

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Jesse craved a jaw-grinding ~~romp~~, like any other man.

Why wouldn't he?

The problem was that the stifling heat killed his sex drive.

And *that* was saying ~~ddd something since it~~ had been three weeks since Jesse's ~~his~~ last playdate deep inside the incredibly hot Russian sex buddy he secretly visited after work Friday nights.

Too long.

Walking into the courtyard of their villa, Jesse tried to get in a final word before the phone call went dead. This girl ~~was severely pissed off~~ ~~yelled into his ear for half an hour~~. It's not as if wasn't into her.

He was.

~~Logically, he knew they passed the point of casual sex and of~~ ~~Of~~ course she wanted commitment. ~~Not~~ inviting her to the party seemed to be the straw that broke the camel's back. That would mean he was ready for commitment. Since then, he spent each phone call apologizing while she pressured him about meeting Yelena or being invited into his house.

Not happening.

So much that he spent a little extra time in the shower lately with a bottle of conditioner ~~stroking himself under the cool water that did nothing to tame his morning wood~~. He was virile, in the best shape of his life, early thirties, not to mention rich, famous, and sought after by women from Cleveland to ~~Timbuctoo~~ ~~Timbuktu~~.

So what was up?

"Great!" he pushed the phone back into his jeans. Pulled his keys and worked his way in, grateful for the sharp chill of their expensive air-conditioning that only Americans living in Europe would pay for.

He was sweating. ~~Sweat busted out his pores~~.

Wanted out of the black Viennese ~~polizie~~ T-shirt and cargo pants he wore to work which lately had become fewer days due to recent personal events at home.

But he was ~~tough~~.

As always his first order of business was to seek out his daughter. He cruised into the living room knowing he was so late they'd have already eaten dinner. The sun was gone, witching hour time.

"Hey!" he spotted Daniel on the sofa, ~~drinking orange juice in silence~~.

~~The man drinking orange juice~~ ~~man~~ said nothing, so Jesse set his keys, wallet, knife, and gun on the kitchen table near the back door. No sweet girl running into his arms.

"Where's my kid?" ~~he~~ asked.

Daniel cranked his head to the stairwell. Still no words.

"What's goin' on?" ~~Jesse~~ opened his hands.

Then heard it.

**Comment [ER1]:** Why not use the real word here? Or Something more shocking. Start the chapter off with a real bang (excuse the pun here)

**Comment [ER2]:** Save space and put this all in one entry paragraph

**Comment [ER3]:** Overall, this introduction long line is very interest-piquing and has me curious to read more. Nicely done!

**Comment [ER4]:** Remember to show if you can. If she was irked, how did it come across? What was she doing?

**Comment [ER5]:** Extra space

**Comment [ER6]:** Start with "of course" and take out one of the redundant 'commitment' words. Reword so flows more smoothly.

**Comment [ER7]:** End it at 'conditioner.' Short, crisp, to the point. I think just that first sentence gets the point across.

**Comment [ER8]:** Passive. Show, don't tell.

**Comment [ER9]:** If this is German, use italics

**Comment [ER10]:** If this is part of his characterization, be sure to show, not tell, ways he is tough throughout the book via his actions.

**Comment [ER11]:** Remember to incorporate the senses of touch, taste, or smell often to ground the reader into the scene

**Comment [ER12]:** At first I thought this was a different man than Daniel. It sounds more like describing a stranger.

**Comment [ER13]:** Since there are two men here, be sure it is clear who "he" is. Since we know Jesse is the only one with a kid, in this case it is fine.

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Yelena's muffled sounds of verbal distress from upstairs. She ~~was talking to somebody,~~ rather, arguing and maybe even crying. Jesse lifted his brows at Daniel.

**Comment [ER14]:** Passive. Maybe something like "she yelled with a sharp pitch at somebody"

"Her dad called," explained ~~the tank.~~

**Comment [ER15]:** Be sure to use this method down your entire manuscript if you use it often

Ah shit.

"It's escalating."

Jesse shot for the stairs. ~~"Fuck that!"~~ ~~We'll see about that.~~

**Comment [ER16]:** Be careful using the F word. Save it for very powerful emotional scenes so the word has a severe purpose, not casual irritation.

