roam over her body.

Finally, she gave up, glancing up at him. She flashed him a quick smile, then rose to her feet and walked toward him. She had the most amazing undulation to her walk, complete with a sexy little hip swing that made it impossible for him to tear his gaze away.

"Excuse me," she said as she neared him. "You wouldn't happen to have any sunscreen, would you?"

"Of course," he replied with a gallant smile, reaching into his own bag to procure the item. "Left yours at home?"

"Something like that," she answered. "I'm Alicia, by the way. Alicia Brown."

"Michael Gillian," he greeted, then handed her the bottle of sunscreen. "Anything else you need?"

"Well, I wouldn't mind a little friendly company, if you're offering."

"Friendly company is something I have in infinite supply," said Michael with an even more gallant smile.

"Good. I'll go grab my things." She turned and trotted back to her chair, then folded it up, grabbed her pack, and returned to him, where she set up the chair next to him. She squeezed some of the sunscreen onto her arms and rubbed it in. Michael politely turned away when she started working on her chest; as much as he would have liked to watch, he wouldn't want her to get offended and leave.

She finished with her chest, then went on to her stomach, and finally her legs. Then she glanced back over at him. "Can I ask you another favor?"

"Of course."

"Would you do my back?"

Somehow he managed to avoid grinning like an idiot. He took the bottle back from her, squirted a little sunscreen onto his hand, then set to work rubbing it into her skin. She felt every bit as delightful as she looked. She had wonderfully soft skin, so pleasant against his hands. He would have loved to keep this up all day, but unfortunately he could only draw out the activity for so long. Eventually he had to remove his hands.

"Thanks, Michael," she said. "You're a real gentleman."

"Just trying to be helpful."

She laughed. "And I'm sure you had no dirty thoughts as you were running your hands over my body, right?"

He blushed at that, but she just laughed again. "Sorry. Sometimes I'm just too forward for my own good. Don't worry. I'm not naive; I'm well aware of the effect a scantily clad woman has on a man. When I say you're a gentleman, I don't mean that you don't have those kinds of thoughts; I just mean that you hide it well."

Michael gave a relieved chuckle. Alicia was almost too good to be true. Drop dead gorgeous, friendly, confident, and with a great sense of humor. Exactly the kind of woman that really appealed to him.

"Okay, you're right," he confessed. "My thoughts aren't entirely wholesome, but that doesn't mean I have to act on my thoughts. I wouldn't mind getting to know you, though. Say, over dinner?"

"I was kind of hoping you would ask me that," she replied. "But I have a confession of my own to make first." She reached into her bag and pulled out a bottle of sunscreen. "Now that you know how scheming and devious I am, do you still want to go out with me?"

Michael laughed. "Now more than ever," he said.

The barking of a dog in the distance made Michael sit up. He glanced around, for a moment surprised to find himself in the front seat of his car. Evening had faded into night, and a touch of fog had fallen over the street, clinging like a phantom to the nearby street lights. The dark outline of hundreds of spidery branches from the trees growing on the side of the road gave the whole scene a ghostly feeling. In the growing darkness, details that had been clear during the day were now vanishing, leaving only shadows on the street.

His watch read 7:30, and he worried that he might have missed Alicia's arrival. She might have come home already, or she might still be on her way. He figured he would give her another hour and a half, then he would go home if he didn't spot her. One more day wouldn't make a difference, after all.

He took a sip of coffee from the cup holder in front of him, grimacing because it had long since gone cold. But if he wanted to stay awake, he definitely needed it. He shook his head to clear his mind of sleepiness, then stretched as well as he could in the cramped space. He couldn't afford to get out and do jumping jacks; someone would surely spot him. He couldn't even turn on the car to run the air conditioning. But as the last remnants of the dream faded, he decided that he didn't need it. The nap had been enough; he was feeling better already.

In a way, it was kind of unfortunate. He was really enjoying the dream, really a memory. True, it wasn't completely accurate. He remembered the real conversation being a lot longer before he finally worked up the

courage to ask Alicia out. But the part about the sunscreen was all true. That was what really intrigued him about her. She knew what she wanted, and would do what it took to get it, whether through artifice or pure boldness.

It was a pity, really. That same fortitude of purpose that had attracted him to her had eventually led to his downfall. Once she decided that he wasn't the man for her, it was all over. The restraining order was a little extreme, of course. Technically he was breaking the law just by being here. But he couldn't just leave things how they were. No, there were too many unresolved issues, one major one in particular, the one that led him to violate the conditions of the restraining order and camp out a couple of blocks from her apartment. He had to tie up that one loose end before he could move on with his life.

He didn't like to dwell on such things. He preferred the happier memories of when they were still together, those days of endless bliss. Like their first date, the night after that encounter on the beach. He could still remember it so clearly, so vividly.

