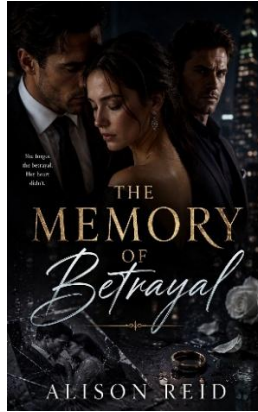


The Memory of Betrayal

by Alison Reid



Out on the small balcony, Candace leaned against the railing with a glass of wine in her hand while London glittered below them in blurred gold lights. Logan stood beside her, jacket discarded, one hand resting loosely around his own drink.

For a moment neither of them spoke.

Then Candace sighed lightly. “I keep telling Zoey it’s never going to happen.”

Logan’s mouth curved faintly because he knew exactly what she meant.

He liked Candace. She was beautiful in the polished effortless way magazines adored, but she was also smart and funny beneath the model exterior. Easy to talk to. Protective of Zoey in a way he respected deeply.

“She means well,” he said quietly.

“Mmm. Yes, she does.” Candace studied him for another moment before asking carefully, “How long?”

Logan glanced at her slowly. “How long what?”

But he already suspected exactly what she was asking.

Candace’s expression softened slightly. There was no accusation in it. No judgment. Just quiet understanding.

“How long have you been in love with my best friend?” she asked gently.
“Your best friend’s wife.”

For a second, genuine surprise flickered across Logan’s face before it disappeared behind his usual calm control.

London traffic hummed faintly below them while silence stretched between them.

Then Logan looked back out over the city lights and gave a quiet humourless laugh.

“Am I really that obvious?”

“To me?” Candace took a sip of wine. “Yes.”

He nodded once slowly, almost to himself.

“Four years,” he admitted finally. “Since the night Leon introduced me to her.”

Candace exhaled softly. God. She had suspected it was bad, but not that bad.

“And before you ask,” Logan said evenly, “nothing has ever happened. Nothing ever will. I respect her too much for that.”

Candace believed him immediately. Because somehow that made the whole thing sadder, not better.

“She likes you,” Candace said quietly. “But Zoey’s very loyal. She doesn’t even suspect a thing. Neither does Leon.”

A muscle tightened briefly in Logan’s jaw before he looked away toward the city again. “You’re not going to say anything, are you?”

“No.” Candace’s voice turned serious. “I like you, Logan. And to be perfectly honest...” She hesitated slightly. “I think you’d probably be better for her than Leon.”

His head turned sharply enough that genuine surprise crossed his face for the first time that evening. “You don’t like Leon?”

“It’s not that I don’t like him.” Candace swirled the wine slowly in her glass. “He just gives me a vibe sometimes.”

Logan frowned faintly. “A vibe.”

“Yes, a vibe.”

“That’s not very specific.”

She huffed a laugh. “You know what I mean.”

Logan stayed quiet.

Candace sighed softly and leaned back against the railing. “Leon loves her. I know he does. But there’s something about him that feels...” She searched for the word carefully. “Restless.”

The word landed harder than Logan expected.

“He likes attention,” Candace continued. “He likes being admired. Sometimes men like that start believing loyalty is optional if nobody catches them.”

Logan’s expression darkened almost imperceptibly.

Not because he thought she was wrong.

Because a small, ugly part of him had wondered the same thing before. And hating Leon for a hypothetical betrayal felt disgustingly self-serving considering his own feelings for Zoey.

“Zoey is the first woman Leon’s ever been faithful to,” Logan said finally, his voice quieter now.

Candace looked at him carefully.

Logan gave a faint shrug, though his expression remained distant. “In university he cheated on practically every girlfriend he had.” He exhaled slowly through his nose. “Then he met Zoey and it just... stopped.”

At least that was what Logan had believed. Because Leon had changed after Zoey. Everyone around him had noticed it. He drank less. Worked harder. Started talking about marriage and children and stability in a way he never had before. For the first time in his life, Leon Holloway had genuinely seemed content.

“He’s never treated her badly,” Logan said quietly.

“No,” Candace agreed immediately. “That’s what makes it complicated.”

She glanced back through the balcony doors toward the kitchen where Zoey’s laugh drifted softly through the apartment. Warm. Happy. Completely unaware of the conversation happening about her.

“She adores him,” Candace murmured.

Logan swallowed once slowly. Yeah. She did. And that was the part that mattered most. Because no matter how badly Logan wanted things he could never have, Zoey loved her husband with her whole heart. He had seen it in every smile she gave Leon, every unconscious touch, every proud look across crowded rooms.

Which meant Logan’s feelings weren’t romantic. They were a liability. A dangerous one.

“You know what the worst part is?” Logan asked after a long silence, his voice rougher than before.

Candace looked at him quietly.

“I can’t even regret meeting her.”

Something painful tightened in Candace’s chest at the raw honesty in his voice. Because Logan hadn’t said it like a man fantasising about stealing another man’s wife. He said it like a man who already understood she would never belong to him.

Candace studied him for a long moment before her expression softened unexpectedly. “For what it’s worth,” she said gently, “I think you’d walk through fire for her.”

A humourless smile touched Logan’s mouth as he looked back out over the London skyline.

“That’s the problem.”

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