~~If Sean called her it was because he got wind of what happened at the concert or with Carlos or both. Four years Jesse did his best to shield her from the truth that Sean still didn't believe her about the rape. He knew Sean likely heard about the party incident from his family. On the way up, he mulled over how hard he worked to protect her from finding out the man never believed her. The story being that Jesse stole her away. That Jesse stole her away and threatened Sean within an inch of his life.~~

**Comment [ER17]:** See how I reworded this a bit? Just work with it until it flows more smoothly.

No forgiveness.

~~Up until now, Sean maintained Jesse's crafted illusion as outlined in the goodbye letter back in New York. So far Sean kept up the illusion that Jesse outlined in the note he left in New York. One word from Sean to Yelena, and Jesse threatened would quickly reveal the truth about his paternity to Sean in retaliation. to tell her the truth about her paternity.~~

**Comment [ER18]:** All of my wording suggestions for changes are entirely up to your discretion to use or not. You can make the changes directly on your own manuscript. I just want you to see how it would look if worded a little differently.

**Comment [ER19]:** comma

~~"End this shit right now."~~

**Comment [ER20]:** Here this sounds like a word from Sean to BOTH Yelena and Jesse. Inserting a comma after Yelena brings a different meaning.

Her voice distress amplified the closer he got. Coming up on her room, he slowed at the open door and listened. Knew instantly they were talking about that night.

**Comment [ER21]:** I would delete this because it looks like he's trying to control who she can talk to. Also, he doesn't try to end it and stands and listens for a while. Maybe show the physical tension in his body developing fast

**Comment [ER22]:** This is more passive telling.

~~Yelena was upset.~~

~~Saying Yelena sobbed out,~~ "Papa, it wasn't like that. You weren't there. I told you, I fainted because I saw Carlos in the audience. What do you mean *why?*"

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Pause.

"Yes I'm sure, I wasn't imagining it."

**Comment [ER23]:** Maybe more like "of course I'm sure, I know what I saw"

Pause.

"Because I saw him, Daddy, *I saw him.* Of course it was nerves and anxiety ~~too,~~ but I pushed through it. You saw it on TV, it was going well."

**Comment [ER24]:** Add comma

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~~Halt. Pause.~~

"Why aren't you listening to me?" she cried, sounding exasperated. "Of course I didn't mean to humiliate her or you. I know, you're both opera singers, I know, I made you look bad, I'm sorry."

**Comment [ER25]:** Very clever how you indicate what it was like from Jesse's perspective to overhear a one-sided conversation.

~~Pause.~~

"Then why are we still talking about it?"

Pause.

"I don't want voice coaching lessons. I'm already a music instructor, I don't need it. I have no intention of ever singing in front of anybody ~~ever again.~~"

**Comment [ER26]:** Have her push for independence here like "So please, stop telling me what to do."

Pause.

“Because I *said so* that’s why.”

Pause.

“Well I’m sorry if that’s rude but it’s the truth. Stop pressuring me. If I wanted to sing, it wouldn’t be in front of a strange crowd of people staring at me. Can you please drop it?”

Jesse battled the urge to bust in.

Waited.

Yelena shrieked, “If I imagined it, then why did he attack me in the kitchen at our party? I have the scar on my forehead to prove it. Sally saw him, Grandmamma saw him, Toto too.”

Pause.

Now she did a cry-yell, “Jesse had every right to do what he did. He didn’t do anything wrong. You weren’t there, Dad, you don’t know, you didn’t see. Why won’t you believe me?”

Pause.

“But of course Jesse would never hurt me Jesse would never hurt me, Dad. Why on earth would you ask that? Do you really think that of your own brother?”

Pause.

“If you had come to the party, you would have seen for yourself but you can’t seem to make any time for me the past four years since you conveniently dumped me on Jesse because all you care about is your job. And yes, it’s true, everybody knows it’s true.”

Shit.

Jesse knew the call had to end before Sean blew the whistle.

Pause.

“Am I sure Carlos was inappropriate?” she asked now “Of course, he was *hurting me*.”

Pause.

“Oh my God, really? Jesse doesn’t drink like that. Why are you so hard on him?”

Game over.

Jesse stormed in with every intention of protecting his daughter from more emotional abuse pushed down her throat by the man she thought was her dad. She stopped mid-sentence at sight of him and instantly welled with tears. “Hold on,” she said to Sean, pleading with her eyes for help.

“Give it to me.”

She mouthed ‘no’.

“Right now!”

Looking scared, relieved she deposited it in his hand. “I’m sorry.”

“Wait downstairs with Dan.”

She plowed into him for a hug. No time for that, so he rubbed her back and took her to the door.

