

The Consequences of My Actions

“I’m really glad we did this, it’s been far too long...”

The words echoed in my head, haunting me more and more as I willed the cool autumn air to chill my soul. The fire burning within me was simply pure guilt, utter hatred for myself. And yet, I’d wanted this so bad, so bad I disregarded my initial instinct, the one to remain loyal and honest to my husband.

I’d run into Chase at my most recent shoot, being a Max Alexander model, I knew it was inevitable for me to see him one of these days. The journalism company he photographed for often highlighted my employer’s shows, and therefore he would eventually need to photograph me. Nevertheless, I’d been capable of avoiding him for almost 6 years after the accident, and I’d tried my hardest to keep it that way.

Yet, two days ago, while getting prepped and prodded for the Fall Paris Fashion Week I glanced towards the door as I’d heard the familiar seductive voice.

“You see, young flower, I will do my best to capture you, but if you cannot own the catwalk, you cannot own my camera.”

The voice grew both softer and closer simultaneously, and I could feel the mix of perspiration and tears begin to well up as he continued his conversation with someone other than *young flower*.

“She thinks just because she’s blonde with blue eyes and fake boobs doesn’t mean the camera loves her most, the world is changing and I plan to change with it, Bobby. Libby Johansen Photography isn’t interested in the basics, we’re interested in the unique. The clothes have never been the only thing to matter.”

Bigotry and self-righteousness right from the bat, and I went to tune him out, hoping so hard that we would just walk past, clueless of the person in the stylist's chair just 2 feet to the left of him at this point.

And just as he'd turned to leave the way he'd come, Brittany, the stylist most often assigned to me, did probably the worst thing possible.

"Eloise baby, how do you feel? Do you love it? Hate it? Huh, huh?" She was always pushy like that, not to be rude, but to help her own self-esteem. Her biggest fear was 'being known as the stylist who sent a gorgeous babe out to the stage looking like a gorilla', her words exactly. Although a bit melodramatic, it was understandable for her to feel this way, especially with lawsuits so expected in the business.

But the first word she'd said was the problem. The name. My name. Eloise.

It was instantaneous how his head snapped, and his body followed a millisecond later. Surprised I'd even heard Brit droning on, I'd done the most destructive thing possible in a moment that seemed surreal. I'd locked eyes with him.

He walked over to my chair and struck up a conversation with Brit and I politely invited me to coffee the next day, and I'd dumbly agreed. I also believed it had been quite a long time since we'd last spoken, and maybe because I was curious, or maybe it was Brit standing there with her questioning and jealous eyes boring into my skull, but I was almost hopeful for this little rendezvous.

The following day, we'd met at the cute little coffee shop nudged into the back alley of our old building. It was only a 15-minute train ride from my sleek flat in the heart of Manhattan, but it was nice to get out to cozy little Brooklyn again. It hadn't been nearly as painful as I'd

Andra E Patterson2

thought it would be walking 10 minutes through my old stomping grounds, but it was peaceful. I'd never come back for fear of the anxiety and pain that would overwhelm me, but that was so far from the case that it was almost eerie. Almost like I felt comfortable at once, like my body and mind knew I belonged here, and I fought that urge hard knowing I belonged where life had taken me.

We chatted, we laughed, we teared up, and shared many stories with one another, but we didn't dare touch the subject of the last time I had seen him. The last time we touched, kissed, the last time we'd been anything more than strangers. The pain was palpable, knowing that the last night we shared was in the very building just outside the front door, and we could see the pain in one another's eyes. We'd always been good at that, making each other cry and laugh simultaneously, like the fucked up pair we were.

Coffee had stayed modest, and I was the first to suggest we wrap it up. I explained to my husband, Donovan, that I would be getting home from work soon and that I needed to cook dinner. We'd paid our bills, said our goodbyes, and both held it together. Then I'd made the worst decision yet, I looked back, and what I saw, broke the strength I'd come down here with.

He was walking into our building. I stood frozen, in this back alley that I once called home, and watched, scared to see the truth I had already accepted. The light turned on, in our apartment, the one where it all happened. Where I became a person, lost my life, rebuilt myself again, and continued the never-ending cycle until the accident.

I don't think I'll ever know what I was thinking, and I don't think I want to know. But I was running, and I was running fast. As fast as I could, closing the distance between myself and the door, ignoring the elevator, and straight up the stairs, down the hall, and my fist was pounding on apartment 4G, with everything I'd got.

When he opened the door, pure confusion in his eyes, I jumped into his arms. Pushing my lips onto his as hard as possible. Every single emotion of this place consumed me, and we were entangled in love. This adulterous act felt so right, so required in my life during that night, and it was like there'd never been a 6-year gap in our relationship. It was like we'd slept together last night, here in this bed, like we'd always had. And we would always sleep together here.

