

Regret

by Alexandrite

He hits me again. My head snaps to the right, blood spitting from my mouth and the left side of my face is on fire. My husband sits in front of me in a worse state than I am.

"Honey, it's going to be okay." I yell to him.

Ace's head hangs down and with the little energy he has, he looks at me. His eyes almost swollen shut, his face is blue and purple. He gives me a faint smile. I want to reach for him. I want to hold him, to protect him. Why can't I get out of this stupid rope?!!! I try to pull my hands apart, nothing. I put my head down in disgust with myself. I glance over to the right and see little legs hanging out, under a cardboard box. Uncontrollable tears fall from eyes. I feel helpless. My little boy. My sweet little boy, laying there on the cold ground of this storage unit. I'm unable to get to him. I don't even know if he's alive, he's not moving. The man comes up to me and stands in front of me. I look up to see only his eyes. A mask covers the rest of his face. He speaks.

"Yes, he is alive...for now but that's only if you give me what I need."

"What exactly do you need?"

"I need ALL the files you have collected on the Lucky Snake organization."

"I wouldn't be able to get those files even if I wanted to. The building is highly secure, and you have to have the right credentials. Just having my badge won't work."

The man takes off his mask, looks at me, and smiles. He then says, "I think I'll get through just fine."

I put my head down so he doesn't see the surprised look on my face and the anger. I think back to the moment I'd last seen my son and husband safe and the dreadful moment when they were no longer in my grasp.

48 HOURS AGO

I sit on my couch watching Ace and Amari play on the rug. Ace is pretending to be a horse while Amari is on his back, kicking his side.

"Giddy up daddy, you're too slow." Amari leans over and wraps his arms around Ace's neck. Ace nays like a horse and swings Amari around to his chest and hugs him tight.

"I think that's enough for right now. We have to get to the bus stop before you miss your bus."

"But daddy can I ride you to the bus stop?"

"Ride me? On my back?"

"Yeah!" Amari swings his feet trying to get down.

"Fine, only today I will, but you have to give Mommy a big hug before we go because she has to go to work." Amari runs over to me and climbs on my lap. He hugs me and lays a wet one on my cheek. I didn't want to let him go. His body was so warm, and his lighthearted energy always rubs off on me.

"I love you baby," I said kissing him on his forehead.

"Eewww mommy, just hugs, I'm a big boy. I'm 5." He says pushing away from me.

"You'll always be my baby no matter how old you are." I got up from the couch and walk over to Ace, while Amari puts his bookbag on. I hug and kiss him since he'll be going directly to work after taking Amari to the bus stop. "I love you," I said to him, looking him in his eyes.

"I love you too." He said as Amari pulls his hand trying to drag him out the door.

"Daddy let's go!" Amari demands. I watch the two of them walk out the door and then I head to my room to get dressed. I put on my dress pants and my collar shirt. I put my belt on and attached my badge, and holster to it. I open my gun case and take out my Glock, checking the clip then securing it in my holster, as I walk out the door.

6 HOURS LATER

I sit in an undercover Ford Explorer with my partner Allen, as we watch the Lucky Snake organization. It feels weird for a gun organization to be in a neighborhood like this. They sit in a black van, with no movement in or outside the vehicle, while we are a half of a mile back. I watch them closely as my partner plays in his phone.

"Any movement yet?" Allen asks without even looking up.

"Nope, not yet, they've been sitting here for an hour. I wonder what they are waiting for." I see a school bus pull up about 10 feet back from the van and blows their horn. The van moves up a little bit and the school bus unloads the kids. I look at my watch and it is time for Amari to be home. I see kids get off the bus as parents get out their cars. Confused, I see Amari standing there but no Ace.

"I'm sorry that's my son, I have to get him."

"Woah, you're undercover, with a badge and gun on your waist. If you even walk in that direction, we lose our lead."

"But my husband isn't here to pick up my son, I need to..." Ace suddenly appears and walks up to Amari and takes his hand. He's acting strange. He didn't even smile at Amari. Ace looks around and he stares at the car I am in. It's as if he knows I am there. He looks anxious---scared. A man in the black van gets out, walks up to Ace and Amari and places a gun on Ace's back. I jump out the truck and run towards them.