Winked, then closed it behind her moving back to the desk.

Then put it to his ear.

**Comment [ER27]:** Good, but keep pushing her independence and assertion.

**Comment [ER28]:** Glad to see Yelena getting some backbone here. She has a hard time standing up to people, which is an area of development you can utilize for her growth. Continue to put her in positions where she feels nervous or afraid to speak up, battles with it, and does it anyhow. Yet sometimes the results should be bad which will discourage her, giving her all the more reason to work hard to keep overcoming the anxiety of it.

**Comment [ER29]:** Awkward. Rephrase. Hollered?

**Comment [ER30]:** I feel as if she would say more to prove her points here.

**Comment [ER31]:** Comma

**Comment [ER32]:** I would leave this line out so she doesn’t sound immature since she is a mature woman with issues with her father. Her statements should be flat and final.

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**Comment [ER33]:** This comes across a bit more like a rebellious teenager than a woman in her twenties who is describe with maturity.

**Comment [ER34]:** This whole section is very strong and alluring. Good work here!

**Comment [ER35]:** Why is she saying ‘no’ as if she wants to keep arguing with her dad? Seems more like she would sigh with relief Jesse coming to get her away from it.

“Now you listen to me,” his voice dropped to lethal warning. “If you got questions about what happened to Yelena that night, *you fucking call me.*”

“That was a private conversation with my daughter.”

Sean’s voice. Four years since he heard it. Still baritone, still aloof.

“And of course, Jessente, you keep me from her.”

“You mean from beratin’ and blamin’ and insultin’ her? Too *fucking* bad.”

“Please put her back on.”

“*If you call her again, I’m gonna change all of our numbers. Did you* only call to make her feel bad about herself? *Cuz from what I heard, nothin’ good’s comin’ outta yur mouth.*”

Sean sighed heavy. “I heard that you violently attacked our brother at your party in front of my daughter and were out of control belligerent, drunk, maybe even on drugs. Or, maybe it was the other way around.”

*Jesse laughed. Hard.*

“Wow, not one person in our family has my back I guess,” he said.

“Did I hear wrong?”

“Nobody else was in that kitchen before I attacked him. I hadn’t sucked down a single drop. I wouldn’t do that with strangers in our home and Yelena already upset.”

“So you’re still harboring a belief that Carlos is a bad man and you’re the good one?”

“It’s no belief, it’s fact. *Fact.*”

*“That’s a matter of opinion.”*

*“For you maybe, don’t mean it’s reality.”*

“You’re not stable enough to take care of Yelena. She should come home.”

Jesse roared, “I’m the *only one* who can take care of her. Amazed I haven’t written off every one of you *idiots* in our family. I mean really, Sean? You don’t believe anythin’ she says.”

“I don’t condone violence.”

“If you’d seen what I did, you’d be singin’ a different tune.”

“Which was what, precisely?”

“Let’s see, kitchen sink, our daughter, *my daughter*, cryin’ for me with her dress torn and Carlos *and* *top on top* of her holdin’ a ball of her hair *and droolin’ all over her.* *pawin’ at her like an animal.*”

There was a pause. Then, “I don’t believe it.”

“There was a catering girl that came in and saw it, too. Want her number?”

“A misunderstanding then.”

“Nah, nah, you know what? The only misunderstandin’ was mine when I allowed you to pretend to be Yelena’s dad because I was tryin’ to keep her safe. Dumbest thing I ever did and I’ll take that mistake to my *grave.*”

“Of course *your defensive response is insults you insult me in your defensiveness.* Maybe it’s you who was inappropriate.”

**Comment [ER36]:** Better way or use of the word here if it’s in light of extreme anger. It shows his aggression, resentment and harshness when it’s directed at a person, not just said when talking ‘about’ a person who isn’t there.

**Comment [ER37]:**

**Comment [ER38]:** Save the threat about changing the number for right when he hands up at the end.

**Comment [ER39]:** I don’t feel he would go from fury to sarcastic or incredulous laughter that quickly. Consider cutting that line.

**Comment [ER40]:** This chapter is long, so let’s cut some excess dialogue to tighten it up.

**Comment [ER41]:**

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**Comment [ER42]:** Here a harsher word would better match his character if he’s this angry.

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**Comment [ER43]:** I like how this gets deeper into the root of the issue. Jesse has painful regret that haunts him throughout the story over this. Maybe add a line about how he plans on resolving this regret so he won’t have to live with it. If his biggest regret is not telling Yelena that he’

"You and I are done here. You hear me?"

