

# Reckless

By Rowan Elizabeth

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“DADDY, I’M AT THE END of my rope. I’m coming home.”

“When will I see you?”

“I’m leaving Myrtle Beach as soon as I gas up. So, about nine, nine-and-a-half hours. I’ll have to make stops for me and Ursa. Ten hours, tops.”

“Keep it under a hundred.”

“I’ll see what I can do, Dad.”

The silver Chevelle shines in the Carolina sun. Ursa waits in the passenger seat. Shelly has made it two years in Myrtle Beach. The two best things she has to show for it sit right in front of her.

The muscle car has been through the wringer. The money Shelly made selling her truck funded modifications. Her job at Billy Neal’s garage gave her the resources to finish the job. Now, the shining blower cuts through the hood. Its thick belt runs to the blown motor—an engine Shelly had taken apart and put back together piece by piece. Her monster has new shoes too. Cragar wheels with fat tires. Gas mileage heading home will suck.

Shelly peeks in the driver’s door. “You ready, baby?”

Ursa climbs across the console, and, with a tilt of her pretty head, licks Shelly squarely on the mouth.

“Bitch!”

The mastiff’s slobber coats Shelly’s chin. “You are so rotten,” she says as she grabs for a towel. She lolls the massive dog’s head in her hands and rubs down her brindle sides. “Go on. Get over on your side.”

Ursa tries for one last lick before settling her one-hundred-eighty pound body into the bucket seat.

Shelly straps the big dog into her special-made harness. The beast wasn't getting hurt if she could help it. Ursa pokes her snout out the window and settles in for the ride.

"Damn dog," thinks Shelly with a grin.

Eight and a half hours north and four pee breaks later, Shelly sees the billboard for the Classy Chassis in Louisville. For a moment Shelly considers marching into the Chassis and confronting Lenore.

It has been two years since she's seen her. Too long to make a statement.

The Chevelle screams up I-65 and across the Ohio River, Shelly rubs Ursa's ears and smiles. "It's one of those things that happens for a reason." The dog nuzzles her hand and turns to stick her drooling lips into the wind.

The Chevelle roars into the Taswell garage lot. Cutting the engine, all is quiet with the overhead door pulled shut and the building dark. Shelly's dad is in his house up the hill.

Taswell is quiet this time of night. The tight grouping of old homes doesn't give much proof of life. Shelly unloads her dog and makes her way to her dad's.

The clapboard house reminds Shelly of hot summers and running around as a child. The old storm shelter is sure to hold ghosts or witches. A tall, aluminum television antenna rusts against the side of the house.

In the most recent of her thirty-six years, Shelly would never guess that she would end up back here. Not even for a moment. Not even for a flop pad until she has her bearings.

Shelly stands on the crumbling concrete step and raps on the screen door. A piercing, tiny barking thing rushes to the door and is quite sure of itself until Ursa utters a low grumble.

"Enough." Shelly jerks her chain.

"Shelly Ann!"

Her dad stands in the door holding a scruffy mutt, a mile-wide smile on his face.

“Daddy, sorry about the surprise visit.”

“Don’t. You called, that’s enough for me. You know you always have a place here. But, what the hell is that?”

“This is my other beast, Ursa. She can stay in the shop, away from that little runt of yours, until I find a place.”

“Let’s get her down there then.”

The father and daughter hold a heavy quiet for ten or fifteen feet.

“Baby girl, what happened?”

“I got the Chevelle done and was ready to come back here to work with you,” Shelly lies.

Her father looks at her and smiles. She knows he doesn’t buy it. Not for a second.

“Seriously, Dad. I should find somewhere to stay within the week.”

“Bob fixed up an old cabin next to the creek. Nothing fancy.”

“The barn? I’ll check it out tomorrow. And Ursa is no trouble. She only wants to eat things smaller than her.”

“Wouldn’t that be just about anything?”



BOB OWNS over fifty wooded acres of hills and valleys. He is just a little unnatural. He took his pet monkey to Woodstock and has been to the summit of Mount Everest twice. He’s the type of person that believes life needs to be lived. For Shelly and her dad, he’s family.

“Oh, I have the best thing for you,” says Bob. “It’s quiet with a lot of space and we can put in an invisible fence for your titan.”

The cabin is two turns and a bridge crossing from the garage. It had served its life as the barn to a house that no longer exists. Bob has applied his great vision and created a retreat.