"Sorry I'm late," said Alicia as she sat down at the table in the cozy Italian restaurant that he had picked for their dinner. "I sometimes have to work late and I couldn't get away."

"No problem," Michael replied. "I've only been here a few minutes myself. Just enough time to decide what I want to eat. But you go ahead and take your time with the menu."

"I don't have to," she said. "I already know what I want. How did you know this was my favorite restaurant? Have you been spying on me?"

Michael laughed. "Hey, you were the one who approached me, remember? I'll tell you what, though. If I ever start spying on you, you'll be the first to know."

Alicia grinned at that. "Isn't the whole point of spying that the victim doesn't know?"

"Ah, that explains things. Now I can see what I've been doing wrong all these years."

The waiter approached the table, and they ordered their meal. They waited for him to leave, then continued their conversation in the same light-hearted tone.

"So tell me truthfully," said Alicia. "Did I come on too strong back at the beach?"

"Nah," he answered. "I like a woman who's not afraid to be forward."

"Really? Because some men are intimidated by a strong woman."

"Honestly, it's kind of a turn-on," Michael said with a laugh. "You should have seen my last girlfriend. She..." Then he stopped.

"She what?" asked Alicia.

"Sorry. Major faux pas there. It's not polite to talk about past girlfriends on a date."

"It's also not polite to drop a subject just when it's starting to get interesting. Come on, Michael. I promise I don't mind."

"Okay, fine. Everett was a police officer, and a damn good one too. We first met when she pulled me over to give me a ticket. I knew I liked her when she threatened to handcuff me. She was just flirting, of course. The type of comment that would have gotten a male officer arrested for sexual harrassment if he had said it to a woman. But I wasn't about to call her out on it."

"She sounds like quite a woman."

"Unfortunately, she was a little too aggressive even for me. I mean, it was fun in the bedroom, but it didn't stay there. You know the stereotypical dominating man who always has to control every little aspect of his girlfriend's life? Well, that was Everett and me, but in reverse. It got real old, real fast. So I finally broke up with her a couple of months ago. I'm glad I got out of that relationship, I can tell you."

"And you're not just saying that because you think it's what I want to hear?"

"Well, I'll admit that part of the reason I'm glad it's over is because I'm now unattached at just the right time to meet a beautiful and charming woman like you."

Alicia grinned. "You know what they say about flattery," she said.

"It gets you nowhere?"

"No, it gets you further than anyone will admit. Besides, it's a good start on making up for talking about your ex."

"Just a start?"

"I'll let you know when you break even."

Michael chuckled. He was really enjoying this playful banter. Alicia was not only beautiful, but fun to be with too. She was bold, but in a less demanding way than Everett had been. He found confidence to be a very sexy trait in a woman, and Alicia had plenty.

The waiter returned with their food then, and they continued talking as they ate. Most of the rest of the conversation he couldn't remember, only that she had the most beautiful smile, and a sense of humor that gave him plenty of opportunities to see that smile. He had been a little nervous about going out with such a gorgeous woman at first, but he soon found himself quite at ease with her. Perhaps his yearning was causing him to see things through rose-colored glasses, but he remembered thinking that she was almost too good to be true. Beautiful, charming, intelligent, funny, not to mention flirtatious.

It was too bad it couldn't last forever, but they eventually finished their meal. He was too full for dessert, but was considering ordering some just to draw out the evening a little longer. He never got a chance to make that decision.

"All right, we've been dancing around this subject all evening," said Alicia. "I appreciate that you respect me enough that you haven't made a move yet, but honestly, I'm as eager as you are. Why don't you meet me back at my place?"

"Really?" asked Michael, trying unsuccessfully to hide his enthusiasm.

"Really. Look, I don't want you to think I'm some kind of hussy for proposing this on our first date, but it's obvious that we both want it. So why should we pretend to conform to some kind of social etiquette? Why should we follow someone else's rules?"

"I won't lie," he said. "I would love to continue our fun back at your place. But are you sure it's what you want?"

"Absolutely. So are you up for it?"

"Check, please!" he called.

He stopped by the corner market to pick up a bottle of wine, adding a box of chocolates just for the hell of it. He couldn't wait to get to Alicia's place, but he wanted to do things right. Despite her obvious willingness to go to bed with him, he figured she would appreciate his nod toward an evening of romance and not just sex. Alicia seemed to like a man who was willing to state his feelings, yet at the same time acted like a gentleman and at least put a token effort into keeping it in his pants.

Michael arrived at the address she had given him, an apartment building with a call system to keep out unwanted guests. He scanned the listing for her name and pressed the button. A moment later, the door buzzed and he opened it, stepping into the hall. Her apartment number started with a 2, suggesting it was on the second floor, so he climbed the stairs and strode down the hall, searching the numbers on the doors until he found the right one. He knocked and waited for her reply.

