

In Love With My Psychiatrist

ANGELYNNA ROT

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In Love With My Psychiatrist: A Novella

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Ghost Hounds - When Your Shadow Touches
Mine lyrics © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd.

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DEDICATION

*To my awesome psychiatrist, who had the
misfortune of having me as a patient, but
endured like a pro.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Sexual content: Recommended for readers over 18 years of age.

Contains scenes involving eating disorders and panic attacks: Some scenes mention bulimia nervosa and depict the protagonist experiencing a panic attack.

If you or someone you know is dealing with these issues, remember that you are not alone. Support and assistance can be found at www.wannatalkaboutit.com.

Parts of this book are based on actual events in my life and real people. All names have been altered to protect their privacy.

Other parts are fiction and a way for me to try and overcome my completely misdirected obsessive thoughts and feelings.

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PROLOGUE

Sometimes I wonder if we would inevitably find each other while aimlessly meandering through the paved paths of our predictable lives.

And would I burn my future to the ground just to be with him the way I did or would I see him in passing, without my heart skipping a beat, and go on living with muted colors for the rest of my days?

But I should start at the beginning.

I vividly remember the day I walked into his office, my spirit broken, my soul dissolving into tiny fragments and leaving my body with every breath.

I didn't even notice how handsome he was.

I just needed someone's, anyone's hand to pull me out.

My parents died in a car accident, returning from their vacation six months ago, and shortly after that crushing tragedy, the supposed love of my life - Shane, left me for my best friend.

I also had to move out of the apartment where we were living together and leave our (well, his) dog with him.

The loss was overwhelming.

I became this thirty-year-old freelance music journalist and part-time cupcake baker living in a shitty miniature studio apartment, sinking into darkness.

CHAPTER 1

"So, what is the reason we meet today?" he said in a kind, inquiring voice.

"I'm not sure where and how to start. I've never been to a psychiatrist before. One of my acquaintances recommended you... and here I am." I shrugged and fell silent.

He was just observing me, casually moving the pen between his fingers. The clock (showing the wrong time) on the wall tick-tick-ticked away the seconds and dollars of my hard-earned money. Ok, I should just start talking, no point in paying to stare at the carpet.

In a few short sentences, I told him about the recent accumulated events that led to me making an appointment. He nodded and asked me various, seemingly unconnected questions,

writing something down occasionally.

"Are you comfortable with taking medication?" he asked in the end.

"Yes, that's why I'm here," I answered promptly.

"I'm going to prescribe Prozac to you, considering the bulimic episodes that you described."

I nodded my acceptance. He gave me the prescription and instructions for dosing. His voice was gentle, melodic. I can't really recall his words while he followed me to the door. I just had a great sense of peace, like there was a soft blanket covering me and defrosting my frozen senses.

After that first therapy session, I finally felt seen by someone.

All those questions, which I now realize were actually part of his diagnosis process, gave me a false sense of importance, but importance nonetheless. And even though I understood it for what it was, I kept that feeling selfishly in the back of my consciousness, because it gave me warmth I hadn't felt in a while.

I decided to see him once a week and our sessions progressed with mutual satisfaction.

Prozac was a *wonder*.

The continually hungry animal inside of me fell asleep and I could finally see beyond the basic need to satisfy its cravings.

I must note that I always had a problem with my appearance. Or rather, with the perception of myself. Oftentimes it was an irrational feeling of being overweight. In reality (when commonsense prevails and I can accept myself as I am) I look nice and weigh in the normal BMI parameter. But, there's something inside - a void so deep and wide, that my brain doesn't know how to cope with it, so it throws food inside. Of course, it doesn't work that way - you cannot fill it with food, ever.

When that moment comes and I overindulge, my guilt, shame, and fear of gaining weight win over and I make myself throw up. I literally can't stand the feeling of food decomposing in my stomach and distributing energy, feeding the useless fat cells.

I've been living with bulimia for about ten years now. Nobody knew about it. Not even

Shane, who I lived with for almost a year. But I told him. I told my psychiatrist this shameful, disgusting secret in that first session.

And I felt liberated. He didn't judge me. Michael just smiled that healing smile of his and tried to help me.

No wonder I've fallen for him, maybe even then, in the very beginning.

CHAPTER 2

The beeping sound of my phone alarm jolts me from the most beautiful dream I had.

Michael and I were lying side by side on his couch. He was lazily caressing my thigh and telling me how he was not married anymore, that he loved me and we could finally be together. I was leaning over to kiss him and then the stupid alarm woke me up.

I've been having recurring dreams about my psychiatrist for about three months now.

Most of the time they are erotic and my mind is making him out to be the almighty sex god. I'm sure that he is not, though.

I mean, he can't be that good - I keep repeating in the hope of ridding myself of these bubbling, overwhelming feelings.

What he is - is very much *married*.

Also, I'm his patient, so of course nothing will ever happen between us.

I have a love-hate relationship with my subconsciousness at the moment.

After my nightly adventures, I'm lying in bed, refreshed but at the same time highly unsatisfied, almost itchy. I want to feel everything for real so wretchedly, it's becoming unbearable.

I turn and scream in my pillow for good measure, then drag myself out of bed. It's still dark outside, but today is my delivery day, so I have to prepare and take the cupcakes across the street before my friend Anna opens the cafe.

I love baking - it's something that has always come naturally to me and I can proudly say I'm quite good at it.

Nina Simone is making my company while I prepare the batter and put the trays in the oven. After I clean everything and the cupcakes are on the cooling rack, I can spare a few minutes

to spend on the balcony, drinking coffee and observing the wonderful nature that surrounds the back of the building I live in.

Four more days until my therapy session.

Cue - wistful sigh...

And yes, you deduced correctly - I'm counting the days between sessions.

I've become addicted to his voice, his soothing presence.

I'm cherishing every time he smiles and the dimple on his cheek makes an appearance.

But the interesting part is, I'm not actively trying to seduce him, although I would love nothing else. On the contrary, I keep showing the worst parts of myself, testing where the limit is - what can I say to make him finally disgusted with me?

It hasn't happened yet.

At least, that I know of.

He never reacts out of the professional boundaries set in our therapy space and it's slowly driving me insane.

It is a perfect paradox of me going to therapy just to become crazier than before.

But at least I feel alive again.

CHAPTER 3

At some point, after weeks of rabid thoughts and hot, sexy dreams about him, I finally admitted to myself that I not only have a crush on Michael, but I'm already half in love with him. All my ensuing internet research suggested that this occurrence (called "transference") is quite frequent in the therapy process.

Whatever it was, I had no peace during the waking hours because my mind was finding him in everything, and during the night, I was almost afraid to fall asleep, because the dreams were slowly killing me.

The next step in this process (according to various internet articles), was admitting my feelings to him, so we can analyze why they

appeared in the first place and what is the base from which they originated.

