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LAST  
WORDS

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CAROLYN ARNOLD

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## PROLOGUE

Her heart was beating like crazy as she paced back and forth across the living room, the phone pressed to her ear. The line just continued to ring and ring.

If only she'd left well enough alone. But no, she had to push and push until she knew too much, and now she may have very well put herself in danger.

With every ring that traveled the line, breathing became more difficult.

*Please, please, pick up!*

As if to mock her, the ringing stopped—

“You’ve reached the voicemail of Detective Steele. Leave a message and your number, and I’ll get back to you. If this is an emergency, call nine-one-one.”

*Should I?*

Her entire body was shaking as she contemplated the enormity of her situation. She was quite sure this person was onto her, but how far would they go to keep their dark past a secret? Would they come after her and try to silence her? Or was she making too much out of this?

*No, I'm not!*

Her mind shot back the answer, the internal voice having power and standing on logic. This person had already proven themselves dangerous.

All these thoughts swirled in her head for several seconds until she realized the line was blank. Silence struck her ears with the impact of thunder.

She cleared her throat. "Detective Steele? It's Felicity Kelley. I need to talk to you. In person would probably be best. Please call me when you get this." As the words left her lips, she heard the voice of a calm and rational person. Where had she gathered such self-control when her entire body was quaking with a mix of adrenaline and fear?

After leaving her number, she ended the call and stared blankly across the room. She was at home, a place she should feel safe. A haven. But even sitting on her couch, she wasn't comfortable. Nothing in her world was making sense. It was as if someone had tilted it upside down, and there would be no setting it right. At least not until she spoke to the detective.

For a moment, she considered calling 911, but her mind chastised her. *Keep the lines open for an actual emergency.*

It wasn't like she was in immediate danger.

She took a few deep breaths, trying to convince herself that she was being paranoid. She could have exaggerated the way they had glowered at her, their eyes constricting, their look hardening.

Maybe if she occupied her mind with something else...

Surely Detective Steele would return her call soon. Hopefully. But she'd been so calm in her message, speaking as if there were no rush, as if nothing was at stake. Who knew when the detective would call back.

Taking a few deep breaths, she let her wild thoughts drift away. What she needed was a moment of normalcy to reestablish rationality. She ordered a pizza—thirty-minute delivery guarantee—and wrote while she passed the time. Playing in a

world of her making was always therapeutic, and she was already past due turning in her manuscript.

Just as she was sinking into the story, letting the muse take the wheel, her doorbell rang.

She flinched, her heart rate spiking. A look at the bottom corner of her screen told her thirty minutes had almost passed. She shook her head. *It's just the pizza...*

She answered the door armed with a twenty-dollar bill and a smile on her face. But it disappeared at the sight of her visitor. It wasn't the delivery guy. Her entire body trembled and turned to liquid, but she nudged out her chin, trying to project strength. "You need to leave."

"I'm not going anywhere. You and I need to talk. Just a few minutes?" Her visitor smiled at her.

The expression had her going cold despite the summer heat seeping into the house. But if she played along, swallowed down the fear that threatened to devour her alive, she might take control of the situation.

"Okay, come in." She stepped back and listened to the sounds of the neighborhood—young children laughing and lawnmowers buzzing. Somewhere close by, meat was grilling on a barbecue, its smell heavenly. She squeezed her eyes shut and hoped she'd be able to savor all those things again.

Because she was quite sure the person she'd just let into her home was a killer.



## ONE

*The Next Day, Wednesday*

How had she gotten herself into this predicament again? All alone, the house to herself, time to pass...

Amanda dropped onto the lounge in her backyard. Freshly cut grass and fragrant summer blooms traveled over the fence from her neighbors' gardens and were intoxicating. The sky was a rich blue, and the sun was a blazing yellow orb. Dumfries, Virginia, was the picture of perfection on this summer day, and even the birds were singing their approval. She lowered her sunglasses over her eyes.

Given all the sunshine and heat she'd had in Orlando, Florida, last week one might think she'd have had enough. Not even close. And despite the incredible weather, there wasn't much downtime between Disney World, Universal Studios, water parks, miniature golf, and on it went. But it was awesome being able to treat her adopted daughter to such a vacation to mark her eighth birthday. Seeing Zoe's eyes light up and hear her laughter was more than enough reward.