Alicia opened the door, flashing him a breathtaking smile. "I've been waiting for you," she said, then grabbed him by his shirt collar and pulled him inside.

The wine and chocolates ended up being unnecessary. He barely had time between passionate kisses to set them on the kitchen counter as Alicia dragged him toward the bedroom. He was surprised, but more than a little pleased, at her boldness. When she said she was as eager as he was, she had certainly been telling the truth.

They left a trail of clothes on the floor as they made their way to the bedroom. By the time they reached the bed, she was down to just bra, panties, and stockings, while he had his shirt off and pants bunched around his ankles. They tumbled onto the bed, still kissing. Alicia ended up on the bottom, but she didn't stay in that position for very long. She flipped him over onto his back and lay on top of him, giving him only a moment to catch his breath before she pressed her lips against his again.

Michael reached behind her back and unhooked the clasp on her bra. Alicia lifted herself up until she straddled his hips, letting the bra slip off of her chest. Michael stared in awe at her nude torso, admiring the sexy and erotic sight before his eyes. Although he had already received an excellent glimpse of her shape earlier that day at the beach, the sight of her gorgeous, bare breasts nearly took his breath away. They weren't particularly big; he guessed they were probably about average. But they had a perfect shape without even the tiniest hint of sag, and they complemented the rest of her form nicely. He especially liked her nipples, which were the most perfect pair he had ever imagined, much less seen. Her day in the sun had given her a light tan line, which he had never really found particularly appealing until now. It suited Alicia just fine.

"My god, you're sexy!" he exclaimed.

She grinned. "I'm glad you like what you see," she replied. "Get used to it, because you're going to see a lot of this from now on."

Michael thrilled at her words. Once again, Alicia was proving to be a very strong woman who knew what she wanted and went for it. She was obviously not interested in a one-night stand; she wanted something

more, and right now he was more than happy to give it to her.

She reached down, grabbed his hands, and placed them on her breasts. Michael grinned as he fondled them, luxuriating in the feel. His fingers sought out her nipples, where he gently tweaked them until they grew hard. He could hear Alicia's breathing growing heavier as he groped her. Between that and the smile on her face, he could tell she really enjoyed this, perhaps even more than he did.

"That feels nice," she breathed.

"They sure do," he agreed with a grin.

"I'll bet they taste even better than they feel," said Alicia, and Michael knew exactly what she wanted.

He sat up and slipped his hands behind her to support her as she threw her head back, presenting her chest to his eager mouth. He lowered his head and kissed her all over her breasts, even letting his tongue brush against them occasionally. When he sucked one of her nipples into his mouth, she groaned in pleasure. Michael let his tongue tease it inside his mouth, noting with excitement the reaction it was having on her.

He moved his lips to the other nipple, and at the same time let go with one of his hands so that he could slip it down the front of her panties. He encountered quite a bit of moisture there, which clung to his fingers as he started rubbing. Her moans increased in pitch until they turned into whimpers of pleasure. The rest of her body was responding to him now, squirming around on his lap.

Michael was just really starting to get into it when Alicia suddenly pushed him back down on the bed. "Time to get out of the rest of our clothes," she said. She slipped off the bed and stood before him, where she immediately grabbed his briefs. Grinning, he raised his hips so that she could pull them down and off him.

"Oh god, I can't wait to get that inside me," she said as she stared between his legs with an enthusiastic smile on her lips. She then finished undressing him by pulling off his socks, leaving him completely naked and eager for what would come next. Alicia slipped her own panties down and stepped out of them, and Michael grinned at the sight before him. She had trimmed her hair down to only the smallest triangle, not surprising considering how tiny that bikini was that she had worn at the beach. Her pussy was red and covered in a glistening coat of moisture from his ministrations. He had to agree with her; he couldn't wait to get his cock inside of her.

Alicia raised one of her feet and placed it on his stomach, and he knew what she wanted him to do. He reached up and grasped the top of her stocking, pulling it down until he slipped it off her foot, tossing it away. She had him do the same with her other stocking, leaving her as bare as him. Then she climbed on top of him and resumed kissing him.

The feel of her hot body against him was amazing. It had been months since he had felt the touch of a woman like this, and at the moment he couldn't remember it ever being so exquisite. He reached behind her and held her tightly against him, letting his hands feel some of the same joy as the rest of him.

After a few minutes, Alicia finally drew back. She sat up, straddling his hips. Her hand found its way down between them, and she grasped his cock, pointing it skyward. She raised her hips a little, just enough to position herself directly over it. Then she lowered herself slowly onto it.

