

It's Not Over

By Bliss

Goddamnit.

As I moved through the aisles of the small local grocery store, looking for the alcohol aisle, the bright lights of the store hurt my eyes. Their luminance caused the store to appear completely sterile, like some sort of hospital. Of course, if this store was still handled the way it was when I worked here as a teenager, that was absolutely not the case. I just wanted to grab something and head out to book my dingy-ass hotel room for the night before drinking away my feelings.

Eventually, after a couple minutes of wandering around the store, I finally found the alcohol. The store had been entirely rearranged since the last time I was here, and I wasn't particularly looking to talk to anyone. Plus, it's Christmas Eve, and at one in the morning there was only a single employee there; I doubt they want to be bothered by me right now. There's a lot better things to be doing on Christmas Eve, namely, spending it with family. Had it not been for my own shitty family, and their whole shitshow, I'd be doing just that. I should have stayed back at my apartment with my roommates, the closest thing I have to a family at this point.

I grab a bottle of cheap vodka, and some Tropicana Lemonade to mix it with. "Sure, why not" I thought to myself before pulling both off the shelf. I pull myself slowly up to the front of the store, and therefore the cash register, looking down and away from the gaze of the poor soul working the register. It's probably obvious I'm fucked up just from looking at me. I hand over my

credit card and driver's license, the latter of which is plastered with the wrong name, a horrible picture, and that piece of shit "M". That single check mark that fucked up my life in the first place.

My voice won't pass no matter how much I've trained it in these past three years, and I really am not looking to get hate-crimed in this small rural town. In as tiny a voice I can, I simply said "Please don't judge. I know I've changed a lot since that license was made, and I've been through so much tonight already." My hands were clammy and I was fumbling with them, trying to fidget to help dull my anxiety, to little avail.

Then, he spoke out: "Jenna?"

4 years earlier..

My shoulder was shoved into the brick wall, erupting in pain. I bit my tongue and held back from crying as Ryan put his forehead against mine, further pressing me into the jagged red wall. My body was crying out in pain but if I wanted to survive, I had to keep my mouth shut. If I came home with any serious injuries, my father would just berate me for not fighting back. Besides, Ryan's two goons, Logan and Gary, were currently holding back my best friend, Lila. All three beefy members of the football team, Logan had Lila's arms pinned across his chest, forcing her to stare at me as I underwent my weekly torture. Gary had his hand across her mouth and her long, auburn locks locked in his hands.

"Please! Just let her go! You can do whatever you want with me, just let her go! Brand me for all I care!" Lila wasn't supposed to be here. This always happened every Monday, that was the cycle. The football team had practice off then, so I had Lila walk back to our

neighborhood without me. Despite that, today was Friday. The football team had a game in about an hour, these three should have been with their coach and team.

But they chose to torture me instead.

Ryan threw me against the wall again, screaming at me. "Shut the hell up you fag! She's as guilty as you are!" Ryan held up two polaroid photos that made my blood run cold, and time felt like it froze. From the view of Lila's back window was a picture of me, completely in girl mode.

"I know your dad will kick you out if he sees these right? So this is how this is going to go. You belong to us now. No more talking to your other faggot friend. You're our slave, and if I find out that you've disobeyed us in the slightest, these are going everywhere around school." Ryan smirked in my face, he knew he had me under my thumb.

The world felt as if it closed out on me, even as I could hear Lila calling my true name. Everything went numb.

And that's the way life was for the next 2 years. If I had rebelled, I would lose everything. Ryan and Gary were relentless, forcing me into doing everything for them, and even progressed my torture by forcing me to work out with them and watch in horror as my body bulked up. Logan was the only one who took pity on me, usually driving me home or telling off the other two, telling them not to push me so hard. While he clearly was uncomfortable with the entire situation, he didn't exactly stand up to me either. When, after planning for two years in secret, Lila and I fled up north to live with a friend from an MMO we all played, Logan had caught us on

our way out when we stopped for food. Rather than doing anything about us, he turned a blind eye. I hadn't seen or spoke to him since.