But all good things come to an end, and consequences must be weathered. When I awoke, he was gone, and I knew I'd fallen right back into the trap that is Chase Daniels. I was naked and embarrassed, never went home to my husband the night before, and felt just as I had all those years ago. I dressed in a hurry, careful not to make eye contact with any of the mirrors within the apartment, the ones I'd hung. Once starving for confidence and self-love, they had represented my beauty, but in that moment they represented disgusting shame and guilt.

Nevertheless, I'd made my way out the door, out the building, and the neighborhood without a single conscious thought. Emptiness, nothing, just a shell of a person who once existed, or perhaps never existed at all. I just kept moving, allowing the gravitational force from home to pull me closer and closer until I arrived back. Pausing briefly at the bottom of the front porch steps, I let the guilt and shame consume me. I allowed the hatred for myself to burn deeply through my heart, and my veins, tasting every inch of my body. I willed my knees not to buckle under me, and yesterday's pastries to remain down. And I knew that no matter how hard I'd worked, no matter how many tears and how much blood I'd poured into recovery, I'd thrown it all away.

The last thing I'd heard last night, while I was closer to unconsciousness than awareness, was Chase's hoarse voice.

"I'm really glad we did this, it's been far too long..."

And yet I was torn up, wondering if it was genuine or manipulation. Even worse, the first thing this morning would be the conversation with my dear Donovan, forced to tell him our marriage is over. I'd broken my vows, and worse yet, I'd broken myself as a person. I quickly collected myself and decided I would not cry, not yet. I couldn't handle him trying to console me while I knew I was the most horrid thing that had entered his life. I stood up straight, held my head high, and began slowly escalating the 7 stairs to the porch. Allowing my footsteps to accelerate with every step, until I'd reached the top.

I thought about looking back out towards the street, but I had a feeling that would lead to me running. Running so far, and so fast, that I would ultimately settle in a new country with a new identity and a new backstory. But I had to be brave.

I'd grounded myself to this porch, and this situation, and I must see it through. I began reaching for the door handle when I noticed something crummy on the ground. I bent over to take a closer look at the mud. But mud in the shape of footprints, and footprints much too small to be those of Donovan who wears a size 13. Now that I'd regained all my senses and awareness, I was able to notice the footprints that had been leading up the staircase I'd just climbed, coming from the east end of the street.

As I slowly bend over to closely inspect the muddy footprints I realize the substance is much too liquidy to be the mushy texture of mud, but rather the thick liquid of a meal shake. It's brighter than I'd first thought, a tint of red hiding within the brown appearance.

And then it hits me. This is blood. These are bloody footprints leading from all the way down the street, up the sidewalk, and directly onto the front porch of my home.

I look back up to the door, ajar, and softly swinging with the slight breeze. I pushed the door open and stepped inside the entryway. There was no one in sight, but blood seemed to have spattered the entirety of the house.

In the living room, the plush, white leather couch had a massive blood stain, covering all three seat cushions and halfway up the top of all three back cushions. The blood still drips slowly from the leather to the edge of the golden-hinted white rug occupying the middle of the living room. The glass coffee table shattered, with blood covering the glass shards and dripping amongst the mangled gold frame.

As I head into the kitchen I notice every knife has been pulled from the holder on the counter next to the stove, and I follow the trail of blood spatter amongst the floor and walls towards the pantry.

Inside the pantry, I find the worst discovery of all, a person. At least, what's left of a person. I first spot the head, rope tied around the neck just above the clavicle, which is still attached, and dangling from the ceiling fan. I look into her face, and although I do not recognize her, I feel guilty for not being home. For being out, doing what I was doing, and being unable to save her. Who is she? Maybe Donovan wasn't being the most honest either...?

My mind drifts just a little as I stare at her, unable to move, thinking of whatever gruesome fate Donovan had met whilst in this house. I think she was pretty, she was probably beautiful. Now she's here, her eyes have been gouged out and her hair pulled so hard her scalp began to rip straight off the bone. Her skin had been bleached by her own blood from sitting so long that it was hard to tell her nationality.

After a moment of paralyzed horror, I floated back to reality and noticed everything else. Her torso was in the corner of the room, between two snack racks, with foreign characters carved

into her chest, and her breasts removed. One of her legs was lying across the snack shelf to the right where the chips had been before something shoved them to the floor, but it was footless. Her other leg had been directly in front of my feet this whole time, but as I was demobilized at the sight of the head, I, fortunately, did not step on it as I would have. One of her arms was lying across the top of the ceiling fan blades, and the other sticking out of the deep freezer in the left corner closest to me.

However I hadn't started screaming yet beyond, so I slowly backed away from the pantry and back into the kitchen where I noticed for the first time the human finger sitting just inches away from my waistline on the counter. The finger bears my husband's wedding ring, and I begin to mourn right here.

I think of the day we met, the night we truly fell in love, our wedding day, and all the marvelous moments we'd experienced together. And now, he was somewhere in our home, dismembered, having died alone and in terror.

My body subconsciously carried me through the dining room, allowing the image of a man, a stranger, mangling similarly to the woman in the pantry and strewn across the room, to barely phase me or alter my goal.