They both let out simultaneous moans as he sank deep inside her, the eagerness and anticipation finally being satisfied. Alicia rocked her hips forward, and he matched her motions with thrusts of his own. They quickly fell into a rhythm, their bodies pulsing with the ecstasy that washed through them over and over again.

Michael couldn't help himself, but reached up and grabbed her breasts as he had done before. Alicia reacted by throwing her head back, closing her eyes and letting out a wail of pleasure as he groped her. She placed her hands over his own, guiding him in his efforts to please her. Once again, he was reminded of the fact that she knew what she wanted and would do what it took to get it.

Most of his pleasure was concentrated in a single part of his body, but he certainly wasn't complaining. The concentration of sexual sensations there was amazing, almost too much to bear. The heat of her tunnel wrapped tightly around him combined with her softness and the obscene motions drove him wild.

Not surprisingly, he hit his peak first. He groaned as his cock throbbed inside her, releasing its load deep into her body. Alicia kept riding him straight through it all, not giving him a chance to rest. No doubt she wouldn't let him stop until she reached her own peak.

Her incessant thrusting kept him from going soft, especially with the sight of her nude body above him continuing to fuel his desire. He wasn't sure how long he could stay hard after climaxing like that, but fortunately she didn't last much longer. It was only about a minute later before she cried out in ecstasy and her body shook with intense pleasure. He loved the sight and sound of her in the throes of passion, and he knew he would never forget this moment.

Michael stretched as well as he could in the cramped quarters of his car. Happy memories. Unfortunately, he couldn't dwell on them any longer; he was already feeling a little tight in his pants as he thought back on the experience. Too bad it was all over. Honestly, Alicia was the best thing that ever happened to him. It was unfortunate that she wasn't willing to forgive him over those pictures he had taken of her. And if she went that crazy over a few photographs, he couldn't imagine her reaction if she ever discovered the video camera he had hidden in her apartment. At some point he would have to go in again and collect it. He had rigged it to a motion detector so as not to use up the batteries filming an empty apartment, but even so, the batteries couldn't last forever. He just hoped she wouldn't find it. That could get him thrown in jail, which would be disastrous for his plans.

Just then, he spotted her. Michael sat up in his seat, watching her walk. Although she was facing away and in the meager light he could only see her dark outline against the fog clinging to the street lights beyond, there was no mistaking her. Long dark hair, coat reaching down halfway to her knees, and very shapely legs. Yes, that was Alicia all right, and as usual, she hadn't spotted him. He followed her with his eyes as she walked away from him, beginning to fade into the mist like just another phantom of the night. Just one more shadow on the street. She strode casually and unconcernedly, no doubt completely unaware of the danger that threatened her. Just the way Michael wanted it.

Alicia was glad to reach the door to her apartment building. For the past couple of weeks, she had felt a sense of foreboding, as if someone were watching her every night when she walked home. It wasn't a particularly dangerous part of town, but ever since she had put an end to her relationship with her boyfriend Michael, she had this uneasy feeling each night. It was probably just paranoia, but he would be at the top of her list of suspects if she had to guess who was watching her. He had already proven that he couldn't be trusted. At least, he had proven it enough for her to convince a judge to sign off on a restraining order against him. It was too bad, really; she had enjoyed her time with him. It had come as a shock to her when she discovered those photos he had taken of her. True, those pictures were all taken in public, but they had been taken without her consent. One or two, even half a dozen, she could forgive. But not the dozens she had discovered. He had been secretly following her, photographing her over and over again.

Well, she was rid of him now. She hoped.

She unlocked the door and stepped into the hall of her apartment building, listening for the click as the door closed behind her, automatically locking out both the chill of the night and the ominous feeling. With that barrier between her and the night, she immediately began to feel better. If Michael really were stalking her, he would have to get through that locked door to reach her.

She bypassed the elevator in favor of the stairs. It was only one flight, after all, and lately she had felt a little nervous about getting into an elevator alone. Alicia knew the fear was irrational, but she still couldn't just put it aside. A little caution couldn't hurt, after all.

She reached the top of the stairs and headed down the hall to her apartment. It had been a tiring day, and she just wanted to get home, take a nice hot shower, then jump immediately into bed. The comfort of home would chase away the ominous foreboding as it did every night, and she would laugh at how foolish she had been to worry about such things. There was no bogeyman out there with malicious intentions.

She unlocked her apartment door and stepped inside, and just as she thought, that fear immediately vanished. Despite the worries of the walk home, Alicia never had any trouble sleeping at night.

She slipped off her coat and hung it in the closet, then made her way to the kitchen for a glass of wine. She took only a sip, just enough to chase away the last vestiges of the chill and worries. Then she headed for the bathroom. Yes, a shower was just what she needed.

