

A COMPLETELY GRIPPING PSYCHOLOGICAL SUSPENSE



THE ~~PERFECT~~ MARRIAGE



**HIS MISTRESS IS DEAD.
HIS WIFE IS HIS ONLY HOPE.**

JENEVA ROSE

THE PERFECT MARRIAGE

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To Mom
My biggest supporter
My proudest fan
My favorite memory

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PROLOGUE

Did he love her? He loved the way she looked at him—the way her bottom lip trembled and her foot quaked when she orgasmed. He loved the way her long chestnut locks fell in front of her doe eyes as she rode him and the way her slender back curved into a crescent moon when he thrust her from behind. Did he love her? He loved parts of her. But the question isn't whether or not he loved her. The question is... did he kill her?

SARAH MORGAN

“**N**ot again.”

The disappointment in his voice fills the room and hangs there like a light fog, clouding us from one another. I take in a deep breath, removing the haze, and let it out just as quickly, clearing the path back between us. I don't need to look at him to know his eyes are disheartened and his lips are pressed firmly together. I don't blame him. I've disappointed Adam again. I run my hands over my golden blond hair taming any flyaways. It's wrapped tightly in a perfect bun. It's always wrapped tightly in a perfect bun. I slide a white blazer over an emerald-green blouse and straighten out my pencil skirt. My eyes meet his, locking us back into place.

“I'm sorry.” I tilt my head down, avoiding his gaze to lure him toward me. He takes the bait, walking to me, his six-foot-two stature towering over my petite body. He puts his hand to my cheek, lifts my chin, and kisses me softly on the lips. Every hair raises on my body. After ten years of marriage, Adam still does that for me. After ten years of marriage, I still do that for him—disappoint, I mean.

“We were supposed to leave for the lake house yesterday. You said you'd be able to today.”

I break our embrace and begin packing up my briefcase, my sense of responsibility outweighing my levels of sentiment. “I know, I know. It's just I have so much work to do and a huge closing statement to prepare for.”

Adam walks to the door frame of our master bedroom and leans against it. He folds his arms in front of his chest. There's nothing more that I want

at this moment than to be wrapped up in his arms rather than wrapped up in a messy court case, but there are some things even I can't control.

"You always have so much work to do. There's always a big case you're working on." He narrows his eyes at me playfully but in a somewhat accusing way, as if I were now on trial.

"Someone has to pay the bills." I give a small smile. That lands. He shakes his head so slightly I almost don't notice it, but I need to acknowledge it. I place my hands on his shoulders. He pretends he won't lean down to meet my lips, but I know he will. He can't resist me, just like I can't resist him.

He smiles, but his game of tug-of-war only lasts a few seconds before his body bends toward me. Our lips meet again—this time more passionate. This time our mouths spread, our tongues swirl, his hands run up and down my back. I consider calling it all off at that moment. I'll quit the firm. We'll sell this house, and we'll move to our lake house in Virginia, just the two of us running hand in hand into our own fairy tale.

But reality sets back in.

"I have to go," I whisper into his ear as I pull away. I'm always the first to pull away. Someday, we'll be everything I always knew we would be but someday isn't today.

"But it's our tenth anniversary tomorrow." He frowns. He still has the boyish charm I fell in love with, and it would be annoying if I weren't also smitten by it.

"I'm going to try to make it there tomorrow." I take a step back from him, surveying his disappointed face, the damage I've done.

He lets out a huff. "After ten years, you'd think I'd be used to you doing this... but I'm not." Adam rubs his chin as if he's contemplating what he'll say next. "I'm just really fed up with it, Sarah." He lowers his head and shakes it.

I close the space between us and bury my face into his chest. "I'm sorry. I know I've disappointed you. But regardless, after this case is over, I'm taking a week off work. I've already talked to Kent." I look up at him with doe eyes, hoping he'll be happy with this news.

He lets on a small smile. "Is this a real promise or a Sarah promise?"

I lightly pat his chest. "Oh, stop."

He grabs my hands and pulls me in for another kiss. "I'll stop when you stop." He smirks. I kiss him again.

“Oh, I almost forgot.” From the closet I pull out a small wrapped box and present my gift to him. “I got you something.”