I mean, hello!?! They appeared because I'm attracted to him and I enjoy his company. He's smart, kind, and handsome, the feelings would inevitably appear in any setting.

Ok, I am *paying* for his attention, but whatever. Infatuation and love can't be so easily attributed to one concrete event or a few circumstances in one's life. Declaring my feelings this way - that they are the "transference" phenomenon and basically not real, an illusion; quite frankly offended me and only solidified them in my mind and heart.

I was terrified of confessing to him what was happening. I was sure he was going to see me like the real lunatic, whacko person that I am, and refer me to one of his colleagues. The thought of losing him (although I knew I never actually had him) was making me anxious as all hell.

After the self-revelation that I'm falling in love with my psychiatrist, we had a few sessions and I was convinced that he knows about it - that it's so obvious in the way I look at

him, how I touch my hair, or what I talk about.

I had to confess.

Fear and mortification were rushing through my body as I sat on his couch that day.

"I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this," was on repeat in my head, but somehow I let the right words tumble from my mouth, focusing on the out-of-place lamp that had dried flowers bouquet instead of one of the light bulbs. The strangeness of it distracted me from my current predicament for a short while and I went on autopilot with the lines I rehearsed at home.

He was wonderful and completely rational about it.

Ugh, part of me was hoping that he was going to do something that will repel me, which will allow me to say - "*No way can you be in love with this douche canoe.*"

But unfortunately, that didn't occur.

I even demanded that he reveal something horrible about himself.

No such luck.

He had to be all professional and compassionate and normal and make me fall for

him even harder.

Bastard.

At the end of that session (after I proclaimed my infatuation), we agreed to make a longer break between seeing each other - on my demand. I was hoping my feelings would somehow dissolve and disappear if I didn't see him for two months.

Of course that did not happen. I was obsessed more than ever. My feelings have progressed from wanting to talk to him forever to wanting to fuck him senseless forever.

I've had so many dreams of us having the best, wild sex (mostly on different surfaces in his office). Just thinking about the obscene, dirty things he did to me in those dreams were making me wet. I wanted him desperately. I've never experienced that kind of lust before.

Also, sometime during the past two months, I convinced myself that he must be feeling something, *anything* towards me as well. It just didn't seem possible to me that I'm going out of my mind and he's just completely ambivalent.

The lies we tell ourselves.

CHAPTER 4

I have difficulty deciding what to wear for the "reunion" therapy session with Michael tonight. It's an ongoing dilemma - I want to wear something subtly sexy, but casual. I can't show that I'm trying too hard to look nice, but at the same time, I want to look *really* nice.

The result is the scene that repeats itself every time I get to see him - I'm sitting in my underwear amid a pile of clothes and despairing.

In the end, I decided to go all out with my outfit.

If I'm going to suffer through this attraction, he will not be spared.

I chose the skirt that I sewed last week when I accidentally came across this beautiful fabric printed with retro comics (shorter in the front,

longer in the back); a black square neckline top (that is quite revealing and can't seem to hold my lacy bra completely inside at all times); polka dot stockings and ankle boots with high heels.

I look at myself in the mirror.

Ok, this is definitely *not* appropriate for a doctor's appointment, but sanity is currently sitting tied in the corner and weeping.

I guess this is it.

CHAPTER 5

This is a complete failure.

I actually tried to extort a hug from him when he opened the door, with my witty - "Oh, my God, Michael, I really missed you. How can we not hug now?"

(Pathetic, I know.)

But alas, he sidestepped me with a smile and smooth - "Well, like this." and gave me a stupid handshake.

Every second of my miserable performance (consisting of me basically talking to him about sex and how much I want him) is so embarrassing. He's frozen in stone in front of me. A blank, cold wall without a trace of human emotion behind it.

I even threw out the "I'm wet right now" card on the table, and still nothing.

I have a feeling he just wants me out of his space and that this show that I presented is such a bother to him. But he's a professional, so he bears with me through it all. I have no idea what I was thinking, coming here like this - like I'm so irresistible that he will forget about his wife, and his career and just take me there on the couch.

Or on his desk.

Or against the wall.

Nothing happens.

CHAPTER 6

I come home feeling defeated and empty.

I can't go on like this.

The haze has lifted and mortification is creeping in slowly, but with force. The part of me that advised against this whole charade is laughing its ass off and singing "*I told you so*" on repeat.

I'm so jealous of his wife.

I don't even know her, but I've decided that she doesn't deserve him. She doesn't deserve to have *all* of him, not just bits and pieces he sometimes almost unwillingly throws into our conversation.

Every small, personal information I find out about him, I cherish like a precious gift and before I fall asleep at night, I carefully pack those jewels in the Michael box in my head.

A part of me is always conscious of the fact that I'm going mental over my psychiatrist, but there's no stopping this out-of-control beast that I've become.

Also, I'm so angry.

At myself, him, his wife, who the fuck knows, it doesn't matter anyway. I've regressed to primal, basic feelings of anger and jealousy.

I really can't go on like this.

I take my phone and start searching for a therapist in the area.

Female therapist.

I can't take any chances of this happening again with someone else. After a short research, I chose one that has a warm smile and kind eyes in her website picture, named Sarah, and contacted her for an appointment.

I will stop seeing Michael.

I have to.

I finally breathe a little easier.

CHAPTER 7

One year later

The summer is burning down on us.

Days are hot, sticky and heavy - only nights offer a reprieve.

My whole week was extra miserable because I had food poisoning (I'm never eating sushi again) and was on antibiotics.

But besides that, I must admit that I *finally* felt like a new person - rejuvenated and ready to embrace whatever the future decides to throw at me.

Sarah, my therapist, was pure gold. She helped me grow in so many ways. The most important fact - I didn't fall in love with her.

I hadn't seen Michael for almost a year and my feelings were fading.

I still occasionally looked for a glimpse of him when I happened to be in "his" area of town.

So what, it's not a big deal.

Don't judge me.

It's strange how I never, ever saw him again after that last session.

My friend Luke is having a gig tonight, so I decided that it's the perfect opportunity to get out of my apartment after a week of lying in bed.

They are playing in a club that's famous for skyrocketing indie bands.

I love that kind of place - you can often find yourself in the presence of greatness being born before your eyes. For me, there was no bigger enjoyment than discovering those unpolished gems, before they became diamonds and of course, writing about them.

I'm going to put a little effort into my outfit this evening, for no particular reason. A girl has to look hot just for herself from time to time.

I peruse my wardrobe, throwing potential options haphazardly on the bed when I come

across my vintage comic printed skirt. I haven't worn it since the epic debacle.

Tonight will be the night to rehabilitate it. I will create new, *nice* memories wearing it. I nod my head to confirm this thought and take said skirt from the closet.

