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Title: Obsession

Exhausted, Scott slowly climbed the steps up to his front door. Soon he would have the sanctuary from the world he craved. He opened the door and rushed inside. Not even stopping to take off his shoes, Scott collapsed into his favorite beat-up armchair and closed his eyes, shutting out the world.

“Hello, Scott.”

His eyes shot open and for a moment time was frozen. They just stared at each other. Then a million thoughts came flooding in, clogging his mind. *How did she get here? How is this possible?* He’d thought he’d never see her again... But here she was. Sophie, *his* Sophie, was now standing right in front of him. More beautiful than ever, with vivid green eyes, her long black tresses curled ever so slightly. She was wearing the yellow sundress she’d worn for so many summers that they’d spent together. But that was gone now. The chord that had once tied their lives had been ripped. She leaned in until their faces were almost touching and gave him the most painful slap his face had ever felt.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” she shouted as Scott jumped up from his seat and started to back away. “How could you have given up on me like this? Forget all your promises? Forget...me,” The last word came out as a broken whisper, tears swimming in her eyes.

“I...uh...but...how are you...how’d you get here?” he spluttered.

“I have my ways. One of the perks of my situation,” Sophie replied calmly, taking his chair and sitting cross legged like she always used to. “But none of that’s important. I’m only here so you can tell me, tell *yourself*, why you gave up.”

Scott thought back to another day when he had been in this room talking to an unexpected visitor. Three years, a lifetime ago, but he could still remember that night as clear as a movie in his mind. He had come home, just like any normal day, showered, made dinner. Sophie had told him her meeting would run late so he ate alone, watching sports on the couch.

The doorbell rang. He opened it to find two cops standing on his doorstep, their faces grave. What came next was all a confused and angry blur. They sat him down in the living room, asked him question after question about Sophie. Where she liked to shop, who she talked to, is there anyone he was aware of who would want to do her harm...

Sophie didn't come home that night, or the next. Her body was found washed up on the beach just four miles from the home she and Scott had shared. For the past three years Scott's life had been completely on pause. No time for friends, family, or even a goodnight's sleep. His days consisted of finding justice for Sophie. It consumed him. He would get up before daylight had fully set in so he could go over Sophie's diaries they'd found. The police, of course, kept the originals. But Scott had learned the hard way that once potential evidence was taken in, he'd never see it again. So he made copies and spent his mornings pouring over them, highlighting anything potentially important.

His office at work was soon filled with the notes and charts he'd made about Sophie's case, places she'd gone, websites she'd visited. He'd spent his lunch breaks meeting with her old friends or anyone who'd ever even met her really, stalking them all on Facebook, desperately searching for any information. He'd stop by the police station each night after work, only to return home to continue working on his charts.

"I spent every second of my life for three years not giving up on you," his voice broke on the last word, tears trying to break through. "Giving the monsters who did this to you what they

deserve was my only goal in life; it still is. But after the accident... they... everything changed. They stopped listening to me, don't even take my calls anymore. *They've* given up, not me!"

Sophie's expression changed from anger to something Scott couldn't quite place. Sadness? Not quite. Somewhere between pity and... pleased? "Tell me about the accident," she said, calm as ever.

It was like he had no control, his words erupting out of him so fast as if he were on autopilot. No thought. Just words spilling out. Scott told her everything. How he'd lost his mind after the funeral. Spent years fruitlessly attempting to find her killer. Then three months ago, he'd run into Sophie's estranged sister, Amy, who'd run away at sixteen with her much older rocker wannabe boyfriend. Since that day, the family had scarcely heard from her. After Sophie's death she'd come back to pay her respects. She'd seemed so shaken by her little sister's murder and had a rock solid alibi for the night Sophie was murdered; Amy had been giving birth several states away. But when Scott ran into her, he finally pieced it all together.

They'd run into each other at the realty office in town. Scott was selling their house he could no longer afford since being fired. Amy was selling her parents' very expensive estate she'd inherited about two years after Sophie's death. She was acting friendly, telling him how her new husband had finally convinced her it didn't make sense to keep such a lavish vacation home. When Amy's husband had walked over and introduced himself, Scott had recognized him as the same man who'd been in the background of several photos Sophie and her friends had taken a month before her death during her friend's bachelorette party. Though the police had dismissed it, Scott just couldn't shake the feeling this man had been watching them... Now it all made sense. Knowing that she had been written out of her rich parents will, Amy had devised a plan with this lowlife to get back into their good graces and become their sole heir by getting rid

of her sister. As she predicted they would, Sophie's parents had welcomed Amy back with open arms during the vulnerable time after her murder. All was forgiven.

Shocked, Scott had lunged at Amy and her husband, half screaming, half crying. They'd gotten away and run to their car. All those years of anger and depression had finally gotten the best of him. Any clear thinking in him had died long ago. He'd jumped into his car and raced after them. The chase went on for miles until Scott lost control, rounded a bend, and flipped off the road. Since that day, no one took him seriously anymore. He was just Sophie's crazy fiancé who'd lost his mind. The police no longer took his calls and blatantly ignored him at the station. Amy and her husband had obviously gotten away.

When he finally finished his tale, Sophie stood up and walked toward him. "Scott..." she said in that calm all-knowing tone. "What happened immediately after the accident?"

Scott shook his head, "I don't know. It was all a blur. I blacked out and... I assume the usual happened. Brought me to a hospital, sewed me up. And I became the crazy man no one gives the time of day to."

"Where are your stitches?"

Scott paused for a second, confused. He'd never thought about his scars. "Well they're..." he trailed off, searching. He ran to his bathroom mirror to examine himself. There was nothing there. Not on his arms, stomach, back, face, nothing. He frantically looked again; surely he'd missed something. Sophie appeared at the door, a look of knowing sadness on her face.

He looked at her, realization setting in, "I didn't make it, did I?"

Sophie shook her head, "That's why I'm here. So you can move on from this. Amy and her husband were caught eventually. But you let them take you too."

“So... What now?” He asked, numbly.

“It’s up to you. It’s *always* been up to you.”