

## The Rehabilitation of Kylie

Written by Max Harper

Part Five: Perspective

The end of Lori's shift had come faster than she had anticipated. Buried in her purse was Quackers, Kylie's stuffed duck. The afternoon had passed with little fanfare as she perused through applicant after applicant. Most weren't what she was looking for but a small handful of them were. She marked them for review by Shannon and slid them over to the corner of her desk. The rejects were filed away on the cart just outside her office. Her office was one of many that lined the walls around the large office space that her department was in. Shannon's office was not too far away, the largest of all of them and the only corner office. It reflected her status within the company and was the envy of all of those looking to move up. In the middle of the office space were the cubicles for the slew of clerks that helped the people with offices. Lori had never had an assistant before and for the most part, had no idea what to do with the young man. He was always quick to respond to her pages and she struggled to find things for him to do. She had intentions of talking to Shannon about not needing his services when he gently knocked on her door frame. She was used to leaving her door open as to not appear shut off or stuck up.

"Ma'am?"

"Yes?"

"You have a message, Ma'am."

"How many times have I asked you not to call me that?"

"A few, Ma'am."

"And yet you persist."

"It's part of the job, Ma'am."

"I doubt that. What's the message?"

"Dr. Vale wishes to speak to you in her office, Ma'am."

"Me? Directly?"

"Correct."

"When?"

"As soon as you are able, Ma'am."

"When did she call?"

"A few moments ago, Ma'am."

"Wonderful. Take these files to Ms. Shannon would you?"

"Of course, Ma'am."

Lori left him to take care of her busy work and headed for the elevator. She glanced at his cubicle to try to get a glimpse of his name. It had only been a few days, but she hadn't been bothered enough to learn who he was or anything about him. She was so used to being a solitary worker that having help was too strange and unusual for her. She used her key card to select the top floor. Moira had an open door policy for the most part, but an employee needed to go up the chain of command before they were allowed to speak directly with her. Only a few people had access to her office without an invitation, though few would dare uninvited. Moira Vale was an imposing woman and was intimidating to practically everyone.

The elevator dinged and the doors slid open silently and Lori stepped out into the entry room. Elegantly decorated, there was little to no furniture in the room. One simple chair sat a few feet from an ornate wooden desk. Waiting for her was a young woman who had to be in her mid-thirties. Makeup covered her face, perhaps a little more than Lori would have preferred. The woman looked uncomfortable though Lori couldn't tell why. The desk protected the woman from any peering beyond the professional level.

"Hello, Mrs. Gillis. Dr. Vale is expecting you." The woman was courteous and professional, pressing a button on the desk in front of her and Lori watched the double doors near the desk swing open. Lori wanted to thank the woman but thought best of it. Everything seemed too sterile and highly controlled. Lori moved through the doors and they swung shut behind her. Lori walked down

the hall, heading in the only direction she could. Adorning the walls were various pictures of what looked like board members or high ranking figures in the company. Each portrait had dates etched into the brass plates at the bottom stating the individual's names and their years of tenure. The last portrait, the one of Moira Vale, held the longest tenure of anyone on the wall. She had been with the company since its inception and remained the primary figurehead.

At the double doors at the end of the hall, Lori found nothing to signal her presence. It seemed odd in such a high tech building to resort to such a basic form of communication such as knocking, but without any doorbell, Lori had little choice. She reached up to rap her knuckles against the high grade wood, but the door swung open and the tall figure of Moira Vale shocked Lori.

“Ahh, Mrs. Gillis, you’re right on time.”

“Oh time? You were expecting me?”

“Of course. I judge all my employees by how quickly they answer my summons. And, I watch.” She pointed to the corner above the doorframe and Lori quickly spotted the dome shape of a camera. She mentally kicked herself for not seeing it as she approached the doors. Moira was a constant surprise to her and she didn’t know if she was ever going to get used to this woman.

“Come on in, let us talk.” Moira said, stepping aside so that Lori could enter. Lori entered the office and took pause at how lavish it was. She had expected the office to be the best looking room in the building, but she was ill-prepared for just how stark of a difference there was between the entryway, hall, and the office.

“How are you adjusting to things around here?” Moira asked, forcing Lori’s attention to the conversation and not the room.

“It’s going well, I guess.”

“You guess? Are you not finding your place here?”

“I am, as far as most things go.”

