

He blinked. The world around him changed in an instant.

He stood before a familiar door, a door he knew to be his old condo. Unable to decipher the time of day, he raised his arm to look at his wrist-comm to check. Immediately he noticed it wasn't the comm he wore just a few moments before and the year... It was 31 ABY. He swallowed and looked at the date. A day of infamy in his life.

The man fumbled around for his key and hesitated before entering the dwelling. He remembered the thoughts he had the same day he went in. They started off innocent and gradually grew grim as the truth was revealed.

*Maybe she's watching porn.*

*Or perhaps doing some intense yoga.*

As much as he wished either of those were true, that simply wasn't the case.

The door swished open as he put the key in, his heart rate increasing as he remembered the music that was exceedingly too loud. He immediately turned off the music to reveal the distant moans of what would be his ex fiancée. Only then did he notice the open bottle of wine and glasses on the table. Jaw taut and body language stiff, he walked all the way to the bedroom and only had one thing in mind— spare his friend. His eyes drank in the scene almost apathetically at this point, but he zeroed in on Warren, the old friend he spent hours investing in to help financially and academically.

Both parties separated as Avery stood in the room, arms folded over his chest.

“H-hey, man... I'm s-s-sorry. L-look sh-she told me you were—”

“Done? I know. We weren't... but now we are. It's fine, War. Take your stuff and leave.” He stared at the other clothesless man with an icy gaze. Warren wasted no time gathering his items, far too delayed in trying to cover himself. He stumbled out of the room and subsequently out of Avery's home. In that time, Avery's gaze quietly studied the uncomfortable Jacqueline who was once witness to him nearly beating Warren to death. Not this time, however. Warren

wasn't innocent but he wasn't in the know on their relationship status and a victim of her web of lies.

"Avery," she said softly, bowing her head in what he assumed was shame. He was all too aware now that she was incapable of actually feeling such because this was the same room she promised she would never hurt him again. A promise broken. Now he had the advantage of knowing about her lying schemes.

"Save it. I want you gone by morning."

"Look, I get that you're upset—"

"You have no idea, *Jacqueline*," he spat with venom. "The damage you've done. The heart you've destroyed." His eyes welled as he remembered that he used to love her. "You were. *Everything*. To me."

Tears began to fall down her cheeks as she looked at him, make-up smeared. "I'm so sorry, Av—"

"You're lying!" He shouted, as his own tears spilled over his lower lids. Hands now by his side in tight fists, he kept his resolve and said, "Shut up. Get your stuff and leave. End of discussion." He pivoted on his heel and walked out of the bedroom, guarding the hallway to wait for her exit.

The woman was haphazardly dressed as she left the room, her head bowed as she carried her bag out of the apartment.

He blinked again and his old apartment was gone and he was in his Aedile office again. Though the scene dissolved, his emotions did not as he shuddered from reliving one of the worst days of his life.