“It’s perfect. I’ll take it.”

“You’re family. Tell me what you need and I’ll find a way to make it happen. And Shelly, it’s good to see you. Come up to the big house. We can talk.”

A good talk with Bob can open minds. It’s one of life’s pleasures.

Back at the garage, Shelly kisses her dad and says, “Give me a couple days to get my shit straight, and I’ll be down to work.”



A SLIGHT, DIRT DRIVE follows the creek to the cabin. Shelly eases the Chevelle through the gravel, trying not to stir up dust. Before going in, Shelly whips out a chamois and wipes down the silver body of her baby. With a kiss on the doorframe, she’ll heads inside.

Wood slats offer entrance and wrap around to a screened porch that looks into the white oak woods. Inside, the cabin is open to the old hay mow that now serves as a loft bedroom. The lower level is adapted to house a bathroom and kitchenette. It is outfitted the necessary appliances, an old Hoosier cabinet, table and chairs and a wood-burning stove.

Shelly has only enough things to make the cabin her own. She unloads her clothes into an old dresser upstairs. A serviceable bed fills the remaining space.

Ursa gives a low whine at the base of the steps. Narrow steps with a bend aren’t manageable for her. The big dog will get a nest downstairs. She’ll be pissed off not to sleep near her mama’s bed.

Shelly pulls pictures from a box. Her mother’s high school senior picture, Dad in front of the shop, Ursa as a puppy and the Chevelle on the day she got out of primer and into her new skin.



AN INVISIBLE FENCE seems logical to most dog owners. Instead, Shelly plants fence posts and runs two levels of electric fence up the hill and around the cabin.

Ursa can run through the trees and bark at the forest life that invades her space. She can bark into the night and excite the coyote that roam the hills, but few things will wish to deal with her and the electric fence.



THE AUTO SHOP sits on the highway and is the only place for miles for the natives and Patoka Lake tourists.

Shelly pulls in. All work in the garage stops.

Her dad's top and only mechanic, Culley, drops his wrench and makes it to Shelly before she gets out of the car. "Shelly, damn good to see you! Look at your ride."

Shelly strikes a pose, straight out of *Hot Rod Magazine*, on the fender. "She's hot, isn't she?"

"You did a hell of a job. Give me the keys. Let's see what she can do."

"Wreck her and I'll have your balls."

Culley settles into the bucket, straps in and creeps out of the gravel lot and lights her up on the blacktop.

"What are we working on, Dad?"

"We've got a Subaru WRX we're loading up for a guy in Corydon. The big project is coming in." Her dad grins.

Shelly knows he's playing his cards close to his vest.

"Okay Dad, what is it?"

"It's a killer, baby. A '70 Hemi 'Cuda."

"Son of a bitch, Dad! How did you get that?"

"Hey, don't doubt your old man. It's a rich gal from Indianapolis. She found me and we made a deal."

"A pony car, Dad?"

"A *Hemi* pony car."

“Count me in, old man.”



SHELLY ROCKS in the old chair on the screened porch of the cabin. Ursa gnaws on the soup bone brought back from the grocery.

“A fucking Hemi. What do you think of that, beast?”

Nothing but slurping and slobbering come from the dog.

“At least she’ll be fun to play with.”



SHELLY PULLS her long blonde hair into a ponytail, slips into some jeans and a tank and leaves for the garage. Ursa barks behind the electric fence as Shelly slips down the drive in the gleaming Chevelle.

She digs into the work, subconsciously waiting for the arrival of the 'Cuda. She only thinks about cars. No matter how basic they are. Hell, she even makes small talk with the flat-tire Honda-Accord folks.

It’s good to be back.

Each day, Shelly loses herself a little more to the cars. Every evening, she loses herself a little more to the sounds of the forest and a quiet she’s starting to remember.



“IT’S BEEN, WHAT, two years? How have you been?” asks Bob.

“Honestly? A little fucked up.”

“And that’s why you’re here.”

“Yeah. I’m either too old to be working for my dad or too young to be stuck in this town. Maybe both.”

“I like to see it as a transition, a chance for change. Isn’t it wonderful?” he asks and smiles.

“It’s Taswell. It’s wonderful for a week. But then what?”

“Shelly, I could live in Nepal, but here I am.”

“Why?”

“Because I can visit anywhere. This is home.”