“I see. And do you plan on explaining things, or are you just going to keep attempting to bullshit me?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I don’t care for the small talk. When I ask questions, I want straight answers. Honesty means more to me than your ability to file paperwork. So, I ask you again, how are you adjusting to things here.”

“To be frank, I’m not.”

“An honest answer. Good. Now, why?”

“Because I don’t understand the job that I’m doing. I sit at a desk all day and I look at applicants for your program and somehow, I’m supposed to know who is worthy and who isn’t. I don’t know that I am qualified for this job.”

“What qualifications do you think your job requires?”

“If I knew that, I would know what I need to do to be better at my job.”

“You don’t think that you are good at your job?”

“I can’t really say, nor is it my place to say. Everyone answers to someone.”

“And here you are. What I will say, as far as your job performance, I have little to say. Your job is based on the one thing that no amount of training can imitate.”

“I’m not sure that I understand. Rather, I don’t understand.”

“Instinct. Motherly instinct. I can’t buy that, it’s a learned trait. I can’t expect anyone who works for me to have that level of prerequisite skill but when I do find it, I am more than willing to pay for that experience. This is why you have such a position in this company and so far, I have not been disappointed.”

“Motherly instinct? There are many mothers out there.”

“Quite a few of them and many work here, but not a single person on my payroll last week had done anything like you have.”

“I didn’t do anything that spectacular.”

“On the contrary, you sell yourself short. You recognised that your child was in need of drastic change in her life. Whether you knew what you were doing or not isn’t relevant. What you did was find a way to help someone outside of the typical norms that society would accept. While you weren’t fully on board with the answer that you found, you knew that once you set down that path, you needed to commit to it.”

“You sound a lot like Mark.”

“I should, he got his knowledge from me. That’s not my point. Shannon has been in close contact with me and the work you are doing is near exemplary.”

“I feel like I’m just guessing.”

“Why is that?”

“I would have to say that because I don’t know the entire situation with these applicants.”

“Would that help?” “I’m not sure.”

“I see. While Shannon has overseen your work, I don’t feel that it is necessary anymore. You are ready to stand on your own.”

“After a few days?”

“Yes. I hire successful people, not people that wish to be successful. What I feel you need to do though is search yourself.”

“Search myself?”

“Yes. Do you know why you are feeling so disconnected from your work?”

“I am not sure.”

“You don’t believe in yourself. You can’t see the big picture or the final stretch.”

“I do believe in myself. As an independent woman, I have had no one but myself to rely on.”

“Relying on yourself is not the same as believing in yourself. Far from it. If you believed in yourself, you wouldn’t have tried so hard to rise above your station and be a part of elite society. You knew little to nothing about the group you were trying to infiltrate and fell by accident onto the right path. You could call it providence but I call it blind luck. A strong woman who believes in herself would never need to seek the approval of others.”

“I don’t need to seek the-”

“You do, and you know it. That’s the rub. You know where the path is, you know what you need to do to walk down it, but you can’t. Your daughter is not the only one on a journey, nor is she the only one who needs our help.”

“I don’t-”

“You know what I mean. I’m not here to convince you to join our program, it wouldn’t work for you. What I am saying is that this place offers more than a specific type of help to people. You seek the approval of others, you will find it here. But like all roads, it’s the journey of self discovery that is what’s most important, for you, and for your daughter. In the end, Acceptance is your true goal. What you seek in approval, you need to find within yourself. The opinions of others mean very little. You need to be happy with who you are, where you have come from, and who you want to be. As Kylie discovers herself, so must you, only then, can your paths Reconcile.”

“You sound like a therapist.”

Moira laughed, “Well, it was my first degree! Serious conversations aside, let’s go for a stroll. I have some things that I want to show you.”

Lori glanced at her watch. She needed to meet Mark to hand off Kylie’s stuffed duck.

“I do have other obligations this afternoon.”

“Mark will understand. Come, let me give you a tour.”

Moira led Lori back to the elevator, saying nothing to the desk woman. Moira pulled a key from her pocket and inserted it into a slot in the control panel. She turned it and pressed the first floor button. Lori cocked an eyebrow at the motion but said nothing.

“It’s an override key. Allows me to go where I want without being interrupted. Perks of being the boss.”