"My daughter *is excellent*. She performed her entire life and now she faints on the stage and humiliates our mother? You should have been supporting her music career."

Jesse had to push a hand into the wall to *steady it*. "You gotta be kiddin' me."

"Why have you not given her proper motivation?"

"You don't know her anymore."

"Which is not my fault."

"Oh yeah it is, yeah it is. You botched that up the night I *took her from you*."

"Over a ridiculous and fabricated assessment meant to get more attention from you. Tell me something Jessente. Every time she wants something, does she pretend to be a victim and you give it to her? *Because surely the only reason she always went to you with her problems was for that.*"

"I'll tell you what," *he Jesse* snarled nasty, tasting blood on his lip, barely able to contain his rage. "Come pay me a visit and I'll show you my answer to that with my *balled fists*."

"I'm concerned about her mental health."

*"Then listen to me when I tell you what's happenin' to her."*

*"She's an adult now, she should come home."*

*"Her home's with me, the man who loves and protects her and we all know that ain't you."*

*Sean shifted what sounded like papers. "I won't let this continue much longer."*

"You got a lotta balls harassin' Yelena about that concert after what she went through. It's like you don't even love her at all. Makes me ashamed she thinks yur her dad."

"I *am her father* legally, Jesse, and you can't change that."

"Oh yeah, *just watch me*."

*He smacked* the phone shut and popped out the SIM card knowing the persistent man would call back to continue the argument. He was about to take a minute to cool his jets when he heard terrible noises below.

"What *the eff*?"

It sounded like a construction crew came through with a wrecking ball. Yelena peeled a viscous fight-scream that ripped through the house. He heard piano keys make dings and dongs and scrapes.

*Smashing. Bashing.*

"What the hell's goin' on?" he yelled, darting back down.

He almost plowed into Daniel who turned to him and pointed at Yelena beating away at the *white gloss* Italian grand piano sent to her by Sean years earlier. The top was lifted on its spike.

Inside keys exposed.

Yelena smashed them with a hammer with grunting *ax-swing* hacks. "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!" she sobbed and screamed like it was somebody's face. "I *hope you die*."

"Yelena!" *he Jesse* yelled, sharp and booming.

When he dodged for her, Daniel grabbed his arm. "Don't!"

**Comment [ER44]:** To steady what?

**Comment [ER45]:** It's good to end the dialogue line with the question so the reader doesn't forget it by the time the next character says something.

**Comment [ER46]:** Keep in mind with two people of the same gender in one scene, it is a tad trickier to keep track of who is speaking.

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**Comment [ER47]:** With Jesse this angry, I am surprised he didn't already hang up the phone. Consider cutting some of the argument to make it tighter and get to the explosive end or hang up.

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**Comment [ER48]:** Okay, so here we go. Good!

**Comment [ER49]:** Maybe "What the hell?"

**Comment [ER50]:** Excellent use of sound here

**Comment [ER51]:** Shorten visual description. Italian grand piano gives enough of an idea.

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"She's destroyin' it!"

"Let her."

"It's a Fazioli Brunel, half a million dollars."

Daniel kept a hand in the air and nodded. "Let her do this."

She gave a piercing war-cry and swung her body in a complete circle, ending with a chop into the stand that held up the top of the piano. It crashed down with a violent weight that collapsed violonetly and broke a leg.

The piano dropped a few feet on one side and flung a marble floor tile into the air.

"Ah man!" Jesse held his head.

Why wasn't Daniel having a cow? The man watched her with interest as if she gave demonstration on baking a cake. She moved on to the main keys adorned with real mother of pearls along the Italian wood.

"I'll fucking kill you," she ransacked it.

Jesse never once heard her cuss. Didn't like her sounding like him.

Another scream of anger, hacking, smashing, beating, hammering away. Black and white shards from the keys exploded and attacked her skin, like fine shreds of confetti exploding from a pinata.

Her eyes closed.

More beatings as she put the full 'tiny' of her body weight into the abuse of a brainchild piano made by a the brilliant mechanical engineer, Paolo Fazioli that once stood at ten feet tall.

"She needs this," Daniel said, explained.

Jesse bent at the waist, hands on his knees, working for his breath. Watching his child suffer felt far worse than any suffering he'd he ever experienced of his own. He knew why she did it.

Carlos.

That man had to die.

