

This is an excerpt from the story, Deadly Liasion, one of three crime thrillers in the book, **Behind The Lies**.

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Mark R Beckner Publishing

First Edition: April 2021

ISBN: 978-1-7369607-0-7 (paperback)

Deadly Liaison

Justin has checked into the Comfort Inn Suites in Castle Rock, Colorado, at 3:00 pm. He has already fixed himself a scotch and water and is now just relaxing in his t-shirt and boxers, waiting for Naomi to arrive. They have used this hotel in the past, as it is convenient and somewhat hidden from the highway. It is a beautiful, sunny spring day, and Justin can see the large rock butte that overlooks the city and from which the city gets its name, Castle Rock. The rock butte was formed millions of years ago after a volcanic eruption deposited large amounts of hard rock called rhyolite. Fifty million years later, erosion has left the rock monument standing tall, overlooking the plains to the east of the Rocky Mountains.

Castle Rock is a suburb city approximately 24 miles south of Denver. It is the seat of Douglas County. Castle Rock is an attractive place for professionals, many of whom commute to Denver. Most of the housing is upscale.

Justin King is 41 years old, divorced from his ex-wife Molly. He keeps himself in good physical condition and stands 6'1" at 195 lbs. He wears his brown hair in a nice professional cut, tapered at the ears, short on top, and combed to the side. King owns KC Spark Electric in Castle Rock with his partner and friend, Ryan Cooper.

At 3:20 pm, King hears a knock on the door and gets up to answer it. “Hey, about time you got here.”

“Yeah, the traffic was crazy today,” says Naomi. “I wish they would finish that construction. Seems like they’ve been working on it forever. How are you honey?”

“Just fine now that you’re here,” replies King. “I’m already primed with my scotch. Would you like some?”

“Sure, just let me freshen up and change my clothes into something more comfortable,” she says with a sly grin.

Naomi goes into the bathroom while Justin fixes her a scotch and water. When Naomi exits, she is wearing a bright red see-thru teddy that looks like it just came off the rack at Victoria’s Secret. The red highlights her long shoulder-length chocolate brown hair and well-tanned skin. Her 42-year-old body looks like it could still belong to someone in her twenties. She is 5’4”, slim, well-shaped figure, and has stunning brown eyes. Justin wastes no time in inviting Naomi to join him in the queen-sized bed.

It doesn’t take long for the slinky outfit to come off and the passionate lovemaking to begin. The sex is good for both, but especially for Naomi. This new relationship with Justin has revitalized her spirit and hope for the future. She likes to believe there is a future for her and Justin.

There is only one problem. Naomi is still married to her husband, Ryan Cooper. It’s not that her husband is bad, he has just become boring to Naomi. She no longer feels they have the same connection and interests they once had together. Naomi wants excitement and adventure, while Ryan seems perfectly content to run the business. He is usually too tired at night to go out or do anything Naomi thinks is fun. And the sex life has not been so great either.

She is considering divorce, but is too afraid of living independently without the income she and Ryan enjoy from the business. They also own a large home in Castle Rock, and she is afraid of having to sell and split the profit with Ryan. She knows she would get a large settlement, but would it be enough to live the lifestyle she is now accustomed to? After all, if she divorces, she will lose her inheritance of half the business. She'd get some money as a buyout, of course, but nothing like what the business will be worth in a couple of years. The business is flourishing, and the outlook is very bright.

Justin and Naomi started their affair approximately six months ago. After more than a few drinks at an office party, Justin started flirting with Naomi. They ended up in Justin's silver BMW 4-door sedan. Ryan was too busy buttering up clients even to notice Naomi was missing. They've been meeting almost once a week since, sometimes two, when they can get away with it.

Ryan Cooper does more of the business side of KC Spark Electric, while King handles the operations side. Thus, Cooper is usually more involved in meeting with potential clients, attending vendor meetings, conferences, and such. King manages his schedule around his time at worksites and generally works fewer hours than Cooper. For instance, Cooper has a business meeting in Colorado Springs today, giving King and Naomi another afternoon together.

Eight weeks ago, King hatched a plan to get Cooper out of the picture and allow Naomi and him to get married. This plan, if it works, will give Naomi and King complete control of the business and allow Naomi to keep the house and all their assets. It has taken some convincing, but Naomi has finally agreed. The best way to ensure her happiness and financial security is to kill her husband,

Ryan Cooper. King promised Naomi he has a way to kill Cooper painlessly and peacefully. They will drug him with a lethal dose of a sedative.

