

THE QUARRY

Bed of Lies

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I sat on my bed, rolling a joint as I listened to the argument unfolding downstairs in the kitchen. I should be used to all of this by now, but I wasn't, the noise left me anxious and afraid to leave my room. The sudden noise of plates being smashed to the ground made me jump. I hated hearing my mum scream, all I wanted to do was go out there and hit my dad's face with a bat, but the last time I interfered, I got whipped with a belt. Mum made me promise to never interfere again.

I turned off the lights, laid down on the carpet, lit the joint and took my first puff. The deeper the breaths I took in, the more drowsy I felt. The fighting grew faint and indistinct. The only thing I could hear was the sound of my beating heart gradually calming. I'd thought I would be able to forget what was happening downstairs. But I couldn't. I flinched at the sound of more plates crashing to the floor. I didn't want to be alone tonight. I locked my door and quickly called Noah but there was no answer as usual. There was no point waiting for him to call me back. I climbed out the window, and made my way across the balcony, towards the tree at the side of the house; with everything going on downstairs there was little chance I'd be seen. The cold wind sent goosebumps up and down my body. I was slightly stoned but I managed to grip the tree branches tightly with my sweaty hands. I could see my misty breath as I made my way down the tree.

I had a 30-minute walk to Noah's house, so I jogged to keep warm. I lost feeling in my face after a while. I didn't realise how stoned I was until I arrived on the main road. The lights were brighter than usual and the cars were a blur as they drove by. The road felt never-ending. I decided to cut through the back streets to reach the park that was located at the bottom of the hill where Noah lives. I knew it was dangerous to be walking in the dark backstreets, but the amount of cars that honked as they drove past made me paranoid. I slowed down to catch my breath before walking up the steep hill.

Noah's house was your typical modern-day mansion. Tall hedges blocked the view of the house from the street, but once you were past these, you could see the sandstone house. The large windows around the house meant that anyone could see inside the house from the driveway. Noah's parents were both lawyers, they decided two years ago that they would build their forever home before their retirement next year. It must be nice not having to worry about how your parents will pay for the monthly mortgage. I quietly walked to the garage, trying to avoid the sensor lights. I couldn't hear music coming from the garage, I didn't know if Noah was editing late again so I went to the side of the house to look into the garage window.

The red light illuminated the whole room, Noah's computer table faced the window. He was in his pajamas glued to his laptop screen. It looked like he hadn't showered for days, his curly hair was a mess, there were food stains on his grey hoodie and pizza boxes on the floor. Noah was wearing his headphones, I didn't want to wake up the household so I waved my arms wildly to get his attention. When he finally looked up from his laptop with his big blue eyes, he sighed when he noticed it was only me tapping on the window. Noah walked over to open the side door of the garage.

'LC, what are you doing here?' Noah stood in front of me with an annoyed expression.

'No hi's?'

He leaned forward to kiss me on the forehead 'Oh, sorry babe. I'm just a little stressed out at the moment.'

‘I can see that.’ I instinctively walked over to his couch next to the computer table. ‘Anyways, I just thought I would come visit you since I haven’t seen you for two weeks.’

‘It’s 12am. How did you even get here?’ I watched Noah settle himself down on the computer table.

‘I walked’ I said proudly.

‘That’s so far.’

‘It wasn’t too bad.’ I shouldn’t be surprised that he cared more about the distance than my safety. I don’t know why I expect so much from him. It only led to disappointment anyways.

Noah frustratedly scratches his hair, ‘Are you going to be sleeping here tonight?’

All I wanted was for him to ask me why I was even here in the first place. Why was that so hard?

‘Yeah, if that’s okay.’

My head was spinning again. The weed was still affecting my eyesight and the red light was making it worse. I laid back on the couch and closed my eyes hoping that the spinning would stop.

‘I really don’t have time to hangout right now though. I have so much work to do,’ Noah said in discontent.

I could feel impatience growing. ‘No surprise there,’ I mumbled. I came here wanting my boyfriend’s company but instead, he was hinting for me to go.

‘Really?’

‘When do you ever have time for me?’ I rolled my eyes as I turn to lay sideways on the couch to face him.

For the first time, I realised I was looking at a stranger. This wasn’t the person I fell in love with five years ago. It was different when I looked into his eyes now. There was a time when seeing Noah would make me nervous. He never failed to take my breath away every time I saw him. I was happy back then, but that felt like a lifetime ago. It was getting harder to hide how I felt about him. The sparks weren’t there anymore. My stomach twisted into a sinkhole, I turned to face the ceiling to stop myself from crying.

‘You’ve been here less than five minutes and you’re already starting an argument’, Noah said angrily.

‘Look, I didn’t want to be at home. I didn’t think you would mind if I came over.’

Noah sighs and moves his chair closer to reach for my hands. "I'm sorry." He pauses, I can see the guilt spreading across his face. 'What happened tonight?' he said, his voice full of affection. I wanted to tell him that I was drowning at home but my mouth wouldn't move. I could see that his eyes wandered back to the computer screen. I just sat there and smiled weakly.

'You should finish off your work before we talk'

'Thank you, baby,' he said, playfully kissing my hands a couple of times before rolling his chair back to the computer table. 'When I'm done with this, you can tell me everything.' Before I could say another word, he turned to his computer and puts his headphones back on.

