



Anonymous Vengeance Book Series

Book 1: Anonymous Vengeance

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CHAPTER 8

Sharon is awoken in the middle of the night by banging on the door downstairs. At first she ignores it not knowing what the banging is. Then she hears the door bell. Her eyes are fuzzy but she opens them and tries to correct the blurriness. She makes out the clock which says Wednesday 2:34AM.

Who could that be at this hour, she began thinking to herself.

Cal jumps up out of bed, "Did you hear that?"

Then they hear Emily yelling from down the hall, "Mom there is a police car out front and someone is at the door." You could tell she was annoyed.

Cal struggles to get his sweats on and falls over, head first in to the bed. Sharon stands up and puts on a robe hanging off the bed. She hears the door bell again and works even faster to get it on. Brandon comes running down the hall. Sharon stops him yelling, "Don't answer it! We are coming."

Cal, Sharon and the kids come barreling down the stairs; Cal leads the way and opens the door. There are two police officers standing there with flashlights. Cal turns on the porch light and they turn off their flashlights.

The taller of the officers speaks up. "Morning, looks like you have had someone try to break in to your cars and they did some pretty extensive damage if you'd like to take a look."

Cal walks out with the two officers. The first thing he notices is the officer pointing to a broken Slim Jim in the passenger window of his car. "What is that?" He asks the officers curiously.

The sergeant points his flashlights at the Slim Jim in the window, "Well, that was someone's failed attempts to get into your cars. It must have been a kid or someone who didn't know what they were doing."

Cal smiles a little, "So they didn't get in and didn't do too much?" He asked.

The officer looks at Cal, "Well you need to come and look over here on the other side."

Both the officers and Cal walk over to the other side of his car which is actually in between both his car and Sharon's SUV. As the officers shine their flashlights down the side of the car Cal sees that the driver's side window is broken out. As the officer shines the flashlight further down the car he can see that someone took a knife and put a 1 inch scrape along the outside of both his car and Sharon's from the front to the back. He can also see that the tires on his cars driver's side and on the passenger side of Sharon's SUV are flat.

Cal just puts his hand over his mouth. By this time Sharon and the kids are outside and see the cars as well, "Oh my" Sharon says with a stunned look on her face.

The officer looks at Sharon and then at Cal, "This looks like someone had a lot of anger directed at this house. Any idea of who it might be? Know anyone in a white or silver sedan by chance?"

Cal yells, "I knew it was Robert! He has a silver car. He was just here in one yesterday!"

Sharon asks the officers, "How do you know it was a white or silver car?"

The officer takes out a notebook, "Well, your neighbor across the street was walking his dog and called us at 1:57AM this morning and said there was a suspicious person with long hair trying to enter your vehicles. He described the car as a white or silver sedan. In the dark he couldn't tell if it was a two door or four door."

Sharon confused, "Robert doesn't have long hair."

Cal screams back at her, "So he was wearing a wig or something. He did this and you know it!"

Emily speaks up, "But my dad is out of town."

Cal screams at Emily, "Yeah, just what you want me to think, huh. You're all probably in cahoots with that loser. Get back in the house, now!"

Sharon yells at Cal, "Don't ever yell at my children again!" The sergeant interrupts, "Excuse me. No sense arguing about it now, who is this Robert fellow?"

Sharon responds, "He is my ex and his name is Robert Ralston. But I doubt he did this because I know he is out of town."

Cal speaks up, "Are you still gonna stick up for him? I mean what the..."

The officer interrupts again, "Well if he did do this we need to find out. We will have to assign a detective to this. Where can we find Robert?"

Sharon speaks up, "I am not sure where he is living I only have his cell number. "

The sergeant writes some more in his notebook, "What is his cell phone number?"

Sharon takes her cell phone out of her robe pocket, she finds Roberts phone number and shows the display to the sergeant who writes the number down.

Cal asks to borrow the other officer's flashlight. With the flashlight in hand he walks around the cars and notices that someone has walked completely around both cars and scraped them with the sharp end of a knife removing the paint in almost a solid inch scrape all the way around.

