

What's Done is Done

“Forgiveness is a ridiculous concept, not to mention pointless, now that he’s dead,” mumbled Carly to herself, while dragging the body of her deceased boyfriend down an alley. She felt more conflicted about her situation than she had expected. Part of her was grateful that the Applebee’s dumpster was mostly empty, but another part felt sore, and you could say that it ached. Carly wondered if she regretted the murder of her boyfriend Joshua, as she stuffed said boyfriend into the trash can. Sighing, she checked her watch. *It’s already 10 PM . . . I better get out of here before the cops arrive.*

24-year-old Carly Whitlock quietly made her exit out of the alley and down the dreary streets of Chicago. She wished that she had chosen to kill Joshua while the sun was still out, but she had been afraid that the police would find her in daylight. *I suppose I might get caught anyway—that idiot just had to scream!* She thought angrily. Her anxiety quickly grew, and Carly started racing down the road to her apartment, while accidentally splashing in puddles from the heavy rain that afternoon. All she wanted was to be home, safe from the darkness and her thoughts.

“Yay!” She darted into her apartment and slammed the door closed. *That was terrifying, but I’m safe now.* She felt relieved that she got home just as the sound of police sirens started. Maybe they wouldn’t find her after all. Maybe everything would be all right. Setting her leather purse down, Carly remembered that the knife was still in there, and her stomach twisted. *Something feels wrong. What’s wrong with me for thinking that something’s wrong? It’s good that he’s gone—he was a jerk! So, why do I feel so strange?*

She turned to the hall mirror and began to examine the woman within it. She bore a resemblance to Carly Whitlock, but something about her was uncanny compared to the real version. The woman did have Carly's fried, blonde hair that had the color and texture of a broom, though. It used to be a healthy chestnut, but Joshua preferred blondes. Carly and her reflection had the same tall, lanky body that she didn't care for, because she didn't have the curves that Joshua always looked for in his other girlfriends. Not to mention, she wasn't allowed to wear heels in fear that she would be taller than him. Carly's impersonator had the same wide shoulders, spindly limbs, and pale complexion. They shared the same worn-out jeans with a cherry red, wool cape—the cape that Joshua gave her. Everything was identical between them, so why did this woman in the mirror look unfamiliar to Carly? It must have been the creature's eyes that seemed different. They appeared dimmed, like a curtain was hung over them. They were still blue like Carly's eyes, only darker and less lively, as if the creature was half-dead.

She decided to shove these peculiar findings down into her gut and proceeded to get something to eat. You get painfully hungry after hanging around the Applebee's for so long. She grabbed a slice of white bread—no, it had gotten moldy. She realized she hadn't bought bread for a while; *he* had always done that. Carly instead reached for a mug to get a cup of coffee, and there in the cabinet was Joshua's cup. It was a simple white mug with a dog cartoon drawn on the front, and he had used it every evening. Carly was angered to see yet another reminder of him. She took the mug and hurled it into the trash, and then chose to go to bed, telling herself that she would feel better in the morning.

But sadly, that was not the case for Carly Whitlock. That morning, at 8AM, she woke up disgruntled and threw her clock on the floor to shut it up. She found herself throwing a lot of objects as of late. Grumbling, she sauntered into her kitchen to grab a cup of coffee before heading off to work. However, she first turned on the morning news, something that she would regret doing. As she sipped, she sat down on the couch to see this:

*“The police discovered a dead man in the Applebee’s dumpster last night at 10:11 PM, after getting a call from locals who heard screams. He has been identified as Joshua Connor, an employee at the Benson Industries office here in Chicago. He was found headfirst in the dumpster, and examiners state that he had been stabbed approximately 18 times. If you have tips about who murdered Connor, please call this . . . ”*

Carly sat there frozen in shock. *He was murdered? That’s not possible. I’m not a murderer. I just sort of killed him, but that doesn’t make me a bad guy.* She started to panic. *What if the cops really do think I’m a murderer! What if I go to prison? I can’t go there, I have a life here!*

She went back to the mirror to see if a bloody criminal somehow entered it. No, it was the same old Carly . . . but the reflection’s eyes were like dark orbs; void of life and emotion. You’d wonder if the creature in the mirror really was dead to have such empty, lifeless eyes. It terrified her, because maybe now she was metamorphosing into one of those killers with no love or compassion that you see on TV. Carly tossed her head back and forth, thinking that something was missing. She ran around her apartment, looking for whatever it was that wasn’t there, but she couldn’t find it. Then, she noticed her cape that she wore the previous night. It

was red, so she hadn't seen it before, but there were reddish-brown splotches of old, darkened blood on the cape. It was Joshua's blood, and she had murdered him. Carly Whitlock was a murderer.

"Hi, Joanna?" she whispered into her phone.

"Oh, dear, I heard the news!" cried Carly's boss. "I am *so* sorry! I know how in love you two were—"

*A one-sided love*, thought Carly bitterly. "Um, I-I can't come in today—"

"Of course dear, stay home. Again, I'm truly sorry for your loss, you must be heartbroken. Take care."

"Thank you." Carly hung up the phone and sat down. *No, I refuse to be heartbroken. Joshua was an awful boyfriend, and I simply had no other choice. It's not like couple's therapy worked.*

"SEE? She refuses to listen to anything I have to say!" Joshua yelled.