"You're going to make us lose our lead!" Allen yells to me.

"I don't care, that's my family!" I said, running as fast as I could. The man sees me and pulls Ace and Amari along, pushing them in the van. I stop, take my gun out the holster, and aim it at the van. I quickly lower it remembering my family is in there. I start running as the van takes off. I chase after the van while Allen drives up beside me.

"Get in!" Allen yells. I quickly get in the truck and Allen chases the van. About a car distance away I grab my gun and stick it out the window. I aim for the tires and shoot but miss. The car speeds up and so does Allen.

"Get closer!" I say, sticking my head in the window then out again. The van runs a red light at an intersection almost hitting a car that stops and blows its horn. Allen speeds to the same intersection and puts on his siren to go through the light. Allen is getting closer and closer to the van when suddenly the strange man in the passenger seat sticks a semi-automatic rifle out the window and fires at us. Allen swerves a bit, but because the bullet proof body and glass, he stays on the van's tail; ramming it and causing the van to swerve. The man stops shooting.

"I just need to blow out the tire!" I said as I check my clip and proceed to stick my head out the window to take aim. I have perfect aim on the tire. "Got it." I said, before Allen slams on the break causing me to fire and almost fall out the window.

"What the fuck are you doing Allen?"

"You can't shoot the tires out; you can harm your family inside if the vehicle flips or crashes into something."

"So how are we going to get my family back? FUCK!" I jump out the car and take aim at the speeding van that is now disappearing. I walk over to the driver's side and point my gun at Allen. "Get out!" Allen puts his hands up.

"What?" he says looking from me to the road ahead of us.

"Get out the car! I need to get my family back."

"They are gone Camilla, but we know where they're going."

"Uggghhhhhh!" I put my gun back into my holster and walk over to the passenger side and climb in. "Let's go."

"Where are we going?" He said as he slowly puts his hands down.

"Take me to their hideout."

"We should call back up." He said, picking up the radios in the car.

"You either take me there now or I'll drive myself." I said, looking at him in the most serious face. Allen puts down the radio and puts the car in drive. He speeds off.

36 HOURS LATER

I arrive at a bar of Allen's choice. The walls are covered in glass and from the ceiling hangs four big chandeliers. I look around as I enter and notice 3 other people, not including the bartender and Allen. A guy at a table close to the bar looks at me suspiciously as I carry a manila folder in my hand, with my gun on my waist and my badge exposed. I approach Allen at the bar. He looks at me up and down and shakes his head.

"Come on, did you have to wear all that in here?"

"I'm here on business, here is the folder you asked for." I say pushing it towards him. Allen puts his glass down and opens the folder. He flips through it and closes it.

"What about the murder cases? Why aren't they in here?" He said looking at me.

"What does that have to do with my family. I told you I'll give you everything on the Lucky Snake organization that can help with finding my family."

"That can help me look at patterns."

"Are you trying to say my family is dead." I said putting my hand on my gun.

"Woah, Camilla. You need to take a break." He said pulling out the chair next to him.

"I don't need any rest until I find my family. What was the results of the bloodstain we found on the shirt at their hideout?"

"It belonged to 2 people. A small amount...was your husband's. The other could belong to one of the guys. It wasn't your son's." I put my hands on my knees trying to hold myself up. I take deep breaths as a tear falls from my eye. I could feel a pain in my chest. I grab my shirt by my heart and look at the ground. I stand up straight and sit in the chair.

"Let me get what you're drinking." I say to the bartender.

"That's my girl." He says as he waves at the bartender. The drink is in front of me in no time and I drink it down without stopping.

"Take it easy." Allen says trying to grab the glass from me and I snatch my hand from him.

"Take it easy? What do you know? You have your family all home under one roof waiting for you to come home. I go home to an empty house. My husband and son's slippers are in front of the door where they last left it. My son's bed is unslept in and his bookbag isn't hanging on the closet door in the hallway!" I put the glass on the table and stand up. I feel a bit dizzy. It could be from me drinking and getting up fast. I shake it off and walk towards the exit. I stumble and trip over a chair, landing on the floor. Allen walks over to me.