The officer leans down with a much smaller flashlight and points as Cal is looking, "These tires will have to be replaced. Whoever it was stabbed the walls of the tires and you can't patch that."

Cal just shakes his head. "I cannot believe this!"

The officer looks at the hood where the word "Jerkoff" has been etched into the car hood. "Between the paint, windows, and the tires it's going to cost you a pretty penny to fix all this."

The sergeant walks up to Cal, "Here is my card and the report number. A detective will follow up with you in a few days after I submit my report. Make sure you take pictures and keep that Slim Jim as evidence when you get it out of there."

Cal shakes the officer's hands, "Thanks, I appreciate this." and goes back up to the house after noticing Sharon and the kids were already in there.

When Cal walks back in to the house he notices the kids are back upstairs and Sharon is in the kitchen crying. "You upset that your ex finally got caught screwing with us?"

Sharon fires back, "No I am not Cal, what I am upset about is that we have absolutely no money, your yelling at my kids, we are now all stressed out all the time, we fight constantly, and the house is in shambles. "

Sharon looks down, "What is that? Is that a cockroach?"

Cal looks down, "It looks like it might be." As he steps on it, "It's just one. Don't get your panties all in a bun. You'll feel better after our week long cruise the weekend after next. The house will hopefully be fixed by the time we get back."

Sharon continues, "Cal we are living in two rooms of the house and all of our furniture is in the garage! I cannot live like this."

Cal sits on the counter, "Well as soon as the insurance pays us some money we can start fixing everything again, better than new."

Sharon looks at Cal with a very disturbing look, "Cal, you are not understanding me! I cannot live like this." She says slowly and loudly.

Cal gets up, "Sorry babe, you're not going to back me in a corner, if you don't like it here then leave." He says, knowing full well she has no place to go and thanks to him taking her savings little by little she doesn't have much money left either. "I am going to bed. I have to work in the morning." He said. Sharon perks up, "What are you going to do about the windows in our cars Cal?"

Cal turns around, "What about them? When your two little white slaves get up in the morning have them go clean up the glass. Their freak father broke them out. Good night." He says as he walks out of the kitchen.

Sharon just turns around toward the counter, takes her cup of hot chocolate out of the microwave, then quickly takes a sip and then puts the cup down. She places both hands on the counter, bows her head, and starts to cry again. She picks up the cup of hot chocolate and throws it as hard as she can in to the sink trying to relieve the stress and anxiety. It makes a huge crashing sound and the handle from the cup breaks off and fly's up onto the end of the counter.

Brandon peaks his head around the corner of the cabinets crying. "Mommy, I don't like it here. When can we go home?"

Sharon picks Brandon up and squeezes him. He puts his arms around his mom's neck and lays his head on her right shoulder. "I don't know Brandon. Hopefully soon. Hopefully soon. Boy, I have really messed things up haven't I?"

Emily comes around the corner crying and hugs her mom, "I hate Cal. I want to move back home too."

Sharon puts Brandon down on the ground, wipes the tears from her face with the sleeve of her nightgown. Then she leans down and hugs Emily putting her head on Emily's' shoulder crying. "I know. I will fix everything don't worry. I am so sorry." She then puts her arm around Brandon and hugs them both at the same time not saying anything as each lays their heads on a different shoulder.

Brandon stops crying and lifts his head up, "We can go home to dad tonight. He wants us. Cal doesn't. Can't we just go now?"

Sharon tears up again, "Man, I wish it were that simple. I really do."

She lets the kids go. "You guys run off to bed. I will fix things I promise. Just run off to bed now."

The kids run up the stairs. Sharon takes out the cell phone in her pocket and sees Roberts name and number already on the display. She hits send, but then quickly presses the cancel button. She looks once more at the display on the microwave. The clock says 3:47AM. Way too early to call she thinks to herself and goes up the stairs. Although she wants to talk to Robert badly and just tell him she loves him and wants to just come home to him wherever he is.