Zoe delighted in the costumed characters in the theme

parks, never passing up a chance to hug one. Amanda had been on guard, wary of strangers touching her child, even in that context. The negativity was an occupational hazard of her job in homicide with the Prince William County Police Department. With all she'd seen, darkness lurked everywhere, even when all seemed light and innocent—especially then.

But that wasn't her issue right now. She had five more days of vacation to enjoy before work on Monday, and currently had the house all to herself. Zoe was with Amanda's sister Kristen and her daughter, Ava. They had a pool and, as Amanda had discovered this summer, Zoe was part dolphin, though she preferred to be called a mermaid.

Logan Hunter, who had moved in with Amanda and Zoe at the start of summer, had also been on the Florida trip. The way their relationship had bloomed couldn't have been planned any better. They just fit. Today, he was off golfing with friends.

That left her with all the time in the world to relax. *Thinking, thinking, thinking.* And B-O-R-E-D.

Between her job and personal life, she didn't have the luxury of much downtime. Because of this, she had zero hobbies and hadn't read a book for fun in... She couldn't remember how many years. It might be time to crack the spine on one of the two novels on the table next to her. They'd already endured the trip south without a single word being read.

*Why not give it a go...?*

She grabbed one, and taking her lemonade with her, she moved to the patio table and cranked up the umbrella. With her light, freckled skin, inherited from the Irish in her blood, she burned easily. She leaned back in a chair, lifted her legs, and rested her feet on the table.

She opened the cover of the paperback. Then looked up. Her mind wandering at just the thought of dipping into a fictional world. Why did the concept of having time to herself sound wonderful, while the execution, not so much? In place

of endless possibilities was an endless void of nothingness. But, no, she had to learn to just *be*. Even Logan had told her that.

She took in her modest-size yard. At the back fence line was a children's play set with a climbing frame, swings, and a slide. Kevin, her late husband, had built it for their daughter, Lindsey. It was hard to believe last month had marked eight years since she'd lost them in a car accident. The sorrow and sense of loss still lingered, but mostly, it lay dormant in her heart. She came to think of her grief as a symbiote, like from the sci-fi enterprise *Stargate*, of which Kevin had been a fan. Just like how the alien lived within a host's body, bringing it benefits, so did her grief. It made her ever aware of how precious and fragile life was, how things could change in the blink of an eye. This made her more conscious of how and with whom she spent her minutes and hours.

And she certainly didn't want to sit here caught up in memories. She had Logan and Zoe in her life now—not that they could ever replace the family she'd lost—but they had made her life whole again.

Amanda took a deep breath. *Be*, she coached herself. Logan had told her that meant existing within the present moment. She was trying, but clearly failing.

She tossed the novel onto the table and pulled out her cell phone, checking for new messages. None. And she'd been in touch with everyone since they got home yesterday. There was no one else to call. Except...

She had received a voicemail yesterday during the flight home. After landing, she'd listened to it with the intention of calling the person back. That just hadn't happened yet. But she suspected how the conversation would go.

The caller had been Felicity Kelley, a local mystery writer, who Amanda had met during a previous murder investigation. Amanda had told Felicity that if she had police procedural

questions, she'd be willing to help. It would seem the time had come to make good on her offer.

Amanda would call her now, answer what questions she might have, and then call her best friend, Becky Tulson, and see if she could meet up for lunch. She'd be working but might find time to take a break. Becky was also in law enforcement as a uniformed police officer with the Dumfries Police Department, a smaller PD than where Amanda worked.

She hit Felicity's number and listened as it rang and rang and—

"Detective Steele?" A man's voice. "Why are you calling this number?"

She removed her feet from the table, her brows pressed down in confusion. "Who is this? How do you know who I am?"

"This is Detective Hudson." Spoken off-the-cuff, as if he were insulted that she hadn't recognized his voice. But it was also about context. Why would she expect him to be answering Felicity's phone?

*Why is he answering it?*

Fred Hudson was another detective in the Homicide Unit with the PWCPD. His being on the other end of the line couldn't be a good sign. Goosebumps rose on her arms, the hot, light breeze doing nothing to warm her now.

"In answer to your other question," Fred said, "your name came up on caller ID. How do you know Felicity Kelley?"

She'd choose to ignore the judgment in his tone and focus on the more urgent matter. "Why are you answering Felicity's phone? Is she okay?" The question dangled, vulnerable, as she wished for an innocent explanation. *Felicity is just in the other room. He is a friend or a relative or...*

"Felicity Kelley has been murdered."

