

In Wine & Blood
by Ashley Andrews

For the fifth day straight, it was raining. Georgia cursed the heavens as her clothes became soaked before she could pull on her coat. Her car was the last in the lot, as usual for a Friday. She heaved the last of a weekend project into her trunk and escaped the rain. A pile of classifieds lay in her passenger seat. Some job listings were circled, and others crossed out. Her boss had become increasingly more forward and wouldn't take no for an answer anymore.

As she pulled up to her house, Georgia let out a sigh of relief. She walked to her trunk, grabbed the first load of work, and carried it inside. She loved living alone because there was no one around to berate her for bringing work home. She dropped everything off in the mudroom—she could grab the rest later—and headed to the kitchen to pour herself a glass of red wine. “The darker, the better,” Georgia said.

Her cat *mewed* and slinked over for attention. She squatted down and scratched under its chin.

“Hey there, Dahlia. Miss me today?” The cat rubbed against her leg, purring, then licked some wine off Georgia's hand in response. Georgia wrinkled her nose and laughed. “I'll take that as a yes.”

The cat jumped into her lap, sending her off balance. She spilled wine all over the front of her clothes. Dahlia leaped away, and Georgia threw the wineglass at her. Glass shattered but missed the cat.

She grabbed some linens and toweled up the wine, cursing herself for choosing such a dark red. She grabbed the towels and carried them to the mudroom, loading them into the washer. She glanced down at her ruined clothes and sighed.

“All’s fair in wine and blood,” she said. As she went to pull her top off, the doorbell rang. “One moment!” she called.

Someone started pounding on the door. She glanced at the huge bundle she had brought home from the office. She didn’t have time for visitors. She opened her dryer, pulled a sweater out, and tugged it on over her wine-soaked blouse. The pounding on the front door continued.

“I’m coming. I’m coming!” She pulled the door open and found two uniformed officers on her doorstep. One officer had his hand on his gun. She took a step back. “Can I help you?”

“Georgia Cameron?” the first officer said.

"Yes, sir."

“I’m Officer York and this is my partner Officer Harvey." He motioned for Harvey to take his hand away from his gun. "Could we ask you some questions?"

“Can I ask what this is about?” she asked. She stood firm, hand on the door, ready to close it if needed.

“It’s about your boss,” Officer Harvey said in a rough voice. She flinched.

Officer York raised a hand to signal to his partner to shut up. He smiled at her. “We heard from a few of your coworkers that he’s been harassing you at work. Can we come in and talk about it?”

She nodded and stepped back. Officer Harvey pushed in ahead of his partner.

“You haven’t lived here long?” Officer York motioned to a few empty moving boxes in the corner.

“About six months.”

“And how long have you had your current job?” Officer Harvey asked.

“The same,” she said. “I moved here for work.”

“When did Mr. Delray begin making advances?” Officer York asked.

She squeezed her eyes shut at their euphemism. “A month in.”

“When did you last see Mr. Delray, Ms. Cameron?” Officer Harvey asked.

“Two days ago, at work.”

They exchanged a glance. “Wednesday?” Officer York asked.

She nodded.

“Not today?” Officer Harvey asked.

“No.” She looked them each in the eyes. “I haven’t been in since Wednesday. I brought some work home that day, to not get behind.”

Officer Harvey chewed on his lip and studied Georgia like he had her all figured out.

“Did something happen?” she asked.

“Mr. Delray is missing,” Officer Harvey said.

She placed a hand on her chest. “Do you think I’m in danger?”

Officer York stepped closer to her. “If you feel like you’re in danger, we could place an officer here to keep an eye on you.”

She thought about it for a moment, then shook her head. “I’m sure you need all your men to find him.”

He handed her his business card. “That’s all the questions we have for you today, Ms. Cameron. Thank you for your time,” Officer York said.

She placed it in her pocket and smiled. As she shut the door, Dahlia jumped on the kitchen counter, licking wine from her paws.

The next day Georgia sipped wine, wearing a silk robe, and watched from her security camera as the officers returned, warrant in hand, and kicked in her front door. The officers ran through the house. She heard the tearing of a bag, and then Officer York swore.

“Found him,” he called from the mudroom. “Well, part of him.”

Officer Harvey stopped in the bedroom. “Hey, York? I think you should see this.”

Officer York joined his partner and found an envelope addressed to him on the bed. He pulled on gloves and opened it, careful to preserve evidence. He dumped the contents, five sets of identification, on the bed. The woman pictured in each was unmistakably the lady from last night, though only one identified her as Georgia Cameron.

Officer York swore and lifted the ID to show his partner.

“Why leave this for us? We had no idea,” Officer Harvey asked.

Officer York scanned the room. His eyes landed on a tiny camera in the corner. “She wants to be seen.”

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