



JASON A. NEY

UNTIL IT HURTS

The dinner was my wife's idea. She said it would give me an opportunity to meet Mackenzie, hear her story, and ask her any questions that would help me come to a decision. If we were going to do this, we needed to be on the same page.

So over a meal in our dining room—Erin and I on one side of the table, Mackenzie on the other—she told us how her relationship with Ryan had seemed like a dream at first. How he'd told her he'd never been married before, never had kids. How, when she'd unexpectedly got pregnant and told him that there was no way she'd be able to carry the baby to term, that she and her ex-husband had tried for years but her body couldn't support a viable pregnancy, he'd been so sweet and supportive. How he'd said he would marry her. How once the baby looked like it would make it, he'd turned into someone she no longer knew, a vicious, controlling abuser who constantly demeaned her and was now demanding an abortion.

How she'd found out he had a wife and two kids in Connecticut, his job here in Colorado allowing him to ferry surreptitiously between two lives. How he was threatening to throw her out of their shared rental, and how her ex-husband had destroyed her once-sterling credit by stealing their chiropractor business away from her and then somehow still forcing her to pay spousal support, leaving her in the kind of financial shape that made her unattractive to landlords. How (and at some point in here, the tears started falling), because of her Lupus and rotated hip, she wouldn't be able to continue to work alongside Erin in the hospital where the two of them had met. How she just needed to stay in Colorado long enough to have the baby on her employer-provided insurance and recover from the pregnancy so she could then safely move in with her mom in South Carolina. How it wasn't ideal, given how cruel and judgmental her mom had been toward her and her pregnancy, but it was her only option.