

# *Unleashed Betrayal*



BY  
KACIE CLEMENT



## **Unleashed Betrayal**

“Feel the pierce of betrayal on the heart by the one whom it  
loved the most.”

By

Kacie Clement

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kacie Clement is a freelance writer and Business Consultant. After three decades of writing Grants for local, State and National Non-Profit Organizations, Kacie decided to become a Novelist with her book “Unleashed Betrayal”.

A writer by day and a reader by night, Kacie is often seen writing, painting or quilting.

When she is not creating things, she is spending time with her family and two dogs, Peek and Boo in her rural Minnesota home.

# DEDICATION

You know how it is. You purchase a book turning quickly to the Dedication page and find that the Author dedicated the book to someone else.

Whether we know each other or not, be acquaintances, may have crossed paths, are related or best friends.

This one's for you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who saw me through this book; to all those who provided support, talked things over, read, offered comments, and assisted in the editing, proofreading and design.

I would like to thank Irene and Simon for helping me in the process of selection and editing.

Last and not least: I beg forgiveness of all those who have been with me over the course of the last year and whose names I have failed to mention."

## PREFACE

The mind does not choose whom it loves and whom it ignores. It is the matter of the heart, it makes decisions, and rationale is usually not the utmost priority. Frank O'Brien tries to pursue his passion for art and hands the running of A'lainn Cosmetics to a man named Garry. Frank soon realizes that he has made a horrendous mistake. But before he can take action to rectify the mistake he is killed in a car accident.

Now it's up to Macy to hold the reins of the company that her father Frank, left for her. But what she doesn't know is that the man she is falling for is not who he seems to be. Perhaps her friend Desmond can help Macy in her path to survival. But will his help be enough?



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## THE A'LAINN PATHWAY

**O**n the western coast of Ireland, is the village known as Doolin. With a small population of just two thousand people, the entire community of the village was very close to each other. However, for a small village, it had a vast amount of attractions. Tourists would come from many parts of the world to view and explore its famous ancient sites in the nearby towns. The crystal clear waters on the entire coastline of the village was a sight to behold. Tourists would enjoy the most beautiful views in the village and of the surrounding areas from hilltops or while canoeing in the North Clare Sea. The pubs were usually filled with people especially in the summers when tourism was high. There were very seldom days when the local pub owners would have to close down early because of slow business days. Although there were very few places to stay for the night, the most popular was the Doolin Hotel which has luxurious rooms, along with a pub. Located in Doolin, it was one the best hotels in the area. Just opposite to the hotel, in a stone cottage reminiscent of the Victorian era, was a cosmetic shop called A'lainn Cosmetics. Right behind the shop, just a few feet away from its back door was a large building where the products present in the shops were made.

Although the large building was rather boring looking with just a plain white rectangular structure, the shop seemed a lot more fun. The cottage shop had a large display window with colorfully packaged products that would take the fancy of any woman with a slight interest in cosmetics. A'lainn Cosmetics wasn't just any makeup seller. They didn't just deal in the traditional lipsticks and bronzer products. They had branched out to various toiletries and fragrances making their consumer range a lot more diverse than most local boutiques.

A'lainn Cosmetics were also more exclusive and different from any other boutique far and wide. This was because they made their own products with all organic materials. While much of their products included minerals, plant extracts and other natural ingredients, just like any other organic beauty product line, they had something much more special in some of their products. Two of their main ingredients were local to the area which were Irish Seaweed and Heather Flowers which gave their products an exclusivity from the rest.

A'lainn wasn't just a shop in the small village of Doolin, it was now famous all over the world, with outlets in 13 different countries. Which is why tourists visiting the village could never resist going to A'lainn Cosmetics and splurging on their naturally made products. They were a trusted manufacturer and even had a few celebrities walk through its doors when they were there for a photo shoot or a relaxing vacation. The shop was run by 3 local women, one of which was named Macy O'Brien.

Macy was perhaps the most important person in the shop when she was around. A chemist by profession, she was a girl who had porcelain white skin, was very fragile looking and had a very small physique. The most striking feature in her appearance was her emerald green eyes which had the power to captivate anyone. Her appearance could be compared to a porcelain doll due to her porcelain skin and green eyes. Macy visited the shop every day but never hung around for longer than an hour. This is because her actual work was in the product testing department in the building behind the shop. She was a chemist there and in charge of overseeing that the products were actually safe for human use.

At the young age of 28, she was already very satisfied and happy with the way things were going for her, as she was the one who one day would be carrying out the family business.

You see, Macy's father was Frank O'Brien, the current president of A'lainn Cosmetics. At age 58, Frank O'Brien was a tall, slender man with dark brown luscious hair and chestnut brown eyes. As he was a financier and a businessman, it was he who had

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taken A'lainn Cosmetics from the village of Doolin and turned it into a global brand. Before he took over at the age of 30, A'lainn was just a local brand. It was only known in the few cities of Ireland, and that too was only because the founder of the company, Frank's mother, Dora O'Brien had managed to expand it through her hard work.

The opening of the franchise was as interesting as the products and the place where the first shop was opened. The first shop was started over 4 decades ago in the same place where now the A'lainn Cosmetic's cottage shop is in Doolin. Dora O'Brien was a lady who had grown up on a farm just outside the village of Doolin. She was very close to the animals that were present on her farm during her childhood. Since childhood, she never fancied meat and resented the idea that animals were killed to feed her and her family. Until she got married, she had very limited knowledge of how the make-up that she used also were made from the by-products of the animals. However, when she decided to work at a local drugstore in a nearby town, she found out how different by-products of animals were involved in the make-up products that she so adored. Soon after her first son, Frank was born, she vowed to start her own business, which would not contain any animal by-products.

Although at that time her ambition was nothing less than an impossible task, she was determined to make it come true. Makeup products made with only natural ingredients were a concept unheard of at that time. So, Dora had decided to use as many organic materials as possible and only use animal by-products when there was no other alternative. She decided to call her business store A'lainn which was the name of her first pet dog, an Irish Red Setter, she had as a child growing up.

Dora along with her husband would make their own rouge and lipsticks in their shed at home and then transport it to the cottage every day to sell. This whole process made her products rather expensive which made them very exclusive from the start. Her market was limited, but she was determined to make it to the top. Gradually her business picked up momentum, and in a matter of

5 years, she had hired 3 employees who helped make her products for her small yet loyal consumers. She was known across the village for the vast selection of colors in her products, and her quality was admired by all who used it.

Being that the Doolin hotel was right across the lane from the A'lainn Cottage, tourists would wander off to her shop and buy a thing or two from her. Tourist's often returned to the cottage demanding a specific product which Dora felt was proof enough her cosmetic line was being used and loved by people in other parts of the country. After doing business for 10 years and expanding their employment to 20 people, technology evolved, and they found better ways of making their products deciding to expand their cosmetic lines.

With a small savings account built on their profits, they decided to open up additional small stores in Galway and Athlone. It was a good decision since they got a good amount of customers from these parts and the stores started doing well in these cities immediately. The business continued to grow, and soon they required a larger space for manufacturing their products. The house shed would no longer be a fit space for everyone to work. A piece of land was purchased right behind the cottage to manufacture their product and provide easy access to the cottage and newly established stores.

Her husband passed away in a matter of few years due to a brain tumor which sadly was discovered a little too late to be treated. Since then, Dora had worked tirelessly on her own, to build the business while raising her son Frank alone. Frank soon took over when he was old enough to handle the business and had completed his education. Dora believed that Frank was the perfect fit to be running the business as he was a very bright student and upon the insistence of his mother had graduated from a well-reputed business school in England. She had always wanted to study business herself, but her education had been very limited since girls were not encouraged to study in her times. And ever since she started A'lainn Cosmetics, she never

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got the time to study further, her business was the only thing that kept her going.

Just because Frank had listened to his mother, and gone to business school, didn't mean he liked being the president of A'lainn Cosmetics. He dedicated his time in making A'lainn Cosmetics successful in everything that they produced. However, his heart was never in it. Ever since his childhood, Frank was the creative type and not the business type. He would read books that described the lives of the great artists and how they struggled in their respective times. He was always astounded by how all the famous artist had suffered hardships when they started to walk on the path of creativity and imagination. Most of these artists were not recognised for the brilliant work that they had produced within their lifetime. In fact, all of them became popular only after they passed away. Frank had always wanted to be a painter since before his college days. He had protested strongly about going to a business school. However, his mother just couldn't understand him when he told her that he wanted to pursue something else other than business. He had tried telling her that she was forcing him to do something he didn't like and in fact he wanted to be an artist. "Nonsense," she had said when he finally made the declaration. His mother was sitting on her favorite armchair listening to her favorite songs on the vinyl records. She turned the gramophone off as she further added, "Artists never earn much of anything in their lives." She folded her arms over her chest and crossed her legs and gave Frank a very stern look.

Frank was now starting to feel very uncomfortable. He knew he had hit a nerve with his mother. As her only heir, he was the one who was expected to run their growing family business. Standing in front of her with his head bowed down, he knew he had to respect his mother wishes whatever it took, but he also needed to tell her that he didn't want to do this. It was wrong for her to expect him to do something that didn't even come naturally to him. "But mum, I am not up for this. I love to paint and make paintings, which is why I want to study the arts and

become a painter. Think of all the wondrous things I would be able to paint and sell for such a high price.” Frank mimicked painting with a brush on the thin air and had excitement in his eyes. Sadly his mother was too caught up in keeping her vinyl record in its box that she did not notice this vivid performance. When she lifted her head up, she again sounded very stern, “I know that you do not know how to run a business yet. This is the reason why I am asking you to go to a business school. And you know England has the best schools for business, which is where you should go.” She then got up from her armchair and walked over to Frank and put her hand gently on his left shoulder and told him, “As for painting; it is a leisurely activity. You can do it in your free time when you are feeling up for it. There is no need to study art. You can go to an art gallery and get inspiration for a weekend project.” At this point, Frank opened his mouth to speak, but his mother silenced him by removing the hand from his shoulder and instead raised an index finger motioning him to remain silent. She further continued, “We need someone to run our business, we have no one but you. It’s well established and has allowed us to live a good lifestyle.

Don’t throw all that away for some small flame of passion that you have.” Frank then saw an opportunity to speak again, “Mum I know what I am meant to do, but we can always find someone else to run the company on our behalf while I can become an artist.” His mother took a step back away from him and still looking at him in surprise said, “You are talking like a child right now. Look at you Frank, you desperately need some good business education. Surely you can’t possibly think that handing our business to someone else is a good idea. And while someone else runs our business, all you are going to do is paint?” His mother’s voice was louder now, and she had now turned aggressive. Her attitude hurt Frank’s spirits. He finally gave in, “Ok mum, I shall go to the business school. I will look after the business when I am done with my studies.” All of a sudden Dora was smiling again. She kissed her son on the forehead and told him “I know you think I am being unfair, but it is for your own good. This painting phase will pass you will see. But whatever



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you study will always remain with you. I could not study because of my family restrictions, but I won't let anything like that happen to my only child." At this point, they both hugged each other. Although Dora was smiling, Frank looked unhappy. Despite his unhappiness, he asked his mother, "So which school should I go to mum?" They ended their hug and Dora told him that they should do their research before finalizing anything.

This was the end of their conversation and Frank went to his room to paint after that, knowing that he may never be the great artist that he had aspired to be. He finally chose a business college in Birmingham, where despite his efforts he struggled to get good grades in his first semester. He did not want to disappoint his mother and knew that his mother had a lot of hopes for him, so he suppressed the urge to paint more often and focused more on what his professors were teaching. He changed his antics in the second semester when he completely abandoned painting and stuck to studying his books about finances and accounting. Nothing was to his fancy, but it was his only choice so that he could inherit A'lainn Cosmetics. In college, he avoided telling anyone that his preference was painting instead of business. In fact, when someone would ask about what he does in his free time, he would completely omit naming painting as his hobby. This was a secret that he now wanted to keep for himself and no one else. Frank completed the semester with good grades, and he was finally looking forward to his new semester. Little did he know that he would get something more than a few courses that semester.

In his third semester, he met Margery in one of his finance classes. She was a beautiful young girl with a very light complexion, emerald green eyes, and golden locks. It wasn't love at first sight however, that got them going. Frank was the first one to approach her right after their first class. He only wanted to find out more about the really strict professor that they had in their class and wished to know if Margery knew anything more about him. Margery didn't. To make Frank feel comfortable, as he clearly looked perplexed she told him, "Why

don't you sit with me in the next class? I really don't fancy sitting at the eye level of a person who keeps being mean to you just because you are clicking your pen too loudly or chewing gum in the class." Frank gave an awkward smile. "Yeah. The guy seems pretty weird to me. Did you see how he got offended when a student couldn't answer one of his questions? He shouldn't have told him off like that." Margery and Frank were now exiting the class when Margery replied, "I know. He is going to be a hard one to bear through." Frank grinned when he looked at her. Margery was smiling as well. They said their goodbyes then and there for the day. However, in the next class, Frank really did sit with Margery. They spent their time sitting in the corner and enjoyed all the ways their professor could get annoyed. There was a list of things that could annoy him, and now some students were doing it on purpose. When their class ended, Frank made a move on Margery. "Hey if you are up for it, we are going to the club tomorrow. It's just going to be one of my friends from the university and me. Want to join us?" Margery thought for a second before replying, "Yea sure. Is it ok if I bring my roommate Penelope?" Frank was taken aback by Margery's quick agreement, but he didn't let it show and continued to play it cool. "Yes of course. I shall see you at 8:30. We will meet in the college commons area, and we can drive from there." Margery smiled "That would be great."

They next saw them meeting in the dimly lit pavement of the commons area. Margery was dressed in a sleeveless yellow colored top with high waist jeans. Frank had also not held back in trying to impress Margery. Dressed in his finest pair of skinny jeans, he was wearing an oversized brown shirt at the top. "You look amazing," Frank said while admiring her after exchanging pleasantries. Margery blushed ever so slightly and said thank you while not looking directly at Frank. Frank knew he had flattered her. They started walking towards Peter's car who was Frank's friend and everyone's ride back to campus. Upon reaching the car, Frank wanting to be the true gentleman, opened the door of the car to let Margery and her friend in. This definitely impressed Margery and she gave her friend Penelope

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a mischievous wink. Her friend winked back and giggled with her. They all reached the club and as expected, Frank asked Margery to dance. They both danced to “Angel of the Morning” with their arms wrapped around each other. It was then when Frank knew that he didn’t just like the girl, he was falling in love with her. Margery, on the other hand, was just as excited as Frank himself. Her heart was pounding heavily, and she had to breathe deeper than usual. She was afraid that she would come across to Frank as an asthma patient or just plain weird. However, Frank never noticed. The loud music had prevented him from hearing her breathing so heavily, and besides, he was only focused on her eyes. Her piercing green eyes which had captivated his attention and were the only things that were worth noticing at the moment. All of a sudden, without meaning to, he leaned forward towards her. His lips met hers, and they kissed. They kissed so passionately that they felt like they were the only ones in the room. Frank felt a rush of adrenaline in his entire body. She grabbed the back of his neck and was caressing it with her hand. Now Frank had goosebumps on his neck and on his arms. They finally ended their kiss after what seemed like hours.

They both smiled at each other knowing that this was a start to the perfect relationship. Frank and Margery both decided that they would take a cab home that very moment. It was fortunate that Frank’s roommate was out as well and they both could go to his place to spend some time together. As soon as they got in the room, Frank closed the door behind him and locked it for good measure. Margery was again panting heavily. She grabbed Frank’s waist as soon as he approached her. Frank took off her top and started kissing her neck while she moaned lightly. Frank took off his shirt and undid her bra. He kissed her all over her body. With the passion intensifying for each other they finally fell on the bed, with Frank on top of Margery. Frank stared at her while she laughed because of the way they had fallen on the bed, with their limbs half hanging from the bed and partially on the floor. He was now more into Margery than ever. He had never seen a girl so beautiful yet so fragile in his life. All he wanted to do was be with her but never hurt her. Frank took off

his pants, while Margery unbuttoned hers. They took off their pants and underwear. Frank had retrieved a condom from his pocket and was now struggling to open the wrapping, while

Margery was caressing his hair. Frank was still trying to open the packet and thought to himself, "This is not the time." It finally opened. Making love, Frank realized that he hadn't felt anything like this in his life before. The two girls that Frank had been with previously in high school and then another in his first semester in college were nothing compared to what he felt now. Not even when Margery was kissing him on the dance floor did he feel such inexplicable feelings. This, Frank knew was more than just passion, it was love.

An hour later Frank and Margery were lying in bed next to each other fully spent. Their naked bodies under the sheets were as close as two people could be physically. Margery turned her head to Frank, and said to him, "So, does Professor Richard still scare you?" Frank laughed. He didn't expect her to pop that question! He then turned his head towards her said softly, "Well even if he does, I have you to keep me company." "I am not sure my company will keep you from getting scolded in class though" Margery replied. Only a few hours into the night and Frank was already falling deeply in love with her. "I think we should have each other's backs," Frank replied to her as he put his hand on her breasts and rubbing them lightly. Holding Frank's wrist, Margery said: "That's a deal I can work with." She then suddenly got up from the bed and started dressing. "What are you doing?" asked Frank moving into a sitting position. "You knew I would have to leave this room one time or the other. It's a boy's dormitory. We sneaked in. Remember? Besides I don't want your roommate seeing us like this." Frank shook his head in agreement. "Good point." He got up as well pulling on his boxers and pants, while Margery buttoned her top. "So, will I see you tomorrow on campus?" asked Frank in a concerned voice, hoping he had made a good impression on her. Margery grabbed Frank's face with her hands and kissed him full on the lips. "Of course, you will."

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This cheered Frank up. He opened the door for her while putting on his own shirt. They both walked outside the dormitory, and from there Margery said her goodbye and left. When Frank made his way back up to his room, he had a certain bounce in his step. From then on the two were inseparable. It was not just a matter of sitting together in the classes anymore. They would always be together. Whenever their lecture ended, they would meet at the entrance door of the university. The two would meet every day off campus where the weather was always beautiful, or so it seemed to them. There was nothing that they could not dream of doing without the other person knowing about it. Several months into their relation, Frank told Margery about everything that ever happened in his life. He told Margery how he never wanted to be in business school and instead wanted to be a painter. He even told her how he painted different abstract paintings and how each one of them had a meaning. Sadly, they were now all locked up in their attic back in his house. He didn't want to see those paintings anymore. Seeing them would only make him remember the days when he was free to do whatever he wanted without being accountable to anyone.

Margery was supportive of his decision. She told him that once they graduated, and got married, she would manage his family business alongside him. This would allow Frank more time to paint as Margery would handle anything that Frank needed to be done but couldn't do. They would purchase their own private cottage where Frank could set up a wonderful studio to do nothing but paint, and it would be their secret place. Frank thought it was a brilliant idea. Margery was every inch capable of handling their business with Frank as his mother and father had been. Of course he would still be running the business, but his future wife may help him be a better businessman while also allowing him to achieve his dream of becoming a painter. Another year into their relationship and they were now in their last semester of their degree. Frank thought it was the right time for Margery to meet his mother. He arranged a meeting with his mother at their annual Christmas dinner. Margery parents had already met Frank this year during summer break. Frank's

mother, however, had yet to meet Margery, the woman about whom Frank had already given his mother very descriptive explanations about. Frank was excited at the prospect of the two most important women in his life, meeting with each other. Finally, it was their time to visit their village, and as Frank drove Margery to his place after a long flight, he noticed that Margery was really nervous. He held her hand, "Don't worry, it's going to be all right." "I know," Margery said holding Frank's hand with her other hand. "But I am allowed to be nervous when going to meet my future mother in law." Frank laughed. They soon reached the house. Margery noticed that it was definitely a house that stood out from the rest. While most other houses were small and enclosed in the area, this one was larger with equally large windows. It was made with brick and painted with the lightest shade of yellow along with a brown rooftop. Frank got out of the car and opened the door for Margery. Since it wasn't cold at all, Margery had dressed in a knee length white skirt and an electric blue top. While Frank had chosen to dress in a round neck shirt that Margery had bought for him on his birthday and faded blue jeans. He knew his mother would think that he should have dressed more formally for a Christmas dinner. But he also wanted to communicate to her that he wanted to make his own rules of his life.

They walked to the door and just as they were about to ring the doorbell the door opened on its own and out came Frank's mother, Dora. She looked about 45 and was shorter than Margery. She was extraordinarily dressed in a red velvet tunic with black satin pants. She spoke before Frank and Margery had a chance to get inside the house. "Come in, I'm so pleased to see you, I had seen you two from my window upstairs when you got out of the car." Dora closed the door behind them and gave a tight hug to Frank. "Oh, Frank I have missed you so much." "I have missed you too mum. May I introduce you to Margery?" He said ending the hug. Dora looked at Margery with kind eyes, and then with a wide smile, she proceeded to hug Margery. "I have heard so much about you dear. It's great that we have finally met." With this, she kissed Margery on the cheek.

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Margery smiled back, “It nice to you Mrs O’Brien. And I am also really glad that we finally have the chance to meet each other.” “Oh well let’s sit down dear, and we can talk all about you and Frank” With this Dora led the two in the living room where she motioned them to sit down on the cream couch while Dora sat in the chair that she always occupied. To start things off, Frank started the conversation. “Mum, I have told Margery about the cookies that you bake every year for Christmas. I hope you haven’t skipped them this year.” Dora smiled and said in a sweet voice, “Of course I haven’t dear. I would never miss out on making something that has always been your favorite. But they are not done just yet. They will be ready by dinner time. I hope you will want to sample them, Margery.” “Yes Mrs O’Brien, I would love to. I have always heard Frank rave about those cookies every time he eats a stale cookie at the university.” Dora laughed, “Everything that I do is for the benefit of Frank. He is the only one I care about in this world. This is the reason why I want him to take over my business so that he may be able to look after himself and possibly you when I am gone.”

Margery was moved and leaning forward to reach Dora’s hand she said to her, “I love Frank, and I do intend to marry him, whether or not he is a businessman or an artist.” Dora looked at Margery quizzically then smiled at her, “I am so glad to hear that you have made the decision to marry him. From what Frank tells me you have made him incredibly happy. You really have my blessing.” At this Frank got up and went to hug his mother. “I am so glad mum that you like her. She has made me the happiest man on earth.” “Frank, of course, I like her, why wouldn’t I? I am glad that you two have decided to get married.” “Thank you so much, Mrs O’Brien.” Margery was in tears now. Dora got up from her seat and sat next to Margery and hugged her. “My child I know you would be perfect for Frank. There is no way that I should be the one to stop you from being with each other. I may have stopped him from being a lowly painter, but I know true love when I see it. You will both have my blessing today and always and please call me Dora.” Margery hugged Dora back, and both started crying while Frank watched them sitting on the

armrest of his mother's chair. When they finally stopped and broke the hug, Dora said to Margery, "Now since you are here, I want you to select anything that you like from our shop, either one item or ten, that's my Christmas gift to you, so please accept it." Margery shook her head in agreement still fighting to hold back tears. Frank got up from the chair and made his way to both the women sitting on the couch. Hugged them both and kissed both of them on the forehead. "I love you both so much." He knew that these two women sitting here were his complete life and his reason to live. Whether or not he got to be a painter, he knew he would remain happy. For him, his life was nearly complete.