Shelly looks around the forest and can see the benefits of the peace. Possibly lonely, but benefits nonetheless.

Twilight sneaks up on the valley.

A shiny Dodge pickup, pulling an empty trailer, creeps up the lane. The woman driving waves and moves along. Shelly turns and watches, shakes her head and looks at Bob.

That’s a shit-eating grin if she’s ever seen one.



“HELL, DAD. Look at her.”

“There’s a man up in West Baden that has the body work. But intake to exhaust, she’s all ours.”

The 'Cuda sits in the lot in all her primer beauty. The car is a restoration, not a cloning. The parts will be expensive and hard to come by. And the process will be lengthy. It will be a long treasure hunt for the goose’s golden eggs with a rich lady’s budget. It is almost better than the Chevelle. Almost.

There is something cathartic about working with her Dad on the 'Cuda. It’s a system. It’s hot work and it’s good for Shelly.

The engine is rebuildable, the K-member in good shape. Without even running, this car is worth a year’s salary for some.



NEVER AFRAID OF HARD WORK, Shelly is worn out as she pulls up to the old cabin. The excitement of the 'Cuda feeds her until everything gives out.

Shelly breathes deeply as she sits on the screened porch. She grills a couple of burgers for herself and Ursa and sits back with a cold beer.

Walnuts fall with a thud to the ground. Underbrush shuffles and sets the mastiff on edge. She presses her wet snout to the screen and grumbles into the woods.

“Fine. Let’s go for a walk.”

They walk up the gravel drive that leads to Bob’s cabins. There is a deep peace around the cabins. Quiet is respected. Tranquility understood.

Shelly walks Ursa through the loop of cabins.

The Dodge and trailer are parked at the third cabin. On the screen porch, sits the tenant.

Shelly waves at the shadow and hears, “That’s a great dog. What is it?”

“English Mastiff. She’s a bigger puss than she looks.”

“Will she let me pet her?”

“Bring food and you can ride her.”

“Great! I’ll be right back.”

Moments later the screen door pops open to a brunette with a big smile. “Will she eat a bagel?” For a second, Shelly stares. The woman has short hair in a messy shag, a bright and open face, and an Claudia Black figure. Before Shelly can speak, the woman skips down the cabin steps and, unafraid, crouches in front of Ursa and offers her the bagel. “She’s just beautiful. And huge! What’s her name?”

Shelly shakes off her stare. “Ursa. Like the constellation. The Bear. And I’m Shelly.”

“I’m Brigid. Are you staying in one of the cabins?”

“Something like that. We live down by the creek. What brings you to the middle of BFE?”

“My car. I’ve decided to go through my mid-life crisis a few years early and get a sharp ride. You?”

“I build sharp rides. And I’ll venture a guess the ’Cuda belongs to you.”

“Why yes, she does.” Brigid cocks her head and grins. “And you’re bringing her back to life?”

“I’m helping my old man. She’s a fine ride.”

“So, your old man? You’re married?”

Shelly laughs a little too sharply. “Far from it. He’s my dad.”

“Is that so?” Brigid is direct in her gaze. “Can I offer you a beer?”

Shelly steps back towards the drive. “No. I’d better get the beast moving.”

“Alright. Maybe another time?”

“Yeah. Maybe.”

Shelly yanks Ursa away from her new food source and strides back down the valley.



THE FRAME-OFF restoration starts with the crew removing every body part and strapping them to a trailer. She’ll be a real painted lady when her skin comes back. Hemi green with the tell-tale black hood and stripe. Classic. The owner will pick out wheels, but the rest is up to the discretion of Shelly and her Dad to keep everything as authentic as possible.

“I need you to meet with Miss Griffen tonight to choose some wheels.”

“Who?”

“The car’s mama. Or did you forget she’s not yours?”

“Funny, old man.”



THEY CLOSE UP SHOP but Shelly leaves the door open. She’s looking through the suppliers’ websites when Brigid shows up.

“Looking for porn?”

Without thinking, Shelly whips around and shoots a nasty look and regrets it. “Oh, hell,” she says. “I’m sorry. The guys like to tease me. I’m not a very easy target.”

“I don’t doubt that. It’s Shelly, right?”

Brigid looks casually comfortable in jeans and a bright blouse. Shelly’s quite sure it all costs more than she made today working on the car.