Yelena beat into the wood and put a hole right through it. Another. Then another, some blows shredding the piano into shards of splintered wood. He watched her arm get stuck into one and take a slice.

A red line appeared.

Blood.

"Yelena..." he yelled, commanded firmly, getting closer now but keeping space. "Look at me here."

His voice stopped her instantly.

Hair now fallen from a bun, wild, knotty, she showed teeth panting like a lunatic on crack and coffee and a pound of sugar cane. The shock of her outburst played out on her face with bunched creases and a grey pallor.

"Look at my eyes," he coached.

The hammer dropped with a bounce.

"I hate him," she whispered.

Did she mean Sean or Carlos or both?

He nodded. "I hear you."

"I let him down."

**Comment [ER52]:** All the more reason the 'white gloss' from above is unnecessary.

**Comment [ER53]:** Are you sure marble would do this? It is pretty stone solid. Maybe research a less expensive but classy material such as a wood floor square or panel?

**Comment [ER54]:** Excellent choice.

**Comment [ER55]:** You already said this, so perhaps "finely-polished" or "gleaming"?

**Comment [ER56]:** We already assume it's anger due to her outburst, so you can save space and not mention the obvious. Show, don't tell.

**Comment [ER57]:** Have him say why he feels this way.

**Comment [ER58]:** Is this foreshadowing? If so, excellent use, but try to remain consistent showing Jesse focused on this thought and outcome throughout the story.

**Comment [ER59]:** Great visual. Nice!

**Comment [ER60]:** Put these two lines together.

**Comment [ER61]:** Remember there are two men in this scene. "He" could refer to either.

Sean.

"No you didn't. He doesn't know you anymore."

"I'm a failure. I'm nothing."

A tear slid down the crack next to his nose. "You're everythin' to me, Yelena. Dan knows you, I know you, nobody else does and nobody else matters."

"That's right," Daniel agreed.

Shaking her head, she backed up to the open patio door looking toward her smashed mess. Jesse followed her line of sight and had the instant thought that she did it as payback to Sean's insults. ~~It was beyond repair.~~

"Baby, look at me here," he coaxed. "Gotta ignore your pop. You know he's the king of the bellyachers in our family. Can't take that to heart."

Hallowed eyes shifted his way.

He was careful to say, "I'm your dad now. And nobody's gonna hurt you again."

She watched him skeptically.

"You hear me, little girl? I love you with all my heart. And if you want, you never gotta see any of our family ever again which is just fine by me. We don't need 'em."

"He'll come back for me."

Carlos.

"That won't happen," Daniel said.

Jesse concurred, "He's right, that guy's long gone."

"He doesn't love me anymore."

Sean.

"Yes he does, very much. He's just flawed."

"You don't know. You know *nothing*."

"Yelena, Sean loves you, I swear ~~to God~~ he does."

"Yet he hasn't come to see me in four years because he says he can't get time off of work. Yet Toto told me he took a woman to Paris two months ago. Paris, Jess, it's close to here."

"There's more to it."

"That's why he ~~gave me away to you and~~ told you to bring me to music school. He didn't want me anymore. No ~~teenager~~ ~~teenage~~ parent ever wants a *stupid girl like me*."

He panged, "Nothin' about that's true."

When he stepped that way, she shrieked, "Leave me alone!" then shot out the back door.

"Let her go," suggested Daniel. ~~"It's her PTSD."~~

It took a minute to calm down as they surveyed the disaster. The beautiful German marble was cracked. Things were quiet. Wrong. Jesse felt cold as if the temperature dropped 20 degrees. A chill ripped over his body.

Then he knew.

"Ah shit!" His eyes went to the table. "Where the hell's my gun?"

**Comment [ER62]:** So suddenly he's crying? It seems more like he has grave concern and anger from the phone call upstairs. Perhaps change his response here in a different way.

**Comment [ER63]:** I would say this part is clear from the destruction you wrote of.

**Comment [ER64]:** Great line!

**Comment [ER65]:** Join these

**Comment [ER66]:** Instead of watching him skeptically as if she didn't believe his statement, I think it would be good to show she is still writing in anger from her outburst. Slapping her hands, pulling wads of her hair, stomping, etc.

**Comment [ER67]:** Nice section here

**Comment [ER68]:** Very clever way of identifying which person she is talking about as she goes back and forth almost manically blending the two.