A shadow emerged from the fog and approached the front door of the apartment building. After glancing around to make sure the street was deserted, the figure reached into a trenchcoat pocket and pulled out a couple of metal objects. Now would be the moment of truth, the test of whether weeks of practicing had paid off.

Gloved hands fit the metal objects to the lock, sliding them inside and moving them around carefully and precisely. The mysterious shadow felt for the minute sensations that indicated that the tumblers were falling into place.

Finally the lock gave way, and the intruder opened the door and slipped inside. Now only one more door stood in the way, an apartment door on the second floor. Tonight, the predator would catch up with the prey, and Alicia Brown would die.

The warm spray of the shower felt so refreshing and relaxing. Alicia sighed as she stood under the water, luxuriating in the comforting warmth after the chill of the night air. She had always enjoyed such simple pleasures. A glass of wine, a hot shower, and curling up in bed with a good book. All too often lately that pretty much summed up her evenings, but she wasn't complaining. Sure, it would be nice to spend those evenings with a good man instead of with a good book, but after what happened last time, she needed to take some time off from relationships for a while.

It was still hard to believe that Michael had turned out to be a stalker. What kind of a sick man took secret photos of his girlfriend? He had been so charming when they were together, a true gentleman. He didn't seem like the type of man who would spy on her. She didn't understand it. Did he suspect her of infidelity? Was he trying to catch her in the act?

No, she wouldn't continue that train of thought. She had nothing to be ashamed of; she hadn't even been tempted to cheat on him. And she had already told herself that she would not allow herself to feel any guilt

over the matter. What he had done was completely his fault.

It was too bad, really. They had had some pretty fun times together. Some pretty wild times, too. Michael had turned out to be a real creep, but she had to admit he was great in bed. One of her hands slipped between her legs as she thought back on those times. She felt a little ashamed about getting aroused by those memories, but since she had no man around, why shouldn't she take care of her own needs?

Her fingers sought out that little bump and rubbed it in circles as she let the pleasure wash over her just like the warm water. She closed her eyes to block out as much external stimulation as possible, so that she could focus solely on that feeling between her legs. Sometimes she wished she hadn't been so hard on Michael. At least then she wouldn't have to resort to taking care of her own needs in the shower. Was it really worth getting upset over a few lousy pictures? Maybe he had a good reason. She hadn't given him a chance to explain himself, after all.

But that was just wishful thinking, brought on by her unquenched desire. A fantasy, nothing more. Her mind was thinking up any excuse to tell her that she should be with Michael right now, because that was what her body wanted. Playing with herself just wasn't the same thing.

It didn't take her long to finish the job. She hadn't had any in weeks, after all, so she was already hypersensitive. Fighting back the urge to cry out, she instead let out a long sigh as the pleasure reached its peak and she felt herself being dragged over the edge. It was a momentary relief, but nothing like what Michael had been able to do to her.

The superficial orgasm left her feeling unsatisfied, but unfortunately there was nothing she could do about it right now. After her recent unpleasant experience, she had sworn off men for a while, but maybe it was time to start dating again. One thing was for sure; she couldn't go much longer without a man.

The intruder stood before Alicia's apartment door, lockpicks in hand. A glance to the left and right confirmed that the hallway was empty. Now having successfully picked one door, the cloaked figure operated on this final obstacle with confidence. This door, this tangible object, represented the last barrier to the fulfillment of weeks of watching and planning. Alicia had only a few more minutes to live, though she didn't know it. The intruder was no stranger to violence, which would make the task easy. It wouldn't be the first time the gun in the trenchcoat pocket had been fired, nor would it be the last.

The lock finally clicked. The door opened just briefly, and a moment later the hallway was empty.

The sound of rushing water filled the apartment, coming from the bathroom. So Alicia was taking a shower. All the better. She would be naked, vulnerable, and probably terrified when she discovered who was in her apartment. That terror on the bitch's face would be such a sweet sight, so exquisite after all the wrongs she had committed. She deserved to die, but she deserved to suffer first. It was all her fault. All the lonely nights, all the gloom and depression, all the long hours of longing for what might have been. It was too late to set things right; nothing Alicia did could undo the damage. So instead she would die. It was the only path to peace of mind.

A gloved hand reached into the trenchcoat pocket and withdrew the gun hidden there. The intruder moved slowly yet confidently toward the bathroom door.

Alicia turned off the water and reached for a towel. She dried her hair first, then the rest of her body,

enjoying the softness of the towel against her skin. Simple pleasures. Like a warm bed and a good book. Looking forward to that book, she replaced the towel on the rack, then wrapped herself in her bathrobe. Then she opened the bathroom door.

She gave a startled shriek at the sight before her eyes. A black robed figure stood there, wielding a gun. Alicia should have expected this; Michael had already proven to be a stalker, there was no telling how far he would go.