The elevator door pinged but the door did not open. Moira turned around and pressed a small section of the detailed wood panel. The section depressed into the wood, something clicked,

and the detailed wood split down the middle, revealing a second set of doors to the elevator. The secrecy reminded Lori of the spy movies that her son used to watch and imitate. This world she had fallen into was stranger than she had initially observed. The hall they stepped into was plain and sterile but along one of the walls were panels and panels of glass.

They stopped by one of them and looked through to a group of people that we're collecting. They didn't seem to notice that they were being watched and Lori guessed that the glass was a one way mirror. From what she could remember from the morning was that there were no reflective mirrors on her way to her office.

"Yes. Before you ask, the answer is yes. I can see by the puzzled expression on your face that you are wondering how the glass works. It's one way glass. We can see them but they can't see us. The trick is a bending of the light. Small projectors along the top of the wall lay a detailed image onto the reflective glass, tuned to make the casual observer think that the wall is just a wall, nothing more."

"It's a bit over the top, don't you think?"

"Not at all. You see, this hall is part of many, where the beginning groundwork is laid for our clients. Many of whom will pass by this glass on a regular basis. The average member of the public doesn't need to see any of this but at the same time, we want to invite them to put their minds at ease before making a decision to enlist our services. Hence, the tour." She motioned to the group of people on the other side of the glass. A strikingly beautiful woman appeared from further down the hall and gathered the group together. Her mannerisms were well rehearsed and she seemed to be able to win the group's trust within a few moments. She motioned for them to follow her and Moria nodded. The group, Moira, and Lori followed the woman, a wall of glass separating them. As they walked, Moira recited the words the tour guide was saying.

"This Institute was founded many years ago with the sole purpose of helping those that society couldn't. We have found that normal means of therapy or rehabilitation don't work for every individual, so other means had to be found. For over 3500 years, mankind has helped its members through the term "healing through words". While successful to a point, it wasn't until the mid 1900's that a new approach was found. Behaviorism. Behaviorism looked at therapy as not just a healing of the mind, but with an emphasis on healing behaviors or the actions of others.

"What is a crime but an outcry for attention? Morally, we all know that theft, assault, and other crimes are wrong. We are taught from a young age not to hit, to take, or to hurt others. Somewhere in our lives, we begin to find ways to justify these actions and their moral ambiguity. Is it wrong? What if the means justify the ends? If I steal food to survive or to feed my children, is it truly wrong? Who is to say that the gray area between right and wrong can be easily defined?

"Here at the Institute, we don't punish crimes or criminal behavior. We look at the individual and the circumstances from which the so-called crime takes place and determine if the individual needs our type of care. Crime is crime. Rape is incorrigible and not something we can help. Murder is reprehensible and needs to be punished.

"With various means and methods, the Institute has successfully helped every single person that has come to us, from people off the streets, to people at the highest levels of government. Our work is one hundred percent effective at finding the source of people's behavior and curing it.

"I know, it sounds too fantastic to believe, but I can assure you that no matter the person, no matter the behavior, no one that walks through these doors ever leaves the same as they came in. I also know that our reputation needs not the praise of myself or others. You are here because you are at your wits end. Conventional rehabilitation or any of the other 60 plus types of therapy have not been successful. Many of you appear stressed, lacking sleep, and at your emotional limit. I am here to assure you that you can put your faith and trust in us. We have never met a person that we can't help.

"No, if any of you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them."

The tour had taken them down many hallways where the group had been shown various rooms with "clients" talking to "therapists". Moira was quick to point out that it was only a facade. They were actors, paid to sell the story to the public.

One person, who had not seemed impressed by the rehearsed speech, was quick to raise their hand.

“This sounds all well and good but you can’t actually expect me to believe that you are the end all, be all solution to our problems.”

“Your skepticism is natural-”

“My skepticism is that I have been to so many of these introductions and meetings and it seems like all of you people say the same thing, just spun differently. What makes you think that any of us would actually believe you?”

The woman smiled, as she had been smiling throughout the whole tour.

“Well, I can assure you, with first hand knowledge, that this program works.”

“And what does that mean? First hand knowledge? That you watched someone get so called saved?”

“Watched? No, this is not a spectator’s journey. I am personally one of the success stories you seem to doubt.