Then I decided to fully recreate the outfit I had on me that evening, complete with the polka dot stockings and black revealing top.

When in Rome...

I twist my hair in a retro hairdo and put on mean eyeliner.

I'm just finishing the last touches on my makeup, when my friend Kelly rings the door, mumbling a few angry-sounding words. She's pissed about something, but it's her usual behavior, so I don't pay much attention to her rant, as I lock my apartment and we head downstairs.

The sun is setting over the vibrant streets of the city, while Kelly and I make our way to the club, eager for a night of drinking and dancing.

We step inside and the sultry jazz notes fill the air, mingling with the joyful chatter. The dimly lit interior is adorned with colorful

murals and strings of twinkling lights, creating a cozy yet electric atmosphere.

We miraculously find a table near the stage, and order cocktails. With each sip, I feel the coolness wash over me, a welcome relief from the summer heat.

As Luke's band starts to play, I can't help but sway to the rhythm of the music. They are really good and I make a few notes about them in my writing app.

At one point, Kelly pulls me to say something in my ear, and as I turn towards her, I freeze like a deer caught in headlights, paralyzed by a familiar face and hazel eyes that still occasionally haunt my dreams.

Michael.

He's here.

Low lights are making shadows dance on his beautiful face, while he watches me intently and sips his beer. I can't break away from his mesmerizing gaze and like a moth to the flame; I shimmy around confused Kelly and go to him. He's got a strange twinkle in his eyes like he knows a secret that I'm suddenly dying to uncover.

"Fancy meeting you here," I say with a smile like we're old friends.

"I'm here celebrating my divorce."

His answer is cold and detached like he doesn't have a care in the world. I, on the other hand, am completely dumbfounded by his way of greeting. A simple "Hello" before the divorce bomb would have been nice.

"Can I buy you a drink?" he asks. Somehow, I can't connect this behavior to the person that I met last year.

"You're... *celebrating* alone?" I wonder out loud.

"I had a feeling that I was going to meet someone who would fit the occasion perfectly. And here you are." He smiles mischievously and signals the waiter.

I guess I'm "celebrating" with him. I have no willpower or ability to make decisions at the moment. I'm just trying to absorb as much as I can of this surprising opportunity.

"I'll have another beer and the lady will have...?"

"Cranberry vodka."

"Cranberry vodka," he repeats after me and the waiter goes to prepare our drinks.

I feel hot and my skin is too tight. Apparently, my feelings did *not* fade. All the images from my dreams of us together are playing out in my head and I'm burning inside and out.

He knows it, I can tell by his mesmerizing smirk.

But, this time I can also see the same fire reflected at me. There's no wall - his desire is plainly written in his hungry expression.

"I was worried about you. You just severed all contact without a word of explanation and disappeared. But you know I couldn't contact you," he says this, not looking at me anymore.

The band is having a break, so the conversation is a bit easier, but somehow more intense with the slow jazz background music.

"Yeah, sorry about that. I just couldn't see you anymore. It was all a bit too much for me in the end."

I shrug like it's not a big deal - like I didn't grieve and suffer for months after I stopped seeing him.

I don't think he's satisfied with my answer, but he doesn't comment on anything else on the matter.

We stand for a few moments in silence. I'm wiping perspiration from my glass with my thumb when he says quietly - "Nice outfit."

His eyes are drinking in every inch of me and I shiver in response.

"Thanks... Oh my God, I wore the same outfit the last time we saw each other. I swear - I have other clothes." I force-laugh and try to diffuse the intenseness that's building up between us.

The band returns for the second set. Although the club is filled with people and noise, a strange vacuum bubble seems to be enveloping us. I can't concentrate on anything else. I'm hyper-aware of his every breath, the way his lips touch the beer bottle, how his muscles seem tense, like any moment now he's going into "fight or flight" mode.

A tap on my shoulder startles me, and I see Kelly behind me.

Oh, God, I completely forgot about her.
I'm a horrible friend.

"Hey, Mark called me so I'm gonna head to his place. Enjoy the rest of your evening." Assuming by the comic wiggling of her eyebrows and not-so-subtle head nudge towards Michael, she's not mad about me leaving her alone. I'll find a way to make it up to her.

"I'll try."

I think my smile is eager and terrified at the same time. Even though I intend to take advantage of this occasion however I can, I'm not sure I can do that without being hurt in the end.

She frowns for a second and says - "Call me when you get home, ok?"

"Ok, don't worry. Say "Hello" to Mark for me." We air-kiss and she leaves the club.

I realize that I didn't introduce them. It's like there's a fog around my head.

"That was my best friend Kelly. I mentioned her a few times during our sessions."

"I remember."

"So, divorce, huh?" I ask awkwardly.

"Actually, we're not divorced yet - just separated. She filed for divorce a few months ago, but it's still not finalized," his answer is

distant and stiff, but there's an undercurrent of anger and a brooding aura enveloping him.

My first urge is to try and give some words of comfort, but drinks are already affecting my judgment and frankly, I don't care about his marriage. I just want to think about myself tonight and take what is presented to me on a silver platter.

"So, I can then assume you're *fair game* tonight?" I try to joke and flirt at the same time. He whips his head my way and then chuckles.

"Can't believe I forgot how direct you are. Well, I guess I am "fair game"," he air quotes.

I don't want to restrain the smile that spreads across my face - it's like Christmas morning and I'm finally getting the gift that I fantasized about for an entire year.

His gaze turns fierce and just like that; I have the urge to climb him like a tree in the middle of a club full of people.

I have to touch him *now*; I can't wait a second longer. My hand moves on its own, to feel the stubble on his cheek, like I imagined doing so many times. He closes his eyes and leans into my caress. It's a strange kind of

intimacy that I realize I don't want to feel, so I withdraw my hand and ask breathlessly - "My place?"

He reaches and intertwines his fingers with mine - "Lead the way."

The humid air wraps around us as we get out of the club. The energy of our finally released attraction pulses in the air, infusing every moment with a sense of endless possibilities.

CHAPTER 8

We're groping each other wildly while we shuffle from the front door to the living room. The clothes get discarded on the way. If I thought our first time having sex was going to be a gentle, loving affair, I would be sorely disappointed now, because it's clear that the months of pent-up frustration and endless longing have made us refer to our primordial state.

He rips my bra in one swift movement and directs his attention to my breasts. I can't seem to get enough air in my lungs, taking swift, rapid breaths. He starts kissing and nipping the skin of my neck and shoulder and I moan so loudly that I think the neighbors are definitely tuned in on us now. Somehow, the thought of an audience makes me even wetter, if possible.

Huh, *interesting*.

He reaches my breast and sucks hard my already pebbled nipple.

He seems to know I need it to be like this, on the verge of pain and out of control.