**Comment [ER69]:** In the line above, Jesse just hinted that he knew her dad came to Paris and didn't try to see her. So why would she not comment on that in this next line? I would think she'd feel betrayed by Jesse.

**Comment [ER70]:** I think by this point the reader knows her well enough to understand what her behavior is stemmed from.

"Table."

"Um, no, *where is my gun?*"

A sweat broke out on his forehead. He pivoted toward Daniel whose eyes slivered instantly. They both shifted glances toward the backyard just before hearing a cry and a loud splash.

"Oh no!"

Everything after that was instinct.

Adrenaline flew him out the door like superman, **hollering her name**. He hopped over a lawn chair to get to the pool, knowing she was in it due to the ripple and waves lapping up the steps.

"Yelenaaaaaa?" he called and called.

**This girl didn't swim.**

**This girl hated water.**

**This girl had his gun.**

"Ah God!"

**He spotted her at the bottom of the pool outlined from a sharp florescent bulb.** **On approach he saw her at the bottom thanks to a sharp underwater light.** He dove in and shot for the bottom. Saw her floating in a ball at the filter. There were no gunshots but he saw the weapon next to her.

No time.

He hoisted her up to the top. Their pool was deep, ten feet, but not very long. Yelena knew how to swim. Why didn't she fight the water getting to the bottom? Suicide. He'd seen it on the job time and time again.

They popped to the top.

The first thing he saw was Daniel waiting at the edge of the pool on the far side with a **phone in his hand** in case they needed medical assistance. Yelena coughed and spewed.

A good sign.

**"Baby Yelena,** are you hurt?" he demanded, taking her to the side. "Answer me."

When she began sobbing, screeching, clinging to his shoulders, he knew her hurt was on the inside. He also knew during the piano blasting that she took shrapnel in her arm.

"Let me look at you."

He tried to set her back which only resulted in a stickier plastering of her body **into his chest** as she tried to climb up his frame like escaping snakes **on rattling** the ground.

So he held her.

Nodded to Daniel over her head. **The man rubbed his chin, closed his eyes, then shook it off.** **Ran into the house.** Recovery took a moment.

Jesse coiled his free arm around her and squeezed as hard as he could. Realized it was to feel her safe for his own sake **and less for her comfort.** Fight or flight **still** jackhammered his body like ten **shots of espresso.**

"Jesus, Yelena."

"I'm so sorry."

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**Comment [ER71]:** Instead of telling that he hollered her name, just show him doing it as you did just below. I am intrigued here.

**Comment [ER72]:** Love this sequence. Nice touch.

**Comment [ER73]:** A bit wordy. Try revising in a way that flows smoothly and doesn't require the author to think too much.

**Comment [ER74]:** Are you sure this is the reason he is holding the phone, in case they need medical assistance? For all Jesse knows, he already called the police or an ambulance which would bring press attention to them in a way they don't want. Maybe Jesse should flag him here not to do anything.

**Comment [ER75]:** It seems he uses the sweet pet names more when he's being loving or in daily conversation, yet this is a serious moment, so he should probably use her full name.

**Comment [ER76]:** Do you really think Daniel, if you mean him as in 'the man', would just shake off what happened? This is the guy who is in love with her and wants to marry her. He doesn't seem very upset to me about what he just witnessed.

**Comment [ER77]:** Nice analogy.

“What the hell were you thinkin’?”

His focus targeted her panic attack that still wasn't over. Thank the Lord he was a trained law enforcement agent accustomed to crisis situations or he'd **tumble like a dominos stack.**

She trembled, working through it.

Gulped hysterically the same way she did waking up from horrific night terrors. He noticed how chilled she was. It's not like the water or air was cold with it **85° outside.**

He shushed, “It's safe, everything's fine.”

The mournful howling of her PTSD process sliced chunks from his gut. She didn't seem to hear him. At one point he put a hand on her face and set it back for a look. She stared at him as if she'd gone mad.

“It's all over,” he soothed gently.

She put her hands over her ears and screeched, “Make it stop!” as if to drown out the voices in her head.

~~“It never stops, Jess, it never stops.”~~

~~“All right, I hear you I'm here, I'll help you any way I can.”~~

Daniel was back with towels that he set on a chair. **Waiting, watching.**

“Sweetie, we gotta get outta this pool,” he ~~said~~ **insisted.**

“Please hold me, please.”