Sharon goes in to what used to be Emily's room but because of the flood, she and Cal are have been using it while the kids both slept in Brandon's room. . She stops in front of the bed where Cal is sleeping and grabs a pillow and the spare blanket off the end of the bed. She then quietly goes in to the room where the kids are sleeping in, lays on the bed in between them, and goes to sleep. When she wakes up, she realizes that she is awakened by the sound of the door bell. Both kids are sleeping next to her and she realizes that it is after nine o'clock. She had no alarm to wake her up at seven to get the kids to school and they have all overslept. The door bell rings again.

Sharon puts on her robe, walks down the stairs and opens the door. She looks out but there is no one there. She looks down on the ground and sees a clear vase with three yellow roses, a big red bow and a tiny little card. She thinks to herself, "If Cal is trying to kiss up it's a little too late."

As she leans down to pick up the vase she see's Mark out front pushing a tire from his truck towards the driveway. He looks at her and then waves. Seeing Sharon at the door he lets the tire fall on its side and runs up to the door. As he approaches he takes out several receipts from his pocket and hands them to Sharon.

As Sharon looks at the receipts, Mark picks up the vase and holds it. Sharon gets a disturbed look on her face, "This is almost a thousand dollars!"

Mark quickly speaks, "Well seven tires had to be replaced, you can't fix tires when the hole is in the side."

Sharon closes her eyes and regains her composure, "You need a check now?"

Mark looks at her as if saying sorry, "Yeah. I used money out of my account which is already spent on other things. Robert said you would give me a check when you woke up."

Sharon takes a deep breath, "Fine." as she turns around and goes in to the kitchen and writes a check.

When she returns she hands Mark the check, "I put a little something extra for you, for doing all this."

Mark smiles, "Thanks Ms. Sharon" as he hands her the vase he was holding.

Sharon takes the vase, closes the door, and then looks at the card and is surprised that the card is addressed to Cal. This peaks her curiosity. Why would Cal get three roses and a card? And from whom did it come from? She takes the card out of the envelope and reads it.

"Congratulations, we are pregnant. I know this is not the best time or way to tell you this but we can talk and clear things up during our cruise. I will see you then. I miss you. Wendy."

This was such a stunning statement that Sharon forgot she was holding the vase and it fell to the floor and shattered, leaving water and glass all over the entry way. The kids over hearing this ran down the stairs. Brandon yells, "What happened, are you alright mom?"

Sharon yells, "Stop right there! There is glass everywhere. I am alright! Run and get your shoes on before you come down here!"

The kids turn around quickly and run back up the stairs to get their shoes. Sharon just sits on the last stair as there is no furniture and reads the card over and over again. Soon her anger level starts rising and she begins to cry all over again. At the same time she starts to feel sick because of the stress, her pregnancy and she hasn't eaten anything all day. She runs to the bathroom and closes the door.

The kids are sitting outside the bathroom door for quite some time before Sharon comes out. "What are we going to do for breakfast?" She asks the kids.

Emily looks up at her mom, "Waffles!" she says with a smile.

Brandon speaks up, "I don't want waffles. I want one of daddy's omelets. Daddy makes the best omelets."

Sharon runs her fingers through Brandon's hair, "Well a waffle will just have to suffice. I am sure you will get some of daddy's omelets soon."

Sharon walks in to the kitchen and opens the freezer. She grabs four frozen waffles and puts them in the toaster, then she gets the butter from the refrigerator and syrup from the cabinet up above.

Sharon looks at Emily, "Go ahead and finish them Em. I really need to make a phone call."

Emily gets a knife and fork and stares at the toaster, "Yum I love waffles."

Sharon walks out to the garage with her cell phone and dials the number to Cal's cell phone but pauses for a minute to gain her composure before hitting the send button. She takes a deep breath, and then pushes on the button.

Cal answers the call, "Honey I cannot talk right now."

Sharon stops him. "You better or you're going to find an empty house when you get home mister!"

Cal seems concerned, "Hurry, what is it now?"

Sharon thinks for a moment how to word it and says in an angry voice. "Your girlfriend sent you flowers. Or should I call her your mistress?"

Cal acting innocent, "What are you talkin..."