"You okay?" he says helping me up by my arm. I can barely stand now, and everything is spinning.

"What's going on Allen?" I can see the guy seated near the bar get up and walk towards us. I reach for my gun and I can't get the holster open.

"Just rest, it'll be over soon." Allen says, handing me over into the man's hands. I black out.

PRESENT

I wake up and my head hurts. My hands, feet, and chest are tied to a steel chair. I look up and there my husband is.

He's dirty and looks as though he hasn't eaten or drank anything in the 48 hours I've been looking for him and Amari. Amari!!! Where is my baby? I look around the area quickly and see nothing. A man with a mask walks up to me and holds my face with one hand.

"You're a bit too nosy, you know that?" I look into his eyes as he talks to me. His eyes are familiar and show desperation. "This is not a job for a woman. Look at the mess that you made." He says letting go of my face and stepping back, revealing my husband behind him. Two men walk up to Ace, and one punches him in the face.

"STOP! What are you doing? I'm right here, hit me!" Just then a fist hits the left side of my face.

"Ooowww, that felt good. I've been waiting to do that for a while now. Women are just so bitchy."

I look up at him and my anger shows uncontrollably. "Where's Allen?"

He bends down in front of me. "Where's the papers on the Lucky Snake organization?"

"Go to hell." I look away.

"I don't think you're in a position to act this way." The guy snaps his fingers and both men start to beat Ace. I see blood now. I can see his agony written on his dirty, tired face.

"Stop, stop...please stop!" The restraints wouldn't budge as I moved.

"Then speak." He smacks me. "Speak!" He hits me again. "Tell me dammit!"

He hits me again. My head snaps to the right, blood spitting from my mouth and the left side of my face is on fire. My husband sits in front of me in a worst state than I am.

"Honey, it's going to be okay." I yell to him.

I try to pull my hands apart, nothing. I put my head down in disgust with myself. I glance over to the right and see little legs hanging out, under a cardboard box. Uncontrollable tears fall from eyes. I feel helpless. My little boy. My sweet little boy, laying there on the cold ground of this storage unit. I'm unable to get to him. I don't even know if he's alive, he's not moving. The man comes closer to me and stands in front of me. I look up to see only his eyes. A mask covers the rest of his face. He speaks.

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The man takes off his mask, looks at me, and smiles. "So, they are in the office? I think I'll get through just fine." He digs in his pocket and takes out his badge and moves it side to side as if he's trying to hypnotize me. I put my head down. I am furious.

"How could you call yourself an agent? You're disgusting!"

"Hey, we got to make a living somehow. My days are already written. Who says this isn't how I'm supposed to be living?" He stoops down in front of me and holds a gun on my thigh. "Tell me exactly where the documents are and you're free." I looked at him with cold eyes.

"They are in the safe under my desk."

"I already checked there."

"I move them every other day, so no one knows where I keep them." Allen gets up and laughs hysterically.

"Damn you are so smart. I love it, Camilla." He points the gun at my husband and his face goes serious. "You gave us such a hard time I got to get something else out of this." He pulls the trigger, and a bullet enters my husband's stomach."

"Nooooooo! You fucking liar!" I sat moving wildly in my chair. I try to break free.

"I said you can leave, never said him. I'm even letting you keep the kid."

"I'm going to kill you, I swear." Tears fall from my eyes.

"Wait, now that's not nice. I even did you a favor by calling an ambulance. Hopefully your husband can hang in there for 5 minutes. I'll see you...hopefully never...tootles!" Allen walks quickly out of my sight, and I immediately look at my husband. He is sweating and his eyes struggle to stay open.

"Ace talk to me...Hang in there...You got this...Don't close your eyes...Look at me!" As the ambulance sirens got closer, I can see my husband fading from me. His head bobs.

"Ace please, stay with me!! ACE!!!"

TO BE CONTINUED...