

Chapter 1 – Rude Awakening

The morning light was coming from the window inside the hotel room. where Hughie and Annie were lying on the bed still in euphoria from the activities of last night and the new development in their relationship.

Hughie looked down at his left shoulder where Annie rested her head. She was smiling and at ease, her eyes locked on something at his other side, but he kept staring at her face. The relaxation on it he never seen before, even on their date at the bowling alley she was tensed, trying to hide her true abilities to not scare him off. But now her face was showing none of that angst, nor the turmoil he saw in her during the belief expo, no, right now she was just at peace, and he loved seeing her like that. He kissed her forehead gently, and after she didn't react, he just kept doing it with a small grin on his face.

Then Annie moved. Reaching her arm out to the nightstand on his right and pulling the top magazine that was laying there. When she rolled to her back, head still on his shoulder, and held the magazine in front of both of them. The smile was still wide on his face, but his eyebrow frowned in confusion as he said, *"I didn't realize you were such a Cigar Aficionado."*

Annie chuckled *"I really just can't get enough of huge, gross logs of not filtered tobaccos."* She replied in a teasing voice while tossing the magazine aside. Then she rolled back toward his body and throw her arm around him to hold him closer. All Hughie could do was close his eyes and smile down at her.

Annie released a few content 'hummmms' before saying happily *"That's all very nice."* But then something she tried to push out of her mind all night was not willing to just leave thing be. The smile slipped from her face, not that Hughie saw it with his eyes closed, as she looked down at his bare chest and began slowly *"But..."* She raised her head to look at his face, gave him an awkward look when she saw his eyes open *"There is a but coming."* She warned with soft voice.

Hughie just kept smiling at her and gave her a confused, *"Ok?"*

Annie took a deep breath and asked *"Why did you bring me to a hotel?"* looking straight into his eyes *"Not to your place?"* She added.

Hughie wasn't sure how to respond to that at first, he turned his head slightly, and looked away before saying *"Well... You know... I mean my dad could make you some post coital pizza rolls. I just figured it will be slightly less humiliating."* He finished with an awkward chuckle and an uncomfortable look back at her.

Annie agreed vocally, but her face was still hesitant. The atmosphere between the two sure didn't ease up in Hughie opinion, so with a wide smile on his face he tried to lighten to mood with a joke *"Yeah... Yeah, very convincing."*

Annie bites her lower lip and look up at him. Hughie began to feel a little worried *"Are you Ok? What's up?"* he asked.

Annie took a moment to consider her answer, before she looked away and started *"It's just..."* But then she stopped for a moment and raised herself on her elbow to look down at his face before continuing *"I never seen you place, or your job. You are kind of a mystery to me."*

Hughie began to feel a new emotion after her last statement: guilt. But he didn't let it show on his face as he tried to change the subject with a joke *"That's hot right?"*

Annie's expression didn't change, she just tilted her head to the right and ignored his question *"You got to understand, my dad was nothing but corny jokes and expensive gifts. Until he was gone, and all the money along with him."* She looked at Hughie worried eyes and kept saying *"I know it's not you, but I need to know the hotel is a nice thing and not a red flag thing."* She stopped at just kept staring down, waiting for a response.

Hughie was about to tell her a small amount of the truth, how he quit his job, how it was hard after Robin. But than he looked deep into her brown eye, the worry, the fear, and most of all the affection. The words 'red flag' kept repeating in his head, making his guilt grow each time, and with the guilt Bucher's words came back too 'what will happen when she learns the truth?'

Hughie's smile was long gone, his eyes were staring at the distance and his body was tenser than ever. Annie's soft feature turned into a worried frown as she kept looking down at Hughie's face and softly called *"Hughie?"*

Hughie broke out of his thought loop. He knew that if he will evade the question now all he would be able to do is hope she never learn the truth and Billy was wrong, but if she does their relationship and any chance for forgiveness will be gone.

He took a deep breath and locked his eyes back with Annie's, he knew that he is putting everything in risk with what he about to do, but at that moment all he cared about was Annie. *"Annie, you are right, you were right in our first date too. There is something wrong with me, a very bad secret."* He saw how Annie's worried frown deepened as he added *"I'm afraid to tell you, because you will probably hate me afterwards."*

Annie's features soften back, she presses a palm to his cheek and said softly *"Never Hughie. Just tell me what's on your mind?"*

"I killed Translucent!" Hughie just blurted out before his courage disappears.