Sharon stops him again, "You know...Wendy."

Cal is silent for a minute. "This has got to be another prank from Robert."

Sharon gets agitated, "Oh really! And just how does she know about the cruise?"

Cal gets defensive, "I don't know maybe the kids told him."

Sharon yells back, "I haven't told the kids yet! I haven't told anyone yet! By the way, your little girly friend, she's pregnant!"

Cal continues to deny the accusation and answers firmly, "I have no idea what you are talking about. There is no girlfriend, and I am having a major issue here at work, I have to go."

Cal hangs up the phone as Sharon walks back in to the kitchen. She takes the envelope with the cruise ship tickets in them labeled, "Replacement Documents" off the refrigerator and places them on the counter. She starts looking through the dinner seating charts, the boarding passes, the boarding instructions, and stops when she comes to the last page labeled "Invoice". As she looks over the invoice she notices a box on the bottom where it says, "Purchaser: Marcum, Wendy".

She takes a step back, and then picks up her phone again to call Cal back. Then she stops, puts the phone back in her pocket. She sees the kids at the table, "Kids, go play upstairs. You don't have to go to school today."

The kids both look at her, then they look at each other, smile simultaneously, and then they yell "Yay" as they run up the stairs.

Sharon looks down at the mess in the entry way and walks out to the garage to get the broom and dust pan. As she is about to grab the broom she notices a box in the garage labeled "Cal's Personal Stuff". She turns to the box and opens the top. As she goes through the box she finds little scraps of papers with girls' names and phone numbers on them. She finds about twenty

of them before she comes across one that says, "Wendy Marcum" at the top and a phone number on the bottom.

Sharon takes the paper and sits in one of the chairs from the living room and takes her cell phone back out of her pocket. She dials the number from the piece of paper, takes a deep breath, and hits the send button. Immediately the phone starts ringing.

Wendy answers the phone, "Hello?"

Sharon pauses for a minute, "Hi, is this Wendy?"

Wendy gets a suspicious tone in her voice, "Ah, maybe, who is this?"

Sharon lets loose a little, "Well you don't know me. My name is Sharon Ralston. Do you know a Calvin Stevens?"

Wendy pauses and has to take a second to regain her composure and think of what to say, "Yes, he is my fiancé."

Sharon is stunned by the revelation, "Your fiancé?"

Wendy, who was sitting at her desk at work when she took the call, stands up and walks outside, "Well we have been dating for about a year. He proposed to me about two months ago. How do you know him?"

Sharon starts to get upset, "I have been dating Cal for about a year now myself. I left my husband for him after I found out I was pregnant."

Wendy pretends to be upset about the news, "I can't believe this. I am pregnant too."

Sharon believing her and trying to imagine her pain, "How far along are you?"

Wendy perks up, "It looks like I am only 7 or 8 weeks along."

Sharon getting mad, "You were with him 7 weeks ago? I am now almost three months along."

Wendy wanting to drive the wedge in a little more, "I was with him almost every night for the past year, where were you?"

Sharon pauses, "I was his day job I guess. I was with my husband during the evenings. So what happened to your relationship?" she asked.

Wendy starts to cry for real this time, "Cal sent me roses about 6 weeks ago. I got excited that he sent them until I read the card. The card just said he didn't think we were going to work out." Wendy starts to cry and gets louder and more upset, "We were engaged, we were going

to get married, I paid for a hotel ballroom, a DJ, a caterer, we had sent out invitations to two hundred people, and I even paid for a cruise for our honeymoon.”

Wendy starts crying really loud on the phone and Sharon speaks up, “I think we need to talk face to face. Are you available for lunch this afternoon?”

Wendy pauses for a second, “Ok. I take lunch around 12:30, where do you want to meet?”

Sharon thinks for a moment for a quiet place, “How about Carters Steak House in Placerville.”

Wendy thinks for a minute, “That’s kind of expensive, Cal took almost all my savings and I have been living on credit cards.”

Sharon smiles, “That doesn’t surprise me.” she says, “Lunch is on me.”