“My name is Christina Mills and this place saved my life. I grew up poor to a single mother who did what she could. Living in the inner city of Detroit, I ran the streets, getting into trouble, vandalising, stealing, you name it. I ran with a rough crowd and by fifteen, I was pregnant. I aborted my child because I was too young to be a mother but regretted it every day. I got depressed and started using drugs. It started with marijuana, slowly got heavier, and before I knew it, I was addicted to crack cocaine. So addicted that I dropped out of school, ran away from home, and sold the only thing I had to get my fix. My body. You heard me. I sold my sixteen year old body to men for drugs. But the crack wasn’t enough. The high had worn off. I tried anything and everything that I could get my hands on. Meth, acid, heroin. If it could be gotten, I was determined to get it.

“I can see your disbelief. Looking at me now, you would never know that at eighteen, I let an unknown number of men have their way with me for a shot of heroin. I got pregnant again. Hard to keep track of the birth control you don’t take when you’re high. My son was born in a crack house. I tried to be a good mother. I tried to get clean. To say no. To be a parent. But you don’t know the curse that is addiction. And I didn’t know the cost.

“Late one night, when I was nineteen. I was driving home from a friend’s house, my baby boy in the backseat. I had just gotten off working a twelve hour shift and I had picked up a small little pick me up from my friend. I hadn’t taken anything. I was as sober as I could be. But exhaustion and drugs are strange bedfellows. So I pulled over. Smoked some meth. It was just a few hits.

“Two miles down the road I got distracted by my baby waking up and drove right into the side of a police car. The officer wasn’t hurt and neither was my baby but my lifestyle had finally caught up with me.

“The judge didn’t care about my story. Didn’t care about my history. Didn’t care about another black girl addicted to drugs. Didn’t care about anything. He gave me twenty years in prison for intent to distribute meth, attempted violence against a police officer, and the reckless endangerment of my child. He took my baby from me and gave him to someone else.

“On the day of my appeal, the judge overseeing my case wasn’t interested in anything I had to say and I thought that all hope was lost until Dr. Moira Vale stood up in my defence. I had never seen her before in my life and she convinced the judge and panel of sentence review to alter my sentence.

“Instead of twenty years, I had to agree to three years of drug and behavior rehabilitation here, at the Institute. And let me assure you, she saved my life. I got off the drugs. I turned my life around. She gave me my life back. A career. And the means to fight for the custody of my child.

“That was fifteen years ago and I’m proud to say that my son is an all state athlete, salutatorian, and looking to become a physical therapist. We have dinner every night in our home and I thank God every night for what this place has done for me.”

The crowd had been at rapt attention through the story, except the naysayer, who scoffed at the end of her story.



“You honestly expect us to believe all of that?”

To her credit, the woman was completely professional and with a flair for the dramatic. She stuck her thumb in her mouth and with a wet pop, she pulled out the top plate of her dentures. Her gum line had seen severe damage from drug use. She rolled up her sleeves to show the scars from the track marks.

“I survived a life of addiction and although I don’t normally mind talking about my story, the last thing that I need is to be called a liar. For further proof, if that is what you need, please, follow me.”

She led them around the corner to a hall filled with before and after pictures. There were so many that it was awe inspiring. Near the end, with one of the oldest dates was the before and after picture of Christina Mills.

“This place saved my life and the life of my son. I was hopelessly addicted. I had lost or damaged all of my teeth. And now, I’m a healthy, responsible, and highly regarded member of society.”

She didn’t need to say anything more. The wall of faces, each picture worth a thousand words, told a story of an unknown length. The group was silent as they looked over the many, many faces. Each face had a plaque under it that said what they had come to the Institute for Drug addiction was a popular reason, but there were many, many more.

Behind the glass, Lori was astounded. “You’ve really helped all of those people?”

“Of course. Our pedigree is built on our success, not some fictional notion.” Moira said.

“Did you personally help her?”

“I did. She was one of my first. And one of my hardest.”

“How? With the same program that Kylie is in?”

“Not exactly. I was working on the program when I found Christina. Let’s continue on and I’ll tell you the story.”

They walked away from the wall of mirrors and deeper into the complex. Moira led Lori to a staircase. They headed down, their heels clicking on the concrete. The hallways lost their decor and were plain concrete and steel construction. “What’s down here?” “The beginning.

“When we started, we had very little idea of how to apply what we knew to a larger client base. I had been successful in rehabilitating my husband. He was a drunken, abusive man, arrogant and cruel. I had tired of his adultery and poor upbringing and decided to remake him into a man I wouldn’t be embarrassed to be around. Physically weaker than him, I couldn’t do it by force, so I used my wit. I withheld sex and any intimacy that I could from him, pulling away whenever he tried. He loved the chase. The more I didn’t want him or showed interest, the more he tried. Eventually, he gave up on chasing other women, convinced that I was his only true conquest. Yes, he called me a conquest. He was still a pig.