I'm moaning in abandon again. The noises coming from us are almost animalistic.

His hand is massaging my other breast and then slowly starts to descend lower, over my stomach, and sneaks between my legs. At the direct contact of his fingers and my wet flesh, my knees buckle, but he holds me firmly pressed up against him, as he whisper-kisses the soft and abused flesh of my breast.

I can't make out clear sentences, just fragments that my overheated mind somehow connects into one string - "I've got you, let go, I'll take care of you..."

His fingers are doing magical things and God, we should have done this earlier, so much time wasted.

He slowly pushes one finger inside me and I see stars. Through the daze, I can hear him growling at finding me so drenched, and I would be embarrassed if I wasn't so turned on.

He pumps one, two times with agonizing languidness but then pushes another finger and starts pumping without restraint. I'm trembling and the orgasm is swiftly building up.

"You're so wet. Is all that for me?" he says in my ear, then bites my earlobe when I take too long to respond. "I asked - is all that for me?"

"Yes, yes... it's for you."

We're grinding our bodies, he's still pushing and pulling his two fingers, and I'm ready to explode.

"Come for me. I've looked forward to this for so long." His husky words throw me over the edge and I fall apart in his hands.

He withdraws his fingers from my raw flesh and licks them like he's savoring a delicious dessert.

"You taste like honey."

It's the most erotic sight I've ever seen, and my muscles clench instinctively. I'm still not satisfied, it's not enough. I'm so empty and I need him inside me now.

"That was so hot. Can you please, please, fuck me now? I can't wait any longer." I'm trembling under his perusal and pleading

shamelessly.

"I love to hear you beg, but no need for that. I already planned on fucking you, as soon as I spotted you in the club."

In one swift movement, he throws me on the bed and climbs over me.

"You have no idea how many times I jerked off to the image of you spread out before me like this," he says between kisses.

He's clasping my body with urgency and his touch transports me to another world, where worries and unforgiving choices fade away and all that matters is this moment of utter bliss.

"You thought you could just waltz into my office, say all those things, put ideas in my mind, and disappear. You knew this was going to happen eventually, didn't you?"

I'm moving restlessly beneath him, scratching his back and leaving trail marks, trying to pull him closer.

"Is this what you want?" he smirks and nudges his cock at my opening. An involuntary moan escapes me.

"Fuck, I don't have a condom."

His words sober me up a bit, but I'm undeterred. "I'm on the pill. I haven't been with anyone in over a year, I'm clean. We don't need it if you're also clean. I trust you," the words are tumbling from my mouth.

We're suspended in time, looking at each other, until he finally makes the decision and plunges into me full tilt.

Yes.

Oh, God, yes.

It burns so good.

I'm gasping for air, while he repeats the motion over and over, increasing his speed.

"You're so tight," he says between clenched teeth.

Everything is way better than any of my dreams have portrayed. Beads of sweat are forming on his delectable skin and I want to lick every drop, I'm becoming feral.

We flip over and I start riding him untamed. He massages my breast with one hand, the other holding my hip and directing my moves. It spurs me on and I ride him harder. My orgasm is building with skyrocketing force, and I know I'm going to come again soon. We're both

panting rapidly, our bodies glistening from extortion and heat.

He puts his hand on my neck and squeezes with just enough pressure that I'm on the verge of not breathing. Of course, he knows that will drive me out of my mind. I've talked about choking fetish in sessions several times.

"Look at me. Don't close your eyes. I want to see when you come on my cock," he commands and his authoritative voice vibrates through me, followed by an earth-shattering orgasm.

I black out.

He accelerates his movements and uses both hands on my hips to press me firmer, but then his motions become jerky and I can feel he's coming inside of me and it's glorious.

I savor every last second of it and when his body stops moving, I lower myself over him, just listening to his erratic heartbeat.

He's lazily drawing patterns on my bare back. We're sticky and sweaty, but I can't accumulate enough energy to move.

"Sooo..." I drawl.

"Sooo?" he repeats while still caressing down my spine. It's a wonderful feeling; I never want him to stop.

"I can check *that* off my bucket list. To have amazing sex with my psychiatrist - done and done."

I'm smiling into his chest.

"Are you ok?" I ask after he stays silent for a little too long.

It's a bit funny that I'm concerned about his feelings after what we did. It's usually the woman's MO to feel vulnerable after having sex, but I actually feel empowered now that I finally took what I've wanted for so long.

"Yeah, of course. Why do you ask?"

"It's just that you have this sad-angry energy around you. Don't get me wrong, it worked out wonderfully for me, but I feel like *you* could maybe benefit from conversation."

He's still silently moving his hand over my skin.

"C'mon, let me be your psychiatrist, I won't even charge you for a session," I joke and his subtle smile makes an appearance.

"Is it the divorce? You said that she filed the papers. What happened, did she cheat on you?" I'm trying to provoke him into opening up to me, but at the same time, for some unknown reason, I want to ruin this semblance of closeness between us.

His answer to this question will give an insight into our potential relationship or lack of one. I'm not allowing myself to hope for anything.

"Why would you think that she cheated on me?"

Hm..

Answering the question with another question - avoidance.

He will not open up to me.

I expected this.

Might as well be completely honest.

"How to explain it... It's just a hunch. When I was internet stalking you, I told you I was also checking if I could find out more about your family - anything that would give me insight into your life. This was happening during the pinnacle of my obsession with you and I'm a bit embarrassed to say that I kept track of your

wife also. At that time, I noticed that she was on social networks, but not particularly active, whereas she kept changing her profile photo on WhatsApp. It led me to believe that there was someone of interest to her there, maybe she was chatting with someone, I don't know. From my experience, only women who want to get someone's attention do that, especially on messaging apps."

"You have her number?" he asks.

"Not anymore, but yes, I've had it. Don't act so shocked, this is the twenty-first century, you can find out anything you want if you look hard enough."

"She didn't cheat on me. At least, as much as I know. Regarding the reasons for our separation - it wouldn't be fair and respectful to you and her, for me to talk about it now. I'm sure you can understand. We can talk about something else? Or not talk at all," he says and rolls me on my back, inserting himself between my legs. He starts kissing my neck and it's delightful, but we both really need a shower before another round.

"How about we take a shower together and see where the mood takes us next?"

I'm already wiggling to get out of bed, so he takes the hint and follows me to the bathroom.

Hot water is cascading down our bodies as we wash each other.

I can't help but notice that he's hard again. I'm salivating at the sight of his glorious, perfect cock. I press my body to his and step on my toes to reach his ear.

"Do you know that I've dreamt and fantasized a million times about sucking you dry? Brace yourself."

I nuzzle his ear and start my descent down his magnificent torso.

I drop to my knees in front of him and take him in my hand, bringing his head to my lips and licking small, short licks. His breathing is rapid and erratic and his hands are fisted by his side.