King had been married to Molly for 12 years before she kicked him out of the house after one too many discovered affairs. They have two kids together, Alex, who is now 16, and Ethan, now 13. The divorce did not go so well for King. He lost possession of a large five-bedroom, three-bath home on a two-acre lot with a swimming pool in the foothills outside Castle Rock. Savings, investments, and other possessions were split in half, and King was ordered to pay Molly \$3800 a month in childcare. King was able to keep his half ownership in KC Spark Electric.

Since the divorce, his standard of living has been drastically reduced. He now lives in a two-bedroom condo in nearby Lone Tree. He's been divorced for almost two years now but still carries anger over what he believes to be an unfair settlement and the awarding of \$3800 in childcare payments. Even with the success of the electric company, he can no longer afford the luxuries he had while married.

After finishing off their sexually intertwined pleasures, Justin and Naomi relax naked in bed with another scotch and water on ice. Soon, it is time for Naomi to get dressed and head for home before Ryan's arrival.

"We are set for next Tuesday, right?" asks Justin.

"Yes," replies Naomi, "Ryan is scheduled to be out of town next Tuesday, so we have the whole night."

"That's great. So, you'll meet me at my place and spend the night, right?"

"Yes, just have to be home before the afternoon on Wednesday."

“Alright, we’ll finalize our plans next Tuesday then,” Justin tells her.

“Okay, love you sweetie.”

“Love you too, honey.”

The Next Day

King arrives at work, and Cooper is already at his desk going over the invoices from the previous three days.

“Morning, Ryan,” says King as he walks in the door.

“Hey, how’s it going?” replies Cooper

“Good, the project at the Streamside Condos is finally going well, and I believe we will be back on schedule by next Monday.”

“That’s great,” says Cooper, “because my meeting went well yesterday. They’d like to meet again next week to talk contract. If we get it, we’ll probably have to hire some more help.”

“Business just keeps getting better,” a pleased King responds. *If we get that contract, this business will expand even faster than expected, thinks King. This would certainly be outstanding for my plan with Naomi.*

Cooper continues, “I’ll be out of town next Tuesday and back Wednesday afternoon, so I’ve set the meeting for Thursday in Colorado Springs. Would you like to attend?”

“I would, but I want to be around to make sure we have no setbacks on the Streamside project. I trust you’ll make the right deal for us.”

“Yeah, it’s probably best you stick around.”

King and Cooper have known each other since working for another electrical company when they were in their mid-twenties. They became friends and would often hang out after work. King even attended the wedding between Cooper and Naomi. King was

already married to Molly, and they were expecting their first child when Cooper and King started their own electrical company. Cooper had inherited some money when his father passed away, and this was used as seed money to start the business. King paid Cooper back half of the initial investment over a period of seven years. They each own 50% of the company and have been in business for a little over sixteen years.

King has always had more interest in the operations side of the business. He has the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish projects on time and is usually under budget. Cooper enjoys both sides of the business but knows the personnel, budgeting, accounting, and contracting side of the business is not King's strength or interest. Thus, he decided early on to focus on that part of the business. It has worked well for them as the business has continued to grow over the years.

Recently, however, Cooper has noticed King does not have the same energy or enthusiasm he used to have about the company. In Cooper's opinion, King lost focus after his divorce from Molly. In the past, it would be rare for a project under King's supervision to fall behind schedule. In the last couple of years, King has not been so great about completing projects on time. Cooper also believes King does not put in the same time and energy that he does. It is starting to annoy him. He knows it will have to be addressed at some point soon.

Cooper and his wife Naomi live by themselves on Sandy Lane, in a quiet Castle Rock neighborhood. They decided early in their marriage not to have children. Their home sits near the end of a cul-de-sac on two acres of land full of aspens and pine trees. The home's location provides plenty of privacy. The home is approximately 4800 square feet, with four bedrooms, three and a

half baths, a large great room with a designer stone gas fireplace, and a large sunny kitchen. The floors in the living area are solid oak. Off the great room are two French doors leading to an executive-styled office. The finished basement includes a recreation room and an entertainment media area. The upstairs master suite has a second gas fireplace, marbled bathroom, and a walk-in closet that is bigger than some bedrooms in smaller homes. An attached three-car garage and covered back patio complete the home. The Coopers had the custom home built six years ago.

For a while, the home, her part-time job, and her outside interests kept Naomi satisfied, even though she was feeling unappreciated by her husband, Ryan. Recently, it's no longer been enough. Naomi works part-time as a nurse at a local medical clinic. Once the electric business started doing well, Naomi cut back her work hours to pursue other interests, such as horseback riding. She owns a horse named Biscuit and keeps him boarded at a local ranch. She usually tries to ride at least once a week, so long as the weather cooperates. Her other interests include meeting friends regularly and chairing a reader's book club twice a month.