## THE LANE TO JOY, DEATH AND DECEPTION

When two people love each as much as Frank and Margery, it only seemed natural that they would want to get married as soon as possible and declare their undying love in front of everyone. And that is what Margery and Frank did. Just days after they both graduated from the University, they sought to get married. Despite all their promises of love and staying together forever, a formal proposal from Frank was necessary. Frank wanted Margery to be the happiest girl ever on the day of her proposal. He had moved into an apartment in Bristol and was taking a job in business management for a year to gather job experience before moving over to A'lainn Cosmetics. This would allow him to be more vigilant in his work when he finally takes over A'lainn. Margery also planned to stay in England for a while and had already acquired a job in a bank as a cashier right before her graduation. Since her job was already in Bristol, Frank had gathered that the apartment was the perfect plan to keep her happy.

Frank hadn't told Margery much about the new apartment just yet because he wanted to surprise her. Frank had told Margery that he had rented an apartment for himself after graduation, but since it was too small, he didn't want Margery to move in with him just yet. So Margery had to move in with her friend who lived on Jacob Street which was thirty miles from her workplace on Station Road. Frank had made sure that their new place was close to her workplace. Now, all Frank had to do was bring Margery to their new apartment so that Margery could be with him for their entire lives. He had kept most of the apartment empty so that when Margery finally did move in, she would be the one who can decorate it with her own style. Frank knew that nothing would please her more. She had also loathed the fact that

she could not place anything of her own choice as she was only a roommate with her friend and was merely paying the rent for the room. Frank decided to take Margery to his apartment the following Saturday deciding that would be perfect to not only show her the apartment but propose as well. On Friday, Frank asked Margery if she would like to go on a picnic in the park and spend the day together on Saturday.

He arrived at Macy's the next morning in his blue Peugeot 205. Margery, outside waiting hopped in the car happily with a large picnic basket in her hand. "Hey, you." She said as she kissed Frank full on the lips. "I see that you have packed up quite a bit of lunch. I told you to not make too much of an effort." Frank said after they had kissed. Margery just gave a shrug and said, "You never know how long you might be planning to stay or how much you may like it there. So we have to be prepared." Frank had started driving, and while looking at the road, he answered her, "What if we both hate the park and want to leave early?" Margery rolled her eyes, "Don't be so daft Frank. You told me that we are going by the riverside. How bad could it be then? See I have made ham sandwiches, squeezed fresh orange juice and even have a goat cheese salad, along with a bag of chips."

Frank was definitely amazed when he heard her say all these things. He realized how excited she was at the prospect of spending the entire day with him. "That's a lot of stuff that you have for us." She gave a wide smile to Frank. He loved when she was smiling because of him. It made her look so beautiful and made Frank feel so special to have her. Frank then continued with his conversation, "Hey I need to tell you something, I have also invited a friend and his girlfriend to come with us." Looking at Margery, he added "No, no you need not worry," as Margery had given him a look of shock and anger. He knew she was not going to be happy when she realized that they were not the only two people going to the picnic. He further added, "We will just stop by their place for a minute or two to pick them up, and we can be on our way." Margery scoffed, "I thought it was just

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going to be you and me. The things I packed won't suffice for four people." Frank now focusing on his driving said in a comforting voice, "Don't worry Marge, I told them to pack their own lunch. So that part is covered." Saying this he put his hand on Margery's thigh and caressed it. Margery looked down at it and had the urge to push away his hand from her thigh. She was clearly very cross with Frank for not telling her that they would have company. She had planned to do so much together with Frank, and now he was bringing a friend and his girlfriend to a day that should have been only theirs. But she refrained herself from removing his hand and decided that there is no point in staying angry and ruin her mood. She wanted to remember today as a good day when they think back to their memories. This was her first picnic with Frank since they graduated, so it was indeed a special moment for her. No matter who else was invited, she would make her full effort to have a good time.

Frank had now arrived at the apartment building. It was a modest looking building, not very old, but definitely not something that was built in the past decade. There was no elevator, so they climbed up the stairs. The black and white tiled hallway of the building looked rather nice but somewhat unkempt. This still was better than how Margery had expected the interior to be looking considering the exterior of the building. When they came to the door, instead of knocking, Frank simply took out his keys from his pocket and opened the lock on the door. Margery's mouth fell open. "Frank what are you doing? Are you even supposed to have your friends' apartment keys? And even if you have them shouldn't you still bother knocking first?" To her surprise, Frank simply walked in and asked her to follow him inside. Margery walked in through the apartment door feeling very conscious of her surroundings. She saw that most of the apartment was empty and apart from two armchairs and a TV set in front of them, there was nothing else in the apartment. The kitchen was to her left, and even that looked uncharacteristically empty for an apartment that is being inhabited by two people.

She looked towards Frank with a confused expression, and Frank laughed loudly looking at her. He then came close to her until they were a few inches away from each other. He held her hands and kissed them. “Margery, I love you, and I know that we have always dreamed of being together with each other forever. I want us to live here during our time in England. I have left this place empty so that you can decorate it the way you like it.” Margery was on the verge of tears, but she held them back. “Oh, Frank I am so glad that we are going to be together.” She then looked around the room clutching Frank’s hand she stretched them as far as she could. “Is this really your place? You said it was very small. But this is so big.” Frank laughed, “I lied. And the place is ours, not just mine.” Margery came close to Frank and they both kissed.

Frank stepped away from Margery after they finished kissing and freed Margery’s hands from his grips. While Margery scanned the entire apartment, Frank had taken out the engagement ring box from his pocket. When Margery made her way back to Frank after scanning the apartment, she saw the box in Frank’s hand. Her smile vanished. She looked dumbfounded. Frank got closer to her and bent down on one knee. Margery had now started crying. Frank spoke “I never thought that the first time I saw you, I would be meeting my partner for life. You have made me a better man and made me believe that I too can follow my dreams. I will always want you in my life. So for that matter, will you marry me?” Margery was speechless, the whole time during Frank’s speech she was weeping. So when she said “Yes” it was barely a sound. But Frank got the hint and put the ring that he had bought on her finger. Frank kissed her passionately overjoyed she had said yes.

After they broke apart from each other’s’ arms, Margery realized that she hadn’t even looked at the ring properly. All her attention was on Frank and his moving words. She held the new ring up to the light that was coming in from the window. It sparkled brilliantly. It was not a traditional diamond ring and was instead an oval-shaped sapphire, surrounded by small diamonds and

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fixed on an intricately designed gold band. Margery loved every bit of it. She knew she was going to be the happiest woman alive when she married Frank. Margery moved into the apartment the next day. Their life together began. Just 18 months later they got married and moved to Doolin, just a few blocks away from the A'lainn Cosmetic store. Since they both wanted to work for the family business, it seemed like a wise idea to move to the village where it all started. They had found the perfect cottage out in the woods on a dead-end road. The cottage not only gave them the privacy they so desired, but it had a perfect side room with just the right amount of light needed for Frank to set up a studio to create his paintings in.

They worked together to make the store more successful and expand the business beyond just Ireland. They worked day and night to incorporate new lines and design into their products making them more attractive to the newer generations. Margery would use her skills to run the company alongside her husband, but on days when Frank needed the time off, she was the sole person in-charge. She actually liked being in command of such a budding corporation and didn't mind when Frank was not around. On the other hand, Frank had started pursuing his love for painting once again. He painted whenever he felt the need to get away from all the business talk and it all got overwhelming for him. This made him a lot more relaxed and gave him the opportunity to be himself in those times. Sometimes he would just go to the city and then visit an art gallery to see or just seek inspiration from an artist's work. Life was going by smoothly for them.

Now they wanted someone else to share their joy and life with. They planned to have a child together and by 1989 they were blessed with a beautiful daughter whom they named Macy. Macy was the love of their lives now. All their attention revolved around her when they were at home. How she would eat, sleep or dress were the most discussed topics in their homes. Unfortunately they never paid much attention to their own health when they were with their daughter. Two years after Macy's

birth, Margery was diagnosed with breast cancer. However, her condition was not the one that could be treated and healed. The disease had spread beyond her breast and had now infected her lungs and lymph nodes. This made the condition a lot more severe. Despite the recommended treatment, Margery couldn't make it past 6 months since the discovery of cancer and passed away.

This left Frank heartbroken. He felt that he was once again alone in this world. Everything that they had worked for in their lives and the plans that they had yet to accomplish now seems futile. With feeling such devastation and knowing he had a young daughter to raise alone, Frank moved himself and Macy into his mother's home so that Macy would have the female presence needed as she grew up.

Frank never married again after that, and with his mother together they raised Macy. Since he now also had an office in Chicago, Illinois for the U.S. based production and branding of A'lain Cosmetics, he and Macy moved into a comfortable home when she turned 16 years old. One year later, his mother had a heart attack and passed away. Apart from Macy, his mother was the only person in his immediate family who was left. And now she had left this world as well. Frank was devastated and never wanted to go back to Doolin, Ireland again. His long mourning period for the loss of his wife and mother had somewhat diminished the progress of their family business. They had expanded to several countries, and the brand continued to evolve, but the business end of the company had not been as highly maintained as it was before.

Frank did not care much about the business anymore, what more could life take from him anyway. Not only did he lose his closest relatives to this business and the village of Doolin, but he had to abandon his one true passion for it. There was no happiness in Doolin for him, and there was no motivation for Frank to continue A'lainn Cosmetics. He used to think to himself all the time that the only thing left to him was himself and his daughter Macy. They could do without their massive business and still

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live comfortably enough. However, it wasn't until one of his stores was closed in France, due to the quality of products that were being shipped to them, did he realize that a lot of people's lives depended on him. They were earning their livelihood from him, and many people had their trust in him so that they could feed their families. Just because he had now a massive amount of wealth didn't mean that everyone else had a lot of money to throw away too. There were multiple things that would have to be considered before he threw away the business just like that. Although he had decided to stay in Chicago for himself and his daughter, he would not abandon the business before it is handed to his daughter.

Frank got over his depression stage and went ahead to improve the diminishing image of the business that he now owned. As Frank had wanted for his daughter, Macy grew up in the city where she was educated and then attended college in the same State as well. She had always wanted to be a chemist and make their products, even more, nature-friendly and better. Raised by her father and grandmother she was also a person who loved animals, she believed there were a lot of ways that these products could be enhanced without using the byproducts of these animals. Which is why she was now vegetarian, and this trait only added to assist her in working to improve her cause. She did not know about her father's hidden passion for art and how Doolin had affected her father. The only thing that she knew was that it was the place where he and her mother lived and she had lived with both her father and her grandmother. With her grandmothers passing she assumed that in time her father would recover from his great loss and grief of losing both her mother and her grandmother. He just needed time.

Hence, upon completing her studies, she forced her father to move back to Doolin. She had wanted to work as a chemist in their manufacturing plant's research department. Since Macy was now the only person in Frank's life, he finally gave into her request reluctantly. At first, the life in Doolin was rather boorish for the two people who moved back from one of the busiest cities

in the world. This meant changing their lifestyle and adjusting to things that Frank had forgotten and Macy had never been accustomed to.

Since Macy had grown up in Chicago, she had gotten used to spending some time out with her friends so that she could relax and have a good time. However, she had no friends here in this area, and barely any pub or restaurant would be open after 11p.m. But Macy knew that this was not what she was here for. Instead, she was here to make their products better than ever before and introduce new items which may have the potential to improve their business immensely. She did not let the atmosphere of the village let her spirits die down. Although her father looked barely interested in handling the affairs of the company and seemed too eager to hand it all off to Macy; Macy believed that she had a long time before she would one day run the company. This was not to say that she would hate being the president of the company, but she wanted some time before that took place. When she started her work in the research development department, the capacity of that department to work increased a lot. They were now not only making the traditional make up items but products such as face scrubs, body butter and even hair care products. Macy was never happier than when she works, and the people she worked with over the course of time also become her first friends in the village. She was supervising and overseeing everything that was going into production and she knew that this dedication would lead their company to even greater heights than it is now.

In her past, Macy had had 3 boyfriends. 2 of those boyfriends were for a short-term relationship, ones who only lasted less than a year. However, the third of her boyfriends, Desmond Fitzgerald, who's grandmother was a close friend to Macy's grandmother, often spent their childhood days together. Their relationship was a lot more serious through their college years. Unfortunately, they had to break up because Macy felt she could not have a long-distance relationship with him working for A'lainn Cosmetics in Chicago and her working for the company



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in Ireland. When Macy had announced that she was moving with her dad to Doolin, she began pushing him away. Macy convinced her self it was for the best that they end their relationship and knew the best way to get through the heartbreak was to focus on work. She wanted to prove to herself that whatever sacrifices she made for the company, which her grandmother had started were not in vain. She had assured herself that whatever she was doing would make the company be stronger and have increased recognition, not only because their products were made from natural ingredients, but also because they were high in quality and they could be trusted.

At first Macy had ignored the fact that she had noticed her father's lack of interest in expanding the business or making the existing trades better. She also knew that her father wanted to hand the company over to her as he had hinted at several times, when he was talking with Macy about work. Macy saw an opportunity to ask him one day what it was that was bothering her father so much. They both were sitting by the fireplace in the library, a room where they usually relaxed and talked about their day. There was no fire burning at the moment, her father had arrived earlier and she had found him drinking brandy while going through his laptop and reviewing some statements on the finances of the company, Macy sat opposite to him, reading a book on the plants that had the best oil extracts. Throughout her time with her father, she was noticing how uninterested he looked. This could have been a one-time occurrence, and had it been the case Macy would have ignored it. But now her father always looked irritated when there was any type of work that involved A'lainn cosmetics.

Macy closed her book and put it aside on the table, and then turned to her father. She spoke to him softly, "Dad, what is going on with you? Are you feeling ok? I always see you looking perplexed when it comes to your work. Too much stress isn't good for you." Frank looked up at his computer screen and found his daughter staring at him with a concerned look. Whenever Macy would talk to her father this way, Frank would be

reminded of Margery's soft voice and her look of concern whenever there was something that was troubling Frank. He also closed his laptop and put it away on the table to his left. "What do you want to know my dear?" he smiled when he said this, thinking his daughter would merely think that he was just worried about his company's finances and that it was not a trouble worth discussing with anyone else. However, Macy was not the one to back out from a session of constant questioning. She asked her father again, "Dad, do you not like it here? It has been over a year since we moved from Chicago to here. Do you still not like this place because grandmother and my mum died here?" At this, Frank laughed and merely shrugged, but he knew he had to give his daughter some form of the answer here. So he stretched his back on the chair he was sitting on and gave a good hard look at his daughter. He then answered her, "No dear that is not the only reason why I dislike the place." Now it was Macy's turn to look perplexed. She then asked, "Then what is it? Don't you like working at A'lainn Cosmetics any longer? Or is it the stress of the work that is too much for you?" Her dad who had been smiling until now changed his expression to a rather serious one. When he spoke, his voice was quivering slightly from the weight of what he was about to tell her, "Dear Macy, I think it's time that you know my history."

From the time that he had wanted to go study arts to the point where his wife and Macy's mother died, Frank told all of his stories to Macy. It was a discussion he hadn't planned to have, but now that he was telling his daughter everything, he wanted to let it all out. There was no burden that he wanted to keep on his chest anymore. Macy now knew the truth about her father and how much he loathed doing this business. She understood her father's perspective completely and knew exactly why her father was filled with stress whenever it came to work. She then got up from her chair and went up hug her father. He had borne a lot of pain and suffering in his life only to keep the people he loved happy. First, it was his mother whom he had wanted to keep happy and then it was his daughter whom he wanted to protect and provide the best of everything too. The only person

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who had cared for him was his mother and Macy's mother, Margery.

Margery was taken away from him, leaving no one to care about what Frank wanted. As she sat on the armrest of her chair, hugging her father, Macy said, "I am so sorry that you had to go through all of this dad. I didn't realize what I was putting you through. I am now going to take care of you. Everything that I do will be for you to feel joyful and excited about." Her father wrapped his arm around Macy and replied, "Macy, you don't have to do anything for me dear, I am perfectly fine the way I am." Macy lifted up from the chair and sat on the floor, in a kneeling position, in front of her father. Now they were eye to eye, and Macy's eyes looked stern now. "Dad, you know I love you. So please let me do this for you. You have given up way too much. Now I want you to have it all back and live your life the way you wanted. I will handle everything from now on related to A'lainn Cosmetics. You just focus on what painting you are going to make, where you want to travel to get inspiration and what would you need to make that painting."

Frank looked at his daughter with amazement, he could not believe his ears or eyes. His daughter whom he had always sought to protect was now trying to protect him. She wanted him to live a full life. She was offering him his life back along with lifting all the responsibilities that came with A'lainn Cosmetics. He thought for a moment and then replied, "I would love to go paint too, but you come first, and I wouldn't want to....." at this point Macy had gotten up, and from her place looking sterner than ever and cut her father off midway into his sentence. "You won't need to do anything now except what makes you happy. Anything that you require to paint, I will arrange for you, but you need to stop suppressing your own hobbies just because you have a family business. I am here to take care of that. Now tell me where you would like to go to get inspiration for your artistic creativity." At this point, Frank decided to give in. It was hard for him to argue with his daughter.

Once she made up her mind to do something she would not stop at anything to achieve it. So Frank answered his daughter most innocently as if he was a kid and his mom had caught him in a lie. “There is this art gallery that is in Chicago, which I sometimes went to. And now I hear that they have recently updated their collection to showcase the finest modern era, painters’. I would love to see their work.” Macy smiled at this. “Then its decided, you are going to Chicago this week dad. And you can stay there as long as you like.” This brought a wide smile to the old man’s face. Frank quickly agreed to this proposal. He hadn’t been this excited in a long time. He got up from his seat and kissed her on her forehead. They both hugged for what felt like a really long time. Macy felt her father’s rising happiness to the prospect of going away to do something that he had wanted to do in a really long time.

Macy and Frank at once excitedly discussed which day of the week would be suitable and how long the trip should last. Frank was all of a sudden very happy at the prospect of getting to see what he had been thinking about for a very long time. He was smiling throughout the planning phase with his daughter. Macy was happy that she was finally going to help her dad with something and that it would bring joy to her father. They finally decided that this coming Saturday would be a perfect day for Frank to start his trip. It would give him enough time to transfer his duties temporarily to Macy while he went off on his trip. They both concluded that the company could be transferred formally to Macy at a later time. As of now, they had a lot of packing to do, and Macy had a lot of work to do. Come Saturday, Frank O’Brien boarded a plane to Chicago to visit one of his favourite galleries in the world.

The news of Frank’s arrival to the city he had left behind more than a year ago did not fall on deaf ears. There was a certain hustle in the business world of the city of Chicago. They all anticipated that Frank was coming back to make his business stronger than ever before and he would control his corporation once again from Chicago. One man, more than any other was

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interested in Frank's visit to Chicago, this man was Garry Murphy. He was a tall man with blonde hair that was always slicked over to the right side. He had brown eyes and was rather skinny. Due to him being so skinny, he looked younger than his actual age, which was 45. Garry had a purpose in mind when he set his eyes on Frank O'Brien.

Garry's father had once a thriving business in fashion, but their business had been shut down due to poor management on the part of Garry and his father. This made Garry seek out new opportunities for himself to earn money. Garry knew that Frank's business was very secure and he wanted to profit off from this opportunity. He wanted to be a business partner with the owner of A'lainn Cosmetics. This way he'd be able to feed off a solid organization and then profit himself from its downfall. This would enable Garry to start his own business and live the rest of his life with peace and financial independence. He had tried to arrange a meeting with Frank O'Brien, a few months back, but failed to do so. He was informed that this was not going to be his business trip.

## **GARRY'S PLAN TO TAKE OVER A'LAINN**

**G**arry had always been the type of person who would outdo any of his friends in school when it came to mischief. He didn't care who got hurt or offended because of his actions. His only intentions were to have fun and be amused by what he had done. To add more to the injury he would be able to avoid a lot of punishments. His friends would get caught who were accompanying him in any mischief, but he would escape at just the right time. Since he did not face the consequences of his wrongdoings in most cases, he started feeling empowered with what he was doing. Be it slashing the tires of the teacher whom they hated in high school, bullying and even slugging the younger boys on their baseball team, he had done it all. He had gotten used to power and authority, and he was used to getting that by any means necessary.

When he grew up and went to college, he didn't take much interest in studies. He knew that whatever he did, he still wouldn't be at a loss. That was because now he knew that whatever he did, he was to take over his father's business when he graduated. His future was secure, unlike the rest of the people studying with him. Nevertheless, he passed with exceptional grades as he wanted to show everyone that he too was capable of being a hard worker. Although his habits had only gotten worse in his college phase. He did not hesitate to manipulate people during his college days and even got people to do his assignments for him. He came from a school of thought where he believed that either you are the one being manipulated or you are the manipulator. He wanted to be the latter rather than former. And since manipulation came easy to him, he believed that this was the only way that people would work for someone.

Due to his personality, the only friends he had were rich people who always talked about money, stocks, bonds and market

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shares. He liked the company he kept because those people were the ones who made him richer. They were manipulators just like him. They paid people to get the work done for them. They did this while they sat in the gentlemen's club, on plush leather chairs, wearing expensive suits, smoking Brazilian cigars and drinking the most expensive scotch. As Garry joined his father in the garment industry, he had become accustomed to this lifestyle as well. There was nothing that was stopping him now from leading the life he had dreamed and was so inspired by. The father and son duo made their business bigger than ever and had been one of the best rising empires. The economic crisis last year didn't do much damage to their corporation.

This resilience to stay strong made Garry a lot more carefree. By 2010, his father passed all his business to Garry as he was the only child of his father. Now Garry was the sole inheritor of everything. Garry had married in the early 2000s and had a wife and kids of his own. But he was not interested in his family nor did he love them as much as he loved money and the life that he led. He thought the more money he earned, the more the world would respect him. Unfortunately for him, his power was short lived. With the economic growth stalling in 2011, his business suffered a hard blow. But it was still not enough to reduce his business empire down to rubble. His father decided to retake the business from his son's hands thinking that he could do a better job. Garry didn't give in and wanted to get back on his feet. He couldn't let a year of bad business get in the way of making his dream come true.

The fighting among father and son, made their company suffer one blow after the other. The company could not handle so many losses at the same time. 4 years later, his company was way in over its head in losses and Garry was now on the verge of shutting his company down permanently. Luckily for him, another multinational brand acquired his business and he was saved from going completely bankrupt. Garry now had nothing of his previous lifestyle. The only thing that belonged to him now was the mansion that they called home, but he knew that he

didn't have the money needed to maintain the upkeep the property needed and there was not enough to properly finance his lifestyle. He realized that he had to do something before Garry and his family would lose their home. So he set out to find someone who was willing to have him work for them and in return he would acquire all the assets of their business. All he had to do was find someone whose company may be at the chance of failing or a man foolish enough to take him on board. This was a difficult task and Garry knew that. Yet he was determined to find somebody that would let him take over their business. Garry knew that he was clever and cunning. He planned that once he got a job like that it wouldn't be hard for him to be able to go through with his plan.