Wendy replies quickly, “Ok. I will see you there. I have a meeting to get back to.”

Sharon hangs up and runs to the bathroom upstairs to get ready. No longer is she upset about what Cal has done to her. It weighs in the back of her mind but getting a complete picture of the situation and making things right is now her highest priority. She now knows that Cal is a cheater, a liar, and has sweet talked or forced out of her just about all the money that she brought in to this relationship as a security blanket.

She starts to come back to reality as she is taking a shower and thinking why she did the things she has done and got so off track from where she was. Why she thought, would I leave an almost perfect man that managed money well, was giving, funny, did well at work, smart, took care of the family both emotionally and financially, had a small house halfway paid for, savings in the bank, played with the kids, went to church every Sunday, and spent almost all of his evening time and weekends devoted to the family he loved. Why? She thought.

Then she contemplated what she thought was important at the time she left, lots of money. And Cal seemed to have a lot of it. A bigger house, a better job, nice clothes, a sports car, he was younger, liked to travel more, he wined and dined her, he told her she was beautiful more often than her husband, and didn’t seem as boring to her as Robert was at the time.

As she turned off the shower, she thought about how much had changed in a month. Cal was no longer the knight in shining armor. No longer did he have all the money she longed for. He no longer seemed to care about how beautiful she was. No longer did Cal seem to be the caring and concerned suitor he had so often promised to be.

Oh, how she longed to go back a month, and then a year to make everything different. Even though Robert no longer had the home they spent years making, the job he had for his stability, the nice car they were making payments on, or the money they in their savings account, all she

wanted was him. Just to hold him in her arms and feel the warmth and security he once brought to her life. Not just at the beginning of their relationship but all twelve years of it.

As Sharon was blow drying her hair she stopped, put the hair dryer down and started to cry again. Not because of Cal but because of all the things she had done to destroy everything that was really precious to her, didn't even realize how lucky she was, and how naïve she could be at not looking at the big picture. She is now carrying a man's baby she wants nothing to do with, and the man she nurtured for 12 years, where was he? How can I win him back? These are all questions she was determined to answer. It no longer mattered that Robert didn't have a house. It no longer mattered that he didn't have money. It no longer mattered that he didn't have a job. It no longer mattered that they may have to live in an apartment and start over. She realized for the first time in her life that money was not everything. She realized that love is everything. And she had that once but because of her greed and selfishness it was now gone. In her heart she knew that her only goal now was to try and make everything right and hope that luck and love would prevail, make everything right in the end.

As Sharon put on a dress, she asked herself if seeing Wendy was just wasting time on the path of setting things on the right path. Then she thought, well this is the first part of setting things right. She put on her shoes and yelled to the kids. "Emily I have to go out for a little while. You are in charge of Brandon." Emily opens the door and runs out of the room with Brandon right behind her. Emily looks at her mom, "Wow, you look nice. "

Sharon starts to put earrings in her ears, "Thanks, I know you have never babysat before but I need to have you babysit for just a little while. Do you have your cell phone?"

Brandon runs back to the room while Emily talks to her mom, "Yeah. I can't wait to babysit. We are going to play Lego's, watch Nickelodeon, We will have fun!"

Sharon leans down and looks at Emily, "Ok. Just don't get in to things. I am in a hurry but if you need me just call and don't answer the door for anyone." she says as Brandon runs down the hall with Emily's cell phone and places it in her hand.

Sharon comes down the stairs and opens the door and is suddenly startled by a man in a suit standing right in the doorway. She screams, "Oh, you startled me."

The man speaks up, "Hi, I am Detective Farrell and I am here inquiring on a vandalism and theft from last night."

Sharon regains her composure, "No theft that I know of, someone vandalized our cars and did a lot of damage."

The officer looks down in a manila folder, "It says here that you had a suspect in mind. A Robert Ralston, how do you know this person?"

Sharon helping the officer but not really wanting to, "He is my husband."

The detective somewhat surprised, "Your husband? And why would your husband want to vandalize your cars?"

Sharon puts her head down, "Probably because I left him and am pregnant with someone else's child."

