

Deception

Kayla Bennett closed the door to her navy blue, 2017 Kia Sorento and gulped down the rest of her coffee before tossing the cup into a nearby trash bin. On her way to the crime scene, Olivia Ramsey, another detective from her unit and a good friend of hers, stopped her. Kayla read Olivia's expression and frowned. "What's wrong?"

"What are you doing here?" Olivia asked.

"Captain called me," said Kayla. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Olivia bit her bottom lip and then sighed. "You're gonna wanna brace yourself for this one, Kay. It's...bad. Plus, it might seem very familiar to you."

Kayla narrowed her eyes. "Spit it out, Liv. What are you trying to say?"

Olivia sighed. "The crime scene is identical to your parents' crime scene."

Kayla felt her stomach drop as she made her way over to the crime scene. She ducked under the yellow police tape and placed her hand over her mouth to keep from vomiting at the sight.

There was a man and a woman posed, holding hands. Their hearts had been cut out of their chests, cut in half, and were now lying on their chests.

Kayla suddenly flashed back to twenty-three years ago.

###

Kayla came in the front door, letting the screen door slam behind her. She knew her mother was going to yell at her about it, but she didn't care. All she wanted to do was go in her room, put on some headphones, and let Lauryn Hill blast her horrible day away.

She made her way to the living room and stop in her tracks. Then, all she could do was scream at the top of her lungs.

There her parents lay, still and pale, holding hands, with both of their hearts cut out of their chests, sliced in half.

Kayla dialed 911, but when the operator answered the line, she was barely able to get the words out. Suddenly, she heard someone saying her name.

"Bennett."

###

"Detective Bennett, snap out of it."

Kayla looked up to see her captain, Michael Hammond. She cleared her throat and nodded her head. "Sir."

Captain Hammond motioned towards the man standing next to him. "This is Detective Jason Logan from the Major Crimes division. You're gonna be working with him on this case. He's been chasing this case since its inception." He paused and read her expression. "That is, if you can handle working this case? I know it's personal for you—"

"I can do it," said Kayla. She shook Jason's hand. "Detective Logan."

The detective shook his head. "Call me Jason. We're gonna be partners, we should be on a first name basis, don'tcha think?"

Kayla nodded. "Call me Kayla."

"Kayla. Pretty name."

Kayla rolled her eyes. "Let's get to work."

###

Kayla sat at her desk going through the old case files of her parents' murders.

Jason walked up behind her and asked, "What'cha doing?"

"Looking through these old case files to see if I can find any clues," said Kayla.

Jason sat down at the desk across from her and sat back in his seat. "Why? That case is what, twenty-three years old? You really think it's the same killer?"

Kayla looked up and locked eyes with Jason. "My gut tells me it is, and my gut's never wrong."

Jason raised an eyebrow and gave her a small smirk. "Never?"

Kayla shook her head. "Never, ever."

Jason leaned forward, keeping eye contact and lowered his voice. "But why would he...or *she*...stop killing for twenty-three years and then suddenly start up again, now?"

Kayla shrugged. "Therein lies the question."

"Well, if it is the same person, I'll tell ya one thing," said Jason, "Whoever they are, they're very patient."

Kayla wasn't sure why, but a chill ran down her spine as he said that. "You're right about that."

Captain Hammond stormed over to where Kayla and Jason sat and said with urgency, "There's been another one."

###

Kayla and Jason were assaulted with a horrible stench as soon as they walked into the apartment. The scene looked the same as the others, except for one thing...

There was an envelope, and it was addressed to Kayla Bennett.

Kayla opened the envelope with a furrowed brow and read the note inside. It was written in her own handwriting, and it read:

"Trust and fidelity are all you have in a relationship.

Without fidelity, you have no trust,

and without trust, hearts get broken."

Kayla stared at the note in confusion for a few moments. "This is my handwriting, but I didn't write this."

"The question is, who did?" asked someone from behind her. Kayla turned to see Olivia Ramsey looking just as confused as she was.

"I know, of course, you're not a psychotic murderer," said Olivia, "but the note looks *exactly* like your handwriting. Whoever forged it did a damned good job."