In his search to find a person like that, he came across Frank O'Brien, the owner of A'lainn Cosmetics. He was being discussed in all the clubs that Garry hung out in and all his wealthy friends were talking about how his daughter was set to take over the company. Garry had heard of A'lainn Cosmetics and knew how much the company had expanded in recent history. However, he knew he would not be able to do much unless he researched about the company in detail. So he started reading all the news articles he could find and the past five years of annual reports for A'lainn Cosmetics. He knew that he would find something that would bring him closer to understanding the company and then he would be able to manipulate it to his advantage. Garry's research went on for two weeks in which he had found numerous articles relating to the company. He was hell-bent on finding everything that was related to A'lainn Cosmetics that would provide him insight into the company. This would help him in not only taking over A'lainn but the research would assist him in winning Frank O'Brien over in one shot. The more he knew about the business, the more he would get to know about the man who ran it.

From his research, Garry found Frank to be a naïve man who did not know how to influence people. Instead in Garry's perspective, Frank was a man who could be easily manipulated.



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Garry had found out how A'lainn Cosmetics was founded by Dora O'Brien and her husband and that together they had started this business from scratch. He then discovered how the company was then handed over to her only living son Frank well before Dora's death. Frank had then run the company with his wife Margery, together they had expanded the company's brand and business around the world. Garry also unveiled the truth that Frank was indeed a person with a taste in art. This was discussed in an article where Frank and his wife were interviewed, and they both shared Frank's passion of art, how he gave up his dream to run the family business, and how he painted in his spare time in a little cottage in Ireland. Garry realized that this was the something that could convince Frank he needed him. His other powerful friends had lent them their advice on the business prospects and their market share in the stock exchange industry. Now he needed to do the research on Macy O'Brien to see what made her tick.

Over drinks, at the clubhouse, his friends had speculated that Frank was not actually coming on a business trip to Chicago. In fact, he was coming for a leisurely trip. A recent art exhibition at a famous gallery was also about to start, and it took Garry only a moment to put two and two together. He knew Frank's real intention was to visit the gallery and that he wanted to view those paintings in the collection. This was Garry's chance to be friendly with the man he intended to control. It was his chance to run into him with a proposal so good that Frank would not be able to say "No" to him. This way, just like Frank's wife had done with Frank, Frank and his daughter both would have more leisure time on their hands while Garry would handle the company's business matters.

Garry needed to put his plan in action and meet Frank in person so that he could present his proposal to him which in fact was a plan to take over Frank's company. He wanted to be the person whom Frank chose as the person to take care of his company. So instead of meeting in a formal setting, Garry found out where Frank was staying and decided to pay Frank a visit. Frank had

just gotten back to his hotel from his first visit to the gallery when he was stopped by Garry. Frank had known Garry's father as they were both businessmen and they had met several times at charity galas or business conferences. He also had met Garry briefly but had no trouble recognizing him now. However, he was unaware of Garry's real agenda or that their business had collapsed. Frank invited Garry in his room to have a drink.

It was there that Garry saw an opportunity to pitch his offer to Frank. With his assistance, Frank could take a bit of a breather from his business, and let others handle the business management of the company. He proposed that A'lainn Cosmetics bottom line would greatly increase if he would give him the opportunity to become the vice president of the company. Frank was taken aback by this sudden offer of help, especially since he thought that Garry was still working with his father's business. However, Garry truthfully informed Frank that their business had collapsed due to the neglect of his father and due to some bad investments. But he also admitted that he was trying to stand back on his own feet and had the experience to make Frank's business revenues increase. Since Garry knew what mistakes were made in their own business, he explained to Frank how he could prevent those faults from happening in A'lainn.

This made Frank think about what Garry was saying and told him that, "You have come up with a wonderful proposal Mr Murphy. However you see, my daughter is now the acting president of the company. I am planning to retire. So with your permission, I shall discuss this matter with her when I go back to Ireland and call you once Macy and I have spoken." Garry smiled and stood up with his hand outstretched, "I agree with you, Mr. O'Brien. I will await your call. Until then I bid you adieu." Frank got up to shake Garry's hand looking into Garry's eyes, Frank did not see the deceit and lies that were just told. Garry left the room already thinking in his mind that even though the daughter could present a problem, he had nearly achieved victory, Frank planned to take this proposal seriously

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and have a discussion with his daughter as soon as he got back home to Doolin. Frank proceeded to rest knowing that these decisions will soon be in the hands of his daughter and not his, but maybe this would help her along the way.

Garry knew that Frank was tempted by his offer as any man who was uninterested in his business would be. Furthermore, rumor had it that if Frank didn't do something soon about A'lainn's business management they may soon be in hot waters. Seemingly it seemed fine, but due to Frank's rumored disinterest the gossip was that the finances would start to take a hit if things didn't turn around. Garry would be the knight in shining armor for Frank, the one who could save his business from collapsing.

After Garry left Frank's room, he headed for the clubhouse for drinks with his friends. It was there he learned that Frank would be attending a special showing at the art gallery the next day. He then planned to make a second impression by running into him in the art gallery. He would let Frank know on how he understood the suffering that Frank went through. He planned to share his thoughts on how it was callous of his mother to be desperate for her son to take over the business which kept Frank from following his passion. Garry had planned to manipulate Frank and considered this a good idea.

Now it was time for Garry to make an impact in the gallery. He knew that tomorrow was Frank's last day in Chicago so if he was to make an impression this was his only chance to close the deal. The next morning, he was at the gallery when they opened the doors and planned to purchase a painting that he knew Frank was really interested in. He would then present it as a gift to Frank as a show of understanding his pain. The receptionist had already been bribed by him to let him know at what time that afternoon Frank would arrive at the gallery to view the artwork. Garry was getting closer to his goal and he was already tasting the sweet taste of success. Garry knew that this simple gift of a painting would swoon Frank and he would secure a good position in Frank's mind.

That afternoon, Garry was sitting fully dressed in a restaurant nearby the gallery, waiting for the receptionist to call him. He was having a lunch of risotto and was about to take his last few bites of the delicious dish when his phone rang. He received the call and knew that it was the receptionist calling him. "Mr Murphy, he just walked in five minutes ago." Garry smiled, it was time for the show to begin. He thanked the receptionist for her service as he paid for his meal and left the restaurant. He got in his blue Alfa Romeo Giulia and drove it to the gallery which was only a few minutes from the gallery. He had planned to make an impression of his wealth when he drove out from the gallery in front of Frank which was why he driving the only expensive car he owned now. He reached the gallery and entered through the glass doors where the receptionist gave him a greeting and smiled at him widely, and then pointed to the direction where Frank was standing. He thought to himself "Not too obvious you idiot." He was afraid that the receptionist's pointing may be seen by Frank and he may suspect something. Luckily for Garry, this did not happen.

He then made his way to where the receptionist had pointed. He found Frank seated on the bench in front of a painting reading the booklet that explained who the artist was and how it was inspired. Frank was wearing a casual polo shirt with jeans and tennis shoes. The attire was unexpected to Garry as he had himself dressed in a sharp looking navy colored suit. Despite that awkwardness, Garry casually and slowly made his way to the painting left of the painting Frank was currently viewing. Frank had not looked up from his booklet and was still engrossed in it when Garry moved to the front of the painting that Garry himself was viewing. The sound of the footsteps caught Frank's attention in the quiet atmosphere, and he looked up to see that Garry was standing nearby, observing the beauty of a painting. Frank was surprised by this as he had not expected to see Garry again.

Frank decided that he should talk to him and so he got up from the bench he was sitting on and called out to Garry. "Hey,

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Garry.’ Garry turned his head towards Frank and gave a surprised look. “Hey, Frank.” At that moment Garry moved forward to shake Frank’s hand. “How are you?” Garry asked while ending the handshake. “I can’t say I have changed since the last time we met, which was just last night if my memory serves me right,” Frank replied with a bit of humor in his voice. He seemed excited to see Garry and Garry took it as a good sign for him. “Indeed. Your memory serves you correctly. I am surprised that we would meet twice in two days on your short trip to Chicago.” Garry was humble and polite in his manner of speaking so to show that he deeply respected Frank. Frank gave a smile as he scanned Garry up and down, “You are surprised to me! Look at you. You are dressed for a high society event looking so prim and proper. It’s an art exhibition lad you don’t have to be so dressed up.” Frank said while giving a small laugh. Garry realized that he was overdressed and that Frank was having a laugh at him, so he replied with humor. “Well, you never know who you might meet, your next date, or a potential business partner.” Frank laughed even more loudly now. “Good one Garry. How about you accompany me around the gallery while we view the collection here. If you are up for it that is.” “Sure,” Garry replied.

As they were walking by the paintings, Frank asked Garry, “So what brings you here? Do you like the artist or are you just here to relax your mind?” Garry replied, “I am actually very interested in a painting here, and I intend to buy it. But I thought maybe I should look around one more time today so that I can finalise my decision. This art really speaks to you. Its abstract, but the colors and the design are so refreshing.” Frank was surprised at how Garry was describing the art. He seemed to know so much about it on a personal level that Frank was beginning to suspect that Garry himself was an artist as well. Frank liked the fact that he was being accompanied by the person who could read the message that the artist was trying to portray in his work. Frank asked Garry, “So you are interested in art it seems.” Garry smiled. He was really resonating with Frank now. “Yes, it is something very close to my heart. In fact, apart from

doing business, this is the only thing I love. I like many modern art pieces and artists.”

Frank stopped in front of a painting and looked at it, Garry also stopped and looked at the painting. It was a very lightly colored painting with different colored dew drops on a leaf. Frank spoke, “I love art as well. But unlike you, I love it even more than my business. I have planned to hand over my business to my daughter. This will give me the time I desire to paint.” At this Garry acted to be surprised. “Oh so you yourself paint?” Garry asked in a surprised tone. “Oh yes. But barely. It was my passion at one time, but I had to forego it in order to take care of my family and the company.” Frank looked sad, but Garry didn't comment on his sadness. Garry instead got to another topic and said, “In that case Mr. O'Brien you must accept something from me. As one art enthusiast to other. I want to gift you the painting that I was choosing for myself.” Frank was astounded at this, “No Mr. Murphy, I surely can't let you do that. I know what that artwork must mean to you. I can't take that from you.” Garry put his hand on Frank's shoulder and said it to him, “I want you to have it. As a token of my appreciation for your sacrifice for your family and business. You gave up your passion because of that. And please call me Garry. ” Frank was overwhelmed by that and responded with a ‘Yes’.

The painting was of the back of a girl talking on her cellphone with a beautifully printed umbrella in her other hand with rain drops surrounding the entire scene. Garry signed a check then and there and there and the painting was then to be shipped to Frank's address in Ireland. Frank accompanied Garry outside. There parked on the curbside was Garry's Alfa Romeo. Frank observed Garry as he made his way to his car, while Garry was trying his best to show off. Frank realized that it was the starting of a new friendship and perhaps a business partnership.

When Frank got back to his house in Doolin the painting was already there waiting for him. He told his daughter all about his trip and the incredible person he had met there, Garry Murphy, and his wonderful business proposal. His daughter expected

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something more substantial to seal the partnership and said, “Dad, don’t you think you should at least do a background check on this guy?”

The next morning, they were both sitting in the dining area and were enjoying a cup of Irish breakfast tea. Her father sipped from the cup and then said to her, “Just trust me, my dear. I have seen it through. I have talked to my industrialist friends from Chicago, and they were praising his business sense. As for the business that he has lost, it was his father’s wrongdoing. He should have known that the fiscal year was tough for everyone and let his son handle the situation. He would be good for our company.” His daughter looked somewhat satisfied with her father’s answer and said, “Ok, if you trust him then I trust your decision.” Frank looked happy and said, “I am glad you trust me. It means the world to me. I only want to lessen your burden and increase your focus on the quality of the product then he can work on the finances and business management while helping us to further expand and improve the existing outlets and business that we have.” Macy then replied, “Thank you for thinking about my best interests dad.” Frank got up and kissed his daughter on the forehead and said: “You will always be my number one priority, my dear Macy.”

Frank walked out of the room while Macy still looked deep in thought. She trusted her father, she thought to herself, so she knew that whatever her father had planned was in the best interest of everyone. She decided that if her father thought this was in the best interest of the company, she will trust Garry Murphy and be as cooperative with him as possible. So she got up from her chair and walked after her father who had just gone to the other room. “Dad, I think we should both go to Chicago when you close the deal with Mr. Murphy. I would like to meet my new boss.” Her father smiled and patted her cheek, “Certainly Macy. That would be great.” Macy smiled. She knew her father wouldn’t deny her request.

So after a week, the father and daughter duo flew to Chicago. Frank was visibly very happy with the decision. They met Garry

and even Macy liked him. Since Garry had invited them to his home, she got to meet Gary's family as well and was impressed by how Garry took care of his family. Little did she know that it was a façade that Garry had created to lure the owners of A'lainn into his trap.

For the next month, Garry worked in the Chicago office. It was then Frank set a meeting up with their board and investors. Garry was introduced to everyone and the whole situation was put in front of them. After careful deliberation and reviewing Garry's performance over the past month in the company Garry was finally hired for the job. It was decided that he was to work in their office in Chicago.

Frank and Macy came back to their little village very satisfied with their decision. Macy got back to her usual routine of coming up with new ideas of products and maintaining a good standard for their existing ones. However, during their visit to Chicago their head Chemist from the Chicago office Desmond Fitzgerald had transferred to the lab in Doolin. Desmond was an extremely handsome man from Ireland, who lived in Galway but had shifted to Doolin as he wanted to make a difference in the world by adopting a healthy lifestyle which would not impact the Earth in a negative way. He was hell bound in protecting the world environmentally and from horrible people who only thought of their benefit. This attitude of his had made him a bit of a snob and rather stand offish. Since Macy had the same agenda, and could be a bit of a stubborn soul herself, she and Desmond would have rows and rows of arguments. Sometimes there disagreements would be so bad that their work would get delayed. However, they did not let the quality of their products falter. Despite their disagreements, her father liked the man, as he was a hardworking, dedicated chemist and valued his passion immensely. He often said to Desmond, "You remind me of my wife. She wanted to change the world, and her thoughts were way ahead of her time." He trusted Desmond's ability to help Macy.



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Several months passed since they hired Garry to be the vice president and things were going progressively well. Garry had now gained the total trust of Frank. This made Frank grant him, even more, power giving him full power of attorney to make his own decisions to run the company and full access to the financial decisions that needed to be made. This meant that Garry was now allowed to handle all the finances of the company and controlled all the legal assets of the company, its investments and the cash flow. This was the time that Garry was waiting for so desperately. Not only did he control all the finances, but he was now making the decisions based solely on his own profit. A few more months down the road, it had started showing in the records of the company how much damage was being done by Garry. Payments for a \$30 million apartment, accessorising it with \$6,000 shower curtains and \$15,000 umbrella stands, he was essentially begging the shareholders to hate him.

This caught Frank's attention. He had expected Garry to be vigilant in his work instead of him being a lazy person who didn't really do what he was hired to do and at the same time spending money on his own lavish needs. Frank, however, decided not to tell Macy anything. There was no way Frank was letting this matter go without looking into it explicitly.

He decided to make a trip to Chicago. But before leaving, he wanted to discuss the matter further with Desmond as he had worked for a short time with Garry in Chicago. He wanted to get Desmond's take on the matter. "So now you know the whole situation Desmond. What do you propose?" Frank asked a perplexed looking Desmond while they were sitting in Frank's home office. Desmond was sitting across the desk from Frank and while sipping from his glass of whiskey gave his two cents on the matter, "I think you should go there, talk to the guy and see what is wrong with him. You need to fire this person if he really is this corrupt." Frank nodded his head in agreement. "That is exactly what I had thought. I hate the fact that I would have to fire someone whom I so willingly hired, but some harsh steps must be taken." Desmond looked at Frank and said, "You

must be headstrong in that. I can come with you if you want me to.” Frank shook his head in disagreement, “No that won’t be necessary. You need to be here. I shall talk to him first and then brief the board later about his dismissal after I have cleared matters with Garry.” “That would be appropriate.” Desmond answered. “But you must promise me that you will not tell any of this to Macy. I will tell her when I have made my decision.” Frank said. “You can trust me Frank. I won’t say a word.”

The next day Frank met with his daughter. He told her that he had some important matters to oversee and that Garry needed his attention. “Please take care of yourself and A'lainn for me Macy while I am gone. I may be there for a few weeks and I won’t be here to help you with anything.” Macy laughed, “Dad you know I have took care of this company before and I will continue to do so until my last breath. Do not worry about A'lainn or me. It’s in my hands.” Frank smiled at his daughter. He knew that he had raised her well. “You know, I never thought that I would take this company to where it is now. You made it all possible, you were my inspiration. If it weren't for you, I would have left this business a long time ago. I want you to protect this company just like I have protected you. You understand me?” Macy smiled again. “Yes, dad I completely understand. You do not have to worry. You go ahead and have a safe trip. I hope Garry takes good care of you. But I still don’t understand what the matter is. Why can’t Garry take care of any situation that is so bothering you that even you have to go?” Her father patted her arm and said, “All in good time my dear.” “If you say so.” With this Macy hugged her father and he hugged her back.

Frank flew to Chicago and arranged a meeting with Garry. Garry had anticipated this and had already calculated a plan to rid himself of this trouble. He was now planning to kill Frank and make it look like an accident. Frank was unaware of his evil intentions at that point and merely thought that Garry lacked in performance due to his bad attitude towards work and lavish spending. Garry arranged to meet Frank in a restaurant so that whatever they talked about would be heard by the public and

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everyone would think Frank as the deranged one. He ordered a goat cheese salad for himself while he waited for Frank to come. As Frank entered the restaurant, he came to sit across from Garry. Garry did everything possible to come off as still the charming person that he was when Frank first met him in the gallery, but the reality was quite the opposite. Garry had no intention of revealing his true plans to Frank. Instead, all he wanted to do came off as an innocent person who got confused handling some of the finances of the company.

Garry ordered wine for himself and Frank, and the two started talking to each other as they drank. Frank started, "I have looked at the financial statements of the company, and there are many irregularities there Garry. What is going on?" Garry tried to look as innocent as possible, and said, "Yes I understand your concern, Frank. I know that there have been many irregularities in the finances, but I am trying to manage it in the best way possible. These things take time, and that is what I intend to give." Frank was now slightly angry at Garry. He imagined that Garry would come forth with a little more professionalism than what he was showing at that moment. He had considered Garry to know that in matters where business is involved, time is money. When he spoke in a low tone, Frank's voice clearly reflected that anger. "You have cost us to lose millions of dollars, Garry. This is not just about giving time anymore. You are making huge blunders which cannot be avoided." Garry decided to continue the innocent act and said, "Frank you need to understand, my family business was also going through things like this, and if my father had let me, I would have handled it well. You need to give me that chance. Please."

Frank was now furious. Instead of Garry admitting his mistakes, he was now instead of telling Frank that it was all part and parcel of the business life. Frank had finished his first glass of wine and Garry had poured Frank the second one. Frank drank half of it while Garry was explaining all this to Frank. Frank told him, "Listen, Garry, this is not your family's business. It is mine and my daughter's. I don't want you to be associated with this

business anymore. I shall have a talk with our board and investors. There is a high chance that you will be losing this job. I thought I could talk to you and stop what you are doing and make amendments for your actions. But now I see that you are clearly a delusional person who really does not know much about business.”

Garry merely smiled at him for second and then making himself comfortable on his seat he said, “Do what you have to do Frank. I am not stepping away from this position.” By this point, Frank had finished his second glass of wine and was on his way to pouring the third one. He did not like where this conversation was going. “Do not threaten me, Garry. I own the company you work for, and I will do anything to stop you from corrupting this place.” Frank’s voice now was higher, and it also looked like he sounded drunk. People had started looking towards their direction at this point. Garry smiled and said to Frank, “Maybe you should go home, you are creating a scene as you are quite drunk.” Frank noticed the people around them staring and got up from his place. “I shall call you after the meeting with the board. Your time at A'lainn Cosmetics will be over by the end of this month.” With this Frank stormed out of the restaurant. Garry merely smiled and made a call on his cell phone. In hushed tones, he said “I just finished up a bad lunch with my boss, but I hope I will hear some good news by tonight. Have you done what needed to be done?” He then paused to hear the answer from the other side, smiled and said, “Good.” With this he switched off his phone and made his way outside, placing his cell phone in his pocket.

Frank went to the parking lot and got into his car. He did not feel completely fine as he was angry and maybe had drunk too much wine. But he was too angry to care about that. He started the ignition and drove off from the restaurant. He was speeding his car on the bridge over the icy Chicago River when he noticed that his breaks weren't working at all. He tried to slow the speed of the car but he couldn't. He realized that there was no way that the car would stop like that. While he was thinking about what

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to do, he saw that the cars in front of him were slowing down due to the traffic ahead. He tried to turn his car towards the other side. Sliding on the ice, his car ran straight into the railing of the bridge breaking through and falling into the cold Chicago River.

Garry's plan had indeed worked. He had asked a hired assassin to cut the brake lines from Frank's car while he was talking to him at the restaurant. The assassin had hidden in the parking lot, and as soon as Frank had gotten out of his car, the assassin had done his job. Garry had easily gotten rid of the one and only thorn in his way. And now he was free to do whatever he liked. He knew that Macy was young and figured he could manipulate her as easily as he did Frank. Now A'lainn was his, and nobody knew what had actually happened or what he was doing with the company.

## FRANKS' TRAGIC DEATH

Garry was in his home watching TV when he got the call from the same number he had gotten from the restaurant. Garry knew what that meant. Either the plan had gone perfectly well, or there was a huge imposition. This made Garry quite nervous to pick up the phone call, but he had to answer it. So with his finger shaking slightly, he touched the screen of his mobile and dragged it to the receiving icon for the call. He then put the phone towards his left ear and said, "Yes?" The voice on the other side was calm but sinister. "He's dead. I just saw the cops and the ambulances where his car crashed. It was the Chicago River Bridge where he lost control, and his car went over the bridge. They pulled his car out and retrieved his dead body. You may hear it on the news soon." This calmed Garry. He took a deep breath. He then answered, "Great work my man. You will receive your remaining payment within the hour." The sinister voice on the other side of the phone grimaced and said, "Terrific. Goodbye. Till we talk next time." Garry smiled, He didn't think they would ever talk or meet each other again. He said "Bye" and disconnected the call.

Garry knew that this was the end of all his troubles. Little did everyone know that his marriage was on the verge of collapsing? His wife had taken their kids and started living separately because of his greed and his horrible attitude towards them. She had filed for divorce, and now all he needed was to finalize the money he was to give her. He thought the sooner this finalizes, the better. His finances were soon going to increase with the newly acquired power over A'lainn Cosmetics. He didn't want the money that he would steal from that company to be shown on the records of his assets and be distributed to his wife. He wanted to keep the wealth he was about to acquire to himself only. Now that he had played his ace card. The next target on his list was Frank's beautiful daughter Macy. She would be the one, Frank thought, who would make him a richer man. All he needed

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to do was maintain his innocent and caring façade in front of her, till she falls for him.

