

Avery promised himself he never would fall again yet he broke that promise to himself. Years of battling with depression and healing from the wounds his ex had marred onto his soul. Years of unproductive one-night-stands. Years of never bothering to find the one. Too painful, he thought. To give himself fully to someone else would be an utter disaster, he thought. Keep it simple, move onto the next woman, no attachments, no drama.

But now, after months he looked at her and she made him smile a real smile. She gave him all of those romantic butterflies that he thought were long gone. No drama. No poison. No lies. It was a scary thought if he dwelt on it too long. These were feelings he discussed with her time and time again and her words were always there to assure him. Even after his moments freezing up on her, she was still so patient with him. It made him adore her all the more.

There still was another rule he made for himself; no cheating. In essence, he would never ever knowingly be an active perpetrator in such a heinous crime. Not if they were married, or in a committed relationship of any kind. First hand, he knew how painful and destructive it made him. It turned a generally passive man into what some may view as a monster. He burned everything he bought her. Broke his ex best friend's nose. Lost his reputation within high society. Did jail time. There was a sense in which yes he was responsible for his own actions, but he was still a victim of the web of lies she trapped him in.

For the most part, there was no resistance to this somewhat arbitrary rule while he was single. He was the arbiter of what it meant. It was so easy to keep. Lady after lady, no complications, no commitments. But it seemed as soon as he made a commitment again, a woman who he had regretfully been intimate with before his current relationship made her true desires alone. Because it was so unexpected, it made him dwell on what could have been for far too long.

Her turquoise eyes, her golden skin, the drunk nights they shared. But no. This was something far deeper than mere appearance or physical attraction. He protected her, defended her dignity, he was a friend to her during her lowest points. These were points she did bring up during her confession and he tried to convince her-- and himself-- that she read the situation all wrong, that he would always be there as a friend. It was a lie. She had done well to improve herself and started going to school, hone in on her craft. It stung that he had very little part in that. He wasn't involved because he was involved with someone else.

So daring fate, he got involved in her life again and got too close. Lying violated the Mandalorian code so he soothed his conscience by omitting critical details from his partner.

*“Working late again, tonight?” She would ask him.*

*“Yes. A patient in critical condition.” Almost every other patient was in critical condition before, still, he would always make time for her. “Plus, I’m working on a small engineering project to improve quality of life. Don’t wait up.”*

The first few weeks were innocent; just talking, and making plans for a real device to improve the quality of life for pilots. Because that is what his friend loved doing. Though the first few weeks were innocent in nature, he still felt guilty. This was not something he should be doing. Then the shift to long comm calls that weren’t always pure.

*“Who were you talking to?” His partner was bold and wise to follow her intuitions.*

*“Ah, just an old friend.”*

*“An old friend? Avery, I know you well enough to know that no friend makes you laugh like that.”*

That’s when he would smooth over the situation with flattering words and offer sex as a peace offering. Of course that only worked for so long so calls were made when she was absent. Slowly it started with a few playful touches that he or his old friend would have thought nothing of. Then a kiss. So he rationalized that kissing wasn’t sleeping with someone else so thus not cheating. He believed his own lie until it was too late. He woke up in a bed that was not his own and the guilt was so overwhelming he had to face his lover. He could no longer hide or risk someone else sharing this with her. So he confessed.

The powerful slap to his face was not nearly enough punishment. Even still, he pleaded with her through tears, repeated apologies, on his knees, for forgiveness. It never came. A pathetic attempt to wrap his arms around her lower half to keep her. She made it more than clear she no longer wanted him to touch her. Then her words were driven into his heart like a spike with his name on it.

*“You are no better than your ex. I never want to see you again.”*

His world was shattered. There was no pinching to wake him up. There was no cold sweat waking him up from a nightmare, no. This had become his horrifying reality. He had become the thing he hated. After she left, no shortage of self loathing thoughts drowned him in his sorrows.