Kayla's eyes widened as it dawned on her what the note meant. "Infidelity."

Both Jason and Olivia let out a collective "Huh?"

"The couples," said Kayla. "Someone in each relationship was unfaithful. That's why the hearts are sliced in half and lying on their chests. They represent broken hearts!"

Jason stood with his arms folded across his chest, his eyes dark. "You know what this means, don't you?"

Kayla gave him a questioning look.

Jason sighed. "This means if it really is the same killer, then one of your parents was unfaithful."

Kayla's jaw dropped. After a few moments, she said, "You're right."

"But the question is, why write a note addressed to you in your own handwriting?" Olivia asked. "It's just so bizarre. Why is the killer targeting you?"

Kayla shrugged.

Jason said, "That's the real question. You probably shouldn't be alone until we figure this out. Also, you probably shouldn't go home."

Kayla scowled at him and shook her head. "No way I'm letting some asshole scare me out of my own home. Also, I can protect myself, thank you very much."

Jason grabbed Kayla's arm and locked eyes with her. "I'm not leaving you alone."

Kayla stared at him for a beat and for some reason, her heart began to beat just a little bit faster. She snatched her arm away and began to walk towards the door, rolling her eyes. "I need a drink."

###

Kayla was ripped from her sleep by the loud buzzing of her alarm clock. She groaned as she reached over to turn it off. She turned over to see Jason smiling at her.

"Good morning, sunshine," he said, as he ran his hand up and down her bare back.

Kayla groaned. "My head feels like it's been hit with a sledgehammer."

"Let's just skip work today. Call in sick," said Jason.

Kayla chuckled. "I wish, but we have a killer to catch. He's not gonna take a day off, so we can't, either."

Jason shrugged. "Who knows? Maybe he will." He gave Kayla a light kiss on the lips before he turned around and stood up to stretch.

Kayla took a moment to admire his body. He was seventeen years her senior and at fifty-five, and he looked damned good for his age.

Kayla's phone rang, bringing her out of her trance. She answered it, "Bennett."

"Kayla, we've got something. You'd better get in here." The voice on the other end of the line belonged to Olivia.

"I'm on my way," Kayla replied, before hanging up the phone.

Jason was getting off the phone at the same time she was.

"They've got something," said Kayla, as she rushed to grab some fresh clothes from her drawers and get dressed.

Jason looked at her, his eyes apologetic.

"What is it?" Kayla asked as she finished dressing with haste.

"My Captain called me in, said it's an emergency," said Jason. "Might have something to do with the case."

Kayla nodded and shrugged. "If it's an emergency, then you have to go. We'll catch up later."

Jason walked over to Kayla and wrapped his arms around her. "I'll miss you."

Kayla rolled her eyes and chuckled as she pulled herself out of his death grip. "So dramatic. Lock up when you leave." She kissed him on the lips before grabbing her keys and walking out the door.

###

Kayla had just walked into the bullpen when Olivia rushed up to her.

"I've got it, I figured it out," Olivia said, her hazel eyes wide as saucers. "Why the killer is targeting you."

Kayla walked over to her desk and sat down, motioning for her friend to finish. "And?"

"The killer was your mom's lover!" Olivia blurted.

Kayla's jaw dropped as realization hit her like a ton of bricks.

"Just think about it," Olivia continued, "It makes sense, right?"

"You really think the killer could be my mom's lover?" Kayla asked.

Olivia nodded. "Why else would the killer be targeting you? It's because of your mother! Your mother broke his heart!"

Kayla nodded and scrunched up her nose. "It does make sense, it's just so creepy. The question is, why now? Why wait twenty-three years to start killing again?"

Olivia was just about to speak again when Kayla's cell phone rang.

Kayla answered it, "Bennett."

A distorted voice on the other line said, "I can answer that question for you."

Kayla put the call on speaker phone and asked, "Who is this?"

"I'm the one you're looking for."

Olivia ran over to the civilian tech guy across the room and told him to begin a trace.

"Why are you doing this?" Kayla asked. "What do you want?"