The detective looks down at his notes, "You're talking about Calvin Stevens, right?" speaking in a tone that indicates he knows Cal.

Sharon looks up at the detective, "You know Cal?"

The detective looks right in her eyes, "I had the unfortunate chance to meet him a week or so ago when he was arrested."

Sharon shakes her head in disgust, "Ok. Well we don't need to reopen that wound."

The detective starts to write some notes, "Ok. Well I will take it from here; I will get this Robert guy in for questioning and find out where he was when this happened. You guys want to press charges against him right?"

Sharon gets a little hesitant to answer questions, "I don't, but I am sure Cal does."

The detective looks a little perplexed looking at his notes, "I don't understand, if this Robert fellow did this, wouldn't he be the one that vandalized your car as well?"

Sharon shakes her head yes, "Yeah, but I deserve it. And if he did do it, Oh never mind."

The detective smiles, "Ok. Well I will investigate this, and I will call Cal on his cell phone and find out what he wants to do then."

He then closes his file folder, and walks down the stairs stopping to take pictures of Sharon's car and to survey the damage. Sharon just watches and waits for him to finish so she can go.

When the detective is done he waves goodbye to Sharon. Sharon waves back and goes to her passenger side window which is in small pieces, which are mainly half inch shapes of glass all over the seat and on the ground. She walks back in the house and gets a small dish towel and comes back out to the car and begins to brush the remaining glass from the window. After she brushes as much glass away as she can, she opens the passenger side door and starts hitting all the glass from the seat on to the driveway. She then closes the door and goes over to the

driver's side and opens the door. On the seat, she finds more glass. She realizes that the door is unlocked and cannot figure out why as she knows she had locked it the night before.

Through deduction she realizes that someone had opened the driver's side door. She looked through the center console, and then glove box but nothing seemed to be missing. She looked up at the visor and made sure the garage controller was there. It was.

Knowing that someone had put sugar in her and Cal's gas tanks just a week before, she began to wonder what surprises were coming next and if anyone had tampered with her engine compartment or the trunk. She pressed the trunk button to open the trunk and got out and looked in the trunk just to make sure. Nothing seemed to be amiss. She even checked the spare tire to see if it was flattened.

Sharon began wondering again why the person broke out the windows on her and Cal's car and why they had gotten in the driver's seat and then taken nothing. It was a question she couldn't answer and the only thing she could conclude was that this was an act of anger and retaliation, not a theft, or kids vandalizing a couple of cars in the neighborhood. The thought was only a moment before she sat down and started the car and turned her thoughts to her pending meeting with Wendy.

As she pulled in to Carters Steak House, she began to think to herself, "How am I going to figure out who Wendy is?"

It was something that she had forgotten to ask. She was hoping that Wendy would be the only single woman not sitting with anyone in the restaurant. As she walked in to the front door and in to the lobby a man in an overcoat came up carrying menus, "How many today?" he asked.

Sharon speaks up quickly, "I am actually meeting someone who I don't know what she looks like?"

The door greeter walks over to a small dark wood podium in the middle of the lobby, scrolls down a small seating chart and looks up at Sharon, "You wouldn't happen to be with Ms. Marcum's party would you?"

Sharon gets a smile on her face, "Yes, I am."

The man puts down the few menus he was holding and looks up at Sharon again, "Please follow me. Ms Marcum is in the back of the restaurant."

As they approach the table, Wendy stands up and extends her hand. "I assume you are Sharon?"

Sharon extends her hands and they shake hands briefly, "Indeed I am. Glad to finally meet you Wendy."

They both sit down across from each other at the table and both start looking at their menus. Both can feel the tension and are not really sure who should talk first and about what. Sharon finally puts her menu down and looks at Wendy who in turn does the same.

Sharon speaks up, "So where should we start?"

Wendy stares at her for a moment, "Well, I guess we have already established we both started seeing Cal around the same time, give or take a month. You were his daytime girlfriend and I was his night time fling. I lost and you won."

Sharon pauses not knowing right away how to respond, "Well, I don't want to put it that way. Tell me how you feel right now." she asks.