But this was all wrong. In her darkest nightmares she had dreamt of being hunted down by Michael. Not once had the monster in her dreams had any other face. But the face before her now did not belong to him; it belonged to a woman.

"Who--" she began, but the woman cut her off.

"Shut up, bitch!" she shouted. "You don't talk unless I say you can talk. Now get your damn hands up!"

Too terrified to argue, Alicia complied with the order. The woman stood there looking at her, like a predator eyeing her prey. She was about Alicia's age, with blond hair tied back in a braid. She had a commanding, even terrifying, presence, as if used to giving orders. And although Alicia wasn't sure, it looked like the woman held the gun like a trained professional.

"Look, if it's money you want," said Alicia, hating how panicked her voice sounded. "My purse is on the couch."

"I'm not here for your money."

"I have jewelry in--"

"I told you to shut up!" the woman ordered. "Now put your hands behind your head."

Alicia did so, now more frightened than ever. If the intruder wasn't here for money or jewelry, that suggested even more sinister motives.

"Now step out into the front room, and walk slowly toward the front door. You can lower one of your hands-- one of them-- to open the door, then put it right back behind your head."

Alicia followed the commands robotically, trying her hardest not to think. She had a feeling that she knew exactly what the woman's purpose was, but it was too horrible to contemplate. She walked out her apartment and headed for the stairs, following the instructions implicitly.

She can't be planning to do what I suspect, Alicia thought. She's just trying to get me out of the apartment so she can go back and rob it. I don't know her, so she has no reason to hurt me. It wouldn't make any sense.

In a fearful daze, she moved to the front door of the apartment complex, lowering a hand once again to open it. She stepped out into the cold night air, made even colder by her limited clothing. The bathrobe wasn't designed for night time in the open air.

"Stop!" the woman commanded, and Alicia froze. By this time she had reached the sidewalk. She didn't dare turn her head to look to see if there was anyone nearby, but from what she could see, the street appeared to be deserted.

"Turn around," ordered the woman, and Alicia turned to face her.

"You humiliated me, so now it's time for me to return the favor," said the woman.

"What? But I didn't--"

"I didn't say you could talk! Now shut your mouth before I blow your god damn head off."

Alicia stopped speaking, her worst fears confirmed. Despite the fact that Alicia didn't know the woman, this was all about revenge. And that meant there were no limits to what might happen. She was about to try to protest her innocence again when the woman hit her with the next shocking command.

"Take off your robe," she said.

Alicia stared at her. She couldn't be serious! Not out here, in the middle of the street where anyone could see.

"Do it!" she ordered. "I want you to feel what I felt. Shame. Embarrassment. Humiliation. It want that to be the last thing you feel, ever!"

Alicia lowered her hands from her head, too frightened to disobey. She reached for the sash of her robe.

Suddenly, another voice interrupted them. "Put the gun down, Everett!" it said. Alicia turned her head to receive the final shock of the evening. Michael Gillian stood there, pointing a revolver at the mystery woman.

Michael felt nervous and frightened as he trained his gun on Everett, but he managed to maintain an outwardly cool composure. It probably had to do with the fact that he had been preparing for this moment for the past two weeks. Unfortunately, he had almost missed it. He had fallen asleep again, and nearly slept through the whole event. He didn't know whether Everett had followed Alicia inside, or been lying in wait for her in the building the whole time, but in the end it didn't matter. He had woken just in time to see Alicia forced outside at gunpoint.

What he did now would determine whether she lived or died. Everett was unstable; he had begun to suspect that when he was still seeing her, then later when he was going out with Alicia, he came home one day to discover a note slipped under his door which confirmed his suspicions. It was typed, so he couldn't identify the handwriting, but who else could it be from? He knew of nobody else with a reason to hate a woman in his life, especially someone willing to announce it with a note reading simply, "I'm going to kill that bitch!" His breakup with Everett had been bitter, and she had never quite gotten over him, so when he started dating another woman three months later, it was understandable that Everett would be a little jealous.

Now his suspicions were confirmed, and he was finally vindicated, if only to his own conscience, for taking those pictures that had led to the restraining order. Unfortunately, Alicia hadn't noticed the key element in each of the photos. In every one of them there was a second woman, hidden in a crowd or nonchalantly sipping coffee on a park bench or reading a newspaper as she leaned against a nearby wall. Michael had been gathering evidence that Everett was following Alicia.

He regretted not telling her everything. He had hoped not to worry her. The realization that Everett was dangerous had come as quite a shock to him after all; that note she had typed suggested an unstable and possibly murderous personality. He knew he had to do something to protect Alicia.