Beautiful.

After I've had enough of teasing him, I take his cock in my mouth as far as it can go until I trigger my gag reflex. He lets out an animalistic sound and puts both his hands in my hair.

Yes.

I'm so turned on, I want to swallow him alive.

I continue bobbing my head with the increasing pressure of his hands. He's speeding up the tempo, saliva is dripping down my chin and I want to be completely ruined by him.

I want to take more, I want to take everything.

He abruptly pulls himself out of my mouth and brings me up. We're kissing under the water spray like there's no tomorrow and then he roughly turns me and presses me from behind.

"I need to fuck you hard now, can you handle it?" His hips are already moving against my ass.

"Yes, yes, please do it, please," I'm meowing and my words are unintelligible but he understands me and sinks into me with a groan.

He starts fucking me with unyielding intensity. One hand is holding my hip bruisingly and the other is around my shoulders and neck, pinning me to him. He grunts in my ear as his tempo increases.

I'm aroused beyond belief and when he licks my earlobe and growls "You're mine now", I believe him for one painful second, then my orgasm barrels through me and I fall apart. He quickly follows and I'm sure the skin on my hip will be a lovely purplish reminder of his orgasm. We are panting, crushed to the wall tiles.

"Holy hell, what was that," somehow I manage to join words together. I can feel his smile on my shoulder before he extracts himself from me and turns off the water. We dry off and drop on the bed like two stones. I snuggle to him, throwing my leg and arm across his body and my head on his shoulder.

"I'm not deluding myself that we can be more than this, and I realize that all we have is one night - that this will never happen again. Will you just hold me until I fall asleep and then you can go," I say drowsily.

I'm conflicted, because my fragile ego wants him to say that we have a future together, that this is just the beginning of something wonderful. I hold my breath, waiting for his answer.

He is silent for a few moments and then whispers a simple - "As you wish," kisses my hair and hugs me closer.

A single tear rolls down my cheek and that's all I'm going to give to the "what ifs" that are multiplying in my head.

His breathing slowly lulls me to dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER 9

I wake up alone in my bed.

Morning light is shining through my balcony doors and illuminating messy sheets wrapped around my body. I stand still for a few bits, trying to discern if Michael is here, but all that greets me is deafening silence.

I'm not sure how I feel about it.

I decide that a hot shower has priority over everything else right now, but as I get up, I see a folded note on my bedside table.

How very old school, movie cliché of him.

"Last night was amazing.

Remember - you are worthy of love and deserve someone who can give you the world.

We both know I can't be that person and I'm immensely sorry for that fact.

Thank you for everything."

I reread the note a few times.

I expected a similar reaction. Actually, I thought that he would just leave in the middle of the night without a word, and that's fine.

Maybe this was just an itch he had to scratch.

Whatever the reason, I'm not blaming him for anything. I took what I needed from him and I had zero expectations for the morning after. I knew that there was no future for us, so this is just a welcome confirmation that I was right.

I take a shower and let the hot water wash away the last remnants of feelings, thoughts, and desires connected to Michael.

I got what I longed for and now it can finally, *finally* be over.

No more.

CHAPTER 10

"I'm late. That is - my period is late," I say to a confused-looking Kelly.

"What do you mean "late"? You mean late - *late*?" She widens her eyes and dramatically takes my hand. "Please, tell me you're not pregnant."

"I'm not pregnant," I repeat immediately, and when she releases her breath, I continue, "but I might be. So, I need you to sit with me while I take the pregnancy test I bought this morning."

She squeezes my hand in reassurance.

"But how can you be pregnant, you haven't had sex for over a year. Unless... you left out telling me about someone. Wait! No? Tell me that it wasn't the hot, married psychiatrist."

I just look at the dirty spot on my coffee table and start rubbing it with my finger.

"Oh, my God, you had sex with him that night and you didn't tell me! Bad friend!" she scolds me like I'm a misbehaving child. "Serves you right, if you're pregnant. But how could you both be so stupid, not to use protection?! I mean, he's a doctor, for Christ's sake, I'm sure he had sexual education at some point in his life!" she's going into full rant mode, but I raise my hand to stop her.

"I'm on the pill. You know that. I have no idea how this is possible." I really hope that my hormones are just going crazy from the abstinence.

"Let me take the test and then we can discuss more, I just need your *quiet* support now."

I go to the bathroom and pee on the stick, then go to the living room to anxiously wait it out with her.

My mind is reeling with possibilities.

In the meantime, Kelly is scrolling on her phone.

"When I said quiet support, I didn't mean for you to tune out completely," I grumble.

"Shut up, I'm googling you. Did you take

seizure medication, antifungal medication, or antibiotics when you had dirty, secret sex with your doctor?" she asks me, while still looking at her phone.

"No, I didn't and would you stop calling him *my* doctor, he's not *my* anything."

"What about herbal remedies?" she continues reading from her phone.

"What are herbal remedies? Never mind, I didn't take anyth... Oh, no! Fuck, I did take antibiotics. You know, I've had food poisoning from that awful sushi the week before we've gone out." My expression is transmitting the panic that is overfilling my brain when the timer on my phone starts ringing.

"It's time," she says.

We go to the bathroom and what do you know - two lines on the stick are screaming at us.

I'm pregnant.

Anti-fucking-biotics.

CHAPTER 11

"What are you going to do?" Kelly asks with desperation when we sit on the couch in the living room.

"Right now, I need a cigarette and some coffee. I would prefer a stiff drink, but I suppose I can't have that for a while."

"You can't have cigars either."

"Fuck me," I say while massaging my temples.

"So, you're keeping it?"

I don't know what I'm going to do, but I don't want to have an abortion. And, despite the panic this discovery has brought up, I feel protective of the little seed that's growing inside of me.

"I'm keeping it. There must be a greater reason for this situation and I'm deciding to

trust the universe."

"Ok, ok. That's good. We'll figure everything out," she suddenly seems excited by the prospect of a baby entering our lives. "I'm going to be an aunt," she squeals. "When are you telling Doctor Michael?"

Oh, Michael.

I forgot about him.

What a mess.

I can't imagine what that conversation would be like and I realize I don't relish being a participant in it.

"I'm not telling him. I think he wouldn't be especially eager to be involved anyway. I would prefer not to look like I somehow did this on purpose, to try and tie him to me. As a matter of fact, I would hate that with a force of a thousand suns."

"But you have to tell him eventually, yeah? He has the right to know."

"I don't know. What if he's back with his wife? This could completely ruin their marriage, his life. I'm not going to do that."

I'm justifying my choice this way, but the main reason is that I don't want him in my life

in any way. Although I have been trying to convince myself that his leaving in the middle of the night didn't affect me, I was, in fact, in a shitty mood for almost a month and a half now.