“Yeah, Shelly.” They shake hands. “Have a seat and make yourself comfortable. I have the Mopar options up for you. That is if you want to go somewhat original.”

“That’s the plan.”

“Then you really only have a couple of choices.”

Brigid eases into an old office chair and scoots it closer to the screen. She stops with her knee pressing against Shelly’s. She smiles. “What do you recommend?”

“I’d go with one of these two. Get some sharp tires and you’re walking tall.”

“See? I didn’t even need to come down here. You know what I want.”

Shelly had a pretty good idea she did.

“No, I don’t. You should come down and watch the progress on your car so you know what we’re doing.”

“I don’t know if I could stomach it. She looks awful all torn apart.”

Shelly pictures the stripped down car. “No. You should really see her base, her frame. It’s what makes the car.”

“Should we go out there and look her over now, or can I take you to dinner?”

*Fuck.*

“Just come down some time tomorrow and we’ll all show you what we’re doing. Besides, I’ve got to get to the beast.” Why is she explaining?

“All right. I’ll see you tomorrow, Shelly. I’m looking forward to it.”

“Yeah, tomorrow will work.”



“URS, THIS IS NO GOOD. I really don’t need this shit right now.”

The big dog’s nose doesn’t leave the rabbit hole.

“Some help you are.”



THE NEXT DAY, Shelly—wearing slight jeans shorts—has her ass is in the air as she bends to loosen a bolt on the frame. One lace-up boot is on the wheel.

“You’re right. She really is lovely this way.”

Shelly twists around to the only other female voice in the garage and grabs a pink shop rag to wipe the filth from her hands. “It’s worth seeing from the beginning. You know how big this project is, don’t you?”

“I have a pretty good idea. Bob made an agreement with me. I’ve got the cabin for at least six months. I think the time away will be good for me.”

“We’ll need at least that long,” Shelly says.

“And she’ll be worth every dime and every drop of sweat. My money and your sweat.”

Shelly, head cocks her head and regards Brigid, quite sure there are too many innuendos she can read into her words. She’s not naive but she sure as hell isn’t going to hit on a client.

“Come here and I’ll walk you through what we’ve done so far.”



SHELLY WATCHES Brigid drive off.

Her Dad smirks over the engine stand.

“She’s nice. Don’t you think, baby?”

“She’s got great taste in cars. I’ll give her that.”



THE WEEKS PASS as the ‘Cuda enjoys tender loving care. The mechanics get worked up with every step. The regular customers stop in to see the machine, and the tourists only mildly annoy them with the breaks in work.

The Hemi’s down to her frame. She’s getting sandblasted next week and then the body man will have the frame to prime and paint. Two weeks away from the car. Time to catch up on the little projects that have piled up. The days in the garage will be shorter, the work less intense for the break. Each night, Shelly returns to the cabin with a little excess twitch.

Dinner, a walk with Ursa, and a beer in the tress. Her surplus energy finds its natural outlet. Rocked back in the chair, Shelly massages her pussy. The cool forest wind brushes over her and she comes into the silence. The coyotes echo her moans.



BRIGHT HEADLIGHTS SHINE towards Shelly’s cabin and gravel crunches as they slow and stop in the drive. Ursa raises her hackles and strides off to terrify the intruder. Shelly waits for the deep growling barks to begin. Only the sound of the woods can be heard. Ursa comes trotting through the porch screen door with a bagel in her mouth.

“You bitch,” Shelly whispers.

“The dog or me?” Brigid stands in the doorway with a case of beer and a satisfied smirk. “If I drink all of this by myself, I’ll die of alcohol poisoning. You have to help me.”

“Do I?”

“What’s it going to hurt?” The bright face of Shelly’s intruder opens in a genuine smile.

“Fine. Hand me a beer and have a seat.”

As they work their way through the case, they stay on neutral topics. The dog and how big she is. Bob and how kind he is. Shelly’s dad and the talent he has.

“So, what’s it like to live here?” asks Brigid.

“You’ll have to ask me in a couple of months. I haven’t lived here since I was seventeen.”

“And your parents own the shop.”

“My Dad.”

“And he brought you up to be obsessed with cars.”

“Burned it in my brain.”

“I’ve been admiring your Chevelle. Did you do that by yourself?”

“I started her here and then finished her in Myrtle Beach.”