And now I was standing face to face with him, already an emotional wreck.

I stared back at him, his steely blue eyes and slicked back jet black hair mystifying me. I reminded myself that, despite his familiar face, I couldn't trust him completely. He still sat there, still, while I was blackmailed for my identity all of those years. After a moment of silence, he spoke up. "Jenna, what are you doing back here? I thought you got out?" I glared up at him, but also couldn't help but find comfort when looking at his face, a familiar one that I had certainly trusted over the other two, just not completely. "Ain't that question, because I honestly have no idea. I came back at my family's insistence, for the Holidays, and in the process stopped running from coming out to them. Didn't exactly go well, but hey, what the fuck did I expect!"

Logan looked at me, his big eyes absorbing what he had just heard. "Jenna, I'm so sorry, for your family and for what we did to you all those years ago. Although, I know that "sorry" doesn't even begin to cover what happened. I don't know if you have a safe place to stay, but, I'm still living at home. You're welcome there if you need. Nobody deserves to be alone, especially tonight of all nights."

I stared at him like a dumbass. Wow. Again, I certainly didn't trust him, but he seemed to have put a fair amount of thought into this. Plus, staying at an actual house would be cheaper and possibly safer than a motel. I couldn't just be totally complicit though, this is Kentucky, I had to be on my guard. "Look, I really appreciate what you're offering, somewhere safe would be really wonderful right now, but I need to know, how can I trust you? What happened still happened, even if you were only complicit and not the cause of it."

Logan sighed. "I understand if you don't, but these are the best I've got." He grabbed his sleeve, then looked at me "You're not squeamish right?" When I shook my head, he pulled up

the sleeve of his uniform, revealing tons of scar tissue, populated across his arm like a suburb. "After you left, I left work early and rounded up all of the photos of you we had. I said you had pissed me off. I burned them all in front of their faces, and they didn't exactly take it that well. I have places like this all over my body. Sent me to the hospital, and I spent a long time there. Luckily they're locked up now." I gasped upon seeing the numerous amount of wounds, but Logan continued. "I'd really like to continue this conversation, but preferably not here. There's too much personal stuff for me to talk about at work. It's closing time now, so I have to lock up, but I can give you my address. My moms are home, I'll call them and let you know that you're coming." After exchanging info, and also confirming the story by looking up Ryan and Gary's mugshots and charges, I set off for the home of the Grey family.

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Pulling up to the home, you could certainly see the love put into it. It was a little red house, with white accents, and a large garden out in the front, although it's current state didn't contain much life. They had built the house a bit outside the main town, and as such had the space to create a much longer driveway. It was quaint, and wonderful. Someplace I would like to live someday, if not for the location. I walked out of my car and towards the door. The bitter winds hit me and made me remember to stay on my guard, despite the friendly atmosphere. Logan had still let them hurt me.

But he also got hurt when he took a stand, life threateningly so.

Feeling quite awkward to be doing so at two in the morning, I immediately was greeted by two older women, in their 60's, smiling at me and welcoming me into their home. It was only a slight bit overwhelming, but they did a lot to ease my nerves. I suppose they were probably waiting for Logan to get home. One of them I immediately recognized as Logan's bio mother, as they were pretty similar. While his hair was shorter and slicked back, hers sat in a braid going down her

back, accentuating her apron. I was guessing that was related to how the entire house smelled like brownies. She told me just to call her Dianne. Her wife, Rachel, also had an apron on, but one that was covered in considerably more mess, leading me to believe I knew who was more accustomed to cooking. Her red hair sat just at her shoulders, curling down onto them. Standing at around six feet, she had about 6 inches on her wife. While they were sitting together on the couch, I sat in a big armchair, and retold my story, and history with their son, at their request. None of it seemed to be anything new to them, except for the detail of my parents throwing me out and disowning me.