Wendy starts to talk but there is a crackle in her voice. It is evident to Sharon that she is very close to crying. "Well I said some of this before." she says, "Pretty much Cal proposed to me about two months ago. I said yes thinking that it was the best thing that ever happened in my life. I dreamed of starting a family with him, having kids, being the house wife, and I was devoted to him. He said he was going through some financial restructuring and I thought we had combined bank accounts. I was putting my paychecks in an account we opened. I closed my savings account and added that to our checking account so we could pay for our wedding which coincidentally was supposed to be next Saturday."

Sharon stops her, "Next Saturday?"

Wendy starts to cry, "Yes, next Saturday. I had paid for everything, all the vendors, the ballroom, invitations, dresses, tuxes, rings, and even a weeklong cruise for our honeymoon. About fifteen thousand dollars I spent on this wedding and I still owe another seven thousand even though it is cancelled."

Sharon stops her again, "Tell me about the day he broke up with you."

Wendy starts to cry even more only this time she can barely get words out. She pauses to take a drink of water as the waiter walks up. "Hi there ladies, should I come back?" he asks.

Sharon turns to the waiter, "Maybe that would be best. Just give us five minutes or so."

As the waiter walks away Wendy starts to speak, "Cal sent roses like I said and just crushed me. I left work early because I was crying too hard. When I stopped to get something to eat, my ATM card wouldn't work. I called the bank and they said the account had been closed by Cal. He took all the money. My savings and even the money that needed to be there to cover

checks I had written for my groceries and the wedding. I tried calling him, coming by, and he had an attorney write a letter saying that if I came to the house again he would get a restraining order. I was crushed! I didn't know what to do. There was nothing I could do."

Sharon asks, "So how have you been getting by?"

Wendy stops to think and take another drink of water, "I have been living on credit cards mainly. He took all my money and savings. I have gotten a few paychecks since then but those have been going to repay the people who got bounced checks so they don't prosecute me for writing bad checks."

Sharon shakes her head in disgust, "I am so sorry, how much was the cruise?"

Wendy thinks for a minute, "I think I spent like eighteen hundred dollars on it."

Sharon takes out her check book and starts to write a check for eighteen hundred dollars. As she does this Wendy notices the check and being nice, "You don't have to do that."

Sharon rips the check out of her register, "I don't have much money left myself because of what Cal has done to me, but I do owe you for the cruise because Cal changed the names on the cruise documents and we are scheduled to take the cruise. Although I am not sure I will go now."

Wendy starts to cry again, "Thank you so much, when I found out I was pregnant I thought that Cal and I would use the cruise to catch up and maybe patch things up. I really wanted to. That was until I learned about you from the phone call this morning."

Sharon who has remained strong the whole time, "Well I think I am going back to my husband. I have learned that Cal is very dishonest and self centered person who cares nothing of the disasters he creates in other people lives. "

Wendy perks up a little, "So you are leaving him?"

Sharon now thinking she can confide in Wendy, "Don't tell him this but as soon as I can get on my feet and get another place to live I will leave. I may take the cruise only because I have never been on one and I need to get away and think. Not only that, I really have no place to go right now. Unfortunately I am forced to rely on him until I can get out of there."

Wendy pretends she doesn't know anything, "So I take it you are living with Cal then?"

Sharon looks at Wendy, "I am sorry, but from my calculations I moved in either a few days after he broke it off with you or just shortly thereafter."

Wendy looks down at the table, "I cannot believe how he deceived me, what am I going to do now?"

Sharon pauses not knowing what to do, "Well we are in the same boat now. I wish there was more I could do to help you. I hope just knowing how deceitful Cal was to you will help you in your decision making process and you stay as far away from him as possible and take him for as much as you can get!"

The waiter walks up again and Wendy looks at him, "You know what? I don't have time to eat. I have to get back to work and to tell you the truth I really don't feel like eating. I am sorry."

Sharon opens her wallet, takes out a ten dollar bill and hands it to the waiter. "Here is a tip, I am sorry but I think we are going to go."

