

CONNECTED BY HEART

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

IGOR POPOVICH (50s), silver fox despite his beer belly, tightens a chain on the door.

An older model green Honda careens toward him. Stops a few feet away.

JADEN TILLEY (27), light skinned black girl with deep emerald green eyes, hops out.

JADEN
Mr. Popovich, wait!

She races toward him as he padlocks the chain.

POPOVICH
I wait and wait. And for what?
Still no rent.

SHAYLA BOWMAN (27), dark skinned black girl with pink crystals adorning her waist length braids, signs their check then races over. Waves it at Popovich.

SHAYLA
We're so sorry. We just got your message. Here.

After one peek at the check, he hands it back.

POPOVICH
This isn't cashier check. Or dated today.

SHAYLA
No. But the funds are coming. The investor --

POPOVICH
The investor. The investor. No. There is no investor.

JADEN
There is. He promised the funds would be in our account next week. At the latest.

Popovich pauses. Takes his time lighting a cigar. The girls wait on pins and needles. He blows a stream of smoke skyward.

POPOVICH
Fine. Bring cashier check next week.

JADEN

We can't afford to halt production.
We'll miss our delivery deadline.

POPOVICH

I can't afford you girls using my
warehouse for free. Other tenants
pay good money.

JADEN

We understand and appreciate your
patience --

POPOVICH

Look, girls. Maybe you are in over
heads. Yes? Perhaps it's time to
cut losses.

What passes for a kind smile tugs on Popovich's lips. He
leaves the girls standing there. Gut punched. Jaden rallies.

JADEN

Wait a minute! What about our
stuff? Everything is inside.

He pauses as he's about to climb in his Mercedes SUV.

POPOVICH

Bring cashiers check to office next
week. I give new key.

He drives off.

SHAYLA

Everything is inside. Ever-y-thing.

JADEN

I know.

Jaden tugs on the new padlock, while Shayla paces off her
agitation and tries not to hyperventilate.

SHAYLA

But we got this.

JADEN

We got this.

Supergirls once again, they climb in and drive away.

INT. MACY'S - DAY

Distracted by her phone, Jaden trails behind her mother,
VALENCIA TILLEY (65), brown skinned black woman, exits the
store into the mall with a few shopping bags on one arm and
her purse on the other.

VALENCIA

And then your father said --

She stops and looks for Jaden. Waits for her to catch up.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

What is so interesting on that
thing anyway?

Jaden logs out of her bank account before her mother can get
a peek at the \$337 she has left in the world.

JADEN

Daddy said what?

VALENCIA

Are you sexting?

JADEN

What? Mom! No!

VALENCIA

You're a grown woman. And Minnie
tells me it's what you young folk
do these days.

JADEN

We are not having this
conversation, Mother.

INT. MALL - DAY

Jaden walks on ahead. Valencia catches up.

VALENCIA

You never introduce your father and
me to any young men. Are you on
Tinder? Minnie raves about Tinder.

JADEN

I'm trying to launch a business. I
don't have time to date.

VALENCIA

Just don't wait too long. Your
father's not as spry as he used to
be. He wants to bounce a grandbaby
on his knee while he still can.

JADEN

Dad is plenty spry.

Valencia checks out a jewelry vendor's cart.

VALENCIA

Maybe we should start sexting. How do you sext anyway? Is it fun?

Jaden wants to die. Turns the tables instead.

JADEN

Take a picture of your breasts and text it to dad. Tell him to send you one of his penis.

Valencia's mouth drops. They walk on.

VALENCIA

Jaden Margaret Tilley!

JADEN

What, Mom? You brought it up.

VALENCIA

No, Minnie brought it up.

JADEN

You have questionable taste in friends. What does Minnie know about Tinder anyway?

VALENCIA

Good Lord. I don't think I even want to know.

A GUY (19), shoves his way past Valencia. In the confusion, he snatches the purse from her arm. She tumbles to the floor.

JADEN

Mom!

VALENCIA

He took my pocket book!

Furious, Jaden sprints after the dude. She's fast.

He glances back. She closes in. He speeds up.

Too late. Jaden shoves him forward. He smacks, face first, into the automatic door that hadn't fully opened. He bounces off the glass and lands on his ass.

