



*Giving the Screw Another Turn*

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**November**

School had started back up for Aurora again, and Iris was attending classes twice a week. Due to Davis's circumstances, I had to remain at the house during the daytime with him. I thought this would become a burden for me and set back my studies, but Davis was so charming and so dedicated to his studies that I welcomed the opportunity to spend the days with him. Since he was not enrolled in any school at the moment, I helped him remain active in his studies until I could find a solution to his predicament. I followed the lessons in his books, which in turn kept my German active as well.

One afternoon while teaching him the placement of adverbs in an English sentence in the sitting room, there happened a pause in our discussion, and out of nowhere, he mentioned Quint. I stared at him blankly at first, but then proceeded to inquire carefully about his statement. I wanted to find out what he knew about the man. He regarded my curiosity with careful consideration before answering, "I find it interesting that you always sit in that chair, because he always sat in that chair."

I suppressed the urge to fidget in the chair, which had understandably become uncomfortable. "Then, you must have spent a lot of time with him in here to have noticed such a small detail. What else did the two of you do together?" I gently prodded.

"We had fun together. We spent many nights talking in front of the fire. Sometimes, he would let me come into his room. He would show me his souvenirs from his travels."

"Oh. So, he was a traveler? He must have had interesting stories to tell."

"Yes, but we talked about other things mostly," he replied.

"Such as?" I believed Davis was just about to give me some real insight into Quint's character.

"Different things. This and that," with this last remark, he smiled back at me and slowly stood up from his chair. He announced that he was thirsty and went to get a drink from the kitchen. I was dumbfounded by his ambivalence to my questions. It made me even more curious about the locked room upstairs.

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The sun was still shining when Aurora returned home from school. Even though it was cold, we wanted to enjoy the little bit of sunshine that we could. We spent the afternoon walking through the front garden. It gradually became darker, and Iris called us in for dinner.

As we walked into the foyer, Aurora announced she had forgotten her teddy bear. She worried that he would freeze outside alone, so I promised I would rescue him while she washed up for dinner.

I found the bear in the gazebo and turned to walk back to the house. I looked up at the tower, and a movement in the window caught my eye. A shadow was looking down at me. I



immediately froze. I clutched the bear; my knuckles white. My body temperature dropped instantly. It was Quint – no doubt about it. His shadow, even from way above, was overbearing, and I could feel his presence pushing down upon my chest. A sharp gust of air whipped my hair into my face, blocking my view of the window. It momentarily disrupted my trance, and when I brushed the hair away from my eyes, the shadow in the window was gone. I ran into the house and slammed the door behind me. I rushed to the kitchen, pulled Iris away from the children and demanded that she tell me everything about Quint and Jenny.

“I’ll tell you tonight after the children have gone to bed,” she promised in an unsteady voice.

## II

“As I told you before, things changed when Quint came to live here. He had full control over everything and everyone. He brought a constant tension into the house, and he had his eyes set on the children and Jenny from the moment he first met them. Quint was unstable. He would lash out at the children one moment and then tell them stories before the fire the next. Jenny had been their au pair for about a year when he arrived. She was so full of life, always smiling and laughing. Aurora clung to her all the time, even slept in her bed. But when Quint came, the sleepovers became less frequent, and Aurora would come down the hall to sleep with me. Jenny became increasingly more withdrawn from the staff and the children. She and the children used to take walks through the garden and forest quite often, but she began to complain of tiredness and sickness whenever they wanted to go outside.

“The rumors started around that time about Jenny and Quint. There had always been a heightened tension between the two of them. Jenny would become sullen and quiet when Quint entered a room. She never looked into his eyes, but would try to hide her blushing when he looked at her.

“One night, I was saying goodnight to Davis. When I stepped out into the hall, I saw that her door was slightly ajar. I noticed the lamp on the nightstand was on and was about to enter her room when I heard whispers. I hesitated and peeped through the open slot of the door. Jenny was sitting on the edge of the bed with Quint standing in front of her looking down.”

“What happened next?” I asked breathlessly.

“I don’t know, and I didn’t want to know. It was none of my business. I turned around and went to my room,” Iris stated defiantly.

“You said he had a fatal accident. What happened exactly?”

“I only know what my mother told me. It had been a bitter cold winter, and it had been snowing. For whatever reason, he had been walking through the backyard at night. He was found in the morning lying next to the bench in the backyard. He must have stumbled over something and hit his head causing him to lie there all night unconscious. He had frozen to death.”

I let out a low steady sigh. This was a lot of information to digest. “What about Jenny?”

“She was inconsolable. She left shortly after. I told you already that we received notice of her passing.”

I sat there stunned, not knowing what to say. Iris touched my shoulder and said she hoped that I could rest easier now. Knowing the story should settle my nerves and calm my



wild imagination. She believed I was creating these images of Quint and Jenny from scattered pieces of information. She apologized for keeping so much from me, but her intentions were to recreate a safe atmosphere for the children. I thanked her for her kind words, and said I wanted to sit by the fire awhile longer. She gave me a look of

concern and wanted to sit with me, but I assured her that the fire comforted me. I hugged her and sent her off to bed. I wrapped a blanket around me, hugged a pillow to my chest and watched the flames dance before my eyes. I did not even notice it had started to snow outside.

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I woke up feeling cold. The fire had died out. I stretched and looked out the bay window. It was dawn and the sky was a cloudy grey. I stood up and kept the blanket wrapped around me. I started towards the stairs. At the bottom, I came to an abrupt halt. Above me on the stairs to the right stood Quint facing the stairs on the left where Jenny stood. They were staring, their bodies rigid, at each other. They did not move nor speak. She was looking pleadingly into his angry eyes. I held my breath too scared to break the tension between them. Time stood as frozen as we did. Then, ever so slightly, I noticed them starting to move. Breaking the stillness, they both turned towards me at the same time. Both sets of eyes bore down at me and a collected fury of rage hit me. My eyes grew wider and I opened my mouth to scream, but nothing came out. Quint's eyes blazed as he took a step towards me, wickedly grinning. Then, everything went black...