The waiter picks up the menus, "You women have a nice day and come again. Thank you for the tip." He says.

Both woman grab their purses and jackets and walk out together. As they walk out to go separate directions, Sharon extends her right hand and shakes Wendy's. "Good luck and it was nice meeting you. Keep in touch and if you need anything, please don't hesitate to call."

Wendy lunges forward and gives Sharon a hug, "Thank you for everything. Thank you."

Sharon smiles as Wendy walks off.

She hurries to her car and starts it knowing she left Emily and Brandon at home alone. As she approaches Cal's house she sees Cal's car and a California National Insurance car parked on the street. Here we go she thinks to herself.

As she walks in the door, Cal greets her at the door and starts yelling, "Are you a moron leaving a seven and a nine year old by themselves? Where the hell did you go? Huh?"

Sharon yells back, "I had an appointment that came up." as she notices the insurance man walking up.

The insurance man passes Cal and Sharon acting as if he is scared to be there and turns to Cal, "That is all I had to tell you and I am going to go now." as he opens the door and goes out.

Sharon throws down her jacket and her purse, "What is your problem? Shouldn't you be at work?"

Cal pauses for a moment and appears to get angrier, "I lost my job today!" he yells.

Sharon immediately yells back, "What?"

Cal pauses for a minute, "Apparently someone found out that I was arrested and they thought that Grand Larceny doesn't look very good for a supervisor. This is so screwed."

As he says this the door which was not closed all the way drifts open and both of them can see the insurance agent talking to the detective who was there earlier.

Sharon turns to Cal, "That is the detective that was here earlier. He is investigating Robert from last night."

Cal replies, "That is the same detective who arrested me for the meter theft, great, just great."

As they stand in the doorway watching they overhear the detective repeating what the insurance agent said, "They have submitted six claims on their house and cars in a month?"

They overhear the insurance agent telling the officer that he has never heard of anyone making more than two in a year and it sounds very suspicious to him, and they both exchange cards. The detective writes down some more information on the folder he is carrying and walks up to the door where Sharon and Cal are standing. "Can we go inside and talk?"

Cal and Sharon walk inside and the detective notices there is no place to sit down. He turns to Cal, "Ok here is the deal folks. This sounds very suspicious to me! Your insurance agent just told me that you have two house claims and four car claims made in a month to your insurance, to me that sounds like you are trying to make Robert Ralston your scapegoat."

Cal speaks loudly, "Yeah, because he did it!"

The detective yells back loudly, "No he didn't! Robert Ralston has been in the hospital since yesterday. I went down and saw him. Verified with four nurses and two doctors that he has been there since yesterday around three in the afternoon! There is no way that he could have done this! And if you saw him you would realize he is no condition to do anything to your cars. Anyone else you want to accuse or think might have done this?"

Sharon thought to herself there was another person but didn't want to let on to Cal she knew more than he thought. Cal on the other hand, not wanting to let Sharon know of his lies earlier in the day about Wendy shakes his head no.

Sharon asks, "What is he in the hospital for?"

The detective turns to her, "That is confidential but I can reiterate that at three in the morning he was on so much pain medicine he couldn't move and his chart shows that his blood pressure and vitals were taken at two-thirty and three in the morning. I even verified it with the nurse who was on duty and showed her Roberts driver's license picture."

Sharon turns to Cal, "I knew he would never do anything like this!"

Cal looks at Sharon with a very angry face but says nothing.

The detective then looks at Cal and in a very stern voice, "You know you are out on bail already and if you are committing insurance fraud or filing false police reports you better watch out. I am telling you this is looking suspiciously like insurance fraud to me. Luckily the guy you are trying to accuse has an airtight alibi. I will be watching and investigating further on this. Trust me!"

The detective opens the door and walks back out to the car.

Robert slams the door shut so hard a picture on the wall falls and the glass in the frame shatters all over the carpet. He looks down at the mess but then turns and stomps upstairs saying nothing. Sharon can hear the door to the upstairs bedroom slam shut causing the house to shake. Instead of being upset, Sharon sits down and smiles.