Jaden grabs Valencia's purse. The dude fights back. Lands a punch on her thigh.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Jaden! Somebody help my daughter!

She kicks purse snatcher in the side.

He falls back. Then launches an all out attack. She keeps pulling at the purse. Kicks his blows away.

He trips her up. She lands knee first on his groin.

Game over.

The guy howls in agony. She retrieves the purse. Jaden's green eyes go ice cold as she stands over him.

JADEN

You could've hurt my mother.

He cups his sac in pain. Tries to crawl away.

She steps on his balls again. His protective grip is no match for her boot. He sheds real tears under the pressure.

JADEN (CONT'D)

No one hurts my mother.

Valencia puts an arm around Jaden. Trying to pull her away.

VALENCIA

I'm okay, sweetheart. Let him go.

SECURITY GUARDS push their way through the growing CROWD.

SECURITY GUARD

We've got it from here, ma'am.

After one more vindictive press, Jaden backs off. The guards cuff the crying man and drag him away.

Off Jaden's cold green eyes watching him go.

INT. SWANKY HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The same green eyes. This time, they're calculating as they regard TAMI STEIN (34), plain-faced blonde who makes the most of her significant curves. Said curves are currently packaged in a bright red dress that is darn near a second skin.

She leans over the bar and points to a top shelf scotch all while making sure to give the BARTENDER a nice long view of her cleavage.

TAMI

That one. Two.

BARTENDER

Yes, ma'am.

While she pours, Tami stands and turns to see the owner of the green eyes, KENNEDY PIERCE (30), smiling at her.

Everything about him, from the top of his longish brown haired head to the soles of his Ferragamo-encased feet, screams rich frat bro. Except his eyes.

His smile widens as he watches Tami pick up the glasses and sashay his way. She hands him one then settles on his lap.

TAMI
I'm glad you called.

KENNEDY
How could I come to New York and not say, 'hello' to my favorite lady?

TAMI
Oh, I don't know. How'd you do it last month? And the month before that?

KENNEDY
You mean when I had my bratty little sister in tow. I swear that girl is going to be the death of me.

TAMI
How is Taylor anyway.

KENNEDY
Bratty. With a new boyfriend. Chad.

TAMI
We don't like Chad, I take it.

KENNEDY
Hell. Chad doesn't even like Chad.

He drops his eyes to her breasts. Plants a soft kiss on her shoulder.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)
Do you really want to waste time discussing Taylor and Chad?

Off Tami's smile.

INT. JADEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jaden shuffles through a stack of unpaid bills at her desk. Depressed, she pushes them aside. Reveals a black purse. Reverently, she picks it up and studies it.

One side is made from shiny leather, while the other is covered in tiny solar panels. Fine stitching just under the zipper spells out TilleyBowman in a french script.

Shayla bounds into the room. Startles Jaden out of her thoughts.

SHAYLA
I knew I still had it.

She hands Jaden a business card.

JADEN
This was his cell on the back. Have we tried all these?

SHAYLA
Yes, but let's try them all again. Mr. Conyers has to be somewhere.

Shayla pulls up a chair while Jaden dials the first number on the card. She puts her cell phone on speaker.

JADEN
This number is in my contacts. We've definitely tried this one.

She hangs up when the voicemail comes on.

SHAYLA
Try his cell.

Shayla nervously picks up the purse while Jaden dials. They sit and listen to the phone RING on the other end.

SHAYLA (CONT'D)
Just watch. After we get these babies to market, we're going to sit and have a long laugh about all this.

Jaden shoots her a skeptical look. The phone keeps RINGING.

SHAYLA (CONT'D)
A long, long laugh.

The RINGING stops. Both girls sit up in anticipation.

AUTOMATED VOICE
This number has no associated mailbox. Goodbye.

The girls deflate.

JADEN
That's it. We're out of options.

INT. SWANKY HOTEL SUITE - DAY

A trail of clothes - the red dress, a suit, red heels, a tie - leads from the door across the room to the king sized bed where Tami sleeps. Alone.

Naked, Kennedy goes through her phone. Searches her email for "Pierce Pharmaceutical". He tosses a cold look over his shoulder at her when he finds a lengthy chain. He forwards them all to himself then deletes the new sent messages.

Tami stirs on the bed. Looks for him.