On the other hand Macy hadn't found out about her father's death yet. She was busy testing a mixture of ash wood along with shea butter to make sure that their new line of luxury bath soaps was effective. Since they were now working globally, it was important to incorporate ingredients from different regions and not just Ireland and its neighboring countries. Just as usual, Desmond was interfering in her work, and they were having an argument about how much of the butter extract that they should be used in making this soap. "Shea butter extract is much in demand Desmond, and I want to give this soap an African touch. You just can't understand." Macy was arguing. At this Desmond responded, "Macy, using cocoa butter will do wonders for this formula instead of shea butter. You are only using that because it will attract a diverse market. But it would be so much better if you leave the marketing to the marketing team and focus on developing a product that is good. Cocoa butter inclusion in this soap will enhance this soap's benefits to the user." Desmond was arguing back to her.

They both were flushing red with anger, and you could see that each of them truly believed what they were saying. Desmond then finally gave in, "Fine. We make two versions of ash wood soap. One with cocoa butter the other with shea butter. We shall then see how good the one or the other is." Macy relaxed a little bit with an "Urghh" sound, making sure that Desmond heard it, she then turned herself the opposite way. While doing so she twisted her ponytail back from her head in a dramatic motion, and her ponytail looked more like a whip in that instance. It nearly hit Desmond in the face, but Desmond dodged it by tilting his head to the side. Macy looked back and "Oh sorry," and then walked away. Desmond knew she clearly did that on purpose and grinned to himself. He fancied arguing with Macy just to get under her skin. There was always something that Desmond wanted to change in any of Macy's proposals. It was his way of talking to her and getting her attention.

Macy had just been walking out of the lab when her cell phone rang. The number was unknown, and she looked at her phone suspiciously. Nevertheless, she took the call after a few seconds of debating who it could be. It was a policeman named Jake, who was calling from Chicago. As soon the policeman introduced himself to be calling from Chicago, her heart skipped a beat. She stopped walking and stood still in her place. He confirmed if her name was Macy O'Brien and if she was indeed Frank O'Brien's daughter. All she could do was reply with a "yes" in a loud whisper. Her heartbeat had gotten faster at this point. The policeman started "Ma'am Frank O'Brien has been in an accident. He was in his car when his brakes failed. His car went over the Chicago River Bridge. I am sorry to tell you that he died instantly. We have retrieved his body from the river. Since you are his only living relative, we would need you to come over to Chicago and identify the body for us. After this, you can make the needed arrangements. I will text you the address. Again, I am very sorry for your loss".

By this time Macy had collapsed to the floor and was sitting down with one of her hands muffling her mouth from making any sound, and the other one was still holding the phone to her ear. Tears had started rolling down her face, and all she could do was say in a hoarse voice "Yes I shall come as soon as I can." The policeman spoke in a softer voice than before, "Thank you, ma'am. We are very sorry for your loss." With this, he disconnected the phone. Macy moved the phone away from her ear. She slowly got up, and moved back to the doorway to the lab looking for Desmond. "Desmond, Dad, it's Dad." This was all that she could manage to say before she started crying standing at the doorway. Desmond was worried all of a sudden. He approached her and wrapped his arms around her and inquired, "What is it? What happened to him?" She rested her head on his shoulder while crying but she had to tell Desmond what had happened. So she held back her tears, "Dad died in a car crash in Chicago. His car brakes failed. "I am supposed to go there to identify his body." She then broke down in tears again.



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Desmond gave her an even tighter hug now so to comfort her. But she didn't stop crying. "I will go with you. I need to be with you in this. He was my mentor too. I will not let anything happen to you over there." Macy was confused as to what he meant. She stopped crying and looked up at Desmond, "What do you mean? Why do I need to be protected?" Desmond calmly said, "Now is not the time to dwell on that. We have much more important things to worry about. I will book our tickets for Chicago right away." Macy felt some comfort due to his assurance. She realized that Desmond was only saying that because she was in mourning, she might not be able to do everything on her own. She figured that this was why Desmond said that he needed to protect her. But Desmond knew what he meant. He didn't like how things were going. Based on what Frank had told him when they last met before Frank's departure to Chicago there was definitely something off, and Desmond wanted to find out for himself. He knew that the accident and Frank's tragic death was too convenient for Garry and suspected it was not just an accident.

Early the next morning, Desmond and Macy boarded the plane to Chicago. The entire 7-hour flight was very hard for Macy. She wanted to see her father so badly that she couldn't wait. She imagined reaching there and looking at the body and the body not turning out to be her father's. She imagined that it was the policeman who was confused and mistook someone else as Frank O'Brien and then called her to inform her that it was her father who had died. She imagined that her father would call her any moment telling her that he was all right and he had lost his cell phone which is why he hadn't contacted her. She didn't cry the entire flight, she wanted to be strong when she reached Chicago. She sat through the entire journey and distracted herself with a romantic novel. The novel was about a girl in USA and her husband was away fighting a war in a different country. They would write to each other every week as phone communication was scarce in the warzone. In the end her husband finally returns home after winning the war reuniting the couple together forever.

When they landed in Chicago it was morning there as well. Since they only had two handbags bags, they didn't require going through the crowded baggage line, and she immediately went to the police station along with Desmond. There they were both then escorted by two cops, one of whom was Jake, to the morgue where Frank's body was being kept. Desmond was right by Macy's side along the way so that he could hold her if she were to fall after seeing her father. When they entered the morgue, a naked body laid on the table with only a white cloth covering it. Macy's heart started racing very fast. She knew this was the moment she had been dreading. Jake reached to one side of the table with the body on it while his partner Fay stood next to him eyeing Macy to come closer. Macy had stopped just near the door. Desmond held Macy's hand and helped her walk forward. They both stopped in front of the body with Macy's eyes starting to water. Jake removed the cloth from the body's face. Macy saw her father's pale face and gave low shriek before covering her mouth.

Jake calmly asked Macy for confirmation, "Is this Frank O'Brien, your father?" Macy replied with a whimper, "Yes." She held back her tears. Jake then covered the body with the cloth and then looked at Macy again. "We can release the body to you ma'am. You will only need to sign some papers." Macy nodded in agreement and then went out with everyone. They signed the papers and they were told that they were allowed to leave and make arrangements for the body to be returned to Ireland. Walking out of the Morgue, Desmond told Macy that he would arrange a coffin and make the arrangements for carrying the body to Ireland. Macy walked to a nearby café to await Desmond, while he took care of things. Trying desperately to keep it together, Macy was focusing on her cup of coffee when her phone rang. It was Garry, she did not know what to expect as she didn't know whether or not Garry even knew that Frank had passed away. She gathered the courage to talk again and answered the phone.

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“Hello, Garry.” From the other side Garry’s voice came and he sounded solemn. “Hi Macy, I heard what happened. I want you to know I am terribly sorry for your loss. Where are you? Can I help you with anything?” Macy spoke to him in a calm voice. “Thank you, Garry it means a lot. I am now in Chicago sitting at the Roadside Café near the morgue where they are keeping dad.” Garry replied to her, “Oh well then I am coming there. You need people to help you. You won’t be able to do everything all alone.” Macy replied with a soft voice which was filled with gratitude, “Oh no you don’t have to do that. Desmond is here with me. He is my friend from work and was very close to dad, so it’s fitting that he would oversee the arrangements to transport Dad’s body to Ireland.” Garry waved away her formalities, “Well your father was close to me as well. He gave me a second chance. It seems appropriate that I help him get back to where he belongs.”

Macy was now feeling nervous, as she knew that Garry must have other priorities. She decided to tell him that, “Garry I know you mean well, but you have A’llain to look after for and your family.” Garry responded with determination “Listen you need me now more than anyone or anything. I am coming over. Wait for me in that café.” So Macy waited there while Garry arrived to the café. He saw her and come over to hug her. As he hugged Macy, she felt incredibly comfortable in his arms. She hadn’t felt so safe and warm while she was hugging Desmond. She hugged him back, and tears started rolling down her cheeks. She realized that Garry was indeed the one who would make everything right and everything would be better. She separated from Garry, and they both sat down by the table. Garry looked at her concerned. She was starting to feel nervous around Garry. He was wearing a blue button-down shirt with black pants and black shoes. An attire which certainly wasn’t out of the ordinary, but somehow caught Macy’s attention. She liked him in these clothes. “He is married,” a voice in Macy’s head said. So she looked the other way.

Garry then spoke to her, "I know it must be really hard for you. The loss of a loved one is dreadful. When my father passed away last year, I was devastated too. As if that wasn't enough, my wife now wants to divorce me because apparently, I don't pay enough attention to my family. She says I am too engrossed in my business. She took my children with her as well." At this point, Macy was listening to Garry with her eyes wide open. She couldn't believe her ears. Garry was getting a divorce because he was so dedicated to their company. She turned to him and spoke in an understanding voice, "I am so sorry for that. I didn't realize that you were going through so much. And despite that, you still came for me. It means a lot." She then put her hand over Garry's to make him understand that she indeed meant what she said. Gary smiled and replied, "Thank you. But our main priority is getting you and your father on a plane." Macy replied to him, "Oh Desmond has already booked tickets for us to return home. We leave tomorrow afternoon. He is currently making the arrangements for the coffin we would need to carry Dad in." Garry gave it a thought, and replied "Hmm, then we shall both wait here."

After about an hour or so, Desmond arrived at the Café and saw Garry quietly talking to Macy while gently holding and rubbing her hand. He walked quietly to them. Macy stopped talking to Garry when she realized that Desmond was there and instead started speaking to Desmond. "Desmond, this is Garry Murphy. He is the vice chairman of our company. It's been barely a year since we hired him. Dad must have told you about him." Desmond was still standing in front of these two and glared at Garry. However, when Desmond spoke his voice was very refined and friendly, "Yes I know him. I know him very well." Desmond and Garry both shook hands, and then Desmond turned to Macy, "We have the coffin and a funeral home. They shall carry out their usual procedures of embalming and then transport the body to the plane. We can leave tomorrow, and the body will reach us by the day after tomorrow." Macy smiled, "I am glad it worked out so soon."

Desmond then grabbed their bags and said “Come on, we need to find a hotel to stay in.” at this Garry interjected, “There is no need for that. You will both be staying with me. Macy and I have discussed this. You both will be my guests for the night.” Desmond looked at Garry then Macy for confirmation, looking a little bewildered. “What? Why?” He said to Macy sounding exasperated. Macy replied to him calmly, “There is no reason for us to stay at a hotel if we can stay over at Garry’s place. We don’t need much space, and it’s only going to be him at his place. His family doesn’t live with him anymore.” This alarmed Desmond even more, but he didn’t want to give it away. He tried to reason with Macy without telling her anything in front of Garry, “I am sure Mr Murphy has a lot on his plate already with him handling our company with Frank gone and you mourning his death. He can’t possibly have time to entertain guests.” Garry waved it off, “Oh no it’s not an issue. I am glad to provide you with comfort in this time of grief. And don’t worry I will take care of A’lainn for you. You can count on that. But you must stay at my place today. I insist.”

Macy then looked at Desmond’s face and said, “If you are uncomfortable with Garry, then you can rent a room for yourself. I won’t mind. But I am staying at his place, and that is final.” Seeing this stubbornness from her, he knew had to agree to stay at Garry’s place. He did not want Macy to be alone with Garry, neither did he want to argue with Macy when she was mourning. She was already too emotionally fragile to be argued with. Desmond put the bag down and sat with them. They had lunch there. Ever since hearing about her father, she had lost her appetite, but now that Garry was there, it seemed to have come back. In fact, she actually enjoyed the chicken sandwich they were having. They then all got up from the café and went ahead to Garry’s car with Desmond carrying the two bags they had brought with them. Desmond eyed Garry as Garry was putting their luggage in his car trunk. He had no intention of letting him get away with hurting Macy. Macy, unfortunately, sat in the front passenger seat, instead of Desmond, so Desmond had to sit in the back seat. He was planning to make it impossible for Garry

to communicate or even come near to Macy when they reached his place, knowing now was not the time to reveal anything without proper evidence of what he was suspecting Garry of doing.

They arrived at Garry's place, and he graciously showed them around the house and to their rooms. Desmond was given the room that was at the end of the hallway, while Macy had a room next to Garry's bedroom. When Garry had left them alone in the room, Desmond approached Macy, "Hey Macy, how about you shift to my room, and I shift to yours?" Macy was sitting on her bed with her laptop and viewing her pictures with her father. She looked up to Desmond with a confused expression and responded, "Why do you want that to happen? What is so wrong with your room?" Desmond replied while smiling, "It doesn't have a big window. Only a small one. While yours has two and that's not fair." Macy looked irritated, "Desmond, stop being rude. You do not have to stay here for long. We go back tomorrow afternoon if you remember." Desmond wanted to argue more, but at that time, Garry came upstairs and entered through Macy's door.

"I have had my cook prepare a dinner for you. Please join me." Desmond looked at Macy and then at Garry, confused about whether or not he should accept the invitation. Macy then replied with a smile on her face, "Of course we will Garry. We will be down in a minute." Garry then politely smiled, and said, "I will wait for you both downstairs." Saying this, Garry made his way outside the room and down the stairs before Desmond started to talk to Macy again, "You know you don't have to eat anything unless you want to. Or we could go in the city to have dinner. A pizza or some pasta. Or we could search for a restaurant that serves Irish stew with a side of soda bread. That would be great, wouldn't it?" Macy scowled at this, "Desmond why are you so rude to our host. Clearly, he wants to look out for us, and I will eat whatever he has served us. You come down and have dinner with us too, please."

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Desmond reluctantly went down with Macy, and they were served a dinner consisting of pot roast, cob salad and mashed potatoes. Macy ate a hearty meal and was actually full while she sat there chatting with Garry. Once again Desmond tried to intervene in their conversation many times but was not able to grasp Macy's attention for any length of time. He now knew that Macy was infatuated with Garry and this was getting more troublesome than it already was. He still hadn't found anything to prove that Garry wasn't a nice man and he also wanted to wait until after the funeral was over. The dinner ended with Macy hugging Garry thanking him for a wonderful meal and Desmond, and Macy made their way up to their rooms while Garry excused himself to go to his personal office and do some work.

Desmond thought to himself that Garry probably had his personal computer possibly in his own room at the moment where all this data was. But Desmond could do nothing about it. Desmond wanted to get access to the company's financial records which now only Garry had access to. He didn't want to be the one to get blamed for making false claims and be called a liar himself. Desmond wanted to spend more time with Macy when they reached their bedrooms so he asked, "Can we talk in your bedroom? I don't think I am sleepy right now." Macy yawned, "I don't know how you aren't sleepy, but I definitely am. I am still on Ireland time, so I am sleeping now. You get some rest too." With this, she went to her room. Desmond was now sure that Garry would not be able to talk to Macy while she slept. He made his way to his room and closed the door behind him. He thought about different ways that he had seen in movies of how people stealthily gain access to the important documents. This he realized wasn't a movie, and he didn't have any resources to steal any information from Garry despite being in his house.

In the morning they were having breakfast with Garry when he announced that he was coming over for the funeral to Ireland. Desmond didn't like this idea but said nothing to stop Garry.

Macy, however, was excited at the prospect and said, "That would be truly great Garry. I would like you to be there. My father valued your services for him and the company. You shall stay at my place when you are there of course." Desmond was shocked, but Garry was pleased that Macy had agreed so quickly, even offering him the opportunity to stay in her home. His plan to romance her was definitely going very well. He wanted to seduce her to the point where they would soon get married, and all her assets would be his as well. He hadn't decided until now whether or not he would let her live with him or have her murdered after that. One thing was sure, the way things were going, his plan of marrying her definitely seemed a reality.

Garry drove Macy and Desmond to the O'Hare terminal, giving Macy a long slow hug when dropping them off. As they boarded the flight, Desmond was hell bent on driving Garry away from Macy. So he started, "Look, Macy, I know you have just lost your father, and you are emotionally vulnerable right now, but there is no need to involve Garry so much into your life. Neither do you have to invite him to stay over at your place when he comes to attend the funeral." Macy looked irritated by this. "Why do you care what I do and what I don't with Garry? He is a nice person who let us stay at his home. I would like to return the favour to him." Desmond whispered to her, "Look, Macy, I don't trust that guy with anything right now." Macy gave Desmond a hard stare and then proceeded to say, "I don't know what you are talking about, but please don't try to tell me right from wrong. He seems like a good, helpful person and I will not be dictated by you as to who I should talk to and to whom I shouldn't." Desmond then pursued the matter no more. He knew the more he pushed it without evidence, the more he will drive her to him, and it will only make things worse.

When they landed in Ireland, Macy was not in the mood to talk to anyone and wanted to go home immediately. He didn't want Macy to get any further upset or appear to as uncaring as well. Macy went on to her place and made calls and arrangements for



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the funeral to be held on Sunday. She had already told all their extended living relatives about the death, but now they needed to be informed about the funeral arrangements. Since all of them lived away from the village, everyone would have to be looked after. Her father's body arrived the next day and was brought home to their house which now was being served as the wake house, and she placed her father in his bedroom. The people of Doolin continued to come all day long paying their respects and trying to make Macy feel comfortable. They commented on how Frank was a good man, and Macy should be proud to be his daughter. All this made Macy cry even more instead of being consoled.

Macy missed father dearly, and every time someone mentioned him to her, the raw pain of his loss hit her with renewed force. Desmond came stopped in Macy's office every morning to check on her and would then go back to work. Saturday came, and most of her relatives had come from all across Ireland and were staying at the nearby Doolin Hotel. She, however, was most looking forward to the arrival of Garry to her village. She knew that when he arrived, he would make Macy feel a lot better. On Saturday evening, she welcomed Garry to her home. They talked about how her father was a good man who helped everyone he could, and Garry agreed with everything she said. He said that he missed her father dearly and he will continue to carry his legacy with him just as he had planned.

Macy liked the fact that Garry was so responsible and was handling their business so well. She thought her father had made the right choice in choosing Garry and in her heart she was thankful to her father for this. At midnight, Garry stood and said goodnight to Macy and went to his room. She hadn't felt this good since she found out about her father. She now made her way to her bedroom and closed the door behind her. She laid there thinking how she and Garry had both lost their beloved fathers and now Garry was going through the divorce. Which according to Garry was about to be finalized in a matter of days, it was a very tough time for both of them. She wanted to offer

her support to Garry just as much as he had offered her his support. All she needed was to find a way to show him how she felt.

The next day was the funeral. Frank's body was transferred to the local church. The attendees were in a larger number than expected. A lot of the people from the village who knew Frank had gathered to pay their respects and say goodbye. Macy was moved by the overwhelming response given to her father. She never realized how many lives her father had impacted. The women in Frank's office had written her father a poem which a small group of children read out in the church after that morning's Sunday service. Frank's body was transported to the church in preparation for the funeral later that afternoon. The funeral had begun, and it was now time for Macy to give the eulogy. But before she stood to go to the podium, Garry asked her, "Can I also say some words for your father after you have spoken?" Macy smiled, "I think dad would love that." With that, she went ahead towards the podium.

Straightening her shoulders, Macy spoke tentatively into the microphone, "My father, was one of the greatest men I have ever known. Not only did he sacrifice a lot for his family, but he was the epitome of hard work and resilience. Not only has he raised me, but he was responsible for taking care of an immense number of families. With his company, he has provided people with numerous opportunities to earn a decent living for their family. He was not the one to back down when it came to helping people. In fact, he was the first one to help a person in need. He dedicated his life to his employees who were no less than his own family in his eyes and to me. When I was a child, he would always encourage me to follow my dreams. He believed that I could do anything that I set my mind to. He wanted me to be the pilot of my own life. He had a hidden talent for painting which people barely got to see. I wish he had spent more time with us to share his interest and we all could have seen art through his eyes. However, I feel that he is in a better place than this world. He is at peace, may God rest his soul, Amen."

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With this, she stepped away from the podium hearing a resounding amen across the church from everyone in attendance. She now realized that the church was so full that a lot of people were standing inside and out just so they could attend the funeral. She was deeply moved by this. She looked for Garry around the room and found him standing just a few steps from her. She then saw Desmond sitting in the front row with a deep concern for her in his eyes. There were many people she barely knew, but they all were there for her father. She looked at Garry again and nodded to him hence hinting that it was his turn to speak. Garry nodded in agreement and then made his way to the podium that Macy had just gotten off from. Seeing Garry go towards the podium made Desmond's blood boil. He hated the fact that he was even there sympathising with Macy and everyone who was genuinely mourning, but now he was also giving another eulogy. However, Desmond said nothing.

Garry started his speech, "As Macy has already told you how great of a man Frank was, I want to add to that. I am the living proof of Frank's generosity and kindness. He gave me a chance when no one thought I was worthy of getting one. He gave me his company to take care of it and to help it grow. He was a man who trusted people and saw the good in them. And I hope that he will be rewarded for this in the life hereafter. Amen." There was another resounding "Amen", and the church went silent again.

The coffin was then lifted, and the procession then moved to the graveyard where Frank was laid to rest next to his beloved Margery. Macy cried once again, as she watched her father's coffin being lowered into the ground slowly. She had promised herself that she wouldn't cry, but she still did. Desmond came over and hugged her. Despite the hug, she couldn't stop the tears from coming. She had finally laid her father to rest, and it was all looking so final that it was not easy for her to fathom it all. Desmond accompanied her to her car and drove her back to her home to prepare for the other mourners to arrive. There she stayed with Desmond who made sure that Garry didn't come too

near to her. One by one the guests left, and it was time for Desmond to leave too. Despite his insistence that he spend the night at her place to take care of Macy, Macy refused his offer. She wanted to be alone, so Desmond had to leave. It was then when Garry informed her he too had to leave that night and needed to be back in Chicago the next day. He was supposed to sign his divorce papers the following day. So she bid him farewell, and Macy realized she was now all alone in her house which seemed to empty and sad.

## MACY'S HEART

Macy woke up the next day in her bed with the sun shining brightly on her face. She had a really bad night after the funeral. She kept waking up again and again throughout the night recalling how she was now alone in this world. She never realized how alone she was going to be until Garry had left and now the house seemed too empty. Macy pulled herself up into a sitting position laying her head on the headboard. As she shifted her position, her head started hurting badly. She sat massaging her temples with both her hands. She didn't know what to do today. It's like her life had no purpose now. She had no one to look after her, no one to praise her accomplishments and nobody to ask if she was going to be alright. Although her dad never dictated what Macy was supposed to do with her life, it was comforting to know that she had a support system in the form of her father. Whenever she was troubled, or she felt something was not right, she would go to her father to talk and always took his opinion into consideration. She realized now that she was afraid of even going to work today. What if she did something wrong?

There would be no one to guide her there now. She remembered how her father believed in her. His voice echoed through her memories. It was Macy's very first day of work, and she was going to intern with a professor from her college. That professor was researching on ways to produce adipic acid in an environment-friendly manner when Macy joined him. She was nervous on her first day, and that was even before she left for work. Her father had observed this behaviour, and before she went to work that day, he had sat her down on the breakfast table and said, "I believe in you, and I know that you will do what is right. However, mistakes are a part of life. We learn from them, and it improves us. So it's ok if today, tomorrow or this entire week doesn't go right. You are new to this professional world. No one expects you to know everything within a small time

frame.” Macy had smiled at this, and she had given her father a big hug for these words of encouragement.