That couldn't be right. She'd just called Amanda yesterday. She was alive... *yesterday*. And there it was again, things changing in the blink of an eye.

“Are you still there?”

“Yeah, I’m—” Her job was dealing with murder, but that was the last thing she’d expected to come at her today. Her mind must still be in vacation mode. Normally she was far sharper, ready to go, not stuttering and floundering in shock. “Murdered? Are you sure?”

Fred let out an exasperated sigh.

There hadn’t been any urgency in Felicity’s voice or in the message itself—or had she missed it? She’d need to listen to it again. All Amanda remembered was she had said, “in person might be best.” But people said that even when a phone call would suffice. “Of course, you wouldn’t say it was murder if... I’m just shocked is all,” she eventually said, filling the elongated silence. “Where are you? Where is she?”

“No need to concern yourself with that. Ryan and I have this handled, but we will need to question you.”

Natalie Ryan was another detective with the unit and Fred’s partner.

“Question me?” *Like I’m a suspect?* She and Fred had never exactly been buddies and his attitude shouldn’t surprise her, given their past encounters. “Tell me where you are. I’m heading over.”

Another loud, exaggerated sigh. Then Fred told her he was at Felicity Kelley’s house. He didn’t need to provide the address. It was one Amanda remembered from her first meeting with Felicity. She and her partner, Trent Stenson, had gone there to notify Felicity her only sister had been murdered. And now, flash forward a year and a half, someone had taken Felicity’s life. Was the family cursed?

“When you get here, Steele, I hope you have a good explanation for why you were one of the last people she called.” He hung up, and she was left holding the empty line.

She wanted that explanation more than anyone.

## TWO

Amanda stood on the sidewalk, looking up at the two-story, white-sided house. A rather ordinary home, in an ordinary neighborhood in Triangle. It was a small community, which was part of Prince William County, and located five minutes from Dumfries—where Amanda lived—and fifteen from Woodbridge, where the PWCPD Homicide Unit was stationed.

Uniformed officers had the area cordoned off, and an unmarked department car, likely the one that Fred had signed out, sat at the curb. There was no sign of Crime Scene or the medical examiner's vehicle yet, though they came from Manassas, thirty minutes northwest of Triangle. The scene felt fresh, and it was likely Felicity was discovered rather recently.

Detective Natalie Ryan was with a man and woman, both in their late twenties, early thirties. He had his arm around her, and she was pawing at her cheeks, visibly distressed from this distance. Probably wiping away tears. Amanda suspected she had found Felicity.

An officer stood by the front door of the house, watching her closely.

Amanda was finding it hard to move, her legs frozen in

place while her conscience ate away at her. Ever since Fred had answered Felicity's phone, guilt had stepped in, plaguing her with *if onlys* on a never-ending loop. *If only I had called her back sooner, would she still be alive? If only I had answered when she called? If only...* Two words, their implication brutally painful.

After hanging up from Fred, Amanda made two calls—one to Trent Stenson, the other to their sergeant, Scott Malone. He was also a family friend and had known Amanda from the time she'd entered the world. She'd told him she was back from Florida, and he'd asked about her trip and told her to enjoy the next few days off. Her counter was to request an early return to the job. Her conscience told her she owed Felicity Kelley this much. And just as she had found justice for her sister, Amanda was determined to do the same for Felicity.

Malone agreed to her going to the scene and roping Trent in "for the time being." His words. They didn't bring much hope that he'd reassign this case, but once face to face with him, she was certain she could make him see how important it was that she was the one to investigate Felicity's murder.

"You don't need to do this, you know." Trent walked around the nose of the department car he'd driven them here in, having met Amanda at Central. "You still have a few vacation days left. I say let Hudson and Ryan continue to run with this."

She shook her head. "We covered this already. I just can't do that. And how could you? We knew her, Trent."

"Yeah, I know."

"You also know how Hudson and Ryan can steamroll their investigations." She didn't need to spell it out in detail. A year ago, they'd witnessed the duo's shoddy detective work when they investigated the murder of Logan's estranged wife. One could blame the management at the time, an interim sergeant named Katherine Graves, who had exerted her authority and pressured for a quick resolution to look good to the police chief.

But Amanda couldn't forgive Hudson and Ryan for playing along and jeopardizing justice.

"Well, no time like the present, I suppose." Trent gestured toward the house, but she picked up on his reluctance. He wasn't looking forward to the inevitable confrontation with Fred any more than she was.