Going to the cops was out; they weren't likely to believe him over one of their own, especially with just that note to support his suspicions. So he had started collecting proof. The note, of course, was locked away in his

apartment, and the photos had begun to paint a damning picture of Everett's activities. He had hoped to have enough evidence to get her arrested, thereby neutralizing the problem before he worried Alicia about it.

Unfortunately, his discretion had backfired. Alicia had found the photos and used them to slap a restraining order on him, without even giving him a chance to explain. He didn't blame her for that; even he would agree that it made him look more than a little creepy. But had she known of his suspicions, she would probably worry needlessly about something she couldn't change. The last thing he wanted was for her to hide out in her apartment, afraid to go out.

In hindsight, he figured he probably should have told her, but by the time he realized his error it was too late. Breaking contact with him was, of course, the worst thing she could have done. It meant that he wouldn't be around to protect her when Everett made her move. So in desperation he had taken up camping outside her apartment, hiding in his car a couple of blocks away so as not to draw any suspicion to himself. Night after night he waited, hoping to catch Everett red-handed. And now he had.

Standing there with the gun in his hand, he knew he had to take charge of the situation. But this was so far out of his experience that he had no idea what to do.

"Michael?" asked Alicia. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to stop Everett from making a big mistake," he replied.

"It's too late for that, Michael!" Everett barked. "I know you're confused, but this is the best thing for everyone."

"I'm confused?" he asked.

"We went through some rocky times, but that was no reason to go running to the first woman you saw. I would have welcomed you back. But she's controlling you, Michael. Don't you see that?"

"She's not controlling me," he insisted. "Look, just put the gun down and we'll talk."

"Not until I do what I came here to do. It has to be like this, Michael. Once she's gone, you'll see that you could never have been happy with anyone but me."

It was official. Everett had gone completely off the deep end. Not a good quality in a woman with a gun and an inclination to use it. He had to do something drastic, but he couldn't think of what. Sure, he could shoot her, but he had no idea whether that would set off Everett's gun too. At least he could keep her talking until he thought of a plan.

"Maybe you're right," he told her, and Alicia glared at him in anger. Unfortunately, it couldn't be helped. "Maybe she was controlling me. But not anymore. We broke up."

"You're lying!" Everett exclaimed. "You're just telling me what I want to hear so I'll spare her life."

"I'm not lying. Look, I'll prove it. Alicia, how would you like to come to dinner with me?"

"Go to hell," Alicia replied.

"See?" said Michael.

Everett's hand lowered slightly, but not enough to put Alicia out of danger. But it was a start. The tactic was

beginning to work.

"To tell the truth, I was just thinking about all the good times we used to have," he continued. "Alicia's company was pleasant enough, but it just wasn't the same. Maybe we can try again."

"Really?" asked Everett. "I don't know. You could still just be trying to save her life."

"I don't care about her. I'm more concerned with you. What do you think is going to happen if you pull that trigger? You'll go to prison. What kind of a relationship will we have then? But if you walk away, we can all pretend this never happened. You and I can go away together."

"Or I could shoot her and then we can go away together anyway."

"If there's no harm done, we can just lie low for a while. But if you commit murder, the cops will never stop hunting you. You deserve better than a life on the run. So what do you say?"

Everett hesitated. She stared at Michael for a while, then turned her attention to Alicia again. He saw her beginning to tense up, her face tightening into a murderous rage. For a moment he thought she was going to pull the trigger.

Then she dropped her hand to her side and let out a frustrated sigh. "Fine," she said. "The bitch can live. For now." Once more she turned to Alicia. "But if you ever try to take my man again, you know exactly what will happen to you."

Michael approached Everett, reaching down and taking the handgun from her. "I'm proud of you," he said, then pulled her into his arms for a hug. "You did the right thing. We'll go back to the way things were. I promise." That was one promise that he had no intention of keeping. She was still too unstable to let loose. Fortunately, attempted murder was serious enough to get her locked up for a very long time. With the evidence he now had, Everett would soon be in jail and out of their lives forever.

"But what about her?" she asked, nodding toward Alicia. "What if she calls the cops?"

"You won't do that, will you?" he asked Alicia. "It wouldn't serve any purpose. You don't want to have to go through all the trouble of testifying against Everett at a trial, do you? It's not worth the effort, especially since we'll both be long gone soon." Actually, he hoped Alicia *would* testify, but he also hoped she recognized what he was doing and played along. The last thing they needed was to re-escalate the situation.

"Whatever," Alicia shrugged. "I honestly don't care anymore. If you just go away and leave me alone, I won't call the police."

"Thanks," said Michael. "Everett, do you mind if I give her one last hug? It just wouldn't feel like a real goodbye otherwise."

"Fine," Everett said.

Michael approached Alicia, then threw his arms around her. He leaned in close to her ear and whispered, "There's a camera hidden in the vent above your sofa. That should provide all the evidence you need to lock her away."