With these words in mind, her first work day ever had gone by smoothly with although one exception. She had printed and submitted an erroneous document to her boss, and her boss had laughed, as it was not a report that she had submitted, but instead, she had printed out her boss’s “to do” list. She had felt embarrassed but soon recovered from the debacle. She had come home to tell her father at night how it was so stupid for her but had also admitted that she wasn’t going to let such a small mistake hold her back. Her father had told her that he was proud that she didn’t let these trifling matters get in her way to success. This all revolved in Macy’s head as she sat on her bed. She stopped massaging her temples and diverted her attention to the window. She got up from her bed and walked towards the window. She was looking for something that would motivate her to walk out of her bedroom that day. She saw the trees in her yard and the bright sunlight that was peeking through its leaves. She saw one of her servants cleaning her Tesla Model S.

The car her father had helped her pick for herself. Emerald green was her father’s favourite color and that is why she had selected this colored Tesla to buy. Macy observed that she had everything that was needed to live a luxurious life. She again thought of how she still had no companion in her life to share it with. As she was thinking this, suddenly, Garry’s face came to her mind. The man who had provided her with a helping hand when she badly needed one. He had opened his home to her and even comforted her despite going through so much himself at the moment. Maybe Garry knew how she must be feeling at the moment which is why he was so nice to her and took such good care of her.

Macy then thought of calling Garry and inquiring about his divorce being finalized. But she then realized that it was still night time in Chicago, and Garry must be sleeping at that moment. Then it dawned on her that she has no business getting involved in the matter. She had no right to ask Garry of his

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personal life. He may not even take well to Macy interfering in his divorce. So she decided against calling Garry at all unless it was about any work related to the A'lainn. She remembered how Desmond was desperately trying to stop her from talking to Garry. She knew he had realized that she was infatuated with Garry, and Desmond was hating her admiration for Garry. Macy recognized that Desmond still had feelings for her. The events after her father's death had proved how supportive and protective Desmond was to her. But unfortunately, she only thought of him as her friend, not someone with whom she would spend her life with. He was too arrogant to the point where he irritated Macy often. This thought made Macy want to skip work even more.

Macy walked across her room and went to her walk-in closet. Maybe something in there would make her want to go out. Her closet was full of beautiful clothes. She ran her fingers through each of them as she walked past every one of them. All were pretty clothes. Most of them were very expensive enough to buy a month's food supply for an average family. Many of these were also by designers who discouraged animal cruelty. However, some of them were by those who also sold real leather and fur products. These were mostly gifts from other people or the designers themselves, and she couldn't say no. None of them was able to provide her inspiration to change the clothes and go out and do her part to the world. She thought to herself maybe she wasn't looking at the right place for what she wanted.

Macy went to the last section of her closet, where she didn't often venture. There she kept the clothes which she seldom wore. Either those clothes were too expensive or special to wear, or she didn't feel comfortable wearing them. After shuffling through hangers of dresses, she found a dress, which was perfect for her today. It was a knee-length electric blue and white dress. The electric blue color stretched from the cowl neckline to just below her chest and from there on it was completely white and very comfortable. The sleeves of the dress were padded with the style that was very reminiscent of the 1980s. She had bought that

particular dress because she had seen a picture of her mother wearing something of a similar color combination. Her father had told her the photo was taken at a time when her father and mother had visited her grandmother and told her that they were expecting a child. She had cherished that picture so much since then, that she had it framed and placed it near the staircase that went to her room. This way the picture would always be in her view when she went to upstairs to her bedroom.

She took off her pyjama shorts and her tee shirt. She went to the bathroom to take a long hot shower, brushed her teeth and went back to her closet wrapped in her bathrobe. She looked for the right undergarments to go along with the dress she had picked for today and found her white lacy satin set of bra and panties. She wanted to feel good today by dressing well. This, she believed might help her get through the day with a better perspective. She got dressed, and now she needed the perfect shoes to go with the outfit. She found her white strappy heels made special for her by Christian Louboutin and decided those would be perfect. She looked at herself in the full view mirror and knew that she was finally ready to go out. The final touch was her mother's gold bracelet and gold earrings. Macy supposed that everyone at work would be surprised to see her in such bright colors when they were expecting her to show up in black clothes since she was mourning. She laughed at this thought while she tied her hair in a ponytail.

The moment she went down for breakfast where her cook greeted her, she knew that she was right in thinking that people would definitely be surprised. Her cook's mouth fell open when she saw Macy wearing the colorful dress. However, neither her cook nor Macy said anything to each other about this and Macy enjoyed her breakfast with a smile on her face. She wanted to see the expressions of her co-workers today desperately now. She got in her car and drove off to her office. As soon as Macy walked through the doors of the building, she started to get attention. She walked through the entire corridor with people looking over their shoulders to see her. Many passed a smile to



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her. She understood that they all wanted her to feel welcome and comfortable with them. She felt sincere gratitude and greeted them with a bright smile in return. Some also displayed shocked looks her way, and she thought it had to be the dress. She was amused by the attention she got and made her way to her office.

She started with her work and was well into it when Desmond approached her office. As soon as he entered he stop midway into greeting her. “Hey ...” by this time he had noticed what Macy was wearing. Desmond’s expression was all that Macy had to see to understand why Desmond had not completed his sentence. She started laughing looking at Desmond while he scratched his head with his index finger. “You look lovely today,” Desmond said casually as he approached her desk. Now Macy was flattered and said “Thank you” while she sifted her focus to her computer instead of looking at Desmond. Desmond sat across from her desk and gave Macy a concerned look. Macy looked up and said, “What is it Desmond?” Nothing. I just never thought you would be wearing these colorful clothes only days after your father’s death. But I am glad that you look happy today.

Macy then turned towards Desmond, giving him her full attention. “Desmond I know most of you were expecting me to be still in mourning, but I needed the motivation to come out and work today. For that, I needed to look good. And now I am motivated to work so I am happy.” Desmond smiled. “I am glad that you are happy and finally moving on with your normal life. Your father would want that for you. I only came here to check on you and see if you needed my help with anything. Even though you look perfectly capable to do everything on your own for now, let me know if you need anything from me.” Macy smiled with this. She knew that Desmond wanted the best for her, “Thank you for your concern Desmond. I really appreciate that.” She thought that this was the end of their conversation and now Desmond would go back to doing his own work. Macy

diverted her attention to her computer. However, he continued to sit there staring at Macy.

Macy observed this and then spoke to Desmond again, this time in a concerned voice, "What is it Desmond?" Desmond inhaled deeply and then started, "I have meant to tell you something. It's about Garry. I had thought of gathering proof of it before telling you, but since you have been so close with him, I think I should tell you right away." Macy suppressed a smile. She knew what was coming. Desmond was going attempt to stop her infatuation with Garry. She smiled and folded her hands on the table while leaning forward towards Desmond and said, "You make it all sound so sinister and intriguing. Let's hear it." Desmond knew that she wasn't taking him seriously. He knew that she may not believe him or even agree with what he was about to tell her, but he had a duty to tell her.

Desmond began to describe the conversation he had with her father, "Macy you need to know that I talked with your father before he went off to Chicago. Do you know why he went there?" Macy looked serious now. "Yes, he told me that he was going to meet Garry for some important business. When Garry was staying at my place, he talked about the errors and miscalculations that had happened in the finances. He told me that Frank was worried, so he went there to meet up with Garry. They actually met, discussed the problem and together came up with a solution." Desmond's mouth flew open. He didn't think that Garry would have mentioned anything about the meeting with Frank to Macy. But now he knew he was on the right track, he was trying to come clean towards Macy, to win her favor so that she wouldn't find out about the losses he had made to the company. Instead, he was trying to cover up those losses by calling them a mistake. This did not bode well for Desmond as it would make it even harder for him to explain to Macy what had happened.

Despite that, now the matter was on the table. Desmond decided to pursue further discussion. He started, "It was not like that Macy. Your father was really concerned by what was transpiring

with the finances of this company. He told me that he was worried that Garry was not fit for running the company and that he was even thinking of removing him if all did not go well.” Macy was surprised to hear this, but she let Desmond continue. “Look, Macy, I care for you and for this company. Garry is not the right man for this job. He needs to go. Who knows if the accident that got Frank killed wasn’t really an accident at all.” When he finished speaking, there was a hint of suspicion in Macy’s eyes. She thought for a minute and said, “Desmond I know you are only trying to look out for me, but what you are saying is sounding more like a conspiracy theory instead of facts. I can understand the fact that Garry may have made mistakes, but as I told you, it was a small error, which Gary told me was dealt with efficiently. My father was actually pleased with his services, and if he weren't, he would have told me right away. As for your theory of Garry killing my father, please think for a second. Garry is a businessman, not a murderer. He wouldn’t harm the person who helped him get to his feet again. I think you are confused.”

Desmond was expecting her to dismiss his theory of Frank being murdered. But Desmond didn’t expect her to not believe anything at all about the finances and or the fact her father was thinking of removing Garry from the company. He had assumed that Macy would at least talk about giving things some thought and then together they would uncover the truth behind the finances. However, Macy was now refusing to consider the idea of investigating whether or not Garry was indeed messing with the finances of the company. Desmond put his hand on the table and leaned towards Macy so that he could make her understand the seriousness. “I know that you fancy him, Macy. But there is no need to take his side if he is the culprit. I agree my theory about him being involved in your father’s accident is farfetched, but what about him messing with the finances? At least trust me on that. Do you think Frank was wrong to think that?”

Macy was now getting irritated by this repetitive discussion which was not leading anywhere. “She leaned back to her chair,

removing placing her hands firmly on the desk. She then said, "I am not discrediting your information, but I am merely saying that it is faulty. I am telling you that Garry told me everything and I understand that the error was caused by some bad investments but was recovered immediately. Garry explained it to me. I believe this because even my father was confused before he left. I know that because when I asked him why he had to go to go all the way to Chicago, he had told me it was nothing for me to worry about and that he would tell me after he comes back from Chicago. He was himself was only slightly confused to what was going on. Which is why he didn't tell me anything before we went to Chicago. He didn't think it was as big of a problem as your making it out to be." Macy said that and leaned back on her chair further while looking sternly at Desmond. She didn't want to sit there and listen to any more of this.

Desmond looked at her, she clearly didn't want to talk about it anymore now. So he decided to stop talking and said, "I hope that you come to understand the situation one day before it is too late." With this, he got up and walked out of her office with a quick stride. She didn't want to talk about it any further either, so Macy was pleased that he had gotten up on his own, without Macy asking him to leave. She took a deep breath in and started massaging her temples again. Her headache had returned. This was clearly not the way she was expecting her day to pan out. Not only did the day seem to go downhill from there, but her mood changed from bad to worse throughout the day. There was one problem after the other that needed her attention. Since she had not come back to office since she found out about her father's death, there was a lot that needed to be looked over. To add to the injury, Desmond had refused to talk to her when she approached his office to have lunch together. He didn't seem angry he merely said that he wasn't hungry. Macy knew Desmond, this meant that he was angry at her.

Macy arrived home after a long day feeling completely defeated by life. Instead of doing something else to lighten up her mood, she went straight to her bedroom to lie down. She expected her

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next day to be better. However, this was not going to be the case for her. The next day although was better, with no arguments from Desmond, the air was yet very strained. The entire week passed like this for Macy. She was starting to think that going to work was not something she would enjoy now. But that changed when she received a phone call from Garry on Friday.

“Hey, how are you?” Macy said as she received Garry’s call with a bright smile on her face. Garry sounded just as ecstatic from the other side of the phone. He said, “Macy finally I am free. I have successfully divorced my wife, and I am a free man. But now I am also thinking of something else. I want a change of pace. I can’t be at the same place I was when I was with my wife. I need to go somewhere else. I hope you will be excited for me when I tell you that I want to move to Ireland.” Macy’s smile got wider, and now excitement was overtaking her manner of speaking. Really Garry? You really want to come work in Ireland? But does that mean you will be quitting your post of Vice Chairman from our company?” she sounded sad all of a sudden. The prospect of Gary leaving their company was hurtful for her. And if he really was coming to Ireland, would he even be coming to meet Macy. This was also a question that needed to be answered.

Garry recognized the sudden change in excitement in Macy’s voice and merely laughed from the other side. “No of course not. In fact, I plan to be more dedicated to your company than ever before. This is the reason why I am moving to Doolin. This way I can be of much more help to you and together we can run A’lainn.” Garry said in an even more excited manner than before. Macy didn’t believe her ears. Garry was moving over here, to Ireland so he could work together with Macy. She then answered, “That would be perfect Garry. I have to do so much here. It would be a huge help if you were to come here and assist me. You will have everything that you need. I will have them set up an office for you right away.”

Garry then calmed down. His plan was working. Macy was taking the bait that he was throwing at her. He then replied to

her in his calm manner, "That would be perfect. I will be there by the end of this month, which means you have two weeks to prepare." Macy then also calmed herself down, knowing that she was out of line acting so excited. Garry must think of her as a young girl, she thought to herself. She answered in a very business-like manner, "Of course Garry. We will be ready for you. But what about your house? Where will you be staying? Do you want my people to look for some suitable place for you to rent here?" Garry then replied with a smile on his face, "Oh no, you wouldn't have to worry about that. There are so many people here that can look into that for me. So I shall see you when I get there." Macy replied in a normal voice, "Yes. I am looking forward to your arrival here. We shall see each other again soon Garry. Thank you for letting me know about your plans. When you reach here, I assure you that you won't be disappointed." The two then said their goodbyes to each other and then disconnected the phone.

The next morning Macy made her way to Desmond's office. She explained the situation in a very professional manner. She was careful not to get overexcited when telling him about Garry's intentions of joining them here. Desmond listened to her carefully and then only commented that they would greet him warmly. She was satisfied with the response. All she wanted was Garry and Desmond to get along well. She didn't want any animosity between the two due to her or any misconceptions that Desmond had about Garry. Now that was out of the way, Macy made her way to her assistant and told him of the requirements that should be met for Garry's arrival. Some people were to be shifted to the building and space had to be made to create an office for Garry. Interior designers were to be called to plan the office space, and everything was supposed to be perfect and functional by the end of that month. Her assistant noted that and was told to get to work right away.

The next two weeks passed quickly, but not quickly enough for Macy. Every day she woke up she counted how many days were left for Garry to arrive. She wanted to be in Garry's company

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badly as she knew once he arrived, things may get better for herself and for the business as well. The day finally came when Garry was set to arrive at Doolin. He was supposed to go to his home first which he had rented in Doolin. It was close to the company and was a large house made of bricks painted white. It had a beautiful mahogany rooftop and a small driveway that led the visitors from the road to the house. It also had a very scenic view towards the fields ahead and was surrounded by luscious greenery. Macy was glad that he had chosen this place for himself as this truly depicted the beauty of their village along with their culture. Macy was supposed to pick Garry up his house and take him to the office showing him around their office facility and give him a tour of the first ever A'lainn store that was just a few blocks from the building.

As planned Macy got into her car and drove towards Garry new place seeing him the first time in weeks. She had dressed in a canary yellow dress that was flowy and certainly looked like it was more appropriate for a formal nighttime event rather than an office attire. She wanted to make a good impression on Garry after being away from him for so long. She had already located his house before Garry's visit, so she had no trouble finding the place. She pulled the car up her driveway and then got out of the car. Macy calmed her nerves by taking a few deep breaths and then made her way to the door. The house looked even better in the morning than when she had previously seen in the evening. She rang the doorbell and was greeted by Garry himself.

He invited her in and both were served tea by a maid who was hired by Garry before he came to Ireland. They talked about how life had been for them and how hard each of their journeys had become without the person they loved so dearly. Garry felt bad that Macy had lost her father, and had no chance of seeing him again. He commented how difficult his ex-wife was making it for him to see children whom he adored. On the contrary, Macy was feeling bad for Garry as he was the one who had to go through the emotional trauma of not just losing one important person from his life, but all three at once. His wife, and his two

children. They both sat in silence for that discussion deeply engrossed in their own thoughts, when Macy realized that it was time for them to leave the office, she said, "Everyone is waiting for us in the office. They wanted to welcome you with flowers and have planned a great cake cutting ceremony for you. I hope you won't let their efforts go waste." "Certainly not," said Garry while standing up from the table.

The two made their way out of Garry's place and went outside to Macy's car. Garry acting like a true gentleman opened the passenger door for Macy but then realised that she was the one driving it and it was Macy's car. Macy laughed at this rather loudly and then proceeded to get into the driver's seat, while Garry sat in the passenger seat for which he had opened the door. Macy drove them to their office. As soon as Garry got out of the car and joined Macy who was now handing her keys to the watchman, Garry held out his arm to Macy. Macy laughed again. "If I hold your arm like this, people would assume we are a couple." Garry looked at Macy and raised an eyebrow. "It is ok if they think that. I want that for us." Macy went red in the face. She was blushing really badly now, and she knew that Garry had noticed it which is why he said, "If you really are uncomfortable with that, then its ok, I won't force you." Macy then quickly grabbed Garry's arm and said, "Oh no. I didn't mean to offend you, and you didn't make me uncomfortable at all. I just didn't realize that you wanted the same things of me that I wanted from you." Garry acted surprised. "So you want to be with me too? Just as much as I want to be with you?" Garry asked Macy. Macy nodded in agreement and then smiled.

Garry leaned over intending to kiss her gently. But Macy responded with a deep passionate kiss. Garry was enjoying it even more than he had ever enjoyed kissing his wife. Her lipstick was all over his lips, but neither of them cared. They both broke up and realized that they were in the office parking lot. They both smiled at each other and Macy knew that she was truly in love with this man. They made her way towards the office arm in arm and Macy was ecstatic that he was by her side now, truly



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supporting her. On the other hand, Garry was smiling to himself for finally scoring his ace card. The one that he had been planning to secure for quite some time now. He didn't really think it would take so little effort on his part once he arrived in Ireland, but apparently, Macy was really interested in him. He thought of it as progress and didn't want to think about how it happened, just that it felt victorious.

They both entered the office hand in hand, and everyone welcomed them. Macy was glad that everyone was so accepting of Garry. Desmond had made a face when he saw Macy walk in with Garry holding hands, but he quickly changed his expression to a smile before Macy could see it. Garry was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Macy's personal assistant, and Macy started introducing all the employees in their office one by one. Garry kept a jolly attitude while being introduced to them all. She wanted him to know each person and feel as comfortable in this place as possible. Garry then was asked to come to the cafeteria, where he was presented with a delectable white pineapple cake. Garry seemed to love every moment of attention, while Macy was only looking at Garry oblivious to what was going on around her.

It was now time for Garry to be shown to his office room. While everyone got back to their work, Macy went with Garry to show him the executive office space they had decorated in a matter of two weeks. Macy opened the door, and Garry entered behind Macy. Garry was astounded by the beauty of the place. The room's woodwork was something to marvel about with the wood seeming to be extracted from the oak trees. The charcoal grey colored marble floor looked so shiny that Garry thought he might slip on it. Up there on the end of the room was a large wooden desk seemed to be made of Mahogany and looked strong. The desk had two chairs on one side and behind the desk sat a large chair with the leather color that matched the color of the desk. Behind the chair were two very large cabinets fitted with glass panels. The dark brown cabinets matched the colour and woodwork of the desk but were empty at the moment. The

office was well lit all around, but the lighting fixture in the centre of the room was the centre of attention. It looked like a designer's item with small lamps that were protruding from a branch of a tree. On the wall behind his desk hung the painting he had bought for Frank.

Garry took his time to roam around the room and observe everything from top to bottom. He was actually very pleased to see how carefully everything had been designed and placed. The room exuded the luxury and style he preferred. He said to Macy, "Wow. You really made an effort to make me feel welcome here. This is beyond my expectations." Macy smiled, "You like it?" Garry still scanning the room said, "I don't just like it. I love it!" He said rather loudly. Macy went over and hugged Garry. She was glad that she had made Garry happy. He looked deeply into her eyes before kissing her. Pulling away, he asked Macy, "Does this office have a lock on the door?". Macy smiled, walking over and locking the office door. She turned back to Garry, "Why yes it does!". Walking into his arms, he twirled her around laying her over the edge of the desk while his hands moved under her skirt to remove the satin panties that were impeding his last step to victory, Macy was to be his.

From then on, it was Macy's daily schedule that they would meet each other at Garry's place for breakfast before they went to the office. Sometimes she would spend the night with him and would wake up to find Garry serving her breakfast in bed. They would spend their lunch hours together in each other's offices and would never leave each other's side during their break. Macy thought they were inseparable and away from all the evils of the world. She was glad that her life finally had purpose and that she had found that special someone who would care for her and be her inspiration to work and live every day. On days she was feeling low Garry would make her feel better just by being there at her side. Macy had dreamed of this life for so long and now it was finally hers.

## LOVING YOU ONCE AGAIN

Things were incredibly better for Macy, as she felt like she had someone to love in her life. She knew that Garry would take care of everything if she failed to do so in any aspect of the company. Similarly, she would support Garry if there was a need for improvement. In Macy's mind, there was no question of Garry's loyalty towards her and towards A'lainn. The more she spent time with Garry the more he made her realize that he was a nice person and that she was right in choosing him as her partner in business and life. She also thought from time to time, about how Desmond had tried to pressurize Macy into thinking that Garry is the bad guy in her life. How wrong he had been. Garry was here, he was loving and her, the employees and the business as far as she could see was doing fabulous. Live was perfect. But she still felt that Desmond was feeling threatened, and she needed to prove that nothing Desmond said was true. For this to happen, Macy would arrange meetings with Garry, Desmond and herself. This would let the three sit together and talk better strategies and innovations for their products.

Macy usually praised Garry's ideas and commended his composure and strategies for being intelligent and thoughtful. This made Macy feel even closer to him, and he knew that with each passing day he solidified Macy's trust. On the other hand, Desmond felt Macy was slowly slipping away from him. He knew that she couldn't be his, he had accepted that. He had even accepted the fact that Garry may not have been the responsible for the death of Frank and that Desmond had indeed thought wrong. But he wasn't willing to let go of the fact that Garry had indeed played a role in corrupting the company with his presence and his business antics. Desmond was determined to dig deeper for that secret and uncover the truth. He had twice tried to access Garry's computer in the office. The first time he did that, he could not break in through the computer security. The next time he had acquired the help of one of his hacker friends in the server

room, who helped him log in from his own computer in the strictest of confidence. Yet they were unable to find any proof of Garry's wrongdoings. Desmond now had realized that his enemy was way cleverer than what he had anticipated earlier. Garry must have his guard up all the time and knew that he may have an enemy or two everywhere he goes. He decided to rethink his strategy.

Once when Macy, Desmond and Garry were discussing the latest ideas for their hair products, Desmond decided to outsmart Garry. Garry was insistent that they should use cheaper, local products such as lemon extracts. On the other hand, Macy wanted to have aloe-vera oils in their shampoo. Desmond decided that it was his moment to win the favor of Garry so that Garry may not consider him an enemy anymore. "I think Garry is right Macy. We cannot have all the expensive ingredients in one shampoo, because it has sandalwood extracts in it as well for essences. It would cost the company greatly. We can sell the shampoo at the same standard high price that we have but for ingredients that do not cost us that much." Macy looked at Desmond in surprise. Ever since Garry's arrival, Desmond had sided with Macy and had always been thinking for the benefit of the consumers instead of the company. This was something new that she had never encountered with Desmond before.