He doesn't deserve to know about this child, after the way he left me.

I'm contradicting myself, I know, but my body is producing all sorts of hormones and they're messing with my head.

I *want* to be mean and spiteful.

Kelly shows me his Facebook page, and sure enough - he's happily hugging his wife in his profile picture.

My heart constricts for a second, but that's all I'm going to warrant.

I'm over it. (Sure, you are.)

"It's decided then," I nod. "Now, can you get me that coffee?"

CHAPTER 12

Months are passing in a blur.

Morning sickness is a bitch, especially when it lasts all throughout the pregnancy. What is the point of throwing up *nothing*?!

My sense of smell has gone crazy. I'm hyper-aware of every little detail that makes my environment.

Angie (that will be my little girl's name) is restless and she's kicking the life out of my internal organs.

These seven months of my pregnancy had ups and downs, especially when you take into consideration the circumstances of my life now and the influence of hormones on my body.

Kelly is still pressuring me to call Michael and tell him about our baby in the hopes of happily ever after, bless her romantic heart.

I have to be honest - there were a few times when I was scared shitless about the prospect of raising a child alone, and I was so close to succumbing to the urge to call him and demand any kind of help he was willing to offer.

I've developed a protocol for these situations.

First, I would check his social media and confirm that he's still married.

He is still married of course.

Although, so many photos picturing love, googly eyes, and happiness of him and his wife seem a bit forced. I forbid myself from developing theories about that.

Second, I would look in the mirror and remind myself that I have friends who are ready to jump in and assist me anytime, and I say a loud "*Thank you, stars*".

Third, I recite examples of strong single mothers who managed to raise their children and live a full life. If they can do it, I can do it.

Last night was one of those times when I wanted to call him. I woke up around three - Angie was partying pretty hard inside my stomach, I was thirsty and had to go the

bathroom. When I got out of bed, I experienced a fainting spell, lost balance, and landed on my ass.

The breath left my body from the force of the fall. Panic rose quickly, and I felt my lungs constricting - all the air in the room somehow vanished. My arms locked, I lost all feeling in my legs and I thought - "That's it, I'm going to die. I'm going to die."

The whole terrifying experience lasted for about fifteen minutes, which was equivalent to eternity. It was the worst feeling in the world, and I later understood that I'd had my first panic attack.

My finger hovered over his name on my phone, but in reality, I had no idea what would I say, even if I got the courage to press Call. I threw the phone down and started crying - defeated, angry tears streaming down my face. After a while, I managed to get myself to bed and somehow fall asleep again.

Another problem was that I had to get off Prozac. In the first few months, I was worried that bulimia would make an appearance, but any time the urge to throw up took hold of me,

the mere thought that I may be harming my child brought clarity to me and stopped self-destructive sensations.

There was something more important in my life now, something that rises above the uncontrollable need to be skinny, loved, and admired by everyone. I've long realized that the basic line of my personality is the lack of self-esteem and the absence of love for myself - which sometimes turns to outright hatred.

It's an endless empty well inside of me that I try to fill by pouring food and other people's emotions, but unfortunately, it never gets replenished.

Now I'm beginning to feel something completely different.

The empty well is not significant anymore.

I have a tiny human being that needs me sane and collected, and I will do anything and everything to be what she needs.

CHAPTER 13

I have a doctor's appointment scheduled for this afternoon. It's a good thing too, since the whole fall/panic attack happened last night.

My friend Luke picks me up in his beat-up Chevy. He's dressed in ripped jeans, a black T-shirt, and a leather jacket like the rock star that he is. Shaggy, black hair falling all around his face, aviator glasses covering his turquoise eyes, and a trademark, panty-dropping smile lighting up his face.

"Hey, gorgeous. Hop or better said - *wobble* in," he rasps and throws a still-lit cigarette through the window.

"Oh, for fuck's sake, Luke. You're taking me to the doctor, not a club. And smoking, really? Also, littering. Can you be more disgusting?"

"You love me, babe, don't pretend. So, what are we doing today - are you spreading your legs or doing a boring ultrasound?" he asks, while the car speeds up.

"Charming," I roll my eyes. "Today is ultrasound, but you will wait in the hall. I don't want to listen to your "funny" comments. When I say "funny", I mean embarrassing."

"Your wish is my command," he says with a wink.

Luke is a bit of a manwhore.

His tall, dark and handsome good looks, combined with playing in a band that's on its way to stardom, ensure that the ladies are lining up outside his bedroom. We never went beyond the friend zone (because we've known each other since junior high and have zero chemistry), but he just can't turn off the flirting mode.

As we enter the hospital, I tell him about my panic attack and he comfortably takes my hand, while we walk around the reception to the elevators.

But then I hear my name and turn around, and there he is in the flesh - Michael, looking

hot as Hades in his doctor's white coat, standing a few feet away.

I watch as his mask of pleasant detachment transforms to shock when my jacket opens and my almost eight-month pregnancy makes an appearance.

"Hello, Michael," I try to sound calm, while my whole body is vibrating.

He scans me from head to toe again, and then focuses on Luke, who is still holding my hand.

"I believe congratulations are in order," he is fake-smiling now and his face is wiped clean of *all* emotions.

Luke starts to say something, but I interrupt him.

"Thanks. This is my boyfriend, Luke," I gesture to him with my free hand, "and this is Doctor Mills. Remember, I mentioned him a few times. He was my psychiatrist for a while," I say to Luke and he makes such a comic face of recognition, I want to faceplant to the floor. They shake hands and awkwardness joins us like a fourth person standing there.

"Are you well?" Michael asks, his full attention on me again.

"Yes. I'm perfect. We're perfect. Everything is perfect," I say in one breath like I'm pronouncing one of those long German words containing a couple of words mashed together.

Now would be a great time for a few Marvel characters to burst in and make a distraction from my mortifying behavior.

Thor, perhaps.

Or Captain America.

But unfortunately, no superhero comes to my rescue.

"So, you're working here now?" I ask the obvious.

"Yes, I transferred about two months ago."

"Good. That's good. Great. Perfect." My brain damage makes another appearance.

Oh, God, *shut up*.

"Hey, babe, we should go if we don't want to be late. Nice to meet you, man. Have a good day," Luke says and swiftly drags me to the elevator, not giving Michael or me a chance to say anything else.

Michael is still standing in the same spot, keenly looking at me, until the metal doors close and the shining surface reflects my bewildered expression at me.

"Jesus, that was intense. So, that's the guy, huh?" Luke says softly.

"Yeah. Fuck my life, he's working here of all the places. I can't transfer to another hospital now, just to avoid him," I say, although the thought of finding a new obstetrician had crossed my mind as soon as he confirmed my fear that he's working here.

"At least he thinks the child is mine, my lovely girlfriend," he makes a kissy face.

