

Pooja B.

My Deadly Love

Every day as I begrudgingly enter my depressingly lonely apartment with an exact population of one at all times, I jokingly and jovially exclaim to no one in particular, "Honey, I'm home. Oh—wait -- I live alone." Today, however is like none other because I get a convivial response of, "I brought pizza." Thinking I have mistakenly entered the residency of another guest of the apartment complex at which I live at, but neither Mrs. Owens nor Dr. Lee get off from work this early. Besides, my key would not work for either of their apartments anyways. I grab the closest thing to me that could be used as a weapon and to my luck it's a kitchen knife that had somehow gotten placed among my knick knacks on top of my shoe rack.

I tip-toe into the kitchen where I heard the noise from and almost stab my brother's best friend, the one and only, the school's Mr. Popular, Eric Chen. I scream as he turns around, one hand still holding his slice of pineapple pizza, and grabs my hand – the one holding the knife – and flips me onto the floor, all the while taking a bite of his disgusting pineapple pizza.

"You could have killed me, Lara Jean, and you know *that* would be a disaster for so many girls in school."

"Your ego is the size of a school. What do you want?"

"You, Lara Jean Montgomery, are to be delivered to an audience with, the one and only, Trey Montgomery," Eric proclaimed feigning class.

"Yeah, no." I hated my brother more than I hated Eric, so it was an obvious no for me to his clear attempt to show me off at some stupid gala of his.

"Nothing personal, princess."

"Wha--"

I was cut off by gigantic arms throwing me over his shoulder.

"Put. Me. Down," I huffed out each word like it was its own sentence.

"Nah, I don't feel like it," he proclaimed like he was groggy.

Next thing I knew I was being thrown into the back of a black limousine. With a slight, "Ow" muttered from my lips, muffled against the seats, I started sobbing my eyes out. I know it was immature, but he was my brother, and I was seven, sleeping in the closet, and now I really don't want to see him.

"Shhh, mi amore" he breathed calmly.

It didn't work.

I stopped crying, but started something worse.

I started hyperventilating and sobbing my eyes out, kicking and screaming; I knew I was causing a scene, but I didn't care, I was having a mental breakdown.

It took two hours to calm me down.

"What happened to you girl, you scared me so bad."

"Panic attack," I lied; he didn't need to know the truth.

"Do they happen often? Why don't you take medicine for them?"

"I—I-I d-do," I gasped, ignoring the first question— that didn't need an answer.

"It doesn't work?"

"Yeah, i-t doesn't," I agreed.

With that, he scooped me up into his arms and carried me into the car. He started tapping away at his phone and just left me be. I silently cried the whole ride. When Eric saw me he freaked out on me.

"Okay," he said starting his rant, "I tried to respect your privacy, but this is too much. What. Did. Your. Brother. Do." Each word was a slap in the face, and with that I resumed sobbing.

He held me and eventually his embrace calmed me. He gave me a soft, but stern, look basically telling me he wouldn't let this go. I choked, told him what my brother did, and resumed sobbing. He continued to hold me until I calmed down again and then I walked out of the car and into my brother's mansion with my hand in Eric's as he rubbed circles on the back of my hand.

When we entered the residence, I started shaking. *Oh no* I thought. *Not another one, not another one* I chanted, thinking maybe if I said it enough I would believe it.

"Lara Jean," it was a statement, but it sounded like an order.

"I'm O.K.," I assured; it wasn't true, but he didn't need to know.

My brother entered the room and stalked to the threshold at which we stood. His voice, drunk and slurred hissed out profane and perverted words slurred together like music notes.

After about a minute Eric declared, fists clenched, "Lara Jean, go wait in the car."

I hesitated, then, seeing as he wasn't going to budge, I obliged.

I heard screaming and things breaking, but I didn't budge— until I heard gunshots.

I walked in and stood over my brother's dead body, thought I was going to have a breakdown for a second and then, turned to Eric and said, "I love you," those words He embraced me and said the magic words, three words, eight letters, and three syllables, "I love you."

We got in the car and drove and drove to nowhere in particular.