After a few seconds of consideration, Macy then only responded with, "Maybe we shall see how this idea plays out once it goes to the market. For now, I agree with you if you both are of the same opinion. This better not lessen our reputation, because if it does, you two both will be out this second." Garry smiled, "Darling, I have been in this business for many years, this is the right idea. It won't ruin you or your consumer base. But it will definitely benefit the company immensely once this product goes out. All you have to do is tell your manufacturers and testing departments to get on with the show, and we will have a new shampoo." Macy looked uncomfortable. At this Garry further added, "Look, even Desmond agrees with me. If I were really wrong then Desmond would have disagreed with me. He

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may not be a businessman, but he is definitely a chemist just like you.” Macy closed her eyes, took a deep breath and then opened them. “Yes, I understand.” With this the two men got up from the conference room and made their way out of it, leaving Macy to stare at the two.

She didn't move from her place and continued thinking about why had Desmond disagreed with her despite knowing that the product has a bigger chance to suffer badly due to sandalwood and lemon extracts being mixed together. Surely it would interfere with the scent of the product. And for the lemon smell to prevent from overpowering the sandalwood, the shampoo may need to have more ingredients added making the shampoo equally expensive had they included aloe-vera. But it didn't matter to Macy now. She had given them the green signal. They were two people whom she trusted immensely in this organization. Maybe Desmond would realize his mistake and talk to Macy privately, or they would make do with the same shampoo recipe that has just been devised. With these thoughts, Macy walked out of the conference room and into her office to resume her work for the day.

Macy went home that day perplexed. This made her slightly uncomfortable after the tiring and mentally straining day at the office. She sat there on her large grey colored couch with her laptop in front of her, her feet resting on the table. Seemingly she was just watching a romantic film, but in actuality, her mind was really somewhere. The film continued to play on the laptop screen as she was deeply engrossed in her own thoughts. These thoughts were not of what had transpired today between her, Garry and Desmond but instead they only revolved around herself and Garry. She never thought her infatuation with Garry would form into an actual relationship. How well had everything turned out in her life? Life, which a few months ago was in total chaos, was now filled with nothing but happiness. It could very well be that Garry was going to be her partner for life with whom she may even have children with becoming a family of their own.

Macy desired a more substantial relationship. She no longer wanted flings that lasted a few months and ended over the slightest issues. Despite being with Garry for less than a year, she knew that Garry was the perfect man for her. He was the one with whom she would want to spend the rest of her life with. He was mature, intelligent and responsible. In addition to that, he deeply cared about Macy and was always concerned about her wellbeing. No one Macy had ever met could give her that kind of love for long. They both have a great understanding of each other. To add to that, they were now business partners and understood each other's work completely. They were the perfect match, thought Macy. To Macy, it didn't matter that Garry was divorced one time. The point was, he was in deeply love with her just as much as she was with him.

Thinking further, maybe she should finally talk to Garry. Since Macy considered Garry to be a mature man, he would understand Macy's emotions for him. It seemed like the perfect time to take their relationship to a level. However, she wanted to hold back until tomorrow. "It's night time. If I call him up at this hour, he would probably freak out." She thought to herself. "Maybe I make him a special dinner tomorrow night. Then I will let him know of my intentions" It wasn't a bad idea. Maybe not the unique one, but it was the perfect romantic date and the best way to blurt your heart out. With these thoughts, Macy went to sleep.

The next morning, she drove to Garry's house as usual, with no intention of him even getting the slightest of hints of what she was about to do. As they sat down to breakfast, Garry looked nervous and shaky himself. But Macy didn't pay any attention to Garry's nervousness as she herself was much occupied in keeping herself quiet. Garry although wanted to make it look like that he was shivering so that he would be asked by Macy what was bothering him. This did not happen, and Macy did not seem to notice how Garry's hand shook as he passed her the fork or he himself was cutting his own scrambled eggs. "Well this strategy certainly isn't working the way I intended," Garry

thought to himself. Then another idea popped up in his head. He would deliberately spill the tea while pouring it for Macy. He stretched his hand across the table and picked up the steaming tea pot. He then started pouring Macy a cup of tea while she silently ate her breakfast with her head bent down. Despite her efforts, she was failing miserably in masking her happiness as she ate her breakfast and suppressed her smiles. Garry had noticed her quietness but wasn't going to say anything to her about it.

Garry started pouring Macy's tea out and then on purpose moved his hand sideways. Away from the tea cup. This made tea spill all over the table. Macy looked up while Garry yelled "Oh darn!" on purpose to gain more attention and made it look like that his hand was burnt by the tea too. Macy took Garry's hand in hers and started massaging it with her other hand. She looked at Garry lovingly and smiled at him. Garry smiled back at her and knew that it was time for them talk. Macy asked Garry, "What's wrong? Why were you so clumsy with the tea?" Garry began in a low voice which only Macy could hear. His embarrassment was evident in his voice when he spoke, "I have been like this all morning darling." Macy was confused now, "Why? What's the matter?" Garry took a deep breath, then said, "I love you Macy, but I am a much older man than you. Whatever relationship we have now, I want to make it stronger. I don't want this to just be a fling between us which last only a couple of months. I want you and I to be "Us". At this Macy's eyes had widened. Garry took it as a sign that Macy may reject the idea thinking it was too soon. So he corrected himself, by adding, "Maybe not right away, but some day when we are ready we can begin our new life. For now I do feel like that we should think of moving in together. You and I are literally living under one roof. Every day and every night, it's just you and I. Would you like that idea Macy?" If Macy had looked surprised before, it was nothing compared to how she was looking now.

All of a sudden Macy's heart rate increased and her breaths turned heavier than they were. She didn't expect this coming

from Garry, and that too was all of a sudden. She had thought that she herself would be the one asking Garry to live together. And she was scared that Garry was the one who may have been uncomfortable with the idea. Yet it was the other around now. It was her who had to answer the question of moving in together with Garry, and he was supposed to be answering her. Despite the upset in the events, she was glad that this was happening. This was proof of the fact that she was not wrong to think of spending her life together with Garry. Instead, Gary thought the same too for both of them. He had even gone as far as to hint to Macy that he even intended to marry her shortly. Inside, Macy was thinking all these thoughts, but outwardly she was merely staring at Garry blankly.

Garry continued to look at her and was anxiously awaiting her response. Macy was still clutching his hand and they both were now looking intensely at each other with nothing but awkward silence between them. This was not how either of them had imagined for the situation to map out. Macy realized the awkwardness of the situation and then said in a breathless voice, “Yes. Yes, Garry. I will surely move in with you. And as soon as possible.” Garry smiled. They both closed in on each other; their foreheads lightly touching the other’s forehead. They both looked at each other and then kissed. To Macy, it felt like a kiss filled with love, passion and a promising future. In Garry’s mind, the kiss was the bond that joined him and Macy together now. Macy was in his hands, and he had played a good game. Speaking of hands, he took her other hand and led her to the bedroom to prove his love and devotion to her. As Macy, slumbered beside him exhausted from the hours of intense lovemaking, Garry laid beside her thinking, he had fooled her enough to think that he was truly in love with her. Maybe now he will be able to control her and the company.

Within a span of a week, Macy formally moved in with Garry and Macy, and within months she began to realize whom the man was she had fallen in love with. Though Garry was very caring of her it seemed that it mattered to him just a bit too much



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on how Macy took care of the company and her health. He would heavily advise her now on how to be better. Both in business and in the ways she dressed, her weight, and her actions. Macy thought maybe it was just a sign of love that Garry had for her, yet Garry in truth was only protecting his investment. With the vast amount of time that Garry had spent on Macy to win her favor, he was not going to let anything happen to her or her company without at least getting everything switched legally into his name. Acquiring everything legally meant that he would have to marry Macy as soon as possible. He hadn't talked to Macy about marriage, Garry was merely waiting for the right time to ask.

Desmond was the one person whom Macy trusted the most besides Garry, Macy told him about her decision to move in with Garry. Desmond merely congratulated her and said nothing else. However, when Desmond was alone with his thoughts, he was disappointed and felt that Macy was making the biggest mistake of her life. Feeling hurt, he thought maybe I shouldn't care about her as deeply as he used to. The sexual tension between them had all but gone, leaving nothing but a barren friendship, which to Desmond had no meaning. How could Macy trust a man whom she barely knew him and how despite his attempts of warning her, did she not listen to him? Furthermore, there was no way that Macy would ever be in love with him like he was in love with her. For his own peace of mind, he could not pursue her any further. Sighing, Desmond knew that they would remain friends, but he also knew that his chances to be involved romantically with her dwindled down to nothing.

Desmond, Garry and Macy continued to work with each other daily. The one change in Macy's schedule was she now didn't have her lunch with Garry every day like they used to. One day Macy came unexpectedly to Desmond's office for lunch. Over sandwiches, he asked her, "Hey, I notice that you are not having lunch with Garry as often. Is everything ok?" Macy looked at Desmond in amusement while she suppressed a laugh. Desmond knew that this was a ludicrous question.

Macy was always bad in concealing her laughs. So he said, “Go ahead laugh at me. I only asked because you are here and not with Garry.” Macy started laughing loudly while Desmond shook his head from left to right while looking at Macy. She knew Desmond was embarrassed at what he had said. So she said, “I am sorry, I didn’t mean to embarrass you. I know you care about me. But no, there is nothing wrong between Garry and me. We used to lunch together because we didn’t get enough time with each other. Now that we are living together, we don’t always have to be together everywhere. So I instead choose to spend some of my lunch hours with you. You and I have been a bit apart lately, and I know I have neglected our friendship, which is why I am talking to you and enjoying this lunch together.”

Desmond wasn’t expecting this answer. He had hoped that Macy may have seen the reality, that Garry was causing trouble for her. But the complete opposite had happened. Macy was only stating that she wanted to spend more time with him. Desmond hated that he was being treated as a secondary person in Macy’s life. He despised being pitied. Yet, he refrained from showing his disappointment. He wanted to be close to Macy just to protect her. So, it was necessary that there were no arguments among them. Macy felt like she had really hurt Desmond but didn’t pursue the subject any further to avoid even more complications. They both spent the rest of the lunch hour sitting silently with only the sound of munching echoing in the room.

Although Macy had been honest with Desmond, she indeed meant to mend bonds with him, as there was another hidden truth to the matter as well. Garry and Macy had been living together for quite a while. Although seemingly everything was fine, there was something that was bothering Macy. Garry was too overly protective of Macy sometimes. Being in check of her health was something that every person does for their partner, but Garry’s involvement in how she was coming up with new products was the fact that bothered her the most. She hadn’t told Garry yet, but this was certainly something that she intended to talk to him

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soon enough. However, until that happened, she couldn't share her concerns with Desmond either.

Macy had been experimenting with their old products trying to give them a unique touch. They would sometimes do that with older versions of the product so that they can maintain the uniqueness and cater to all the users. It was then when she came across a lab result that showed some changes had been made to the original recipe for the products. A formula for shower gel had been changed considerably. It contained imported flower extracts instead of the normal Wild Irish Seaweed and Heather Flowers extracts. This changed the product entirely and also would affect the quality of the product that was actually promised. They had claimed to have imported flower extracts which included white rose and jasmine in the shower gel instead of the widely available Wild Irish Seaweed. Macy immediately set up a meeting with her production department. During the meeting, she was made aware that the changes had been directed on Garry's order. Garry was the one who had ordered them to use different, less expensive ingredients. They also shared that Garry had informed them all that he was now the one calling the shots because now that Macy was overwhelmingly busy with the executive work of A'llain, she need not be consulted in such small matters. Hearing about the meeting she knew nothing about, the changes that were made, the fact she wasn't consulted and the fact her employees were told not to bother her with such details, she became very upset with Garry's actions. Yet she did not want to create a scene at the office and make it appear that the owner of the company and the vice chairman of the company disagreed with each other. This could wait until they arrived home.

That evening, Macy waited for Garry to get changed and freshen up before she decided to speak to him in their great room. The large, coral blue velvet couch was something that was one of Macy and Garry's "go to" place. Whenever either one of them was troubled, they would choose that couch to sit on, and the other one would know that they needed support on one matter or

another. Macy also occupied that couch when she wanted to remember her father, even though the couch had no connection to him at all. But Garry would then come and hug her, kiss her and wrap his arms around her. This would always make Macy feel just as good as the first time Garry hugged her after Frank's death. This time it was different, however. Macy was still trying to comprehend the whole situation and decide how she should pursue the matter with Garry when Garry saw her sitting on the couch. He came by and sat beside her. He had the look of concern on his face, but he didn't say anything and continued to stare at Macy in silence. Macy turned to look at him, and Garry knew that whatever she was about to say, she was determined about it.

"Garry, there is something that I need to discuss with you." Garry sensed the harshness in her tone but merely pretended not to notice it. He spoke to her in a calm, comforting voice, "Sure honey. I am here. What is it?" This time Macy spoke with more sternness so that Garry would understand that she was upset. "Garry there seems to be an irregularity in the company. I have just found out that you have been advising the production team behind my back. I believe you need to explain this situation to me. As this is simply not done." Garry was taken aback by this piece of information. He didn't think that Macy would find out about his cost-cutting schemes. Yet he maintained a polite façade and answered her in a slow, kind voice, "I admit I did that. There were a few products which needed fine tuning, so I changed the ingredients used in them." Macy was now deeply upset as this. Not only was Garry admitting that he undermined her authority, but he was not even apologetic for it.

She spoke with determination yet again, "Garry, why would you do that with any of our products? And especially why did you not even think of discussing it with me before you did it? Let me be very clear to you, the research department must make changes that would improve the quality of our products, of which I am heading. You not only challenged my authority as the head of research, but you also challenged my authority as the owner of

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A'lainn. How can you do that to me?" Garry listened to her same as a kid who was being scolded by his mother would. He knew if he raised his temper towards Macy things would get out of hand. The best way for him to get out of this was to admit that he was at fault and promise her that he would not do it again. So he did just that. "“I know I have undermined your power, and for that, I am deeply sorry. I didn't want anyone to know about the changes that I had made only because I didn't want anyone to think that I actually was the only one who was improving the products while keeping it cost effective. I kept this a secret so that no one would question the changes or accuse me of defying your authority. As for changing the ingredients without your permission and breaking your trust, Macy I knew you would not have agreed with me, but I was only thinking about the company.”"

Despite his apology, Macy was not ready for this matter to be closed just yet. Garry took note of this and then said to her, "It was never meant to be this way, Macy. Believe me. I didn't want to hurt you or ridicule your authority. I just saw something that needed my attention and thought it best to not disturb you. I made a judgment call on my own. But believe me, I will never do this again. I love you too much to disappoint you. My real intention was never to reduce the quality of the products, In fact, people will accept the changes as an enhancement to the previous products. You just need the right marketing strategy for it and people would buy a cheap product for the price of an expensive one." Macy's eyes widened. She didn't expect Garry to be only concerned about the money he could make. Garry realized his mistake soon enough and changed his tone, "I am doing the best I can to benefit you and A'lainn. We are not cheating our customers. The containers clearly state the ingredients that the consumers are purchasing. Don't worry, I have thought this through. There are only a few products that have been changed. But the power of research truly and completely lies with you. You will be the sole in charge here. I promise I will ask you for any changes in the future that I make to any of the products."

Macy had softened her expression, but this did not mean that she was convinced of the idea that Garry had. Instead, she had started thinking that Garry was not trying to benefit the company but was only benefitting himself. He only worried about how much profit they are able to earn. Instead of how their products were made. This was not something that A'lainn stood for. Large financial profit wasn't the main goal of Macy's brand, providing high-end products was. She, however, did not tell this to Garry. She wanted to see how everything would come out which is why she said, "Ok Garry, I trust you, and I am giving you another chance." Garry smiled at her, and said, "Thank you, Macy. I love you. I won't keep you in the dark again about anything." He then hugged her and Macy hugged him back. Yet this time, Macy did not feel the warmth that she had always felt with Garry when she hugged him. But she hugged him back with enthusiasm nonetheless.

The next day Macy had her lunch alone in her office. She was going through the conversation that had taken place with Garry the night before. She thought about how Garry had tried to persuade her that it was only about the benefit to the company yet this morning during the boards finance meeting they said sales were down and George requested a private meeting with her. For Macy these two bits of information did not add up. She knew Garry cared about the business as much as he cared about her. But now this image of him was breaking down. She was suspecting Garry was guilty of foul play. Macy had already found one product that Garry had changed the product in, but Garry had used the term 'products'. This meant plural, possibly more products were involved. All of this had cost Garry to break his trust with Macy. She then analyzed on how Garry would have lied to her on other occasions when she had not even realized that she was being lied to. She then remembered Desmond's words, how he had told her that he was eating off their organization. That he was in fact looting their organization. Macy immediately called George to meet with in the hour. During that meeting George shared recent financial statements that clearly showed the cost of the rent for the home she now

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shared with Garry, the furnishings, the cook's salary, the utilities and maintenance of the grounds were all being paid by the company, and Garry had stated it was for her approval. How could that be she thought? She gave him money every month for half the expenses of their living together. She thanked George and went back to her office. Sitting at her desk, massaging her temples for a headache that was growing stronger every minute, she now believed that Desmond may indeed be right and was starting to believe him. Desmond did not usually just make baseless claims, and Macy now knew something was wrong. She decided she must discuss this further with Desmond and wanted to know his opinion about the products' ingredients being changed and get his opinion on the financial claims against Garry before she proceeded any further.

Macy knew that if she acted right away and went to Desmond's office, Garry would suspect something. She didn't want Garry to get a whiff of anything. She planned to be stealthier than Garry had been under her nose. So she decided to stay late at the office on Friday, even after Desmond had gone home. She would then visit Desmond at his house later in the night. This way there wouldn't be any intrusion nor would there be any eyewitness to their meeting. So when everyone had left, she made her way to Desmond's house. On the way, Macy called Garry and told him she would be working late, and he had believed her. She knew Garry thought of her as too naïve to have any mistrust of her and suspect that she was lying. As she made her way to Desmond's home, she felt a certain surge of respect for Desmond she had never felt before. Desmond was the one person who stood by her through her thick and thin. Even though she had pushed him away and turned him down, on various personal and professional scenarios, he had stuck by her side. She knew that Desmond was the most honest person in her life right now and if she needed the right answers Desmond was the one who would provide her with them.

Macy stopped her Desmond's place and got out of the car. She could see one of the windows had a light on, but there were

curtains drawn which shielded the view from outside. Macy thought to herself, maybe she should avoid talking to Desmond perhaps it was a bad decision after all by showing up at his door. He could have company over, maybe a friend, or a girlfriend. At the thought of Desmond having a girlfriend, her emotions turned to rage for a few seconds. “Why would he even have a girlfriend over? Even if he has a girl over, she can wait. I am Desmond’s friend and his boss after all” Macy thought to herself. She then remembered she had no business being there at all, and she was, in fact, approaching Desmond as a friend and not as her subordinate. She took a deep breath and calmed her nerves. She was prepared to face whatever the situation may bring up. She was there to discuss business problems, and no one’s presence should affect that.

Macy knocked on the door, and after a few seconds, she heard heavy footsteps on the other side of the door. It was cold, and Macy had already wrapped around herself in a thick cotton coat, but now she felt a shiver down her spine and shivered slightly. She knew it wasn’t the cold, it was the fact that she had come to see Desmond all alone at night. While she was going through that Desmond opened the door. Seeing Macy standing at his door certainly surprised him as he stood there for two seconds to take in what he was seeing.

After the initial shock, he said, “Macy! What brings you here?” Macy responded quickly in a way that made her seem out of breath, “Can I come in?” Desmond realized that she was nervous. “Of course,” he responded. With that he stepped aside in order to let her in and closed the door behind her. “Let’s go over there by the fire. You look cold right now.” With this, he started guiding Macy towards the sitting area which had a large grey colored, granite fireplace. He had apparently just started the fire as the woods hadn’t blackened yet and a lot of logs were not even in the fire. Macy spoke, “I needed that. Thank you.” With that, she took off her coat and sat in the armchair by the fire. Desmond took her coat and hung it on the coat hanger in the corridor. Before he went back to the room, he grabbed a bottle



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of wine and two glasses for himself and Macy. He poured the wine for her and handed her the glass before sitting on the opposite armchair from Macy.

“So what brings you here?” Desmond asked. Macy drew a deep breath and started, “Desmond I owe you an apology for not believing in you when you said Garry is misusing the company and its resources. He really is in it for himself, and all he cares about is money. Desmond smiled and looked at Macy. He wanted her to talk more about it. Macy started with the changes that Garry made in their products and finished off telling Desmond that Garry may have a bigger hand in corruption than they were able to see. She told him how all this did not make sense. Macy began to tear up at the end, “This whole scenario changes everything for me. My love for Garry is something that has all but gone now. I overlooked his mistreatment with a few of his subordinates, but now I know that he isn’t a good person. I refused to believe you Desmond when you told me the truth about him. I was blinded by his love. I have never known myself to be so emotionally driven and not think logically.”

Desmond made his way towards Macy. She looked incredibly fragile at that point. Desmond gave her a warm, friendly hug to calm her. Macy felt the warmth of Desmond’s body against her. She looked up at Desmond, and the glass slipped from her hand spilling wine everywhere on the floor. But she didn’t care, and neither did Desmond. She took his face in her hands and then their lips touched each others. They kissed ever so passionately. Their bodies getting closer and closer. Then it all ended. Just as quick as it had happened, it ended the same way. Both were confused at what happened. Desmond resumed his position in the seat he was sitting on before, and Macy looked uneasy.

Macy then stood saying, “Desmond, I must be getting home, it’s getting late”. As Desmond helped her put a coat on, he said quietly, “Macy, at some point we are going to have to talk about what just happened”. Macy replied, “Good night Desmond”. Desmond closed the door feeling more perplexed than ever.

## SCREAMING IN SILENCE

**M**acy woke up the next day in her bed beside Garry. She had barely slept through the night and had mostly laid awake thinking about what had happened between her and Desmond last night. She had not been this disturbed or confused since her father passed away. In fact, this was worse. She had some intuition as to what to do and what not to do with herself when her father passed away, but now she didn't know how to react. All night she rolled over from one side to the other thinking of ways to end things with Garry personally and professionally. She was now feeling repulsed just by looking at Garry's face. Everything was happening so fast that she wanted time to get things straight in her mind before anything was put to action.

After her kiss with Desmond, she had realized that Desmond was indeed the only person whom she could trust now. Not because she was passionate about him, but because he was a wonderful person. He had never taken advantage of her, and despite the kiss, she knew he was the one person she could always count on. Desmond had told her that he had no idea that this was happening, but had suspected foul play somewhere and was meaning to find it. He had also told her that she should let Garry go as soon as possible. Macy had considered it the appropriate step. If she could not trust the man who was responsible for her company, then he should not be allowed to run it.

Macy knew that at one time or another her and Desmond would have to talk about that kiss. She did not have the time right now to ponder on how that conversation would go. The number one priority was figuring out what to do about Garry. The conversation with Desmond would happen on its own when the time was right. When she got home last night after leaving Desmond's, Garry had been waiting for her. But from what Macy could deliberate he suspected nothing of her real agenda

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or that he was aware of what she was doing. Garry maintained his belief that Macy was indeed working late. Macy got up from her bed and made her way to the bathroom. She closed the door behind her.

