

Rejection Means Death

By LauraAnn Goodrich

Alex was on her date and thought she was being watched. So, in the hopes that whoever was watching her would leave, she went to the bathroom. She fixed her eye liner, fluffed her long brown hair and went back to her table. When she got there, Jack, her date was gone. Her food was in a to-go container. She looked at the table and there was a neat stack of money to pay for the meal.

Why did he leave? Who was watching me?

These were the thoughts that flashed through her mind. She was so scared, she took her food and ran to her car. She drove to her house, slightly shaking still. Once she got there, she tried to steady her nerves by relaxing when she saw a note and a stuffed animal on her coffee table. Freaked out, she reached forward and opened the note.

Even though you went out with that fool, I still love you.

She was terrified. Her instinct kicked in. She locked the doors and closed the shades and called her work friend, James. Alex had met James at the law firm they both worked at years before. She trusted him completely because he always was protective of her and so kind in all situations.

“James, I need you. Someone broke into my house,” she said, scared out of her mind.

He responded, "Okay, okay. Calm down, I'll be right there." He raced over and knocked on the door.

"Who is it?" she said, stuttering out of fear.

"It's James." She let him in. When she opened the door she starred in his gorgeous brown eyes. She felt so safe she spilled out the details.

"James. I came into my house after my date with Jack and this was on my coffee table," she said. She handed the note to him. He read the note, then he held the stuffed animal in his tanned hands. He squeezed the stuffed animal twice, then started to tear it up. Inside the white stuffing, he pulled out a camera.

"Looks like you have a stalker," he told her, "Are you going to be okay alone?"

"I-I don't know," she said. She pulled a few strands of hair up to her mouth and began absent-mindedly chewing on it.

"Do you want me to stay?" he said.

"I guess so," she replied.

They spent the next few hours sitting on the couch together watching reruns of *Riverdale*. Finally, Alex felt her eyes growing heavy and stood to go up to bed.

James moved as if he was going to follow her to her room. Noticing what he was doing, Alex handed him a pillow and blanket and pointed to the couch with a soft smile. She trudged up the stairs, fell onto her soft mattress and was asleep in moments.

In the morning, she smelled a wonderful scent of savory breakfast foods wafting into her room. She went downstairs and in the dining room there was bacon, sausage, eggs, toast, waffles, pancakes, bagels, hash, hash browns, coffee, orange juice, and milk all set out on the large kitchen table. She entered the kitchen and saw James preparing the food in a simple apron.

“I was not sure what you liked,” he said with a smile.

“Where did you get all of this?” she asked.

“I went to the store,” he said, grinning.

“Well, thank you,” she said and sat down to eat.

“Also, I made a BLT for you for lunch,” he said.

“Okay. Thanks,” Alex responded.

A few minutes later, they left for work. When they got there, she looked for Jack. She had worked with him on several cases. It was unlike him to not come in, and she still wanted answers as to why he had ditched her on their date.

As she worked on her latest client's case she felt the hair on her neck raise. She looked around but it could be any one. Three of the walls of her office were glass. It started to affect her work so she pulled the black boards around to cover the windows. Her assistant came in her office to see if she needed anything.

Her assistant asked her, “Why is it so dark in here?”

“I have a migraine.”

“Ok but I must ask, since when are you and James a thing?”

“What? We're not,” she told her assistant in confusion. Where was this coming from?

“That is not what he is saying,” her assistant said in a sarcastic tone.

Alex stormed out of the room and found James in his office. She entered, and slammed the door behind her. Pointing her finger at him, she said angrily, “I’m tired of you telling everyone that something happened last night. I thought I could trust you to help me when I needed you. I’m going home.”

“Are you sure?” he said with his charming grin.

“Yes!!” she yelled, annoyed. She could not believe what he had been saying about her to their co-workers. They were lawyers, and she liked to keep everything professional.

“Fine, just call me if anything happens,” James told her and kissed her on the cheek. Immediately, she pulled back, astonished at his behavior.

She smacked him. The sound of her hand hitting his cheek seemed to echo in the small room.

Then she said, “I will not. Pig!!”

She turned around and left him with his mouth wide open in surprise. She went home. As she was driving she thought, *I should have called the cops, not James.* She got there and she ran inside and locked the door. Not even an hour later, James showed up.

She heard him knocking on the door. Annoyed and a little frightened, she yelled, "Go away!"

"It's James."

"I SAID GO AWAY!!"

"I am here to apologize."

"There is nothing you can say to make up for this. What you said at work was unforgivable! That's our career - I don't want everyone thinking we are a couple!"

"Why is saying we like each other a crime to you?"

"Because you lied! I don't date liars."

"Open the door before I break it down!" James told her violently.

She was stunted by what he had said. She worried he'd kill her if he got to her. She made a quick plain out of fear. His mistake was giving her so much time. She had run up stairs and grabbed some clothes. While he was breaking down the door, she slipped out the back to her car. When he got inside she took off in her car. They had been friends, so he knew she had nowhere to go but the hotel. She had been an only child and her parents were dead.

The attendant said, "And your name is..?"