“They didn’t hurt you physically, did they?” Dianne asked me and I shook my head. She smiled at me “Well, that’s good, Logan would be pretty up in arms if that was the case.” When I questioned her about it, she looked to her wife, giggled a bit, and then turned back to me.

Rachel set to explaining: “When Logan was in highschool, we had started dating but were trying to be discreet. He would come to us a lot to ask for help regarding a crush on a girl who was being forced to be a boy. Said her name was Jenna, and how people were forcing her to change her body in ways she hated, but he couldn’t do anything about it because he was too scared. Does that happen to remind you of anyone?”

With every single ounce of blood heading into my face, I sputtered out a series of noises. Did Logan really like me, even back then? Did he still like me now? All this time I’d been trying to avoid the stirring he created in my heart, aided by my perceptions of him in the past, but this broke past that. Truth was, he was just as trapped as me. He didn’t want to be around those people either, even if they did treat him better than they treated me.

He almost gave his life so I could get away, and wouldn't be outed to my family in the process.

With all of that running through my mind, Logan decided right now would be a great time to walk right through the front door. I also didn't overlook the fact that both Dianne and Rachel ran to the back, away from us, and leaving the two of us alone. Logan came over, pulled me over to the now vacant couch, and sat down next to me. I began to speak, atleast, what little I could while this flustered.

"You were scared too, weren't you?"

He nodded. "My bio dad walked out on us when I was really little, only about two or three. He's a piece of shit by the way. When Rachel arrived, she made my mom so happy, but we were all scared. Living here, I need to protect my moms. I was so afraid to say anything, in fear that they would go after my moms. It also didn't help that I'm bi, and a demiboy for that matter, and that I was slowly coming to that realization.

I nodded my head. "I'm sorry, I didn't realize. What pronouns?" He smiled. "Still 'he' and 'him'! I'm just not exactly a boy for the most part." I smiled at him, and he took my hand in his, causing my face to light up like the Christmas tree in the corner. Despite my absolute ineptitude when it comes to romance, I leaned into Logan's shoulder. He smelled like charcoal, which was oddly soothing. I buried my head in his shoulder, and it wasn't long until we both accidentally fell asleep.

*1 year later..*

To say the last year had been eventful is a bit of an understatement, to say the least. I stayed with Logan and his moms for the rest of the year, and had a wonderful time. Logan had Dianne distract me for most of New Year's day. She insisted because I hadn't gotten presents

like everyone else the day of we were going out shopping. She kept insisting that I should try on various nice dresses, but I was already guilty enough that she was buying me anything at all, especially after staying at their home so unexpectedly. We eventually settled on a nice little black dress, one that was decently priced but still looked nice. Arriving home, she practically shoved me into Logan's room where I had been staying, telling me to put it on to show Logan and Rachel what we had bought. Walking out I found that both Dianne and Rachel were nowhere to be found, but what I did find was Logan, in the dining room, with candles lit. While we were gone, he had spent the entire day cooking a meal for us. We talked about our futures after I would go home the next day, and cupping my hands in his he told me "I like this. I want this to be something, no matter what we have to do to make it happen. Do you want that too?"

Things progressed very well from there, especially with the very generous benefactors of Rachel and Dianne, who would help Logan to visit me every couple of weeks. We talked about him moving there full time, but he was worried about his moms being left in the south alone.

And then the pandemic hit.

The old grocery store closed, and with his job gone, Logan took the opportunity to move in with me and my roommates, although we are looking for our own place. His moms are also looking to move near us once all of this mess is over!

I insisted on having Christmas at our apartment that year. Seeing that Lila had recently entered a relationship with our other roommate, Kim, neither of them had any qualms about sharing a bed for the holiday (In truth, it probably would have been that way regardless). Christmas morning, despite the way the year had gone, was nothing short of magical. I was with my two best friends, my boyfriend, and his two moms who had meddled enough and gotten us



together in the first place. I was in absolute bliss. That happiness was about to cause me to explode when, in the process of giving me my gift, Logan got down on one knee.

“Jenna, will you marry me?”