With her back leaning on the wall she sat down on the bathroom floor beside the marble top sink. She started crying. It wasn't because she had no idea what was happening to her, but it was because she had been unaware of it for too long. She had been living in ignorance. She was spending her nights with a person who was slowly robbing the company. A leech whom her father had tried to get rid of, but could not. And being her father's daughter, she was supposed to do what her dad couldn't do. But instead, she made her bed with that wretched man. She hated herself for being like that. She was supposed to know right from wrong. Yet she had made one bad judgment after the other. This was not how her father would have run the company. He didn't love it exceptionally, but he still took care of A'lainn and her. He had considered Macy worthy to inherit the company, but she wasn't at all ready for it. This made Macy cry even more. She wanted to be alone. She wanted to shout. She wanted to scream her lungs out to apologise to her father, but all she could do was repeat, "I am sorry dad, I let you down," over and over again in a whisper.

When she had cried out to her heart's content, she got up and washed her face. When she got out of the bathroom, she saw Garry smiling at her. He was still lying where she had left him. He was looking at Macy's with kind eyes and welcomed her to his bedside by tapping the mattress on his side. Macy smiled back and laid down beside Garry on his outstretched arm. She was going to play along with Garry as long as it took to remove him from her life and A'lainn. Unlike her father who had gone to confront Garry before he fired him, Macy intended to surprise him by firing him without any discussion. She had decided that now. Garry would pay for his deceit against her father and his abuse of her feelings. She would plan something which would

humiliate him in front of the entire board. It must be an event that would also be carried with the permission of the entire board of the company. She had no intention of keeping any secret from the board.

Across town, Desmond was still lying in his bed. He had been awake for quite a while but had slept soundly throughout the night. He was going through the conversation that had happened the night before with Macy. How she had shown up at his door and revealing that her perception about Garry had changed. Now she knew, that things were not the way that she was seeing them. There were many ways that they could take away Garry's power. Macy could talk directly to the board, and then they could look at how Garry had been secretly changing their products' ingredients. This alone was enough to throw Garry off his game. But if that wasn't the solution then with Macy's support they could look at the finances and discover other ways in which he was looting the company finances and fire him on their own. He wanted Garry out as soon as possible. He had no intention of working with Garry for even one more day. But he also knew that the decision of firing him was with Macy, and Garry would only be shown the door only when Macy saw fit. Rolling over to the other side of the bed, he tried to shift his thoughts to something else.

He remembered kissing Macy and how it had reignited his passion for her. He knew that Macy was a smart girl, he had hoped that she would see Garry's reality one day soon, before it was too late. And now Macy knew. But he never thought that she would kiss him, that was not what he expected. Maybe the kiss was in the heat of the moment and only because Macy needed someone to support her in that instant. She could also have done it because she realized that he was the right man for her. He had to talk to her about it. Since she was the one who had started kissing him, she needed to explain things. One thing, however, Desmond knew was that he was now in love with Macy more than ever. The feelings he thought he had hidden

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away from his heart and his mind, were now back even more aggressively than before. He wanted to do something about Macy as soon as possible. Yet Desmond wasn't going to let his feelings for Macy get the best of his judgment. He needed to be very cautious with her around Garry. One wrong move and Garry would know that they are somehow involved with each other. With these thoughts, Desmond got up from his bed and started getting dressed for work.

When Desmond reached the office, he went to greet Macy at her office as he usually did. Desmond was determined not to bring that kiss up to Macy when he walked into her office. Macy was just starting her work day when Desmond entered her office. "Hey you." She greeted Desmond with a stunning smile as she looked up from her computer. Desmond smiled just as widely, "Hey. I am sure glad the cold bug running around these offices hasn't reached here yet. Ardan from my department has such a runny nose that I swear he empties an entire tissue box every hour." Macy laughed. In her mind, she was glad that they weren't talking about anything that had happened yesterday. On the contrary, deep down, in her heart, she just didn't want to talk about the kiss, but wanted to talk about Garry. She wanted to tell Desmond how badly she doesn't want to be with Garry anymore and that she wants to kick him out of her company and her personal life as soon as possible. Instead, she said to Desmond, "Well I hope that you don't stand too close to Ardan. I fear that you may catch a cold as well and we won't be able to get any work done." Desmond knew that she wasn't just talking about the organization work. He responded, "You can count on me to be at your side." With this, he turned to head back to his office waving while saying "See you around." "You too" Macy shouted back.

The day went on as routinely as it could have and nothing eventful happened. Despite Macy's growing hatred for Garry, which increased by the hour, she still had lunch in his office. They were laughing while enjoying their lunch and nothing was

said or done that was even slightly different than normal. Macy was happy with the way things were going. She liked the fact that this time it was Garry who was being kept in the dark. Now it was time to strategize against him, just as he had been planning against Macy and A'lainn. She was eagerly waiting for the time when she could talk to Desmond after office hours. Being careful in her talk and facial expressions Macy wanted to avoid any possibility that Garry would find out that she and Desmond were communicating with each other outside of the office. To her earlier delight, while she visited the mid-morning lab Desmond was the one who saw the opportunity to tell her that he'd be working late. It happened when Macy visited Ardan to inquire about his health an hour before lunch. Ardan was a good colleague, and Macy did not want to overwork her employees if they were sick. Ardan clearly looked haggard. His nose was red with constant sniffing and cleaning with tissues. "Don't worry Ardan, I can cover the remaining hours for you today. If you need to leave early, you can do so." Ardan looked incredibly pleased with this offer and smiled, "Thank you, Mrs Murphy. I guess I will leave within half an hour." Macy nodded, "Get well soon." Macy smiled at Ardan. Thanking both Macy and Desmond, he got back to finishing his work.

Macy and Desmond exchanged glances, and by looking at Desmond, Macy knew that he meant for her to stay back late in the office with him as well. By the end of the day, when everyone was about to leave, Garry came to Macy's office. He looked excited. Since it was the weekend, there was always something that he would plan for himself and Macy to do as soon as they got home. He came to Macy's office smiling like a child with a secret, Macy looked at him with a confused expression while politely smiling. Approaching her desk, he set the ring of keys that he was holding in his hands on her desk. Still smiling and with a wink he said, "Come home early tonight Macy, you are invited to a world full of love and wonder tonight. We shall watch 'Gone With the Wind'. It's a classic. While we watch it, we can treat ourselves to a bottle of wine and a box of chocolates

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that I specially had imported from Switzerland for you just a day ago.” Walking around the desk, he turned Macy’s chair to face him and bending down he gently kissed her on her forehead. Taking her hands in his, he then added, “I am so thankful to you for trusting me with everything. I know I have made terrible mistakes in this business, but you can be assured that nothing of that sort would happen again. You forgave me and still continue to give me your love, I want you to know I will love you as long as I live.” Macy waited for him to finish his speech. How empty the words sounded, words which had once made her fall in love with him. She knew it was all a lie now and nothing Garry said now would convince Macy otherwise.

Macy then proceeded to say to him, “I am really sorry Garry, but I really need to finish up these production reports today. I don’t want to go home before I do that. I will catch up with you around 8:30.” Garry who was until now bent to be face to face with Macy now straightened up. He looked irritated, “Macy, you have been working way too much. You know you don’t have to do everything on your own. And putting it off until Monday won’t make a difference. Come on home.” Garry insisted. Macy seeing the irritation in his face responded, “Garry, you know I would love to be with you. But I really do have to finish these reports. I am only asking for 90 more minutes and then there will be nothing standing in our way in having a wonderful evening. Go home, take a shower, have some dinner and I will join you for the movie.” Garry didn’t seem convinced. “Well then let me help you here and then we can go home together.”

Macy was now more determined than ever, “No Garry. Please just let me do my own work this time. I don’t want anyone else telling me what to do.” She knew that she had just hit the bulls-eye with this statement. Garry considered that for a moment. And then said, “Fair enough. I am sorry for trespassing in your territory. I shall wait for you at home.” He smiled at her lovingly. “Thank you, Garry I promise I won’t be long.” Macy looked pleased, and Garry took it as a positive sign. Garry

turned and left her office. Macy breathed a sigh of relief. She really didn't have much work to do so she decided to let Desmond know that she was available to talk whenever he saw fit. She texted him and got a response telling her he would be at her office but needed a few minutes to finish up his work. She moved from her desk to sit down on the small black couch that Macy had for guests in her office and where she would usually have lunch with Garry and Desmond as well. It was a lot more comfortable than her office desk chair. To pass the time she started browsing through her phone to look at pictures of herself and Desmond. Although the pictures weren't old, so much had happened within few months, they all seemed like a lifetime ago.

Sure enough 10 minutes later Desmond walked into the room looking very sombre. She knew that Desmond was feeling the tension between them after the kiss, which is probably why he looked so serious. Desmond proceeded to sit next to Macy so they could talk face to face without having to be loud, not that anyone would hear them anyway. With a certain rising tension in between them, Desmond started speaking first, "Macy, first we must get one thing out of the way, the kiss. I have had feelings for you for a long time. But I have had to put those feelings away since you started getting serious with Garry. I am sorry that I kissed you back last night, but I just couldn't stop myself from doing so." Macy put her hand on his thigh, "I understand that Desmond. I am sorry that I never responded to you, I kissed you. I know you really like me and I know that you wouldn't do anything to hurt me. I trust you. I think you're more than just a friend to me. I kissed you, and I want you to know that it meant something to me. It wasn't just the heat of the moment. I won't call it a mistake. There is no need for you to apologize. In fact, I should be the one who should be apologizing to you. I put you in an awkward position, but I also don't regret it."

Desmond was speechless. He stared blankly at Macy. He didn't expect her to say anything like that. He was anticipating her to



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say that it was a mistake that she kissed him. He was imagining her saying that it happened because she was lonely, or hurt, or that all she required was Desmond's help to remove Garry from the company. But this was totally the opposite of his expectations which had made him speechless. Then he found his voice and said, "It's all right Macy. Actually, I don't blame you for anything. You were manipulated by Garry in everything. I tried to warn you. But to my dismay, he had already made a place in your heart by then. But I am really glad that you have realized what kind of man Garry Murphy is. Maybe when all this is over, we can take a closer look at our relationship with each other." Macy caressed Desmond's thigh with her hand lovingly, "I hope so too." She then proceeded to say, "But first we must talk about the elephant in the room, which is Garry." Desmond was also hoping that they would get to business. "Yes of course. This requires our attention more than anything. What do you plan to do?"

Macy leaned back into the couch and then said, "I don't know what I am supposed to do here. Should I confront him and tell him that I know how evil and corrupt he is? Am I too naïve to think that he would just give away everything that easily? He will fight me for it and who knows what he will do then. We need to have a plan without him knowing anything. He must not be able to find out that we know his true colors and that we are ready to fire him. The best idea is to go to the board with all the evidence of his wrongdoings and then call a meeting to formally fire him. This way his termination would be a public affair and not just a private one. He may have fooled my father, but he wants me, and the world must know."

Desmond shook his head in agreement, "I agree. He has lost his own business and is now eating off A'lainn. We should protect other people from trusting him and reveal him for the culprit that he is. All we need is a bit more evidence against him. Changing the ingredients was not have been the only thing that he has done since he started working for this company. He has been

misappropriating funds from this company since he was able to. I have had his office computer hacked twice, but there were no traces of any wrongdoing. He probably has all the records like those on his personal computer. If you can, you need to find those. He is very clever so you would need to be very careful.” Macy nodded her head, “I will do everything in my power to see that we expose the worst of him. You can count on me for that.” Macy seemed incredibly determined, and she clearly was very angry with Garry for betraying her trust. Desmond hugged her. “Don’t worry we won’t let A’lainn go into the wrong hands and be used like that.” Macy hugged him back. “I know. Thank you for being with me.” She said as they both ended the hug and Macy set her back against the couch.

They changed the topic to how Macy was dreading having to stay with Garry till their plan was accomplished. While Desmond was consoling her, Macy’s cell phone rang. She picked it up from the table and saw that it was Garry who was calling her. She answered saying, “Hey Garry, I am just finishing up here in the office, and am about to leave.” Garry said from the other side, “Macy I forgot the house keys at your office. They must be still on your desk. I am waiting for our cook to arrive to let me in, he has another spare key. Remember to bring the keys when you leave. I have my safe keys on it as well.” Macy looked over to her work desk and found the small bundle of keys still sitting there. She told Garry, “Oh yes, I see them. Don’t worry I will bring them back to you safe and sound.” Garry replied from the other side, “Thanks, darling. I shall see you at home. Bye.” “Bye” Macy replied and disconnected the call. She then rolled her eyes at the call. She didn’t want to spend the night with Garry cuddled up with him. But staying with him was now the only way that assured her that she would get to the truth.

When Macy arrived home, Garry was waiting for her in the living room with a box of chocolates at his side. Macy returned his keys to him and asked for a little time to freshen up. Upon

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returning, she found Garry still sitting there in the same position. The only thing different was now *Gone With The Wind* was playing on their DVD player. She sat beside Garry and thought of ways to avoid being too close to him. She picked up the chocolate box and placed it between herself and Garry. Garry didn't find it odd and only smiled at her. He then picked up a chocolate piece and ate it. They both started concentrating on the movie. Suddenly Garry picked up a chocolate piece and offered one to Macy. Macy taking it directly in her mouth from his hand started chewing slowly. Macy watched the movie for a few minutes, but now her mind was starting to feel numb. She was getting sleepy. It wasn't very late, so she didn't know what was happening. Her head felt light and started spinning. She could barely keep her voice from shaking when she said, "Garry I don't know what is going on. I am feeling weird." Garry looked at her and laughed. Her head was spinning, and she fell into Garry's lap. Her eyes slowly closed and everything went black.

When she woke up, she was on a hard surface. It felt like a concrete floor. She tried to stand up and realized that her foot had something attached to it. She looked down to see what it was and saw a chain was attached to it. There was barely any light from the bulb ahead. But from what she could see, she was in a large room. Her eyes got used to the darkness around her, and she saw the silhouette of a man appear. The man then came into the light and Macy could now see properly. It was Garry. Standing in front of her, smiling. She looked at him in horror. She was being held captive by Garry. Garry sat down far enough for her to not be able to reach him with that chain attached to her foot. He looked at her in a manner that made him look even more sinister. Macy continued to stare at Garry until he spoke, "It was only by chance that I left those keys on your desk. But I see fate is on my side now. Because when I came back to retrieve those keys, I overheard you talking about me to Desmond. That was not nice Macy. Unlike you, I don't share my plans with just anyone. I am careful of not just the people, but also the location when having confidential discussions." Macy was staring at

Garry angrily. With every sentence that was coming out of his mouth, Macy hated Garry more and more.

Shaking with anger rather than fear, she said, “I don’t think you realize that in addition to me knowing everything, Desmond knows everything as well.” Garry laughed, “That poor chap. I shall deal with him later. He doesn’t have an ounce of cunningness in him. He is an easy target just like your father was. Your father had the stupidity to confront me with what I was doing and plainly threaten me, so I took care of him. He never made it out of Chicago alive.” “I am sure that Desmond would be just as easy as your father to get rid of. But you Macy, you exceeded my expectations. I expected you to mind your own side of the company and not delve into any of the finances or even look at the previous products. After our conversation, I thought I had convinced you to trust me, but you saw right through me. Smart girl.” At this point, Macy’s mouth was wide open. She was speechless. Garry had indeed killed Frank. Desmond was right in assuming that. She had dismissed Desmond’s theory with such resolution that even he had stopped thinking about it. But now, here Desmond was literally confessing to his crimes.

Looking at Macy, Garry went on to speak disdainfully, “You thought that you would have me by the balls, didn’t you? That is not how this works Macy. You don’t get to be the villain of my story. I will get what I want whether you like it or not. I will take over A’lainn, and you will hand it over to me on a silver platter.” Macy was now completely disgusted with him, “You will never get A’lainn. I will make sure of that.” Macy screamed. Garry merely stared at Macy, then said, “You do realize I won’t let you go until you sign the company over to me?” With this, he went in the back of the room and brought a file with him. He took out a pen from his pocket and threw the file at her along with the pen. “Sign these papers and I will let you live.” Macy looked at the papers. The documents stated that Macy was handing over the ownership of the company to Garry. She took

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one look at them and threw them back at Garry and said to him, “You know my answer.” Garry looked furious.

Garry went to the other side of the room and turned more lights on. It was a large room with multiple paintings. “I will give you time to think about it. Maybe a couple of days will do the trick for you. Until then you can have these. He brought a packet of crackers and a water bottle from the other side of the room and put it right beside Macy. “This will be your food for the coming two days. Maybe being hungry and thirsty will let you get your mind in the right direction. Until then you can entertain yourself by looking at the paintings your father has made throughout his lifetime. He brought me here when he had only newly appointed me as the Vice Chairman of the company. Of course, it was a secret trip that I made on Frank’s request, and no one from the company knew about it. He thought I loved art just as much as he did. That old fool. Showed me his work. Well, enjoy your father’s paintings while you think about my offer. Goodbye.” With this Garry walked out of the room, shutting and locking the door behind him.

Macy was now all alone in the room. She was confused and flabbergasted at what had just gone on. She never expected Garry to find out anything about their plan and now not only hers, but Desmond’s life was in danger too. She didn’t know what to do. She slowly got up from her position and scuffled towards a painting that her father had painted. It was a painting of a face that was half painted in blue and half in yellow. The yellow side of the face was smiling, and the eyes looked bright while the blue side looked lonely and depressed. It had a sad expression on its face. The eyes shined brightly with a teardrop forming in them. Macy moved on to the next painting. It was a beautiful pond, with a lotus blooming in its midst. The grass on the land surrounding it was green and was being blown by the wind. Yet there was a dark cloud forming in the distance. It looked like a storm was fast approaching that peaceful and serene place which would disrupt the balance of everything.

Macy looked at the next painting and saw a man sitting in front a beach with his head bent down during sunset. She continued to look around at all the paintings around her. Although there were paintings that depicted a truly happy and positive feeling, there were a lot more paintings that had a hint of suffering and negativity in them. She never knew that her father was so intuitive and more importantly, she didn't realize her father was such a skilled painter. She only had the chance to see only 2 of her father's artworks that she found in his cupboard. One was a little girl holding her father's hand, both happily looking at each other. And the other was of her mother sitting on a wooden chair. Until now Macy had believed that these two were the only paintings that had existed.

Now after her father has passed away she finds that her father was indeed a great artist. Macy could not bear to think that she barely knew her father. She broke down crying then and there. She cried because she could not bring her father the life that he had wanted. No one listened to him, and no one cared about what he really wanted. Even Macy, in whom he had confided his dream didn't really realize how much her father was capable of achieving. And now her father was dead. There was nothing that she could do for him. Her father would never fulfil the one dream that he had. He hid it from the world because he was afraid that even his own family wouldn't be accepting of his talent. He had hidden everything away. He must have thought that his artwork wasn't worth showing to the people. Only, if only he had shown it to her, she would have been more encouraging towards her father. She would have told him to let the world see his wonderful talent. The talent she knew would even surpass many of today's great artists. She cried for what seemed to her like a long time.

She finally calmed down and got out from under her guilt. After all there was nothing she could do to support her father now. She then sifted her attention to trying to get free. She didn't know what place this was or if it was even Doolin or not. There was

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no way of telling that. She thought of breaking the chain that was connected to a wall. Yet she was aware that there was no way that the chain would break from her own hands. Her chain was too short for her to reach the door and to try and break free. There were no other outlets that would let her escape from the room either. Macy didn't know how long she had been unconscious so there was no way of telling whether it was still night time or if it was daytime now.

With a surge of renewed energy, Macy started shouting "HELP!" "HELP!" at the top of her lungs. After each of her yells, there was nothing but deafening silence. Yet she didn't know what else to do other than that. After multiple attempts of crying for help, she then changed her wording and started shouting, "Is anybody there?" She knew in her heart that no one was there. She was just shouting in a closed room where no one could hear her, and she also knew that even if her voice were travelling outside, nobody would be there to hear her. Garry wasn't stupid enough to put her in a room which was near to other people. He was too clever. Macy figured it must be a remote location where she was locked in. She decided it was time to sit down and think about what to do next.

## YOU ARE MINE

**D**esmond was worried about Macy. Her phone was going straight to voicemail, and she was not responding to his texts. He had been trying to reach her to check on how she was coming along. He was worried because Macy had told him that she was going to try and get any information out of Garry's personal computer that alluded to his criminal dealings. She said she would update him on her progress before Garry woke up whichever way the plan went. Yet it was 9:30 in the morning and he was now sure that Garry would have been awake by now, but Macy had yet to text or call him to update him. Desmond only wanted to know if she was safe or not after yesterday. He feared that she may have been caught by Garry red-handed. "Macy is a strong and smart girl. She wouldn't have let herself get caught so easily." He assured himself. Yet even these assurances didn't seem to do him any good. Every few minutes he would check his phone for a message or a missed call and kept thinking, "She was supposed to call or text me no matter what happens. This is what we had agreed upon before she left to go home."

Since there was no reply from her Desmond worried that maybe what he had suspected about Garry was true all along and he indeed was the person who caused Frank O'Brien's death. He didn't know what to believe and what to dismiss at this point, but one thing he did know was that this entire scenario did not bode well for their plan. He wanted to go to Macy at Garry's house to check on her, Desmond thought that this way he would either know that she was all right or if he should be worried about her. He also thought that if everything was indeed all right, and nothing had happened to Macy, Garry would then suspect something was going on between Macy and Desmond. It could be that Macy simply hadn't gotten the chance to look through Garry's computer at all or she merely slept in late. It could also be that her phone had died and was supposed to be recharged.



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There were many other harmless possibilities that were going through Desmond's mind.

He thought to himself on how much longer he should wait for her to call him before he gives up. He gave himself until noon to see whether Macy would call him. If Macy didn't answer his calls or texts by then, he would try to think of a reason to visit Garry's house and check on Macy. If he couldn't find Macy there, then he would then need to come up with a different idea to discover what was going on. He considered going to the police to let them get the truth out of Garry. But then removed the thought from his head. If Garry might really be hurting Macy, then something might have happened by the time the police conducts their investigation or agrees to arrest Garry based on Desmond's suspicion. Macy would have become the victim of a heinous crime by Garry possibly, and the police could have been too late.

Desmond wanted to know for sure that Macy wasn't hurt. At noon, not hearing from Macy, he was getting ready to leave to leave when he received a text on his mobile. It was from Macy! He opened the text, and it read, "Hey, my mobile's battery died. Just charged it. I shall see you Monday at the office, and we will talk then. Until then don't call or message me." This assured Desmond to some extent. He took a sigh of relief and sat on his chair by the fire finally letting go of the horrid things that he had been thinking. "Macy was safe. She wasn't hurt," he thought to himself. "She probably didn't want me texting her or to call her because Garry would probably be close by. Judging by her text, she didn't seem to have found any information on Garry. Damn it! I will talk to her in the office and see what our next plan of action is going to be." Thinking this he finally calmed himself by pouring a glass of scotch and then drank it as he sat by the fire.