He took her back in. **“You're safe, everything's okay.”**

The party, Carlos, the assault, the whole thing seemed like a nightmare now. Of course it could have been worse that night. Every day on the job, ~~more in New York than in Austria, it was always the worst. Maybe that's why he was willing to take the blood of his own brother~~ **it was always the worst.**

No tolerance.

~~Maybe~~ **Maybe** that's why he was willing to take matters into his own hands and not trust the justice system. Maybe that's why he acted before thinking or shot before negotiating ~~or did the doggie before using birth control.~~

**No patience.**

**Bad was bad and there was plenty of it in the world.**

**Then she said something.**

**He strained** over the lapping water to hear her voice, frail and tiny. Yet she said it again and again pleading and clinging to his shoulders with sharp nails that he tisked through.

“Please Daddy,” she said more clearly. “Please Daddy, **help me.**”

Did she mean him? Did she know? Did she sense it? Or was this a leftover effect from the talk with Sean projected into him as she lost her mind? So many years he waited to hear **that title.**

He held her tighter. **“I hear you, it's all right.”**

Then again, “Help me, Daddy. ~~God, please~~ **Oh God**, please help me.”

**“Okay.”**

**“Help me.”**

**Comment [ER78]:** Another clever one.

**Comment [ER79]:**

**Comment [ER80]:** Good use of numbers here showing them instead of spelling them.

**Comment [ER81]:** This feels like a little bit of a third wheel. This is the man who is in love with her. Wouldn't he be speaking to them, offering to help them out of the pool or trying to help Jesse coax her to come out safely?

**Comment [ER82]:** Minimize wordiness. Sometimes it works best to get right to the point.

**Comment [ER83]:** You can move these up as part of the paragraph ending right above them.

**Comment [ER84]:** Blend these two

**Comment [ER85]:** comma

**Comment [ER86]:** What did it feel like to him now that he just heard it? Maybe this finally is the moment he cries instead of earlier in the house.

"I'm here, I've got you."

Then a ~~gargantuanly~~ loud bluster, "God Daddy *help me*."

"Doin' that now, baby. I'm here."

"I'm scared."

"I know, it's all right."

"Please make it stop, please!"

"Everythin's gonna be okay."

"Why are we in the pool? What's happening to me?"

~~He nestled her tighter into his chest and offered reassurances. She wasn't the only one who trembled from fear. The event just took what felt like years off his life knowing she could have killed herself.~~ He didn't know what to make of it. Any of it.

Daddy.

Gun.

Pool.

Piano.

It didn't take an Albert Einstein ~~descendent~~ to figure out this was a delayed response to Carlos. ~~Some form of working through her brain's short-circuit.~~ He knew by the way she held onto him that she didn't mistake him for Sean. His brother never held her a day in his life. ~~Daddy – she meant him.~~

"I'm right here," ~~he said again.~~ ~~he hushed some more.~~

Did she know?

He cried a little with her but kept it quiet. Maybe it was hearing her call him that. Finally. A dream come true that wouldn't last. Or it could have been for the pain she felt, the fear, the damage done.

It hurt.

He smoothed ~~wet hair down her back.~~ "You'll be fine, Lula. I'm right here."

Fatigue set in.

Holding her above water in the deep end, he struggled to steady them both with an elbow on the cement.

It slipped off more than once, taking them down, forcing her cries higher and louder.

~~How helpful.~~

~~The more he comforted her, the faster her distress evaporated.~~ She grew quiet, head on his shoulder facing into his neck. It was now long forgotten and she seemed calm and normal and relaxed.

"How 'bout we get you outta this water?" he asked.

"Please send him away. Don't let him see."

He looked over her head and across the pool to Daniel who paced worriedly with hands linked behind his head watching them. Two towels he brought out now on a lawn chair waiting.

~~Jesse let go of her back long enough to wave a hand toward the house.~~

~~He mouthed, "Go inside," and pointed.~~

**Comment [ER87]:** Show him giving her more comfort and try to express some more of his own emotional response to what's happening.

**Comment [ER88]:** This method of lists is a nice touch to keep narrative moving quickly. Just be careful not to use them too often.

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**Comment [ER89]:** Excellent use of the sense of touch/texture that pulls the reader into the scene and makes it feel real. Sensory descriptions replace sound/tone/and visual we see in movies (in books).

**Comment [ER90]:** Move this up to the end of the last paragraph.

~~Daniel did just that.~~

“He’s gone,” Jesse assured.

**Comment [ER91]:** Saves space to just have Daniel already back inside maybe giving them space or cleaning up the mess.