They didn't need to wait long. Fred stepped onto the porch—hands on hips, lips pressed in an unquestionable scowl, eyes squinting in the afternoon sun. "Stenson? I didn't expect you. Don't you have other work to do?"

Amanda squared her shoulders and took a step toward Fred. "I called Detective Stenson." She'd hold back that she'd cleared their presence with Malone.

"I can't have everyone tramping around my crime scene."

"Don't consider us *everyone*." She bit back saying, *Consider us the new leads on the case*. She was confident it was only a matter of time. She put booties over her shoes, and Trent did the same.

"Fine. Just don't touch anything." Fred retreated into the house without bothering to pass the door off to Amanda. The spring on the frame was tight, and it closed in her face.

She took a deep, centering breath and got the door for herself and Trent.

The place was muggy with a touch of cool—the central air conditioning likely working overtime to offset the front door's frequent use. The layout was open concept from the entry. Straight ahead was a hallway that Amanda assumed led to the kitchen. Beyond that, she didn't know.

A walnut staircase was on the right. Its newel post, caps, and balusters were original to the home, but the steps had been carpeted at some point over the years.

The living room was on the left, and most of it was visible from the front door.

Modestly decorated. Tidy. No artwork adorned the walls.



Chairs bookended the main window through which sunlight was pouring in and drenching the wood floor. Felicity had sat in the chair on the left when they'd informed her of her sister's death.

Amanda pushed the memory aside and continued dancing her gaze over the space.

A couch and two end tables faced a fireplace on the far wall. Fred headed there, and Amanda and Trent followed.

Rounding the couch, she caught her first glimpse of Felicity. She was on the floor. Amanda's breath caught in her throat.

*Remember, you're a professional.*

A reminder she didn't normally need but being off had made her rusty, wiping out years of auto-response. Or was it because she had known the woman and liked her? In the least that aspect explained the guilt trying to suck her down in its powerful undertow. But it wasn't the time to surrender. It was time to focus and be present.

Felicity was on her back, arms at her sides, head angled to the right. Her face appeared haunted—eyes widened, lips parted. Her long, light-brown hair fanned out beneath her head and was haloed by a pool of deep crimson that reached her upper torso. The color and tacky-looking texture indicated the blood had coagulated, meaning Felicity had been dead for several hours.

A knife was sticking out of her chest, a bloom of red around the entry point.

Their first meeting rushed back to Amanda. Felicity was quiet, slightly awkward, giving the impression she was far more comfortable with her characters than interacting socially in real life. She was caught up in the worlds of her creation, living peacefully, and getting paid to do what she loved. That someone did this to her had a redhead rage blinding Amanda.

*Deep breaths...* She'd be no good to Felicity if she let herself become sideswiped by emotion.

Amanda moved closer, mindful of her steps.

Felicity was barefoot but wearing jean shorts and a gray tee. Gold studs and dangling dragonflies adorned her ears. Three gold chains of different lengths and thicknesses dipped above the rounded collar of her shirt. Her fingernails were deep purple. It was impressive with her busy schedule she had time to paint them or get a manicure.

She'd been hitting against a writing deadline when they were here last, stacks of paper everywhere. Today, there wasn't a stray piece in sight. In fact, the entire room was tidy and more sparsely furnished than before.

*Or does it just seem that way without the clutter?*

She lifted her gaze to the mantel. Several framed photographs of Felicity and her late sister, Eve, were displayed there. They served as a time capsule, capturing the siblings at different ages.

Yet again, murder served up an irony—chaos and death in a homey setting.

Amanda was about to turn around when her eyes landed on the hearth. She headed toward it for a closer look.

"Steele, what are you doing?" Fred asked.

She stopped walking and pivoted.

"I've given you the courtesy of letting you into my crime scene, but you need to leave now."

"I'm not—"

"We're not," Trent interjected.

"Going anywhere," Amanda finished.

Fred's cheeks shot crimson. "Oh, yes, you are. You're getting out of this house. Now."

"Nope." Malone stepped through the threshold, and the officer at the front door scurried behind him, urging him to put booties on over his shoes. Malone snatched them and conceded. "She's staying, so is Stenson."

“Excuse me, Sarge,” Fred said, “but Natalie and I were the first from Homicide to respond.”

Malone would have sent them here, but Fred wisely kept his mouth shut on that point.