Garry sitting in the cottage Frank and his wife purchased years ago, Garry was thinking how perfect it was that Frank had never

gone back to the cottage after his wife died. It was only by chance he had told Garry about the location in confidence. Garry began laughing, thinking about the stupidity of Desmond and how easy it was he was deceived by a simple text from Macy's phone. It was him who had sent that text to Desmond and made it look like that Macy was the one who had sent it. He knew that Desmond was foolish enough to be satisfied over a text from the only girl who could possibly care about Desmond. Garry was already planning how to get rid of Desmond, but he did not have the resources like the ones he had in Chicago. He could not just make one call to the man who had carried out Frank's assassination and have him flown in over here. It would take a lot of time and might even draw a lot of attention. Doolin was not a very populated village and the arrival of foreigners in the territory although routine got the attention of the locals. And if the assassin were seen talking to or in any way communicating with Garry, both the assassin and Garry himself would be potential suspects in a murder conspiracy. The possibility may be far-fetched, but it was a possibility nonetheless.

Garry was not a man who left anything at the chance, so he had decided to do things his own way. He was not letting anyone else be in control of how things would get done. Even if it meant killing Desmond and torturing Macy to make her sign the company over to him, all on his own, he would willingly do it. Getting his hands dirty on the road to success wasn't something Garry was afraid to do. If it led to getting a vast amount of wealth and acquiring the company, Garry was fine with anything that had to be done. But the problem was he had to still plot on how to kill Desmond. "Maybe an accident with poisonous ingredients with which Desmond was researching? No. that would be too wild," Garry thought to himself. "Murdering him in his house as a result of a failed burglary? There is a possibility for that, but what if someone sees Garry going or coming from that way." Garry dismissed all the ideas that came to him. He then figured that he had time on his hands to figure out what to do with Desmond. He had just bought himself some extra time by texting

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from Macy's phone to not butt in her affairs until she says so. His main priority for the day would be Macy.

He needed her to sign the documents without a fuss. If that didn't happen, it would become too complicated for him to acquire her company. The process would be long and legal matters will also need a lot of consideration. He may have been close to Macy, but they were not husband and wife yet. The only other option remaining was having her sign off her entire wealth and company to Garry. It had to be done because if he killed Macy without signing off the property to him, there would be no legal right for Garry to claim A'lainn as his. Once Macy does that, Garry would simply kill her on the spot. He would let the world know that she went mad after Garry showed her father's paintings and committed suicide because she could not handle the truth. She was traumatised by the fact that she did not know her father very well and did not recognize his true passion. She then used her father's rifle and put it in her mouth and killed herself in her father's small cottage. The cottage which Frank had kept secret from Macy, which stood in a secluded area near the village to paint and keep all his artwork after Macy was born.

This was indeed a perfect plan. No one would bat an eye. They knew how much Macy loved her father. They had all seen her as a traumatized woman during her father's funeral and how she had told everyone about his hidden passion for painting. The people in the village were closely knitted, but that didn't mean that they were the brightest. They would believe Garry when he told them this story. Nobody questioned Garry's loyalty towards Macy, and everyone knew that Garry only had eyes for her. No matter what the time of the day, or what kind of work they were doing together, Garry was always helping Macy with every irritating little thing she wanted. No one would suspect that if Macy died it was Garry's fault or that he was the one who killed her. Garry also knew that he would have to finish off Desmond soon enough so that he dies with Garry's secret. There had to be some way that he would be killed off, the question was how.

Despite Macy being locked in the room for hours, she still drank barely any water and only ate one cracker. She didn't know how long she would be there, so she had to use minimum resources. Macy gave up shouting for help after realizing the truth that there was no one there. She had been shouting for hours, and if in that interval no one could hear her, then she knew that humans didn't frequent by this path. It was then when Macy had taken her only sip of water. An hour or so into it, she then ate another to calm her rumbling stomach. But it was a bad idea. Now she felt even hungrier than before. She knew she had to get through this ordeal with a strong will and determination. She also knew that if this weren't the case, then it would be easy for Garry to break her spirit and have her sign everything over to them. She thought about her father, Frank O'Brien, and then her grandmother, Dora O'Brien. These two people were the strongest and most determined people she knew. Even though they may not have faced a similar situation, like the one that she was facing now, she realized they each had their own set of problems and hardships to go through.

According to what her grandmother had told her throughout her life, her grandmother had to sacrifice a lot in her life to start A'lainn Cosmetics. She didn't know how to do anything in the beginning, but she was determined to do everything in her power to make her own cosmetics. This had led her to make A'lainn Cosmetics a success. She hoped that one day it would become a brand that people all over the world would recognize. Then Macy's father took over, and when Macy's mother stepped in, the brand continued to grow bigger and better. Macy then remembered her father's struggles, who had also suffered great sacrifices to build on the success of A'lainn. Apart from Macy herself, there was no one for Frank to trust. He had no one to look forward to in sharing his problems with. Macy thought to herself that she was blessed to have such a strong father who despite his passion for painting supported her throughout her life. She had previous relationships with men, but none of them had worked out. But none of those previous relationships was

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this horrible either. But here she was being betrayed by the one person she loved and trusted the most. The worst form of betrayal.

She heard the door lock turning to the room she was being kept in. She got a small flame of hope in her heart that she was about to be saved and someone realized that she was missing being kept in this room. Yet all hope that she had gathered within those two seconds, vanished into thin air when the door opened, and she saw Garry walk in. Garry looked calm but serious. He did not have any weapon with him Macy noticed. So this must mean that he wasn't there to kill her. He was merely there to make her sign the papers that he had left with her. Macy never opened the documents that Garry had left with her. She already knew what those papers contained. There was no need to look through them again. She was never going to sign them. She may get killed refusing to do so, but that meant that Garry wouldn't get the company either. It would simply pass on to the board, and to be owned by the multiple shareholders. The Board would be then in charge of the company and Garry would still be an employee. Picking up the documents from the floor, Garry saw that Macy still hadn't signed the papers. He threw the documents back at her and Macy protected herself by raising her arm. When the papers landed in a pile near her, she pushed them away with the documents landing near one of Macy's father's paintings.

Garry came close to Macy, sitting opposite to her on the floor and took hold of the back of her head harshly. She resisted, but Garry's grip was strong. She tried to pull Garry's hand away from her head but couldn't do so, as he was stronger than her. He held her head and then leaned in to kiss her cheek. Macy slapped him hard, "Get away from me you creep." She saw that Garry's face had gone red at the place where she had slapped him. Yet he simply smiled at her. A smile that used to look so sweet to Macy at one time, now merely looked vicious and sinister. She wanted to punch Garry and break all his teeth. Emotions got the best of her, and before she knew it, she had

punched Garry hard right in the mouth. His face flew back away from her with the force of the punch. This made him loosen the grip on Macy's head, and instead, he put his hand over his mouth to stop the bleeding from his lips. He looked at Macy in surprise. He didn't know she had such ferocity and strength in her, but it didn't matter to him. He got up and stood up in front of Macy. Macy looked up to him and knew that he was going to hit her. Garry hit her hard in the face, but then Macy had also delivered a punch to Garry right in the crotch. Macy didn't utter a single scream, but Garry screamed loud. He backed away from her holding his crotch area.

Garry was now angrier than ever. Macy had never seen him like this but was expecting this. That calm demeanour that he had, when he entered the room was now all but gone. She smiled at the fact that Garry was in so much pain. Macy may be quick to show emotions when letting down, but she was also quick to get up and change matters to suit her. She had never backed away from a fight and her last days of life weren't going to be like that either. She knew this would spark a more severe, negative reaction from Garry, but now Macy was the one with power. She was determined not to sign the documents and determined that she was going to be the one in power. There was no way that she was going to give Garry what he wanted without creating serious trouble for Garry. It was then when Garry started cursing her, still holding his crotch, "You whore. Fuck you bitch." With this, he came close to her and kicked her right in the thigh. Macy screamed a loud scream and started massaging her thigh. It was Garry's turn to be happy, he kicked her again in the stomach. "You bitch. Sign those fucking documents."

Gary sat down next to Macy, his face now red with anger. He looked like a vicious animal rather than a human. He grabbed a hand full of her hair again this time with more strength than before. Pulling her close to his face, "Just sign those God damn papers and get it over with. You should be thankful that I am promising to spare your life even after that. Had it been someone

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else other than me, they would have cut you into pieces and buried you here, and no one would ever know.” Macy smiled, “You know you can’t do shit to me unless I sign those papers. You asshole. You are the one who doesn’t deserve to live. And no matter whether I live or die, I will never let you win. Kill me if you have to, but I will never sign those papers.” Garry looked at her for a second, and then he shook her head vigorously. “We shall see about that.” With that, Garry let go of Macy’s head and got up angrily. He picked up the documents, put them in front of her, and said, “They better be signed when I get back here, or else you are dead.” Macy laughed. “We shall see who wins you asshole.” Garry’s face got even redder hearing this coming from Macy. He stormed out of the room and locked the door behind him. Macy smiled to herself, she knew that she was going to meet her fate in the next few hours.

Getting the office early Monday morning, Desmond was going through the history of his work in A’lainn on his laptop. He was proud of all that he had achieved. Everything that he had gone through in A’lainn was worth it due to his many achievements. He was reliving his days because he wanted to commemorate everything that he had done with Macy. When he and Macy finally came together, he wanted to be able to recount everything that had taken place and recall those happy times to make their relationship stronger and more understanding of each other. He looked at the clock on his wall and realized it was already nine o’clock. Wondering why Macy hadn’t stopped in his office, Desmond decided to go to Macy’s office and check-in.

Reaching Macy's office, Desmond found she wasn't there. He asked her assistant if she was in a meeting. He replied that Macy had texted him a few hours ago and that she was feeling ill and taking the day off. Desmond's heart filling with fear decided he needed a small walk outside to clear his head and contemplate what the next move should be. Walking back through the front doors of the office building he saw Garry heading up the stairs. At this sight, Desmond decided to hide behind a pillar before the

stairs while he watched Garry. Desmond knew that Garry was up to no good. He let the thought of going back to Macy's office vanish and instead track Garry's movements. He followed Garry up the stairs. Upon reaching the next floor, he saw that Garry was going to Macy's office. He did not want to confront Garry, he wanted to find out what he was doing, so he hid in the janitor's closet.

After ten minutes had passed Desmond left the janitors closet wondering what Garry could possibly be doing in Macy's office. He saw Garry removing the rifle that hung behind Macy's desk. Desmond knew that it was her father's gun and she cherished that. She used to tell him stories about how her father used it for hunting and often took her along with him. He then saw Garry loading the rifle gun with black powder and ammunition. As soon as he saw this, Desmond knew that Garry was up to no good. While loading the gun, Desmond heard Garry say to himself, "Kidnapping her was not enough for her. Now that bitch will definitely have to sign the company over to me. If not, then she is dead meat." His voice was full of anger. Desmond knew that Garry meant every word of what he was saying. He was terrified for Macy. He decided to follow Garry to wherever he was taking the gun. As Garry said, he was holding Macy captive, so that meant that she wasn't at home feeling ill. He quickly realized he couldn't call the police without knowing where the location was that Garry was holding her. He followed behind Garry just enough to not be noticed. Garry then went to his car in the underground parking ramp and started the car. Seeing this Desmond ran to his car prepared to follow Garry at any cost

Desmond got to his car and started the engine. As he did so, he saw Garry's car leaving the facility. Garry was too focused on his plan to even notice that someone was following him. His only motivation was the intense anger that he was feeling towards Macy at that moment. He wanted to go there and just splash her brains across her father's worthless paintings. If Macy couldn't give him what he wanted, then he would take it



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forcefully. A new idea came to his mind, he would have a fake marriage license made up and would tell everyone they eloped over the weekend. With the suicide story he concocted there should not be any question of him taking over everything related to A'lainn, He would never give up the company and the tremendous amount of wealth that Macy had. Macy didn't deserve this amount of wealth. She had no use for it anyway. She barely spent any of it on herself and instead would waste so much of it giving to charity and other causes. Garry wouldn't be like that. He would never spend his money so foolishly. All these thoughts that were racing through Garry's mind were clouding his other senses, and despite the fact Desmond's car was just a small distance behind him, he did not notice it.

From the car, Desmond called the police and told them that he had seen Garry with the gun and that he thought Garry had kidnapped Macy. Desmond shared where Garry was heading as the route he had taken only headed to a remote area just outside the village. The road ended just over a few miles with a small, abandoned cottage at the end. Yet, for good measure, Garry told the police the car license plate number and informed them that he was following him. The police assured him that they were sending their cars out but warned him to stay in the car when they reach their destination. Desmond was not all sure how long it would take the police to arrive, and from the looks of it, Garry was just plainly trying to kill Macy, and if the police didn't arrive in time, he would have to intervene.

Desmond knew that he was supposed to do something on his own. He would attack Garry as soon as he found out where Macy was. There was a chance that Macy was not in the cottage at all but instead was somewhere in the dense woods beyond the cottage. If that were the case, it would take a lot longer for the police to find Macy. If he attacked Garry right now, or he bumped his car against Garry, making him a victim of a car crash, then he would die and find Macy alive would be very hard. He followed Garry. It was nearly night time, and the

denseness of the trees had already shielded the road of what little light that was left in the sky. Desmond did not turn his headlights on either and was merely driving behind Garry blindly. He did not want him to know that he was there, following his every move until the right time came to corner Garry. Desmond now wished that he had a weapon with him, but unfortunately, he didn't even have a bat or a small knife with him to attack Garry and render him useless. But he did have his car, and he would use it to ram it into Garry through the walls of that cottage if that is what it took to save Macy.

He didn't have to think too long about it though, Garry's car stopped in front of the cottage at the end of the road. Desmond knew about this cottage but had never found out to whom it belonged to. But that didn't matter right now. Whoever was an accomplice to Garry, was an enemy of Desmond and Macy. He watched Garry go in the cottage with the rifle. He had never seen Garry so angry and filled with rage. There was no one around the house, so Desmond decided to creep through the door from which Garry had just entered. The cottage wasn't furnished with much except for a couch, a stool and a fireplace. Garry had already entered the only other door beside the entrance that Desmond had come through. The door looked heavy and had a huge pad lock was hanging on it. Desmond knew that this was where he was keeping Macy. Beyond the door, he could hear Garry's muffled voice saying something which sounded like "Sign those papers or you are dead". He then heard Macy's voice, "Fuck off you bastard." There suddenly was a loud thud, and he heard Macy's scream. Garry shouted again, "This time it was the gun's butt, but next time it will be a bullet."

Desmond quickly wanted to react and save Macy. He quietly looked around the room for something to use as a weapon. He found a fireplace poker resting on the side of the fireplace. Despite it being rusty it could still be used as a weapon against Garry and could definitely hurt him. Desmond immediately went to pick it up and approached the door. He then tried to open

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the door as quietly as possible. He planned to surprise Garry not giving him the chance to shoot Macy. The door creaked, and he saw Garry's back. He was holding the rifle, pointing it towards Macy's head. He then saw Macy. Macy's head was bent down to the floor. She was crying. In front of her were some papers and a pen. Desmond knew at once what they were. They were the documents Garry wanted her to sign, turning the company over to him.

Neither of them had seen Desmond or heard the door creak. Desmond knew it was now or never. He quietly slid through the door and stabbed Garry's arm within a split second. Garry screamed the rifle dropping from his hand. Desmond took this chance to stab Garry's right leg. He pierced his leg on the thigh and Garry fell letting out a blood-curdling scream. Blood was rolling down from Garry's arm and leg, and he was now rolling across the floor.

Macy was looking at this whole spectacle with a very surprised expression on her face. She couldn't believe her eyes she was finally being saved! And by Desmond. Her fate had decided to give her the gift of life instead of death. She now knew that she would make it out of this place alive. She quickly grabbed the rifle which had fallen just beside her and stood up from her place. She was now pointing the rifle at Garry. Garry pleaded, "No, please no. I am sorry. Macy, please don't kill me. I will let you and Desmond go. I won't hurt either of you. Look." He then reached into his own pocket and took out a key. "This is the key that opens the lock on your chain. Use it to open it and go. Just don't hurt me. I don't want the company either. You can keep it." With this, he started crying like a baby. Macy was just as disgusted by him crying as she was with his smiling ever since he kidnapped her. She wanted to shoot Garry badly, but also didn't want his blood on her hands.

When Desmond saw what Macy was doing, he gave her a few seconds to think before speaking up. "Macy, you don't have to

do this. This pathetic human does really deserve it, but I had called the police before I got here. They said they are on their way here. This guy is not getting out of here anyway.” Macy lowered the weapon saying “You are right.” She walked away from Garry, snatching the key from him, and threw the rifle to the other corner of the room. She then walked towards Desmond and held up the key, “Please release me, my hero.” She said this as she smiled at him. Desmond smiled and took the key from her and bent down to open the lock on the chain attached to her feet. Desmond smiled as he undid the lock and released her leg from the shackles. He then stood up again, face to face with Macy. Behind them, they heard police sirens echoing through the place. They were saved, and they both knew it. They kissed each other. Now they knew that there was no one that was stopping them. Garry was still whimpering in the background. They paid no attention to him. He would be taken care of as soon as the cops entered through the door. The rifle was way too far away from him to be any use to Garry.

Just as the two stopped kissing, five police officers entered through the door. They all looked at the two and then at Garry. Macy then told the cops, “He is the man who killed my father and kidnapped me. Please arrest him, officer.” The officer nodded to her and then moved to handcuff Gary who had started saying, “No, no, she is lying.” The officers didn’t listen to him and made him stand while they handcuff him. Desmond was looking at Macy with surprise. Macy looked at Desmond and said, “Yes Desmond, you were right indeed. He really did kill my father.” Desmond kissed her on her forehead and hugged her tight from the side as they both watched Garry repeating “No, please let me go. She is lying.” The police officers dragged him outside and put him in their car. Macy and Desmond looked at each other, and they both knew that their troubles were over.

They were finally going to be together forever now. This was an ordeal that they both knew that neither one was going to forget.

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They both had their statements taken by the officer on duty. Garry was taken to the local jail, and a case was opened against him for fraud, corruption, kidnapping and an accomplice to murder. With some investigation, the police were also able to find out who had manipulated the brakes of the car. The assassin was later caught and sent to prison as well. Macy was glad that everything had worked out the way it did. There were no more troubles for herself and for Desmond.

Desmond and Macy started dating right after he rescued her and by the end of their six- month long relationship, Desmond proposed to Macy. Of course, Macy accepted his proposal, and they were married by the end of the year. Macy and Desmond decided to move to Chicago where she had grown up for the most part of her childhood. She and Desmond operated the company from there, and just when everything was getting settled, Macy found out she was expecting her first child. After an intense nine-month pregnancy, she finally gave birth to her first child with Desmond on her side. She named her daughter after her grandmother Dora, from whom her inspiration for life had come from. Now she had another motivation in life in the form of a small girl; Dora O'Brien Fitzgerald. Macy knew that she had to give her daughter as much love as she had gotten love from her grandmother and her father. And with Desmond on her side, she knew that she could accomplish that easily. With Desmond and Dora, her world was now complete.

## **GLOSSARY**

1. **Animosity:** Strong hostility.
2. **Antics:** foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior.
3. **Bait:** Food used to entice fish or other animals as prey.
4. **Bode:** Be an omen of a particular outcome.
5. **Composure:** the state or feeling of being calm and in control of oneself.
6. **Comprehend:** Grasp mentally; understand.
7. **Cowl:** A large loose hood, especially one forming part of a monk's habit.
8. **Culprit:** A person who is responsible for a crime or other misdeed.
9. **Curdling:** Separate or cause to separate into curds or lumps.
10. **Debacle:** A sudden and ignominious failure; a fiasco.
11. **Deceit:** The action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth.
12. **Despised:** Feel contempt or a deep repugnance for.
13. **Disrupt:** Interrupt (an event, activity, or process) by causing a disturbance or problem.
14. **Dreading:** Anticipate with great apprehension or fear.
15. **Ecstatic:** Feeling or expressing overwhelming happiness or joyful excitement.
16. **Embalm:** Preserve (a corpse) from decay, originally with spices and now usually by arterial injection of a preservative.
17. **Erroneous:** Wrong; incorrect
18. **Façade:** An outward appearance that is maintained to conceal a less pleasant or creditable reality.
19. **Fathom:** A number of people or vehicles moving forward in an orderly fashion, especially as part of a ceremony or festival.
20. **Flabbergasted:** Surprise (someone) greatly; astonish.
21. **Haggard:** Looking exhausted and unwell, especially from fatigue, worry, or suffering.
22. **Heinous:** Utterly odious or wicked.

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23. Hoarse: Sounding rough and harsh, typically as the result of a sore throat or of shouting.
24. Ignited: catch fire or cause to catch fire.
25. Imposition: The action or process of imposing something or of being imposed.
26. Infatuated: Be inspired with an intense but short-lived passion or admiration for.
27. Keen: Sharp or penetrating, in particular.
28. Leech: A person who extorts profit from or sponges on others.
29. Midst: In the middle of.
30. Muffled: Not loud because of being obstructed in some way; muted.
31. Ordeal: A painful or horrific experience, especially a protracted one.
32. Pathology: The science of the causes and effects of diseases, especially the branch of medicine that deals with the laboratory examination of samples of body tissue for diagnostic or forensic purposes.
33. Procession: A number of people or vehicles moving forward in an orderly fashion, especially as part of a ceremony or festival.
34. Reminiscent: Tending to remind one of something.
35. Repulsed: Cause (someone) to feel intense distaste and aversion.
36. Scarce: Insufficient for the demand.
37. Scowled: Frown in an angry or bad-tempered way.
38. Serene: Calm, peaceful, and untroubled; tranquil.
39. Somber: Dark or dull in color or tone; gloomy.
40. Stealthier: Behaving, done, or made in a cautious and surreptitious manner, so as not to be seen or heard.
41. Transpired: Occur; happen.
42. Transpired: Occur; happen.
43. Trifling: Unimportant or trivial.
44. Undermined: Damage or weaken (someone or something), especially gradually or insidiously.

45. Vigorously: In a way that involves physical strength, effort, or energy; strenuously.



# *Unleashed Betrayal*

BY KACIE CLEMENT

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kacie Clement is a freelance writer and Business Consultant. After three decades of writing Grants for local, State and National Non-Profit Organizations, Kacie decided to become a Novelist with her book “Unleashed Betrayal”. A writer by day and a reader by night, Kacie is often seen writing, painting or quilting.

When she is not creating things, she is spending time with her family and two dogs, Peek and Boo in her rural Minnesota home.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

The mind does not choose whom it loves and whom it ignores. It is the matter of the heart, it makes decisions, and rationale is usually not the utmost priority. Frank O'Brien tries to pursue his passion for art and hands the running of A'lainn Cosmetics to a man named Garry. Frank soon realizes that he has made a horrendous mistake. But before he can take action to rectify the mistake he is killed in a car accident. Now it's up to Macy to hold the reins of the company that her father Frank, left for her.

But what she doesn't know is that the man she is falling for is not who he seems to be. Perhaps her friend Desmond can help Macy in her path to survival. But will his help be enough?

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