“I weaned him into his new role slowly. I would let him lay on my chest, fully clothed, and slowly I would groom him. I would tell him in those moments that he was my good boy. It took months, but eventually, I wore him down. I told him that I wanted him to be my baby. A role play, as it were. I said that if he was willing to do what I wanted and be a good boy for me, I would let him have some of his mommy.

“At first, I was disgusted at calling myself that. I hated his mother. He did too. She was a vile woman. But in our nights together where I would hold him to my chest, he would tell me how his mother was never there for him. He had grown up neglected and abandoned by his mother, who had always wanted a daughter instead of a son.

“Unaccepted by his mother, he had tried to please her by dressing and behaving like a girl. It had worked for a little while, but he wasn’t willing to fully commit. He was too ashamed of wearing girl’s clothes out in public. She scorned him and refused him any sort of maternal care afterwards. Mind you, he was six at the time.

“His mother passed away when he was in his forties and her passing brought his animosity towards women back out into his daily life. That’s why he cheated on me, that’s why he hit me, and

that's why he drank. He even admitted that he should have done what she wanted just to feel something close to her love.

"Nothing he could say could excuse what he had done but it did explain some things. I asked him one night if he had ever thought about starting over. I asked him if he felt he could find peace if he relives his past. He hadn't answered at first, but about a week or so later, he told me that believed so. His trauma of being discarded by his mother had affected nearly every facet of his adult life. He didn't know what it meant or how it could be resolved, but he wouldn't be able to be the man I deserved with her cursed shadow hanging over him.

"It took him a while to admit it, but the months of grooming I had done had made him better appreciate me. He wanted my attention, my love, and my affection. He understood that I wasn't his mother but he felt that I was the only way he could reconcile his past and repair his present.

"I asked him how. Specifically, what did he want me to do about it. I wasn't prepared for his answer. He wanted me to fix him by letting him relive his trauma and choosing a different path.

"*She'd always call me her little sissy baby.* He would say. I asked him what a sissy was. The baby part was obvious, though I doubt he understood what it had meant at the time. *A sissy,* he said, *was a boy that wanted to be a girl.* Back in those days, a sissy was an insult to any boy or man. We didn't know back then that it was more in reference to gender confusion. I remember the day that I boldly asked him if he wanted to be my sissy baby. Behind the anger and rejection was a glimmer of hope. He had barely nodded his head as an answer. He was too scared to admit it out loud, but he wanted it. I told him that this was his last chance. He would either be a better man, or I would leave him. Either way, this was my last sacrifice to his issues.

"I kept the rules simple. I knew that he couldn't live his trauma all day long so every night, after work, he would come home and I would make him my sissy baby. He would do everything that I told him to do, wear what I told him to wear, and behave how I told him to behave. In return, he could deal with his issues in his way and decide what kind of person he wanted to be.

"And so our secret life began. Every day he would come home from work, I would have him strip, lay down on the bed, and I would diaper him. Back then, we only had cloth diapers and rubber pants, but they worked. He was banned from the bathroom. If he was going to be a sissy baby, he needed to embrace all aspects of it. He fought me on the idea at first, but once the dresses and bonnets came out, he changed his tune. I had spent most of our marriage buying his clothes so I knew his sizes pretty well.

"His nights were spent playing on the floor with dolls, wetting his diapers and being my little baby girl. He accepted it all, piece by piece and I found him to be changing. He was more attentive to me, respectful and kind. The mindset I had him in made him the best husband he had been in years. So I increased my efforts.

"During the day, I sent him to work in my panties. Old ones that I never wore. He hated it at first but went along. Then I added tights. Then a training bra. Slowly, I was introducing all the feminine things his mother had wanted him to wear. Clothing styles changed in the years since she was a boy and more and more things could be viewed as unisex.

"But one thing remained constant. Each night, when he came home, the diapers went on. It didn't matter how girly he looked, he remained my baby. He stopped calling me by my name, instead, just calling me Mommy. He stopped fussing at anything that I wanted him to do or wear and stopped drinking.