The voice on the other end of the line laughed. "I would think that would be obvious by now."

"Stop these games! Just tell me what I can do to get you to stop killing people!"

The demeanor of the voice suddenly changed and became darker. "Do you know who I am?"

Kayla sighed. "Yes, you were my mother's lover. She broke your heart, didn't she?"

"Congratulations, cookie for you." Kayla could hear clapping on the other end of the line.

"Your mother broke my heart, and now, I'm gonna break yours."

Before Kayla could reply, she heard the line hang up.

"Got it!" said Olivia. "He's close. Fate's Motel, around the corner."

Kayla nodded. "Let's go."

###

Kayla and Olivia drove up to an old, dilapidated-looking motel.

"You sure this is the place?" Kayla asked.

Olivia nodded and showed Kayla the tablet they'd been using to track the killer. "This is where the signal stops. He's here, somewhere."

Kayla and Olivia both got out of the car and drew their guns. There was a second car of uniformed officers that had come with them as backup. Both officers, Officer Julio Sanchez and Officer Monica Campbell exited their car and walked over to Kayla and Olivia, guns drawn, awaiting orders.

Kayla looked at the two officers and said, "Okay, this is how this is gonna go. Olivia and Sanchez, you cover the bottom floor. Campbell, you and I will take the top. Everyone got it?"

Everyone nodded in unison and then went their separate ways; Olivia and Sanchez into the check-in office, as Kayla and Campbell went up the outer stairs to the second floor.

Kayla and Campbell walked up to the first door and knocked. "Police, open up!"

Just then, Kayla's phone vibrated in her pocket. She reached into her pocket, pulled out her phone and answered it. "Bennett."

"Hello, Kayla."

Kayla's eyes widened as she recognized the same distorted voice that had called her earlier. Her face then hardened as she asked. "Where are you?"

The voice tsked. "Now that would be telling, wouldn't it?"

"Then why lead us here?" Kayla asked.

The voice chuckled. "Okay, I'll give you a hint."

Suddenly, a gunshot rang out. Less than a moment later, Kayla heard Sanchez's voice over the radio yelling, "Officer down! Send a bus and backup to—"

A second gunshot rang out and the line on the radio went dead.

Kayla was about to run back down the stairs but stopped in her tracks when she saw a man in a mask, with a dark hoodie and black jeans standing on the roof of the next building over.

The man waved at Kayla and the voice on the phone said, "Looks like you found me. Catch me if you can."

"I'll take care of the others," said Campbell, "Please just catch the son of a bitch!"

Kayla began to run towards the edge of the outer second floor of the motel. The roof of the next building was about a seven-foot jump. Kayla climbed over the rail, took a deep breath and jumped.

Kayla landed on the roof of the next building at a bad angle and heard multiple *snaps*. She cried out in pain.

The masked man was gone and the voice on the phone said, "Maybe next time."

###

Kayla opened her eyes and looked around. It took her a few moments to realize that she was in a hospital bed. Her vision was a little blurry at first, but she was finally able to focus. She looked over and was surprised to see Monica Campbell sitting at her bedside.

Campbell gave her a small smile. "Welcome back."

Kayla looked at her left arm, which was in a sling and casted all the way up to her shoulder. She looked back at Campbell. "How bad?"

Campbell cringed as she said, "You fell hard on your left arm. You dislocated your shoulder, broke your wrist and elbow, and you fractured your lower arm."

Kayla mirrored Campbell's expression for a moment before shrugging her right shoulder. "Good thing I'm right-handed." She paused a beat. "What about Olivia and Sanchez? Are they alright?"

Campbell's eyes darkened as she shook her head. "They didn't make it. I'm sorry."

Kayla closed her eyes as she could feel them getting damp. She shook her head as a tear ran down her face. She quickly wiped it away. "Damnit."

Campbell put her head down and said in a low voice, "This guy really enjoys torturing you, doesn't he?"

Kayla looked back at her with narrowed eyes, Campbell put her hands up and said, "I just meant that you and Ramsey were close, right? Him going after her was just..." Campbell shook her head and sighed, "wrong."