“Yep, and now this is their case.” Malone flailed a hand toward Amanda and Trent. “They have history with the victim.”

Amanda resisted the urge to smile at the win. She knew that Malone would come through for her.

Fred’s cheeks blazed even hotter, and his lips quirked. “Shouldn’t that be a reason for them *not* to take the lead on this?”

“Usually,” Malone said, “but they are familiar with the vic, and it might move the investigation to a speedier resolution. I assume justice is something we’re all after?”

Silence, except for the faint buzzing of a lawnmower.

Both men locked in a stare down, but Malone always won. He was a tough old bird that Amanda was happy to have on her side—at least he was most of the time.

“It is, Sarge,” Fred eventually said. “But you might want to ask yourself why Amanda was the last person the victim called... well, besides Lorenzo’s for pizza.”

Malone’s turn to ride the silence, and he touched his groomed beard and leveled his gaze at Amanda. “Do you care to chime in here?”

She opened her mouth, but no words came out. *The last person...* Fred had prepared her for that, but it wasn’t any easier to hear a second time.

## THREE

Time suspended as Malone, Fred, even Trent, looked at Amanda for an answer. She was still processing being one of the last people Felicity Kelley had called.

“Steele?” Malone prompted.

“Honestly, I don’t know why exactly. She called when I was on the flight home, and we never connected. I was returning her call this afternoon. That’s when Detective Hudson answered.”

Fred’s shoulders relaxed, and he had this smug look on his face that Amanda would be happy to wipe off—if she wasn’t so busy mentally beating herself up and entertaining the flood of *if onlys* again.

“Apparently, the two were close enough, boss. Amanda was also in the vic’s contacts. I’d say this all points to a conflict of interest.” The latter, a remark he obviously had to get out.

Malone narrowed in on her again, his brow pinched. “How close were you?”

*Damn you, Fred!* Malone knew she’d had dealings with Felicity, but Fred’s comments opened her up for an inquisition. “Felicity was a mystery writer,” she started calmly, “and I told

her she could call me if she had questions about police procedure. Yesterday was the first time she reached out to me.”

“And that’s why she put your number in her phone?” This was from Fred, no attempt at masking his skepticism. He was desperately trying to make their connection appear stronger than it truly was—whatever would get Amanda off the case and him back on.

She wasn’t the rollover type. “I can’t control how a person organizes their life. She probably just wanted to make sure that she didn’t lose my number.”

“Huh, well, that makes sense to me.” Malone looked at Fred. “Satisfied?”

Fred mumbled something incoherent.

“I asked you a question, Detective,” Malone said firmly.

“I have to be, apparently.”

“Detective Steele isn’t hiding her relationship with the victim, though I think *relationship* is stretching things,” Malone said.

“It is,” Amanda agreed.

Fred fired daggers at her and made to leave the room.

“Wait, where do you think you’re going?” Malone called out.

Fred stopped walking and turned around. “You’ve given the case to Detectives Steele and Stenson, unless I misunderstood?”

“Oh, no, you got the message loud and clear, but have you already brought them up to speed? Or were you just going to leave them to scuttle through and waste not only man hours but squander precious time that could be better used in catching up with the killer? Start talking.” Malone pointed from Fred to Amanda and Trent. “And if you two have questions, ask them now.”

Fred walked back to them as he pulled a notebook and pen out of a pocket. He flipped it open. “Victim is Felicity Kelley, twenty-eight years old, single—”

“That much they’d know,” Malone huffed and shook his head.

“Very well. Felicity was found by her friend Celeste Sweeney at eleven thirty AM, that being this morning, Wednesday, August—”

Malone held up a hand. “We know what day it is.”

“Sweeney was here because she was checking on Felicity. Said she’s been worried about her.”

“Did she say why?” Trent asked, beating Amanda to the same question.

“Didn’t get that far. Detective Ryan might have by now, but Sweeney’s a mess.”

That was easy to imagine since she’d found her friend with a knife in her chest. Though they didn’t know if she had entered the house. “Did Sweeney come inside? Touch anything?”

“Nope.” Fred pointed the tip of his pen toward the front window. “She caught a glimpse through there. She resorted to that when Felicity wasn’t answering the door or her phone.”

“Speaking of Felicity’s phone,” Amanda said, “we’ll need that before you go.”

“It’s currently in an evidence bag with the officer at the front door.”

“Where did you find it?” She wasn’t even sure how his response might affect the investigation, but it had taken several rings before Fred had answered when she’d called.

