

DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS

by Trish Arrowsmith

EXCERPT

He reached out and grabbed her hand like he used to when they were dating. “We’re moving. Next week.”

“What?” Kathleen cried. “What do you mean we’re moving?” She pulled her hand from his.

“We’re moving to the country. I bought us a house out there.”

Kathleen went from being the happiest she had been in a long time to livid in a matter of seconds. Her whole body begin to shake. “We can’t move next week, Maxwell. I own this house. I’ll need to clean it and put it up for sale. It could take months.”

“Already taken care of, beautiful. You don’t need to worry about a thing.”

She cringed at his choice of the word ‘beautiful.’ “It’s going to take me weeks just to pack everything.” She sounded like she was whining but she didn’t care, this was a huge decision he made for both of them without consulting her. He had never even mentioned a desire to move, and certainly not to the country. She had never been outside the suburbs of the city. She was already feeling lonely and now she would really be by herself.

“No need to worry. I hired movers. They’ll be here Tuesday.”

“Tuesday? Like five days from now?”

Maxwell laughed. “Well, yes. What did you think I meant when I said next week?” He continued eating his dinner like this was a normal conversation they would have on any given day.

Kathleen had lost her appetite. She slid her plate away from her and shook her head. She was upset that she hadn’t gotten to tell Maxwell her news. She wanted to make it a joyous occasion for them both and it had completely lost its appeal. At least for now. She got up and left the table without eating any more. She needed some time away to process what he told her.

She stood in the bathroom for five minutes fighting back tears before she went to stand in the doorway of the kitchen. She leaned against the frame with her arms crossed. “What do you mean it’s already taken care of? Did you sell my house? How is that even possible?”

Maxwell’s eyes rolled toward the ceiling. After all this time she still didn’t seem to get it. Her naivety both humored and annoyed him. “You seem to forget rather easily that I’m a lawyer. There are so many things that I can do, so many things that I have access to, it would make your head spin. And yes, to answer your question, I did sell it. Got a pretty penny for it, too.” He smirked at her. “Did you make any dessert?”

Kathleen was furious that he had managed to sell her house without her knowing about it. She was sure his job gave him access to information like that, but it didn’t mean he had to abuse the privilege. How did he even know she bought the house outright, maybe she had inherited it from her grandmother or bought it from someone else in her family? She didn’t, of course, and she guessed he had access to that information as well, but this was the first house she had ever owned. She was proud of her little house. And considering it was hers, she would have liked to have some say in selling it. She decided now was not the time to ask him for specific details, but eventually she wanted to know why he sold it and how much he got for it.

She dropped a plate with a slice of Boston crème cake in front of him. The fork rattled and bounced from the plate to the table. Kathleen crossed her arms over her chest again and stared at him. “I know you have access to a lot of information but how did you manage to sell my house without my consent?”

Maxwell straightened his posture, he pulled back his shoulders, puffed up his chest, and smiled so wide it made Kathleen want to slap it off his face. “As a lawyer, I should advise you to read all forms and documents thoroughly before you sign them.”

Kathleen squinted and shook her head. “But I never...”

Maxwell howled with laughter as he watched the realization hit her.

Her mouth hung open and she sighed with shame. “Our wedding day.” Her arms dropped to her sides; her head fell forward.

He nodded his head and shoved a fork full of cake into his mouth. “What’s yours’ is mine.”