King and Naomi have always gotten along well. She has always found him attractive and enjoyed his flirting with her soon after his divorce. It was all just friendly banter until the office party six months ago. She is not sure what it was, but King was very charming that night, and his flirting created a desire inside of her. She finally gave in by sneaking off with him to his car for some romantic kissing and caressing. After that night, it was not difficult for King to convince her to meet him at a hotel just two weeks later. The affair has continued since.

Naomi has been relentless over the years in keeping her figure and good looks. For Ryan, not so much. He is not in terrible shape

but has put on some weight and doesn't have much of his blond hair left. He has a husky look and his belly now slightly protrudes beyond his belt line. Naomi no longer finds herself attracted to her husband like she once did. It is not all due to his increased weight and hair loss, but also because he does not give her the same attention he used to. Naomi had not seriously thought about leaving Ryan until her affair with King. Now, she is thinking about going along with King's plan to kill Ryan. She's just not sure yet.

The Following Tuesday

As planned, Cooper is out of town again on business. Naomi drives to Kings condo in Lone Tree after leaving her work at the clinic. For this occasion, Naomi has packed black, lacey lingerie. She arrives at approximately 6:00 pm.

King has ordered out Chinese food for the evening and has the table prepared. The menu consists of vegetable Chow Mein and Kung Pao chicken and a bottle of Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley Merlot, one of Naomi's favorites.

During dinner, Naomi brings up the topic of their plan to kill Cooper. "Justin, I'm not sure I can do this."

"You won't have to do anything," King tells her. "You won't even be there until after it's over. I have access to a sedative that will quickly and painlessly put Ryan to sleep for good. And the best part, it's a drug that is hard to detect unless you are specifically looking for it, and there will be no reason for them to test for this drug."

"Yes, I know, you've told me all this, but I was married to the guy and did love him at one time. I still care about him."

"Naomi, he's a good friend of mine as well, and I don't want to do this either, but it is the only way if we want to have the type of

life we both enjoy. Look at me now after my divorce. I went from a beautiful home in the foothills to this two-bit condo. I can't afford a mortgage right now, nor do some of the things I'd like to be doing. Divorce is something to avoid if you can."

"Lots of people get divorced, Justin."

"Yes, and look at how many of them are miserable. Do you want to lose your home?"

"Well, no, of course not."

"Do you want to travel like we talked about?"

"Yes."

"Do you still want nice things and nice clothes?"

"Yes."

"Then this is the only way. I will not be able to provide the things you want unless we get full control of the business. Ryan will never just give that up. And we need to be able to keep your house. Even if you no longer want to live there, we can sell it and buy our own place or build our dream home."

It all sounds so good to Naomi, but she just isn't sure she can go through with it. She also doesn't want to end up in prison. After all, she has watched the TV drama *Orange Is the New Black*. That is not the life for her.

"Don't worry, Naomi, I'm taking the risk. If something goes wrong, no one will even know you were involved. Besides, he's only going to work himself to death anyway. Look at him. He's out of shape, never exercises anymore, and doesn't sleep. I will just be speeding up the process for him. All I need is for you to find him afterward and play your role."

"You make it sound so easy and impersonal."

"That's because it is! Look, do you want to marry me?"

"Yes, I love you, Justin."

“Then this is the only way. I’m not going to live my life in a constant struggle to have the things I want. I want you and me to have a good life. This is the way to get there. If you file for divorce, it will be messy, your income will at least be cut in half, the business will suffer, and both of us will lose money. You have no kids, Naomi; you’re not going to get \$3800 a month like my wife gets.”

“I suppose you’re right, Justin. Are you sure he will not feel anything?”

“Positive, Naomi. Now let’s open another bottle of this Merlot and retire to the bedroom. I can hardly wait to see what you’ve brought to wear for me tonight,” says Justin smiling.

The next morning, Justin fixes breakfast for the two of them. Bacon, eggs, and pancakes. *I could adjust to this type of treatment*, thinks Naomi. She hasn’t been pampered like this in a long time.

Before leaving, Justin reminds Naomi not to text him with her phone. “We don’t want text messages between us. It is something that could later be retrieved from our accounts. If you need to get in touch, just call me. Our phones don’t record our conversations.”

“No, I won’t,” smiles Naomi, “you tell me this all the time. When do you plan to set this up?”

“Ryan has a meeting on Thursday in the Springs to go over contract details with a large development company. We need to wait until the contract is signed before doing anything. Once that contract is signed, the company will be in a position to almost double in size over the next year.”

“Okay, bye, sweetie,” waves Naomi as she walks out the door. *I’m going to be happy, loved, and wealthy*, she reminds herself as she drives out of the parking lot and heads home.