"Shut up, I feel bad as it is. Do you think the universe is trying to tell me something?" I say as we get out of the elevator on our floor. He opens his mouth to speak, but I interrupt him again - "Oh, no! Kelly cannot know about this! I won't hear the end of it - about destiny, fate, blah, blah. Promise me you won't tell her."

"I won't. But I have to say that I agree with her about Michael knowing the child is his."

"Shhh.. Somebody could hear you." I turn left and right, completely paranoid.

"Ok, ok, calm down, I won't talk about it again. Let's do the boring ultrasound and get out of here. Girlfriend," he says as we enter the doctor's office.

CHAPTER 14

After that visit to the hospital and nearing the end of my pregnancy, my doctor's appointments were frequent and always stressful for me, because there was a chance I could bump into Michael.

Also, the prospect of seeing him put pressure on me to look *nice* (rather than just presentable, which was the case previously).

You see, this is not a good kind of pressure when you're carrying a seven-pound baby in your stomach, your feet are swollen and overall you look like a hippo having a bad day.

The only saving grace is the fact that the weather is still cold, so I use the opportunity to layer up to the point that only the top part of my face is visible when I go to the hospital.

My due date is next week and I have to do another ultrasound to check if the baby changed position (it's now facing the wrong way - so-called breech position). If it's still in breech position we might have to schedule a C-section, so I will have to finish some formalities at the reception desk regarding that. I don't like that I will be out "in the open space" where the probability of seeing Michael is higher.

But I soon realized that I didn't need to worry about probabilities because he was *one hundred percent* standing in the hospital hall facing the entrance. As soon as he spots me, he comes my way with determination. What is happening?!

"Hi," he says when he reaches me.

"Umm, hi?"

"Can we talk after you finish your appointment?"

There's restlessness in his whole demeanor, it's pulsating around him in waves.

I have a feeling that he's ready to wait for me right outside the doctor's office.

God, this can only mean one thing - he somehow connected the dots and wants to know the truth.

"OK. Sure. They have a cafeteria on the first floor, right? We can meet there?" I can't run from this now.

"That'll be great. Text me when you finish and I'll be there," his gaze flickers to my stomach, then he turns abruptly and leaves.

I float in a soundless bubble through my examination, not hearing a word my OB is telling me. My mind is busy rehearsing possible conversations, my nerves are frayed with dread and anticipation.

I text him after my examination and count the steps to the cafeteria, trying to prolong the time until I have to face him.

I notice him easily - sitting at the far corner table, a cup of coffee in his hand.

Almost all tables are empty and this is a bit of a relief. If something dramatic happens, there will not be many witnesses.

He gets up as I come near and pulls the chair out for me.

I murmur "Thanks."

"Would you like something to drink?" he asks.

"Just water maybe."

"I'll go get it."

Ugh, the conversation is so stilted; discomfort is dripping from every word.

"They only had this one, I hope it's ok."

"Yeah, it's fine. Thanks." I'm gripping the bottle like it's my lifeline.

I'm so nervous. This cannot be good for the baby. I take a deep breath and try to focus on my breathing like we learned in Lamaze class.

"Is the baby mine?" he goes straight at it.

I don't know what to say. I can't look at him; I'm embarrassed for some reason.

"I looked at your medical record, the date of conception matches almost perfectly with the night when we slept together. Without protection."

"You looked through my medical records," I say outraged. "That's an infringement of my patients' rights. I could sue you."

His gaze turns razor sharp, fists clenched on the table.

"Try it. I dare you," he's barely moving his lips while saying this, he's so pissed off.

This is going nowhere. I needed to calm down, so he could too.

"Sorry. I'm sorry. Of course, I'm not going to sue you. That would cost like a bazillion dollars and probably couldn't be proven in the end. The system always works for itself. This one time..."

"Is she mine?" he raises his voice to a roar and I stop my fussy rambling.

The few people loitering about the cafeteria turn our way.

Come on, earthquake - now's the good time for the floor to open up beneath me.

"Yes," I whisper.

The surface of the table suddenly looks so interesting, even though it's plain white, patternless plastic. A minute passes in dead silence.

"That's all you have to say?" He's still upset, but he's talking normally again.

"What would you want me to say?"

"What would..." He shakes his head, smiling bitterly. "You're unbelievable. What would I want you to say?! I don't know. Let's see,

maybe - when were you planning on telling me?"

"I wasn't."

"What?" Disbelief colors his stricken expression.

I clear my throat and repeat, "I wasn't going to tell you anything."

"Why? How could you do that to me? Don't you think I have the right to know I have a child?"

So many emotions are blurring his dark cinnamon eyes, but deep sadness underlines them all.

"I didn't want to ruin your life. It was my fault anyway - I was taking antibiotics and they affected the pill's efficiency. I had no right to mess up everything for you. I saw that you were back with your wife," I choke out. "I just couldn't, I couldn't tell you."

We've been sitting in silence for a while now. I have no idea what to say anymore. I'm surprised I managed to say the few sentences that I did.

"When is your delivery date? I want to be there," he says decidedly.

"What? Why? No."

"Yes. You took almost nine months from me, I will not let you take anything else."

Oh, great, anger is back.

"Listen, this interaction is extremely exhausting, the chair is uncomfortable, my back is hurting and I have to pee. So, take some time to process everything and we can talk again, but now I really have to go."

I scrape my chair on the floor as I get up and the sound ricochets around the empty cafeteria.

"Let me give you a lift home," he walks with me.

"No, thanks. I just called an Uber. Please, please, give me some space and we can talk another time."

"All right," he reluctantly says and stops near the reception desk, as I walk by him to the exit.

I can almost physically feel his fixated stare burning down my neck.

CHAPTER 15

Eventually, I told Kelly about recent developments. I knew she would be happy about it and I hoped that her positive energy could somehow rub off on me.

I was miserable, confused, and frightened of the future.

What if he tries to take my child from me?

What if he leaves his wife and wants to be with me just because of Angie?

What if he despises me and just wants to be a part of her life, not mine?

All kinds of (mostly troubled) thoughts passed through my foggy mind.

Kelly did manage to throw a bucket of sound judgment on me and extinguish the flames of my anxiety.

She convinced me to allow him to be present

during the C-section that my OB scheduled, with the condition that he would leave the operating room at any time if his presence disturbed me.

I also promised to name him as Angie's father if he wants that and allow him to be a part of her life in some capacity for starters.

But I was a chicken shit coward to tell him all of this in person, so I wrote him an email.

Like an adult.

Don't laugh.

Per my insistence, he also replied via email and we agreed that he would meet me next Thursday, when I'm to be admitted to the hospital.

I already got used to the inevitableness that nothing goes as planned in my life, so it came as no surprise that my water broke on Wednesday evening, during the particularly interesting episode of Too Hot to Handle.