"That's because you're lying again!" shouted Carly.

"From what I can see," said the therapist, pinching her forehead, "Carly, you have a lack of trust with Joshua—"

"Because he goes off and flirts with other girls!" said Carly. "That's clearly *his* problem!"

"How many times do I have to tell you that they're friends?!" he groaned and turned to the therapist. "I'm not allowed to have female friends without her throwing a tantrum!"

"I do *everything* that I can to make you happy and I'm *still* not good enough for you! So, you have to run off and find a better girl to replace this one!"

“MAYBE I WILL!”

*Yes, there's no way I regret what I did, Carly decided. I had had enough, and it was the only way to end the relationship satisfyingly. It was the right choice . . . so I don't understand why part of me still wishes I had never done it. I guess . . . she looked around. I miss his stupid presence, and his dumb jokes, and his ugly smile and his dog—HIS DOG! Carly panicked when she realized that no one was at his apartment to take care of his mini schnauzer, Brownie. I have to get her!*

When she reached his apartment, it finally registered that of course there'd be cops there. *Ugh, I'm so stupid. Why would I practically head back to the scene of the crime? Idiot.*

“Hey, you can't just walk in here!” yelled a cop, and he ran up to her. “The owner was murdered; this place is off-limits!”

“I know,” snapped Carly. “I'm here for his dog, Brownie. Is she in there?”

“Yeah, there's a dog. I'll go get her.” The cop suspiciously eyed her, and then went inside.

Carly peeked inside Joshua's apartment herself. There were detectives running around, looking inside his cabinets, and rummaging through his drawers. It disturbed her to see the place she knew so well invaded by strangers. While reminiscing, she overheard one of their conversations.

“Who's that girl? The victim's girlfriend?”

“Nope, I already checked with a few of his coworkers. Apparently, he hasn't had one for several months.”

Carly stood there, frozen. *That utter dirtbag didn't even tell anyone about me.*

"Hey, lady!" yelled the cop from before, carrying Brownie. "Here's the dog. Are you going to keep her?"

She fell out of her trance. "Oh yeah, thanks. She'll come home with me." Carly gently took the fuzzy, brown dog out of the man's arms.

"I can't believe I'm just handing you the dog," laughed the cop, and then he stared at her skeptically. "So, how do you know Connor?"

Carly scratched Brownie behind the ears. "I was his friend."

Weeks passed with no word from the police. It seemed that Carly Whitlock really was going to get away with the murder of Joshua Connor. Legally, that is. However, she didn't get away with it mentally. Every day, her conscience gnawed on her like a dog on a bone. She couldn't stop thinking about what she had done, and that she had somehow gotten away with it. Carly didn't like that she got away with it either. Shouldn't a "murderer" be held accountable for their actions? Instead of answering for her crime, life continued as it had before for Carly, only without Joshua and without peace.

And she tried to comfort herself, but nothing worked. She tried meditation, but quickly realized that she couldn't be left alone with her thoughts. She attempted journaling, but "Dear Diary, I killed my boyfriend" was unable to soothe her guilt. Of course, Carly couldn't go to a therapist about it either. What's the point of getting away with murder if you're just going to chat about it over a cup of tea?

A month had gone by since that fatal night. Every day, Carly woke up, looked in the mirror, and saw that a new piece of herself had crumbled away. Her skin grew paler, her bones became pointier and more prominent, and her cheeks turned saggy and thin. *This must be karma's kiss after what I've done, and I certainly deserve it. Joshua was an awful boyfriend, but no one really deserves to be murdered. I wish that I had just broken up with him and left it at that.* Carly gazed at herself in the mirror. *I can't live like this any longer. I'm going to die of misery unless I do something . . . I have to write a letter.*

*Dear Joshua,*

*Hello. I don't know if you'll ever receive this, since you're dead, but perhaps an angel will take this to bring it down to you. I want to apologize to you for ending your life. At the time, I wanted to take out all my anger at you . . . on you. Now that I look back, I can understand that was a truly cruel and nasty thing I did, and for that I am very sorry. Even though I find you to be a despicable human being, you're still a human being, and I shouldn't have stabbed you. I do wonder if you'd ever forgive me, but that aside, I have something else to say.*

*I apologize to you that I'm going to forgive myself for killing you. I can't live under the crushing weight of my own self-hatred. For these past weeks, I haven't been able to breathe without being choked by guilt and insecurity. I'm sure that you'd be happy to see me dead, but I'd appreciate more time on Earth, and the only way I'm going to get that time is through forgiveness. You see, I can't wake up in the morning without remembering you and without remembering that I'm your terminator. I'm utterly exhausted from self-loathing, to the point of death. Every muscle in my body is strained from anxiety. Since I can't be awarded with your*

*pardon, I choose to give it to myself. You must be horrified, but Joshua, this is the only way I can release you, and my sin, from my life. And I have your dog.*

*Yours Forever,*

*Carly*

Carly set the letter down on her coffee table and walked to her entryway. She felt a little bit lighter suddenly, like her heart had been raised. Turning to the mirror, she examined herself to see if she had magically grown wings. No, she hadn't. But, Carly Whitlock did notice that her eyes were blue.