I have to get out of this house immediately. Stepping closer to the front door I'd come in, I step back out onto the porch letting the morning sun pour down onto my skin. There were a few people outside down the street, walking their dogs and playing with their children. Yet it seemed not a soul knew what had happened here. How could this have been a quiet endeavor?

And then I see him, standing across the street, covered in blood and smiling coldly. The 8-inch butcher knife from my set in the kitchen in his right hand was doused in blood, and my husband's head, held by the hair, in his left.

My heart stopped as I stared in horror at the sight in front of me. I hadn't found my husband's body, other than the finger, while inside, but then again I didn't dare go upstairs. His eyes were gone and his face badly beaten, quite evident he'd been tortured for hours.

The hours that I was peacefully sleeping in his murderer's bed after I'd made love to his murderer. In the hours he needed me most, I was betraying him, happily and peacefully too. Though I should have known better than to contact this man of all people, the man who'd destroyed me, just to build me back up again more times than I could count.

Unfortunately, I'm just now realizing how little control I've had over my life since the day we met. I met Donovan because he let me, I married Donovan because he allowed it to happen. We'd been happy together because he carefully crafted the situation to be. He controls every aspect of my life, he owns me. And I will never be able to escape.

"Hey princess, I thought I told you to sleep in." His voice, stoic as ever, showed no remorse or emotion at all for that matter. It was the same sentence and in the same voice he'd once displayed when I walked into a large drug deal years ago. These bodies meant absolutely nothing to him.

As he spoke many of the people on the street turned to see who owned such a charismatic voice, to then find the shock of how horrifying a man he was. Covered in blood, holding a human head, and a knife, and smiling joyfully at a terrified woman in front of him. In the flurry of panic, all the children and women were pulled into their homes, several of which called the police. Whereas a few of the men in the neighborhood were stupid enough to try to attack the psychopath before them.

Before a single one of them could reach him, he dropped Donovan's head to the group with a mushy splash as it hit the concrete. Using his left hand, pulled a gun from the back of his

waistline, and shot each of them in the head. Every bullet landed between the eyes of the victim, guaranteed kill.

And then he turned his attention back to me, as I cowered down to him over 15 feet away. “You see, he didn’t deserve you. He was banging that whore while you were gone, and ironically her old man showed up.”

The evil icyness of his laugh sent chills running down my spine, and I shattered as the realization of his words set in. He’d come to kill my husband, yes, but he found Donovan copulating with another woman, the mesmerizing woman inside the pantry. So not only had I been unfaithful, but Donovan as well, and his mistress too. Her husband had somehow followed her to her location and attempted to confront her and Don, only to find them already being tortured by him.

He must’ve seen the wheels turning in my head, he’s always known me better than I know myself because he casually continued as if old friends playfully catching up. “I see you’re starting to understand. Now you see the kitten, the other two were unfortunate collateral damages, you know. Just two people in the wrong place at the wrong time.

“Well the bitch had it coming to her for sure, I mean how dare she sleep with your man? It was relatively fun to chop her up, but her old man, now I felt for him. He didn’t deserve any of that. I’m truly sad he had to be so controlling. I mean who follows someone like that? Total invasion of privacy!”

At the end of his micro-rant, the emotion of his face changed just slightly. Not necessarily anger, but more of a dull annoyance that seemed to be pulling on him.

“Say, something baby, you’re just sitting over there shaking, I’m getting really worried about you”. I’d retreated to a ball, curled up with my arms hugging my chest, legs squatted, and

my head between my knees. I was incapable of speaking, of thinking, I wasn't able to exist right here, right now.

He'd crossed the street and approached me swiftly. Tilting my chin up from its hidden position, and held my face as he stared deep into my eyes. "You cannot escape the fate that is us, my dear."

"P-P-Please...NO!" It was all I could muster as the final wave of panic came crashing in. I was a statue, crouched down with my arms still bound tightly around my legs, and my face pointed, my chin resting in his hand.

The whoops of the sirens were getting louder and louder as the milliseconds passed on until I could see out of the corner of my eye the violent red and blue lights bouncing against the houses and businesses.

"This ends here and now, I love you until the end of time, precious baby." And with that, he plunged the knife into my chest.

Instantaneously, my body went cold and he let my chin slip away from his grip as my body limply fell to the pavement. It was getting so cold, so fast, and the police cars were nearly here. As the darkness tugged harder and harder at the corners of my eyes, I just barely made out his next move, his final move.

He took the same blade and drove it deep into his heart, ensuring a much less painful death than the one bestowed upon me. The pain began to subside until the paralyzing realization set in, I am certainly going to die.

"We'll be together forever." His last words were barely a whisper, and I knew he was close enough to touch me.

He'd controlled the latter half of my life, and he'd now even controlled the manner and details of my death. My last conscious thought I'm forced to have as I die, here and now, is that I'd traded my freedom for a few moments of euphoria.



Chronicles of AP