Yes, I watch trash TV.

I'm nine months pregnant, big as a whale, grumpy and somehow horny, so cool off with the self-righteousness.

I call Kelly and we rush to the hospital together. While I'm filling some last-minute forms at the reception desk, Kelly calls Michael from my phone.

She's quick on her toes, I can give her that.

The nurse takes me to my room and my doctor comes to examine me. I thank my lucky stars that he is working now, so he can perform whatever procedure he deems the best at the moment.

I'm scared out of my mind, but I trust him. He asks me about contractions, but I don't have them yet. I can read his expression, he's worried, although not overly so.

The baby is still in a breech position.

He's recommending a C-section, but ultimately the decision is on me.

Michael bursts into the room and disrupts our peaceful conversation.

"Are you ok?" he asks, scanning my body for distress.

"Yes, I'm fine."

"And the baby?"

"Also fine."

He lets out a breath and turns to my OB.

"I'm Doctor Michael Mills, I'm the father."

They shake hands.

"You recently came here from Central, right?"

"Yes, three months ago," he answers. "Can you please update me on the situation here?" He indicates in my general direction.

My doctor repeats a shortened version of what he said to me.

"What would you recommend us to do?" he asks in the end.

"Under the circumstances, I would recommend C-section."

"Then we'll do it," Michael answers.

"Um, hello? A pregnant lady whose belly you want to cut open is sitting right here. Not sure how you can't see me, am I invisible?"

They are not amused by my attempt at a joke.

I, too, want to do what my doctor recommends, but it rubs me the wrong way how Michael just came in and presumed that he has a say in making decisions.

"I feel that you need to discuss this. I'll leave you to it, and Doctor Mills can find me when

you decide what procedure we are conducting," my OB leaves the room.

"Good work, you managed to upset him," I say accusingly.

He rubs a hand across his forehead like he's already overwhelmed by my sparkling personality.

"What do *you* want to do?"

"I want what's best for my baby."

"Our baby," he corrects me gruffly.

"If the doctor says it's a C-section, that's what we do," I answer breezily.

He looks at me completely bewildered.

"I just said that. Just five minutes ago. Why are you doing this, why are you trying to start a fight?"

"I don't know, you tell me. You're the psychiatrist."

"You don't want me here; don't want me in your life. I get that. But you have to understand and accept that we are bonded now. Let me support you through this." He changed tactics - he's now using his gentle, cajoling psychiatrist voice. He knows I can't resist him in this mode.

"Fine." I surrender grumpily.

CHAPTER 16

After some preparation, they are rolling me into the operating room. Michael is walking beside me and holding my hand. They give me a local anesthetic to numb the lower part of my body while doing the procedure. There's a stretched sheet of dark blue linen material preventing me from actually seeing what they're doing down there.

I focus on Michael when they start the process. My eyes hungrily trace every line and angle of his face. I want to memorize every detail for all eternity.

He's hovering by my side, caressing my cheek and murmuring soothing phrases I can't really understand.

I feel sleepy.

For a moment I wonder if they actually gave me general anesthesia instead of local. Then I hear my baby crying and it's the most wonderful song in the world.

We made it.

He's smiling brilliantly and I'm so happy the circumstances forced me to give that joy to him.

I want to say that to him, but I'm still so drowsy, my mouth is not working.

Suddenly I hear a loud beeping noise and everyone is rushing around the operating table, shouting unintelligible words.

Michael's expression morphs to utter terror and I wonder what is happening, but thoughts are so slow, like wading through mud.

"I hope my baby is well" blasts through my mind before I close my eyes and let the oblivion take me away.

EPILOGUE

3 years later

A beautiful golden retriever is barking and running around, disturbing the peace and quiet of the scene.

Spring just started to paint Mother Nature with its lush tint. Everything is paradoxically brimming with life force.

A sweet little girl in a baby blue dress and pigtails is sitting on a bench beside her father. She gets up, takes the flowers from him, and puts them on the cold stone.

"Happy birthday, mommy."

She turns to her father and asks - "Can I go get Bingo now, please, please, pleeeeeease?"

He's looking at some distant point solemnly, but then focuses on her and smiles.

"Yes, but don't try to ride him again. He's a dog, not a pony."

"I knooow," the little girl giggles and runs off to find her dog.

His attention falls on the string of letters written in gold.

"She reminds me of you, you know?" The words are heavy with a sorrow that seeps through every syllable.

"Every day more and more. Sometimes she looks at me and her blue eyes sparkle the same way yours did, when you talked about the things that inspired you."

He takes the other bouquet of flowers from his lap and comes near the gleaming white tombstone.

He gently arranges the flowers and whispers - "Happy birthday, love. Thank you for everything."

He straightens, wipes the grief from his face, replacing it with his glorious kind smile and calls out - "Angie, come on! Let's go home."

Ghost Hounds - When Your Shadow Touches Mine

I guess they call it hazel, the color of your eyes
I try not to notice 'cause you'll never be mine
Like an angel just walking on by
I don't follow too close
But I can't lie
Every time I turn my head
Guess I haven't learned my lesson yet

When your shadow touches mine
That's as close as we'll get
We never had a ghost of a chance
Chasin' silhouettes
Even after all this time I still shiver inside
When your shadow touches mine

You're a book that I can't open up, can't put down
Cover to cover heartbreak bound
A movie that I've seen before
I know how it ends
Can't watch it no more

Days too short, nights too long
I get lost in the darkness, before the dawn
Maybe I'm crazy, maybe I'm not
Feel like I'm losin' what I ain't got

I reach for you knowin' that you're already gone
And that just keeps me holdin' on

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing my book amidst the many great titles available. Your trust, time, and decision mean a lot to me.

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I would like to acknowledge my therapist, "Sarah", whose unwavering support has been invaluable.

Thank you!

During the creation of this book, "Sarah" suggested that I consider writing a different, happier ending. However, I chose to conclude the story as it stands. Perhaps by doing so, a part of me that remains attached to "Michael" could find closure through the death of our unnamed protagonist.

Last, but certainly not least - thank you to my dearest husband, my anchor in life's unpredictable seas - you've been the steady lighthouse guiding my ship through both serene waters and thrilling storms.

Thank you for being my rock, my love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clearly, you've sussed out that Angelynna Rot is just a pseudonym.

Let's face it - I'm a happily married mom of two adorable troublemakers, residing in a quintessential suburban bliss complete with a picket-fenced house, a mischievous Swiss shepherd, and a garden that's always in need of TLC.

For a moment, I almost forgot how good I've got it.

Out of nowhere, I stumbled upon a spark of imagination, an addictive influx of love-induced dopamine in my psychiatrist's office, of all places.

And what did I do with it?

Naturally, I turned it into a book.

Let's hope the paper can carry this burden instead of me from now on.