

## The Assistant

Berniece was so close Elouise could make out each perfect fake eyelash. “Nothing important. Just more meetings.” After a moment of consideration she added, “And it’s *Elouise*.”

“Who gives a fuck what your name is. And *nothing important*? You being serious?!... YOU SLEEPING WITH MARK?!”

“What? No. God!” Elouise tried again to push past but Berniece grabbed her wrist.

“FUCKING LIAR. You never tell me shit! Call yourself my assistant?! No wonder you couldn’t be a crappy actress!”

Elouise took a step back, wounded by each word. “Yeh? Well at least I’m not a pathetic excuse for a crack whore FUCKING A MARRIED MAN!” As soon as she said it the regret pricked in her chest. She saw the hurt on Berniece’s face. “I’m sorry, I didn’t-”

“Just-just *give me the phone*.” Berniece suddenly lunged at Elouise, acrylic nails scratching and clawing. Elouise was surprised; she wasn’t scared. Instead she felt a sense of relief as she scratched at the perfect visage of Berniece. She got a clean slap right across her face, pulling off the plastic layers of makeup. The phone dropped to the ground and Berniece went to grab it, narrowly avoiding a knee in the chest. Elouise caught a glimpse of the stairs behind her. *Break the routine, get out of this all!* That was all Elouise could think. Before she realised it, her hands were gripping Berniece’s shoulders. Elouise shoved. Instantly she heard the crunch of Berniece’s perfect skull on marble step. It turned from pristine white to a murky red. Elouise froze. She didn’t want to watch but she couldn’t take her eyes off Berniece’s elegant figure as it contorted and convulsed down the narrow stairs. She clicked and cracked until the last dull thud. Berniece, beautiful Berniece, lay mangled at the bottom of the stairs.

Tears began to pour from Elouise’s eyes. She started to shiver and shake. Her hands clasped over her mouth. Without thought, her legs began to run back to the studio. This was the only way, Elouise thought. But just before opening the door she heard the back exit. It was Mark. “What the... fucking hell, Berniece?... JESUS CHRIST! BERNIECE, WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?!” She couldn’t tell if Mark sounded angry or upset. Elouise knew that worked in her favour. She burst through the doors to the studio crying “HELP! Berniece! Someone help, Mark’s killed Berniece!”.