"Alex Rosemary, I-"

"Yes, your husband got the romantic suite."

"Excuse me? Husband? I'm not married!"

"Well, someone called in the room." The attendant popped his gum carelessly.

“Can you get me a new room with a secure phone line and don’t tell anyone I switched rooms besides the cops? Do you understand?”

“Yes, but may I ask why?”

“One of the people at my work is stalking me. I thought he was my friend but last night he kept coming on to me. Then, today he told everyone that something happened between us that did not happen.”

“Then, I think you need to see what he sent here for you.”

“Okay, can I have the key? I will be right back to get my new one.”

“Of course,” he handed her the key card.

She went to the suite and saw the gift boxes. There were six including a letter. The letter was in a red envelope and in James’ cursive handwriting was her name on the front. She picked up the letter and on the back was a simple message in the same hand.

You still have my heart even if you love other hearts.

Trembling, she picked up one of the gift boxes. In the first gift box there was a heart made out of shrimp and cocktail sauces. In the next, there were heart shaped chocolate truffles. In the third one was a red velvet heart cake with pink cream cheese frosting. The next had several romantic movies. In the fifth was a red nightgown.

She should not have opened the final box. As she opened it, there was a horrid smell. She screamed - there was a human heart in the box and another letter.

Say your goodbyes to your boyfriend.

She screamed and dropped the box. The heart thumped onto the floor and rolled under the bed, leaving a red trail of juicy blood behind it. She knew she needed to get out of there before James showed up. So, she ran to the front office to get her new key card.

Holding out the key card, she said, "Give this to the cops. And another thing? How did you know what was in the box?"

"It seemed weird for all that to be sent to a room that nobody was in yet. So, I went through it and there was the heart."

"And you did not call the cops?"

"I thought it was fake!"

"FAKE? Okay, my new room is secure, right? Or did you think that part was fake too?"

"Yes it's on the second floor in the corner and put this sign over the numbers. Okay? This is the best I can do."

"Tell the cops when they get here and no one other than the cop. Got it?"

She went to her room. When the police got there and had looked through the suite they came to the room and asked her some questions.

"Any idea who could be behind all of this?" one of the cops asked.

"I think I know who it is. A friend of mine was there for me when I got the first letter and gift. He stayed at my house last night to "make sure I was safe". When I woke up there was a spread of food. Then at work, he told everyone we were a couple. Then he told me to

call him if I needed anything and kissed me on the cheek.” Alex told the cops.

“Did he call in for the romantic suite and send all of the gifts?” asked one of the police officers.

“He’s the only one who would have known I was coming here, so it must have been him.”

One of the police officer’s eyebrows rose up close to his hairline. Then, reaching for his radio, he said, “We need backup.” Turning back to Alex he said, “One of us will be in here and one of us will be outside. We’re going to leave this taser in the night stand. In case one of us gets knocked out or worse and you need to protect yourself.”

After one went to their car there was some noise from the radio.

“The FBI is on the way to bring you into protective custody,” the officer said.

“Thank you,” said Alex. “Can I get something to eat?”

“Of course I will be right back with something for you to eat,” said the officer, “but lock the door when I leave.”

He went out of the room. She heard knocking on the door. She went to the door and looked through the tiny looking glass there. It was the officer with some chips and a soda. She opened the door, he stepped inside and he handed her the food, then locked the door behind them. He appeared to be doing this rather quickly. She moved to her bed, sat down and ate the food.

Then she asked, “Is everything okay?”

“No,” the officer responded, “a car pulled up on my way back.”

They heard someone walking down the hall. Then, someone knocked on the door and said, “FBI. Open Up.”

“I’m going to talk to this guy really quick. Lock the door until I say to open the door,” said the officer. She heard mumbling then he shouted, “It’s okay to open the door.”

She did then the FBI agent came in first and she screamed, “It’s him!!!! It’s him!!”

It seemed like it came out of nowhere, that silver flashing in his hand - a knife. The officer fell to the floor as red seeped into his uniform. Then James walked towards her.

He said “ Don’t walk away from me, don’t reject me. Be with me and then you will be safe.”

She asked, “ Is that all?” She had remembered the taser the cop hid in case of an emergency.

As he kissed her she opened a drawer. Before she could grab the taser, he grabbed her wrist. She winced as his fingers dug into her arm.

He violently said, “I gave you gifts. I gave you a suite in the hotel. I offered you sweets. Yet you still reject me. What do I have to do to make you love me?”

She grinned and told him, “There is nothing you can do to make me love you.”

He got angrier and he lifted the knife to stab her but she hit it out of his hand. Quickly, she rummaged through the drawer. As she found the taser he stabbed her in the back. Her hand released the taser and she slumped to the floor. She bled out slowly.

He leaned over her body as she shivered from the blood loss. Whispering, he said, "I wish it did not have to be like this but I can't be arrested for love. Good bye."

Then he left. She died feeling betrayed. The FBI came and found out what happened by talking to the attendant. After finding the bodies and the knife they were too late. James had got on a bus to Canada and changed his name. He has still not been apprehended to this day.