

Dear psycho,

This version of the ending didn't make it into the final *BODIED* collection—not because it wasn't strong, but because it changed the weight of the story.

Sometimes certain truths hit too hard.

Sometimes a character's silence says more than their survival.

And sometimes... the version that gets published isn't the only one that matters.

This is the ending I almost included.

Unfiltered. Unforgiven.

Enjoy this exclusive alternate ending... just for you.

Peace & Blessings,

—Keira

KEIRA N. JAMES

Tandy

I bolted from the bathroom as screams erupted down the hallway. The chaos echoed behind me—shouts, footsteps, someone yelling Kiana's name.

I clutched my hoodie tighter around me, my eyes wide and my face painted with faux shock. I looked like just another scared dancer in the frenzy.

Down the corridor, I collided with Josiah. His face was pale, frantic.

"You okay?" he asked, barely pausing.

I nodded quickly, voice shaking. "I—I think someone's hurt."

And just like that, he kept running.

I slipped out the back exit with my heart thudding against my chest. Not from guilt, but from adrenaline. I jumped in the rental car and peeled out of the parking lot with the tires squealing as I headed toward the meeting spot.

My hands were steady on the wheel, my breaths controlled.

Behind me, Rhythm & Flow Dance Studio faded in the rearview mirror. Ahead, the road stretched quiet and empty.

Fifteen minutes later, I was pulling up to the meeting spot.

The parking lot was empty. There wasn't a single soul around. Just cracked concrete, cicadas, and the sense of regret crawling down my neck and impending doom stirring in my stomach.

Sin was already there when I pulled up, sitting on the hood of her car like she didn't just set a whole life on fire.

I kept my head down as I walked over to her with the gun wrapped in a cloth inside the backpack on my shoulders.

"You're late," she said, trying to sound playful, but her voice didn't match her body language.

It was... softer. It was off.

"Traffic was hell," I lied.

"Right," she said, handing me a thick, heavy envelope. "This is your payment. Cash and your acceptance letter. You're officially part of Rhythm & Flow's Macon location. That's where most scouts go, so you'll have a better chance of landing some good work. This is big for you."

I should've smiled. I should've felt something.

But all I felt was... sick. Dreadful.

"Why does it feel like you're saying goodbye, Sin?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

She didn't answer right away. She just stared out across the lot with glassy eyes and trembling hands,

"I thought it would feel better," she said eventually. "But it doesn't. I thought Kiana would come back to me. That she'd see what we had... I thought if she hurt like I did, it would make things right. But, we're here now."

Before I could say another word, before I could even ask her what she meant—she brandished a gun and turned it on herself.

And pulled the trigger.

Blood sprayed the gravel and my face. Her body dropped like a marionette with its strings cut.

I screamed. But no one heard. Because in the end, Sin didn't want revenge.

She wanted to be remembered.

And she knew this was the only way she'd never be forgotten.

KEIRAN N. JAMES