Kayla was just about to reply when her cell phone rang. she saw the name on the caller ID and let out sigh of relief.

"Jase, where are you? What's going on."

There was a pause before Jason's voice came on the line and said, "We got him."

Kayla's heart leapt and her stomach sank at the same time. "You caught him?"

"We did," said Jason. "So now you can rest easy and just focus on getting better."

"I wanna look him in the eyes," said Kayla.

"Kayla, I don't think that's a good idea," said Jason.

"Why not?"

"Honey, this man has been tormenting you for *years*!" said Jason. "He's gotten into your head, and I don't wanna give him the opportunity to do any more damage."

Kayla sighed. "Jase, I need this. I'll be fine, just tell me where you are."

"I'm not doing that," said Jason. "Just stay there and do what the doctor says, alright? I'll be there soon."

Before Kayla had a chance to reply, Jason hung up.

Kayla let out a groan of frustration.

"It'll be okay, Detective Bennett," said Campbell. "You'll get your chance to face him."

Kayla looked at her. "Did you know about this?"

Campbell nodded her head. "Of course, I knew."

Kayla raised an eyebrow. "Do you know where?"

Campbell's eyes widened. "I can't. I could get into serious trouble."

Kayla slowly got out of bed and stood in front of Campbell with her right hand on her hip. "Well how about this? As a detective of higher rank, I'm ordering you to drive me to the crime scene."

Campbell sighed and shook her head. "This is so messed up."

###

When Kayla and Campbell walked into the scene, there was a man sitting in a chair next to a table with his back to the door. His hands were cuffed behind the chair. Jason stood in front of him, gun drawn.

The man shook his head vigorously and said, "I told you, it wasn't me!"

"Jason!" Kayla said as she stormed over to him and then looked at the man he had cuffed. "Joe?"

"Kayla, is that you?" Joe let out a sigh of relief. "Can you please tell this lunatic that I didn't kill those people?"

Kayla huffed and looked at Jason. "Can we talk over here for a sec?"

Jason let out a low growl, but followed her, anyway.

Kayla glared at Jason. "What led you to believe that the man murdered all of those people, including my parents, was Joe, the super at my apartment building? Who was there for over thirty years and never within that time hurt a fly?"

"It was a hunch," said Jason.

Kayla narrowed her eyes. "A hunch? A what exactly gave you this hunch?"

"Did you know that not only was he the super in your old building, but he was also the super in the apartment building of the first couple that was killed?"

Kayla shrugged. "So? Supers change buildings all the time. Please tell me you have more than that."

Just as Jason was about to speak again, Joe said, "I know where I remember you from now. You used to come to the building all the time to visit Mrs. Bennett."

Kayla's heart sank as she looked at Joe, putting her right hand on her gun holster. "What do you mean, Joe? Come to the building when?"

"Every day around eleven in the morning," said Joe. "I remember the time because that's when I used to take my second smoke break. Yup. Every morning, like clockwork."

Kayla's jaw dropped as she looked at Jason.

Jason's eyes darkened. "You have me confused with someone else."

Joe shook his head. "I never forget a face."

Jason looked at Kayla. "You don't really believe I'd do that, do--"

Before he could finish his sentence, Kayla had shot him in the head.

Campbell just stared at her in shock for a moment before finally saying, "What have you done?"

Kayla's face was now devoid of emotion as she handed Campbell her gun. "I just killed a murderer, that's what I've done."

"But how did you know?" Campbell asked.

Kayla looked down at Jason and then back at Campbell. "It was the way he said my name."

###

Months had passed since Kayla had killed Jason and she had taken a plea deal of twenty-five to life, with possibility of parole after twenty. Still, it didn't matter to her. She was finally at peace, even in her jail cell.

She was sitting on her bed, reading, when a guard came over to her cell.

"Hey Bennett, you've got mail," said the guard.

Kayla gave her a small smile as the guard handed it to her. "Thanks."

She froze when she noticed that the handwriting looked exactly like her own. She was about to ask the guard where the mail had come from, but the guard had already left.

Kayla opened the enveloped to reveal a note that read, "*Nice try.*"