So now he had come clean, and it was a relief. He hated planting that camera in her apartment, but it had been necessary. Sitting in his car for hours on end had given him plenty of time to think, and with nothing else to do but worry, his worst fears had magnified themselves in his mind. What if his surveillance wasn't

enough? What if he managed to scare off Everett temporarily, but it just tipped her off that he was watching and she came up with a new plan that managed to avoid him? He would only have one shot at this, and he had to make sure she ended up in a situation where she could no longer hurt Alicia. He wasn't about to murder her, which left incarceration. Prison. He had to put together enough evidence to convict her.

He knew what he had to do, but he hated himself for even thinking it. He had fretted about it for days until finally deciding that there was no other solution. So one afternoon while Alicia was at work, he snuck into her house and planted that hidden camera. She had made it easy for him when they were still together by giving him copies of the keys to get into her apartment, which he had never gotten around to returning. He felt like a heel for betraying her trust like that, even now after it had paid off. But he consoled himself with a promise that he would never set eyes on the recording. Now that he had told Alicia of its existence, as far as he was concerned it belonged to her now, to do with as she would. Her smartest course of action would be to turn it over to the police, but he would leave it up to her to make that decision.

Michael drew back from the hug. "Goodbye, Alicia," he said, loud enough for Everett to hear. "It was fun, but I've made my choice." He turned and walked back to Everett. "Let's go," he said.

He led her back to his car. *Now to stash her somewhere that the cops can find her, he thought. She's too smart to go back to her place, just in case Alicia breaks her promise not to call the police.*

"Look, we need to make some plans," he told her as soon as they were inside his car. "We need to keep our heads down for a couple of days until we're sure the cops aren't after us." He deliberately included himself so as to make her think that he was on her side.

"Let's find a motel," she suggested. "I'm sure we can think of something to do in a motel room for a couple of days."

"I wish it were that simple," he replied. "But I don't think we should be seen together. Just for a few days, I mean. If the cops are looking for us, they'll be looking for a man and a woman together."

"Oh, you're no fun," she said with a facetious pout.

"I'll drop you off at a motel on the other side of town, then I'll find one for myself. I'll call you in a couple of days, then once we're sure it's safe, I'll meet you and then it will just be like the old days."

"I can hardly wait," she grinned.

And I can hardly wait to see you behind bars, he thought.

He started up the car and pulled out into the street. Everett kept the conversation going as they drove, and he merely responded with appropriate remarks at appropriate times. If she suspected he wasn't really paying attention, she didn't show it; maybe she was just too happy to be back together with him to mind his distraction.

They eventually found a nice motel, and Michael noted the name and address so that he could supply it to the police later. He pulled into the parking lot, and Everett gave him a goodbye kiss before opening the door. She glanced down at his pocket where he had her gun.

"Don't worry, I'll dispose of these," he said. *I'll dispose of them at the nearest police station, he mentally added.*

"See you in a couple of days," she said, then stepped out of the car and walked toward the lobby. Michael

waited just long enough to see that she checked in, then pulled out of the lot.

Time to try to smooth things out with Alicia, he decided.

As he drove back to her apartment, he wondered what her reaction would be now that she knew he wasn't her enemy. Or did she? Maybe she still didn't trust him. Maybe she couldn't forgive his actions no matter how noble the intentions. Or maybe it would be a moot point; if she had called the cops, likely there would be several cars out in front of her apartment building and they wouldn't let him in to see her. The restraining order was still in effect, after all.

He made up his mind to simply accept whatever happened. He had done his duty; she was safe now. If she never wanted to see him again, well, that was her right. He would just quietly slip away out of her life. But he just had to know.

There was her building. As he approached, he was happy to see a lack of black and white cars out front. Maybe she hadn't called the police after all. Maybe she was waiting until she had a chance to talk with him. Did he dare hope?

He parked on the street, then walked up to the building, stepped into the hall, and hurried up the stairs to the second floor. Soon he found himself standing nervously outside her door, frozen to his spot, trying to work up the courage to knock. Would she let him in? Would she give him the chance to tell his side of the story? He almost didn't want to know; it might be better to go away forever and maintain the fantasy than to have her reject him and know once and for all that she had not forgiven him.

But he had to know. He took a deep breath, then raised his hand and knocked.

"Who is it?" he heard her call from inside.

"It's Michael," he answered.

For a moment time stood still. It couldn't have been more than a couple of seconds, but those seconds were worth a lifetime of agony. Then he heard the click of the lock, and the door swung open. Alicia stood there, beautiful and radiant and, to his amazement and joy, smiling at him. "I've been waiting for you," she said, then grabbed him by his shirt collar and pulled him inside.

THE END

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