TAMI
Where's my Ken-Doll?

He rolls his eyes at the nickname. Without a care in the world, he slyly drops her phone in the pile of clothes.

She clocks the movement.

TAMI (CONT'D)
Was that my phone?

KENNEDY
You and your news obsession. An app kept buzzing. Didn't want to wake you.

He treats her to a wicked grin.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)
But now that you're up --

She gasps when he settles between her legs.

TAMI
It would be - oh! Torture if we ever had to - ah! Work in the same office. I'd never get anything done.

She grabs him by the hair and pulls him up for a kiss.

KENNEDY
Good thing a few states separate us then. The distraction is mutual.

He lets her flip him on to his back so she can straddle him.

TAMI
It would be nice to be closer, though, don't you think?

KENNEDY
That's practically our family motto. Keep friends close. Enemies closer. Family closest.

He hugs her tighter. She smiles and rides him. Family?

His eyes go cold now that she can't see them. Or enemy?

His phone vibrates on the night stand. The Caller ID reads: CONNIE DEAREST.

INT. PIERCE MANOR - HARRISON'S SUITE - DAY

CONSTANCE PIERCE (55), wearing a comfy old shirt and sweatpants, frowns at her phone then hangs up.

HARRISON (O.S.)
Oh, let the boy be, my dear.

CONSTANCE
Did he tell you what was in New York?

HARRISON PIERCE (58), pale and skinny, is almost lost among all the plush pillows stacked on his domineering king sized bed. He holds out a hand to her.

HARRISON
You always worry too much. Come here.

CONSTANCE
No, darling. I don't want to hurt you.

He tosses a pillow aside and pats the newly freed space on the bed in invitation.

HARRISON
A risk I'm willing to take.

Constance picks up the pillow and replaces it. Kinda like a fortress. Keeping him in.

CONSTANCE
Well, I'm not. You're looking better today and I don't want to jinx it.

HARRISON
I'm feeling better. In fact, I think it's a good day to tackle the grounds for a change. Get a little fresh air in my lungs.

CONSTANCE
Let's not get ahead of ourselves. You could relapse at any moment.

HARRISON
All the more reason to take advantage of today. Get out while I can enjoy it.

Constance checks on a plant dying in the corner of the room.

CONSTANCE
Has Sarah been over-watering again?

HARRISON
You're changing the subject.

CONSTANCE
I'm not. I'm just --

An alarm buzzes on her watch.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
-- being cautious. I'm going to fix
your lunch. We'll talk more later.

She hurries out. He struggles into a sitting position.

HARRISON
No more soup. Connie? "He drowned
in vegetable broth" is a terrible
obituary.

But she's gone. He sighs and flops back down.

EXT. S&L INVESTMENTS - DAY

Jaden's car bumps over the broken pavement then parks in the
deserted end of a strip mall. She and Shayla climb out.

JADEN
You're sure this is it?

SHAYLA
That's what the map says. This is
the street address attached to the
P.O. Box on the card.

Jaden cautiously tries the door. It's locked. She presses her
face against the glass to see inside. Shayla joins her.

THROUGH THE GLASS

The space is completely empty save for a bit of trash.

BACK TO SCENE

Jaden moves to a different spot, trying to get a better view.

JADEN
Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

SHAYLA
If you're seeing a great big heap
of nothing then, yeah.

JADEN
I'm starting to think the "angel"
investor we're dealing with might
actually be Lucifer.

Off Jaden's overwhelmed face.

INT. JADEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nervous, Shayla fiddles with their solar bag. She plays with the light in the interior. Flicks it on and off. On and off.

SHAYLA
Okay. So Lucifer's a bust. But there's one more thing we haven't considered.

Jaden looks her up and down.

JADEN
What? Did you win the lottery and not tell me about it?

SHAYLA
No. But you did.

JADEN
What?

Shayla flicks the light a few more times. Annoyed, Jaden takes the prototype from her.

JADEN (CONT'D)
Shayla!

SHAYLA
What about your father?

JADEN
Are you crazy? They don't -- I'm literally doing this to pay off their mortgage. They --

SHAYLA
Not your dad. Your father.

Understanding lights Jaden's eyes for a moment before she shuts Shayla down.