“You lived in Myrtle? I love it down there. But I’m more of a sucker for the Keys or New Orleans.”

“Orleans is great. I spent some time there when I lived in Mobile.”

“Where haven’t you been?”

“Really it’s just up and down I-65 and over to Myrtle. I’ve been up to Chicago once.” In her growing inebriation, Shelly has a question of her own. “Where will you go after your car is done?”

“I haven’t the foggiest idea. Maybe I’ll drive her to Key West and back. Maybe I’ll race you and your Chevelle down there.”

Shelly laughs. “And let you kick my ass? I don’t think so. I’ll have to sabotage yours to win.”



EVERYTHING IS ENGINE work at the shop. Pistons, valve train, cam. The heart and soul is the Hemi engine. It’s like brain surgery. Shelly sure as hell doesn’t want to fuck up or the ’Cuda will just be a sputtering fool.

Some days Brigid only pokes her head in to see the progress. It’s the days she hangs around that unnerve Shelly. At first, she’s only a shadow, asking questions and complimenting the work. After a month, she becomes a real distraction.

It’s not that she’s bossy or overbearing. She doesn’t tell the mechanics what to do. She doesn’t make suggestions. She knows where the automotive power lies.

It’s her energy. Just sitting in an old office chair, Brigid practically vibrates. She understands the car, the power. Watching it come into its own is a trip. The biggest pain in Shelly’s ass is that she keeps catching Brigid watching her.

Shelly usually doesn’t give a rat’s ass about how she looks when she works. It pisses her off that the energy in the soiled chair pushes her along. She now chooses the low-slung jeans, the shorter cut-offs or the tighter tank. “What the fuck am I thinking?” she asks the mastiff before heading for the garage.

The ’Cuda is a wet dream. All tits and beer. Shelly doesn’t even park the Chevelle where the two cars can see each other. No one needs to see their lover with someone else.

Summer settles in, making hot work hotter. Brigid comes just as often, but now in much smaller clothes. The buxom brunette practically bursts from her tops. Her shorts hug her ass and taper into her full thighs.

Shelly knows she shouldn’t even be looking. Christ, with the ’Cuda, she really only needs one hot woman in the garage at a time.



“I HEAR THERE’S a great little place in Milltown. Live music. Would you like to go to dinner with me?”

“I’ll pick you up at seven.” Shelly wonders what the fuck she’s thinking. Is she really going to let her hormones help her commit professional suicide?

They fly along 64 in the Chevelle. The summer twilight glows lilac as they make their way along the sweeping road.

Brigid rests her hand on Shelly’s leg. “I think it’s hot that you have your hands all over my car.”

Shelly stomps the accelerator and plows through a curve.



“YOU KNOW, if you drink much more I’ll have to drive your car back?”

Shelly pictures that in her head. “That could work.”

The band breaks after its second set and Shelly downs her sixth beer. Her control over her mouth left at the fifth.

“So I fucked up in Louisville with Lenore and lost Keeran to a tourist.”

“Sounds like a rough couple of years.”

“Yeah, but I’m good now. Really. I did the ‘come home’ thing and it feels good. Even if I have no idea what’s next. So, I know why I’m here. Why are you?”

“My lover and I had a marketing group in Indianapolis. We ate, drank and lived that place. And it paid off. This spring she told me that she was in love with our intern. A twenty-three-year-old intern, for God’s fucking sake! I told her she could buy me out or deal with me every goddamn day. We sold everything we owned together and she paid me off.”

“And then you bought the car?”

“First, I cried and screamed and threatened all kinds of destruction on her. But I finally calmed down and got laid a couple of times. I invested like hell, bought a trailer for my truck and drove to Georgia for my car. And here I am.”

“What will you do now?”

“I have a handful of clients that won’t make a move without me. I take care of their advertising from here. My investments take care of the rest.”

“So, here we are in the middle of nowhere, trying to get it together.”

“Yes, yes we are.” Brigid looks to Shelly. “But we don’t seem to be alone.”

Half-popped, Shelly thinks she might just believe her.



SHELLY LETS BRIGID drive the Chevelle back to the cabin. Sobering up, she’s sure that, for this woman, she’s either just another lay or a fun ride on the other side of the tracks. She’s not sure she cares. In a few months, Brigid will be gone and it won’t matter anyway.



THEY PULL UP to Shelly’s little cabin and cut the engine. The drive has given Shelly a chance to pull her head together.

