

CHAPTER 10

BLAKE HAD BEEN FORTUNATE that his job gave him the flexibility to come and go with little or no explanation. His boss had said nothing about him being out the office more than usual. Lately his work hours were more like those of a part-time employee. The bottom line was bringing in new clients and as long as he did that, there would be no problem.

As usual, Blake did not return to the office after his last meeting. His intention was to go home and surprise Madison. He wanted to take her out to dinner. That's why he asked his mom to keep Dani.

Getting into his car, Blake looked at his watch. Instead of going home, he was going to make a quick stop, reasoning he had about an hour and then he'd head home. Every day regardless of Blake's plans, his car seemed programmed to take the road to temptation rather than keep his commitments.

No sooner did Blake sit down when his cell phone vibrated. He looked at it. A text from Madison. The message was in all caps. Clearly, she was upset.

What puzzled him was why Madison didn't say anything last night. He had expected a full-fledged interrogation, but she hadn't asked him a single question and he couldn't understand why not. Was Madison as fearful as he was about talking about their problem?

Looking at his watch, Blake gave himself a goal. No matter what, home by seven and he could take Madison to dinner. At seven-thirty, Blake was still sitting and Madison had sent him another text—“*R U ON YOUR WAY HOME?*”

He started typing and stopped. No need to reply because he was about to leave. He would be home by eight. When he received another text from Madison, he couldn't believe it. It couldn't be nine o'clock.

This time Blake considered answering her. After all, it could be an emergency. He shook his head. If it were, surely she would have written it in the message or called. For a moment, he thought about turning off his phone, but he didn't because that would be too irresponsible.

At nine-thirty, Blake received the next communication. Growing angry, he

uttered. *"Okay Madison, you win. I'm leaving."* Although he muttered the words, he sat as if someone dared him to leave the chair.

At ten, eleven and twelve o'clock, Madison sent more messages. He answered none of them. The twelve o'clock message seemed like a threat. *"If you don't come home soon maybe you should reconsider where you live."* Obviously, she wanted to get his attention and she had.

Annoyed, Blake called it a night. Driving home, he realized that tonight was the big show down. No use in easing into the house, worried he might wake her. He was thankful Dani was at his mom's house because their conversation might get loud.

He couldn't help but notice how with each of Madison's messages they had become more aggressive, with a subtle warning. Whatever happened today caused her to understand they...no, he had a major problem and they had to deal with it.

This was the first time in weeks Madison had had such urgency in trying to get him to come home. He wondered what happened. Something triggered the change in her behavior. He was not looking forward to talking to her. He knew he was a coward and eventually he would have to tell her what he had been doing, but he wanted to do it on his terms and not hers.

Week after week, he worried about how he would explain his actions. He even practiced what he might say, but now that it was about to become a reality, he had no idea where to begin.

Too much time had gone by and he thought Madison would have questioned him sooner. Since she hadn't, it seemed as if she had given him a free pass, waiting for him to straighten out whatever was going on.

On many levels, Blake wanted to end what he was doing, but as hard as he tried he couldn't. He had no reasonable explanation except that he had a problem that he was unable to control. After confessing to Madison, he wondered how they would work through it. Could their marriage survive it?

He had jeopardized everything, but isn't that what happens when a person is doing wrong? In one ear, he heard the voice saying, *"You're not doing anything wrong. Everyone has some sort of a vice."*

In the other ear, he heard, *"You're destroying your family. Tell your wife what's going on. Get help before it's too late."*

At times, the guilt was overwhelming, yet it hadn't been enough to put an end to his obsession. He woke up saying how this was the day he would stop.

Unfortunately, the urge had been too strong for him to fight. He never considered

himself weak and prided himself in being in control until now. He had allowed his life to spiral out of control.

He had no answers as to why. Was it a weakness, a demon or something genetic? What would make him risk everything? Daily, no matter how hard he tried, he found himself in the same place, doing the same thing, not knowing how to stop.