JADEN
Are you serious right now? I can't believe you'd even --

SHAYLA
Just hear me out.

JADEN
Why? On the scale of worst ideas you've ever had, this eclipses them all.

SHAYLA
How so? He has money. We need money. It's that simple.

JADEN

Simple? I don't even know the man.
What would I look like showing up
on his doorstep asking for cash?

SHAYLA

You're only here because he raped
your birth mother. What do you care
how you look to him?

JADEN

Why did I ever tell you about that?

SHAYLA

He basically owes this to you.

JADEN

No one owes anyone a thing.

Seeing she's pushed Jaden as far as is wise, Shayla gathers
her stuff to go.

SHAYLA

But what if he says, "yes"?
Besides, what we need is probably
just pocket change to him anyway.

Shayla heads for the door.

JADEN

Shayla. You haven't mentioned to
Mom or Dad that I found him, have
you? They'd be so hurt.

SHAYLA

Like I ever would.

With that, Shayla slips out the door leaving Jaden alone with
her troubling thoughts.

INT. PIERCE PHARMA - CEO'S OFFICE - DAY

CLEVELAND PIERCE (32), dapper in an expensive suit, paces his
office while he reads through a stack of reports. He signs
off on one file then moves to the next.

The office door BANGS open to admit Kennedy. His suit is as
sharp, but his tie remains loose. He heads straight for the
couch and flops on it.

Cleveland barely registers the interruption.

KENNEDY

You should get one of those
treadmill desks. You know. Since
you hate to sit still and all.

CLEVELAND

I don't need a new desk. How was New York?

KENNEDY

Illuminating.

CLEVELAND

That's good.

KENNEDY

Actually, it's not. We've got a bit of a problem.

Only half listening, Cleveland moves on to another file. Annoyed, Kennedy hops up and blocks his brother's path to get his full attention.

CLEVELAND

I don't have time for this, Kennedy.

KENNEDY

What do you know about Gallant Global?

CLEVELAND

Not much. Aren't they big into shipping or something?

He picks up another file and sits behind his desk.

KENNEDY

If you want to call the 2nd largest importer/exporter in the world, "big into shipping" then I guess that's accurate.

Cleveland drops the file to level an annoyed look on Kennedy.

CLEVELAND

I've got a meeting at three. You wanna get to the point?

KENNEDY

The point is they're planning to expand into the pharmaceutical business.

CLEVELAND

What's wrong with that? Maybe we can renegotiate some of our shipping rates. This could be good for us.

KENNEDY

You're assuming there'll be an "us" left. They're not looking to ship pharmaceuticals.

(MORE)

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

They plan to take over the operations of an already functioning company.

CLEVELAND

As is their right.

KENNEDY

How are you this thick? They're coming after us, Cleveland. They're going to take us over.

Cleveland all but laughs in Kennedy's face.

CLEVELAND

I wish them luck with that. We're not available. Who would want us anyway. We're a small, family run operation.

KENNEDY

Who happens to be sitting on a couple billion dollars' worth of patents. Everybody is available if enough money is thrown at the problem. We are not liquid enough to fight off this big an aggressor.

CLEVELAND

You always worry way too much little brother. We're fine.

The brothers stare one another down. Kennedy blinks first and hates himself for it. He leaves Cleveland to his work.

INT. PIERCE MANOR - HARRISON'S SUITE - DAY

Harrison works his way into street clothes. Winded, he stares at the bowl of soup waiting on his bedside table.

HARRISON

Constance?

He waits a moment. Nothing. But just to be safe, he takes a furtive look around then uncovers his iPad. The flashing "OUT FOR DELIVERY" graphic on a pizza website makes him smile.

Renewed, he stands and defiantly dumps the soup in the plant. With careful steps, he makes his way out of the room.

EXT. PIERCE MANOR - DAY

Jaden strides up to the ornate front door. Takes a moment to steel herself. After a couple false starts, she finally RINGS the doorbell.

She waits for what seems like an eternity. CHIMES echo inside the house then fade away.

JADEN
What am I doing?

She turns to flee, but the heavy door creaks open. Too late. She turns back around. Harrison stands in the entrance. He gapes at her. All the color drains from his face.

HARRISON
Maggie?

He clutches his chest and collapses at her feet.