"I had him as my sissy baby for two years when he finally told me that he was at peace. He had put the animosity towards his mother away, she couldn't hurt him anymore. He stood before me, the prettiest girl I could make him and thanked me for saving him. He got undressed, putting all of his girl's clothes away and showered. When he emerged from the bathroom, he was a new man, a real man, and he made love to me like he never had before.

"I was skeptical at first, but the change I had seen in him was permanent. I had fixed him by breaking him down to his base elements and letting him rebuild himself with respect for me in mind. He was and remained a new man, a loving husband, and a successful businessman.

With his help, I started the Institute and began recruiting.

"I loved him until the very end. The man I'd made had been everything that I hoped he could be. He passed away from a medical condition four years ago but in that time, he helped me to help all of those faces that you saw on the wall, especially Christina. You may doubt how we help our clients, but your doubts are the same doubts that I had all those years ago. There is no quick fix for a human being. Everything we do takes time. Every hurt we have heals at its own pace. If I can teach you anything, I hope to teach you patience."

They had reached the end of the hall. There was a single door at the end that they stopped at.

"That was an amazing story. Did your husband ever go back to dressing like a girl?"

"No. He had put that part of himself away. It wasn't needed anymore. It happens to some people. Some find that their lives are only complete when they can live out their inner desires."

Moira opened the door and stepped through. Lori was floored, struck silent by what she saw before her. They were standing on a catwalk over a massive room. Giant pillars of concrete held up the building above her and the room stretched on far longer than the building was wide.

Below them were what looked like cages, cubed rooms with clear plastic roofs one after another, running down the length of the room. Like a warehouse, the room held hundreds of these rooms and in each one was a person, laying or tied down in enlarged cribs. Every person she could see was diapered and in some form of infantile clothing. Between the rooms were walkways. Aisles upon aisles where workers were pushing carts. One would be pushing a cart of diapering supplies, another, of bottles.

"Wha- What is this?"

"This? This is one of our fantasy wards. Everyone you see is an adult baby or diaper lover. They come here to live out their desires in a safe and controlled environment. Some just want to spend the weekend, others plan longer stays."

"These are all voluntary?"

"Absolutely. Every person you see wants to be here. Chooses to be here. Where society would shun them, ridicule them, and demean them, we accept them. In this long and twisted life we live, everyone needs a way to be happy. For these people, this is it. And they are not the only ones. In other places, there are warehouses like this where people can live out their most secretive sexual desires, anything and everything you can think of, as long as it's legal, we will accommodate. For a fee of course."

"And people are willing to pay?"

"Do you need any other proof? We do a lot of pro bono work, but the bulk of our income comes from fulfilling people's desires. Can you say to me, honestly, that all of these people are wrong for giving in to their desires?"

"I...No. I don't know."

"You want to judge them from a moral standpoint. Most do. But if personal pleasure is a sin, then we are all doomed to perdition."

"I don't know what to say."

"Nothing. You don't need to say anything. All this little tour was intended to do was to show you perspective. The files you look through everyday play a big part in our job. Those that just need to blow off some steam or find a way to unwind generally end up in a place like this. Your job is to find the ones that truly need our help, like Kylie, whose journey is not so black and white. I understand your motherly concern, but as I say to every person who brings a loved one to us and entrusts them to our care, they are in safe hands. Like you, they are a valued member of my family."

"Your family?"

"I take a personal interest in every person that is granted a caregiver. I require weekly updates on their progress and am in touch with their caregivers almost daily. She will be well cared for and loved."

"Can I talk to her?"

"No. But I will make you a deal. We will meet once a week and I will share with you what updates I have. Her journey is of great interest to me. But, if my watch is of any indication, you have to meet Mark in a little bit. We should return to your office."



“I would like that.” Lori said as they headed back upstairs. She was overwhelmed by everything that she had experienced and was barely able to carry on a conversation with Mark. She had passed off Quackers to him and nodded numbly at his promise to get it to Kylie that night. She felt like a tiny minnow in the Pacific Ocean, barely a speck in the infinite expanse.

Somehow, she trusted Moira. Kylie would be safe, and that’s all she cared about for the moment. She would come to grips with the entirety of it all at some point, but in the weeks that followed, she found it hard to get that warehouse out of her mind and stem her curiosity.

Happiness was not something she was on good terms with, true happiness.

*Don't lie to yourself. It's not the happiness you want. It's pleasure. You haven't had any real pleasure in years...*