“If you don’t mind, I’ll drive home in your car and bring it back in the morning.”

Insanity strikes. “Or you could stay here.”

“That would be great.”

Shelly takes Brigid by the hand and leads her to the screened porch. “Would you like a beer? I’m going to get one.” She turns for the cabin door and feels Brigid’s hands on her waist.

Brigid pulls Shelly to her and holds her tight. The night air surrounds them and a potent energy sparks.

They look to each other and Shelly finds a fierceness that she's only given to metal.

Brigid is warm and soft and pliable under her fingers. There is a flow to her flesh that echoes the Myrtle surf. Controlled by the moon, the tides, Brigid is more real than the rush of a current. Shelly presses against this powerful force and hopes to absorb the energy.

The forest closes in on the lovers and fills the space with the moistness of underbrush and the high light of the moon. Captive inside the screens, they collapse to the rough-hewn floorboards. Shelly was fucked by Lenore, and passively enjoyed Keeran. She would take this woman with every bit of power she has.

There is no control. Shelly tears at Brigid's clothes. Something pops, snaps and tears. The full curves of Brigid burst out. Brigid matches Shelly's fervor and rips the cotton top from her body. Shelly's high, firm breasts bear down, meeting belly to belly and tits to tits.

She stretches her hand up and clasps Brigid's right hand above her head. She roughly paws the tan skin and rose nipples. Such an expanse of beauty. A playground for those that have time. There is no time.

Shelly consumes Brigid's lips and mouth in an open kiss. Slippery saliva, nipping teeth and the exchange of moans in their mouths. Shelly is quite sure she could eat this woman alive as she pulls with her teeth at Brigid's bottom lip. She could bite her but pulls back to gnaw down the side of her neck.

Shelly looks into Brigid's tortured face and gaining contact, hears, "Yes. Now. Please."

Shelly drives her hand between Brigid's legs. The soft smoothness continues into a wet pool in the cotton that contains her.

There is no point in backing off now. Shelly grabs a handful of panty and rips it from Brigid's body. Her slight "Eek" lets Shelly know she got a few hairs in there too.

"Stay."

Shelly works down Brigid's body on an expedition. Hills and valleys better than those she lives in. More lying below the surface than she could imagine. Brigid's

warm, earthy scent rises from the wooden planks under her, through the folds of her legs and into Shelly's waiting, appreciative nose. She can't remember a better scent. A more encouraging sign, she can't imagine.

What would it be like to taste the controlled destiny of a woman on a mission? How would they meet? She lets go of Brigid's hand, which is then thrust into her long hair. She nuzzles further down, shutting her eyes and following Brigid's geography. Brigid's cunt is swollen and excited, her clit pronouncing itself between her lips. Shelly clasps on and sucks with a fierce determination.

Brigid arches against Shelly's mouth and grabs handfuls of her hair. There is a moment Shelly is sure she can't breath, but sucks with the faith that it is well worth it.

"God ... dammit! Fuck!"

Brigid arches in to Shelly's mouth and comes in a ferocious wave.

Breathing heavy, the women calm and begin to laugh at their location.

"I think I have a splinter in my ass."



THE BRIGHT MORNING light wakes Shelly and she looks at the sleeping woman beside her. She doubts her rash behavior of the night before. Her loss of control. What makes her think this lay is any more meaningful than another? She sits up and chastises herself.

At Shelly's movement, Brigid opens her eyes and smiles. The smile fades as she tries to read Shelly.

"We shouldn't have done this," Shelly says.

"Woman, I swear, if you tell me this was a mistake I will feed you to your own damn dog."

"It wasn't a mistake for me. But I'm sure it was for you. I can't imagine I'm exactly your type."

“Woman, you are a pain in my ass! I’ve had ‘just sex’. So could have you had you wanted to.”

“That’s not what I wanted.”

“What do you want? Do you even know?”

“I know I don’t want to be some spoiled woman’s toy.”

“Toy? You think I’m playing with you?”

“What else could you want from me?”

“You’ve got some issue lady. Do you want everything you love to drive away?”

“I never said I loved you.”

Brigid looks at Shelly with a mixture of anger and pity. She gets out of bed and quickly dresses.

Halfway down the stairs she says, “Really, honey—no one is this bitter and survives.”

The door closes behind her and Shelly is left with her demons.

End