He looks at it and then at me. “You shouldn’t have,” he says taking the perfectly wrapped present. We had agreed after our fifth anniversary, we weren’t going to do gifts anymore, but I couldn’t help myself. I know I’ve been neglectful, but this was my small way of making it up to him. He pauses for a moment and then carefully unwraps the gift. He lifts the box open unveiling a Patek Philippe grand complication watch with alligator band and a gold face. His mouth drops open.

“I’ve been looking at this watch for years... but this, this is too much,” he protests while admiring the intricacies and design of the watch face.

“No, it’s not—it’s ten years of marriage.” I pull the watch out. “Look at the engraving.”

He flips it over and on the back is engraved, *5,256,000*.

Adam looks to me. “What’s that?”

“That’s how many minutes are in ten years.” I plant a light kiss on his lips.

“You counted?”

“I’m always counting.” I laugh as I help him put the watch on.

He holds out his wrist admiring it. “Is this so I can keep track of every time you’re late or stand me up?” he teases. I roll my eyes at him.

“I’m kidding.”

“No, you’re not.” I tilt my head. I know he’s not kidding.

He lowers his arm and returns his attention to me, placing his hands on my shoulders, running them down my arms. “You’re right, but I love you anyway, Sarah.” He kisses me hard.

After untangling ourselves from a passionate kiss, we make our way down to the kitchen, a large and modern space with stainless-steel appliances, cream-colored cupboards, and granite countertops. I set my briefcase on the island and rummage through the fridge for fruit and water. I take some sliced pineapple and a glass bottle of San Pellegrino, which should tide me over until I send my assistant on a lunch run.

Adam pours two cups of coffee and places one beside my black Bottega briefcase. He removes the used coffee filter from the machine and walks to the garbage, pressing his foot on the pedal to open the lid. Just as he is about to discard the refuse into the can, a brief glittering of silver catches his eye.

“What’s this?” Adam reaches down into the trash, pulling out the source of the luminescence. A torn envelope with a card inside.

“Your mom sent us an anniversary card,” I reply without looking up from my phone.

“And you just... threw it away?” He crumples up his face.

“I read it. Acknowledged it. Digested it. What more do you want me to do with it?”

He pulls the card out of the ripped open envelope, and reads it aloud, “I can’t believe you lasted ten years! Happy Anniversary, my darling Adam and Sarah. P.S. Where are my grandchildren? Love, Mom.”

He smiles and walks to the fridge. “That was nice of her.” He begins searching through drawers for a magnet to secure his prize to the front of our stainless-steel fridge. I roll my eyes as I watch him add a piece of garbage to the refrigerator.

“What are you going to do today?” I change the subject. I’m just going to let this one go, and by this one, I mean his mother. I pick up the cup of coffee and bring it to my lips. It burns, but a good type of burn, like the small fires we sometimes need in our lives to remind us that we are alive.

“Well, now that I have nothing but time on my hands...” he says with a chuckle while looking at his new watch. I let out a small, polite laugh for his terrible joke. “I’ll probably head up to the lake house and get some writing done. Daniel needs more pages before he can pitch the book.”

I nod and take another sip. “The last ones you sent were wonderful. Your agent is going to love them. Make sure you send me your newest ones.”

“Do you mean that?” He skeptically raises an eyebrow.

“I mean everything I say... especially, about you.” I wink.

He sets his cup of coffee down and closes the distance between us, standing behind me with each hand on the countertop. He nuzzles and kisses my neck while pressing his pelvis into my butt. I giggle like a schoolgirl.

“Come tomorrow. Just for the day.”

“I’m going to try, even if I can just spend a few hours with you.”

“Do more than try. We’ve had the lake house for over a year, and you haven’t spent more than a night up there.”

“I said I’ll try.” I take another sip of my coffee.

He groans into my neck. “Please.”

“I’ll do everything in my power to be there tomorrow, and you and I can finally christen that lake house.” I playfully back into him. He pulls me in tight and kisses my neck.

“Now that is a plan I can get behind.” Adam turns me around to face him and runs his hands all over my body.

“Thank you for being patient with me.” I raise my chin so our eyes can meet, giving him my most bashful puppy-dog eyes to convey as much sincerity as I mean to express with my words. His eyes lock with mine.

“I’d wait a lifetime for you and then some.” He kisses my forehead, the tip of my nose, and then my lips. “Or at least another 5,256,000 minutes...” He smirks. “Now, hurry to work so you can hurry to me.” He playfully pats my butt as if I was running into a football game.

I pick up my bag and start toward the door. I tell him I love him.

“Love you more,” he says.