I really wanted to believe him this time but I heard this before. I would only be a fool if I was to believe him again. This cycle was becoming toxic for the both of us. I didn't know why I always hesitated to let go. What was I afraid of? I couldn't be worried about being alone because when I was with him, I feel lonelier than ever. I sat back up quickly, watching Noah quietly. My ears were ringing and the room was still spinning. I pressed my finger into my left ear hoping that the ringing would stop. I closed my eyes, took a deep breath in and breathed out in an audible sigh. I wanted Noah to turn around, to give me some kind of hope, a sign that there was a chance for our relationship. My eyes began to sting, I wasn't going to start crying for him now.

'Did you have work today?' I ventured.

Nothing. It was like talking to a brick wall. Noah may be here physically, but emotionally he wasn't. I was drowning and he wasn't listening. Was he purposely trying to edit me out of his life or was he that oblivious to what he was doing? I wasn't going to let him put me and this relationship on the side anymore.

I stormed to the other side of the garage to grab another computer chair to place it on his right-hand side. Noah's startled by my actions, his mouth still half opened. 'What's happening? Are you okay?'

'I'm not. I haven't been for a very long time.' I felt a sensation that vibrated throughout my chest. I paused to control my breathing again, my heart pounded abnormally hard. 'Do you even want to be in this relationship anymore?' I didn't care that I was raising my voice.

'What? Where is this coming from?' he said in a confused tone.

There it was. His favourite go to line to use on me whenever I blindsided him. I hated it. I stood up and walked away to contain my anger before I said another word. I calmly turned around and noticed Noah staring blankly at me.

‘Stop acting like you don’t know what I’m talking about.’

Noah sternly faces me as he places his headphones on the table. ‘Of course, I want to be in this relationship.’

I shook my head in frustration, pacing around the garage. It was worse than I expected, he just didn’t want to make the effort anymore.

‘I’m so confused right now.’

Noah stood up to stop me from moving around. He firmly secured his hands around my wrists. ‘Can you tell me what’s wrong?’

I’ve been with this guy for five years and he still didn’t know me. He couldn’t read me the way I could read him. We weren’t on the same wavelength. Why hadn’t I seen this earlier in our relationship?

‘If you actually paid attention, you would’ve seen what was happening around you.’

‘Well, you could tell me now.’ I could hear the irritation in Noah’s voice.

He knows what happens at home and yet, he has no clue what to say or do to make me feel better. What was I fighting for? I freed myself from Noah’s grip and walked back to sit on the couch.

‘I’m not going to force it out of you.’ Noah’s voice grew louder as he walked over to kneel down in front of me.

‘I get it now. It’s easy for you to pretend that my problems don’t exist because it’s not happening to you. How can someone with the perfect family home understand what I’m going through.’

Noah sat there speechless, mouth slightly opened. That’s all he could do. I could see in his facial expressions that he was trying to come up with things to say.

‘You get a new job and all of a sudden it gives you the excuse to stop caring about me and my well-being.’ My voice cracked, I could feel my body trembling. ‘What the fuck is wrong with you? You could at least be there for me when I need you to be.’

‘I’ve never stopped caring though.’

‘Then why the hell haven’t you been there for me?’ My breathing was becoming heavy as I tried to hold back the tears. I failed. I couldn’t stay strong like I hoped.

‘But I always see you and when I don’t, I still call you whenever I can.’

‘No Noah, I’ve been in the background trying to get your attention.’

‘Well, I’m listening now.’ Noah kneels and places his head on my lap, his hand clutching my legs.

I didn’t try to comfort him. It was too late for that. It was too late for anything. I was done waiting for him to come to his senses. I would rather be alone than be with someone who made me feel lonely.

Noah’s eyes connect with mine, his eyes bloodshot and his cheeks a light shade of pink. I didn’t realise he had been crying on my lap this whole time. He wiped the snort coming from his nostrils and whispered. ‘I’m sorry okay. I’ll do better next time.’

‘There won’t be a next time Noah.’

Noah lets go of my legs in shock and walking away as he punches the air in defeat. ‘No, no, no, no, you can’t just end it like this after five years together.’

‘I’m done Noah.’ I paused to try gain my composure. ‘I’m tired of taking care of my boyfriend when he can’t even take care of me. I’m not your fucking mother, I’m supposed to be your partner.’

‘But I love you. There’s no one else for me.’ The despair in his tone broke my heart but I needed to tell him the truth. ‘Why are you doing this to me?’ he said softly.

‘I’m not trying to purposely hurt you.’ I wiped my face and looked directly into Noah’s eyes. I observed his face silently before I said another word. I could see his puffy blue eyes filled with tears and his lips quivered. Noah was showing me emotions that I hadn’t seen in a long time.

‘We’re both trying to hold onto something that’s been dead for a very long time. I’m just ending it now so we don’t hate each other in the future.’

‘We’re supposed to be a team though. I don’t know what I’m going to do without you,’ he said quietly as he sat back down on his computer chair, and pressed his face against his palms.

‘We haven’t been a team for a very long time Noah.’

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I don't know how long we were sitting there but I couldn't take the silence between us.

'I think I should go now.'

'Yeah, you should.'

Noah didn't look at me, so I knew there was nothing else to say.

As I walked the quiet streets, the piercing icy wind woke me. My mind was clearer than it had ever been before. By the time I arrived home, the house was quiet again, the lights were all turned off. I climbed the tree with no complications and I fell right onto my bed, too tired to even change my clothes. I didn't expect that to happen tonight. All I wanted was to find some sense of comfort from my boyfriend. I thought I needed him to protect me from the darkness. But in truth, I was only there because being with Noah was familiar to me. I didn't need to be there at all. I had made it each day without his help and I knew I was going to keep pushing through.

'I'm going to be okay.' I muttered under my breath.