“It was tucked under the couch cushion, like it was put there on purpose.”

“Strange place to keep a phone.” She turned to Trent, who nodded. Fred shrugged. “How did you unlock it?” she asked.

“I used her fingerprint.”

The room fell silent for a few seconds.

“Anything else?” Malone prompted Fred.

“Actually, I have a question,” Amanda said. “You told us

that Felicity called Lorenzo's after me. I assume you confirmed she ordered a pizza?"

"I did, and before you ask, the delivery kid checks out."

Something only an iron-clad alibi could guarantee. "How is that possible? Do we know the time of death?"

"No ME here yet, so no. But Felicity didn't get her pizza."

"What time was the attempted delivery?" Trent asked.

"Six-oh-five. But this delivery guy isn't suspicious in the least. He was at his next stop ten minutes later and delivering pizza until midnight. Confirmed with Lorenzo's. After that he was with his girlfriend until this morning, which she confirmed."

Likely safe to take him off the suspect list then. "And Felicity called Lorenzo's at what time?"

Fred consulted his notes. "Five forty."

*After she called me...* That should ease her guilt. After all, such a routine thing didn't indicate that Felicity was fearful for her immediate safety. It also allowed Amanda to build a timeline. "Then in all likelihood, Kelley's killer gained access to her house between five forty and six-oh-five."

"We could be looking at the same for time of death," Trent said.

"Possible, though not necessarily," Amanda replied. "Her killer simply would have had to prevent her from answering the door."

Trent nodded and turned his attention to Fred. "What size was the pizza?"

"A small."

"Then she wasn't expecting company to share it with," Trent reasoned. "Whoever turned up, it wasn't for a planned visit."

"Exactly what Ryan and I figured."

"Anything else they should know before you leave?" Malone asked Fred.

“Think that’s about it.”

“All right, then.” Malone clapped his hands together, an obvious dismissal.

Fred picked up on it and left.

“First thoughts?” Malone asked her and Trent.

“Far too soon to leap in any direction,” Amanda said.

Malone smiled, bobbed his head, and left the house with, “Keep me posted.”

Trent turned to Amanda. “I’m going to assume you haven’t seen the news recently, about how well Felicity’s latest book has been doing?”

“I do my best to avoid the news.” She had precious little free time, and she wasn’t spending what she did have filling her head with more bad news.

“As I figured. Well, it’s apparently blowing up the bestseller charts. I’m not a reader, so don’t ask me what it’s called, but its success resulted in a movie deal. And I’m talking box office, blockbuster huge. Apparently, Chris Hemsworth is set to play her lead detective.”

That made her momentarily speechless. “Wow. That’s incredible.” And it was, but it might also complicate finding Felicity’s killer. Was it someone envious of Felicity’s success? An avid fan? A rejected lover? The list was truly endless.

“Just wanted to give you a heads-up. Obviously, I don’t know if it will factor into the case.”

“Again, too early to say. But if I were to ask your early thoughts, what are they?”

“Assume you’re asking?” A brief smirk, then, “I’d say an isolated incident. You know how I feel when it comes to people getting struck in the heart.”

She nodded, recalling he saw it as testifying to a love affair gone wrong. “We’ll talk to her friend, Celeste Sweeney, see if she knows of any boyfriends or exes Felicity had.”



“On board with that. We also need to find out if there is any sign of forced entry. If not, Felicity may have let her killer in.”

With this statement, Amanda conjured a sad possibility. Had Felicity answered her front door expecting the pizza she’d ordered to find her would-be killer standing there instead? “Yeah, we’ll need that answer.”

“You must have missed this.” Trent gestured back and forth between them.

Her cheeks heated, not exactly sure what he was implying.

“I just meant all the questions,” he rushed out. “After all, you did come back early.”

*Mostly wracked by guilt and spurred on by compulsion...* “I wouldn’t go that far, but sitting around does get kind of tedious.”

“You? Sitting around? I’d have to see it for myself.”

“Very funny.” She bristled some, probably because his jest was so accurate.

“It’s true, though, isn’t it? What you are basically telling me is you were bored once you got back from Florida.”

“Fine, yes, I was. Today, anyway. Not that I wanted this”—she glanced over at Felicity’s dead body—“*excitement* to liven things up.” If it meant Felicity Kelley were still alive, Amanda would have happily stared into space for days on end.

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