Annie sat up on the bed, looking down at Hughie's wide eyes face with wide eyes of her own. She took a moment to shake her head before looking back at him and whisper *"What?"*

Hughie swallowed loudly looking at Annie's confused expression and repeated, much quitter and weaker this time *"I-I killed Translucent. A-And installed a bug on your phone."*

Annie kept shaking her head, not willing to believe what she was hearing. All she could ask was *"Why?"*

Hughie let out a heavy sigh *"It's... It's a long story."* Was all he could muster to say at the moment.

Annie start putting things together. Translucent disappearance, her in the seven, Hughie's interest in her. Annie's stare became steely as a very ugly picture was painted in her mind, where all the pieces just fell into place.

She jumped from the bed, knowing the brown t-shirt she borrowed from Hughie after last night reach past her waist, she took a few steps backwards. *"All this time you were using me!"* She shouted the accusation, anger growing inside of her as she saw Hughie trying to protest, but she cut him off *"It makes sense now. You knew who I was since the start didn't you? You wanted to get close to me so you could keep tabs on the seven!"*

Hughie was shaking his head repeatedly, trying to get up from bed himself, not caring he only wears his boxers. But after the first movement Hughie flinch as the lamp to his right

explodes with electric sparks covering his bare skin. When he looks back at Annie, her eyes are glowing white, and her palm are open, ready to attack him. His heart clenched in pain seeing her like that. Bucher's warnings about Starlight killing him suddenly didn't sound so ridiculous anymore. Before he could say something Annie glared at him, eyes still glowing at said furiously *"Yes. Get out of bed slowly, we put our clothes on and then I'm taking you Vaught. Don't try anything, or I will blind you faster than you will be able close your eyes."*

Hughie slowly got to his knees on the bed and begged *"A-A-Annie, p-please just let me try and explain."* When all she did was raise an angry eyebrow at him, he added somberly, *"If after you hear me out you still hate me... I-I will come with you quietly, I promise."*

Annie just stood there watching Hughie kneeling on the bed in front of her. One look at his pained face, caused her to at least pull her powers back, her eyes turning from shining gold to deep brown. But the anger inside of her never left her as she kept glaring at him and bit out harshly *"Go ahead let's see what lie you can tell this time."*

Hughie slowly stood up from the bed and tried to take a step toward Annie, but the blonde just raised her palm in his direction with the same glare on her face. Hughie felt another stab in his heart, but he also knew he had himself to blame. He shook his head slowly before starting *"I never lied to you Annie! I never told you the entire truth I'm more than willing to own up to it, but I never lied to you, or tried to hurt you."*

Annie just gave him a bitter laugh *"Oh so you didn't follow me to the bench in the park, and approached me in my lowest point so I will see you as a friend? You didn't follow me to the race to get my number? Didn't go out with me just to plant the bug? Didn't came to the expo just so I could get you an in with Ezekiel? Didn't sleep with me to make sure I will stay in the dark about you?!"* Her voice grew louder with every accusation, but now that she was starting to let it all out, she couldn't stop *"You were the only good thing to happen to me since I got to this fucking city! I trusted you, started to fall in... And you lied to me, used me..."*

"NO!" Hughie shouted, surprising Annie and making her freeze mid rent. This time when Hughie spoke, it was much weaker, but more determinate *"No Annie, it was never like any of what you said. All the horrible things of my story didn't begin until after I met you on the bench, and I never knew you were Starlight back then, I just saw a beautiful woman crying and wanted to help. I admit I was in the race because of A-train, but I was happy that I met you, and that meal had nothing to do with that. In our first date I was happy for the first time in a long time, yes, I planted the bug, but I didn't want to in the beginning. And I came to the*

expo because you asked me, all the stuff with Ezekiel just turned up while you did the teen thing, and I was completely honest when I talked to you after your speech.”

Hughie had one more thing he wanted to say, he gathered all the adrenalin left in his system so he could push the words out *“You-You are not the only one with deep feeling here. I swear I didn’t sleep with you because of any of this! Annie if my goal here was keeping you in the dark about it, why would I tell you the truth in the first place?!”*

Annie felt like someone struck her in the head. In her confusion and anger, she did miss that point. She allowed herself to calm down, at least enough so she could actually listen to what Hughie has to say objectively.

When Hughie saw Annie’s tense stance softening, he let out a sigh and sat at the left corner of the bed. He looked up at Annie hoped she will join him.

Annie seemed to consider it for a moment before moving forward and taking a seat on the opposite corner of the bed. Hughie once again felt a stab in his heart, already missing the comfort being close to her brought him.

Annie noticed the hurt expression Hughie had when she chose the farthest sit from him she could, but right now she just couldn’t bring herself to trust him yet, or herself if she would allow herself to be drawn to his warmth again. They both will have to be content she can bring herself to be civil in the current situation. She kept her stare at Hughie and asked without any emotion in her voice *“Why?”*