Leave Us In Pieces, Scattered Everywhere

by deandratb

Summary

CJ seeking answers after "Here Today." Angsty angst angst. This is their post-mortem, because he finally did the one unforgivable thing—he betrayed everything they worked together to build.

Notes

Vienna Teng's "Nothing Without You" makes me itch to write sad CJ/Toby. This is totally random. They're my favorite doomed but unceasing love story.

See the end of the work for more notes.

“Why did you tell me?” CJ’s voice is broken glass across the satellites. He wants to be looking at her instead of talking over the phone; he wants to be able to touch her face, to apologize, to offer comfort. This is not that conversation, or she wouldn’t be calling.

This is something else.

“I had to tell you.”

“No, Toby, actually you didn’t. You could’ve told anyone and gotten the same disgraced perp-walk out of the West Wing. So why was it me? Did you need to see my reaction?”
He is silent, shocked by the accusation.

“You’ve been a lot of things to me over the years,” she adds, her words barely a whisper, “but cruel was never one of them.”

“You know me better than that,” he murmurs when he regains his ability to speak.

“Apparently, I don’t know you at all.” She hiccups through her tears. He remembers that from before, long before. It’s a marker of supreme devastation. He would never have done that to her, any of this; there is nothing to excuse him, nothing really to say.

“You know me best, Claudia Jean,” Toby replies. “And I love you best. That’s why I had to tell you.”

“You’re not making any sense.”

“How did you make this call? Through the switchboard?”

“You know I didn’t.”

“Nope. You used back channels, right? Nobody on the staff, in the press, especially the President...nobody can know we’re having this conversation.”

“Yeah.”

“If I had told anybody else, I would’ve had the same perp-walk. I’d still be off-limits to you for who knows how long--if the next administration is Santos and you stick with them, maybe years. But you’d have heard it all secondhand.”

He pauses, wishing this was a real conversation rather than her attempt to understand the inexplicable. This is their post-mortem, because he finally did the one unforgivable thing—he betrayed everything they worked together to build.

“I needed you to hear it from me, to know that I was sorry, to see it on my face. I didn’t want you to wonder, to worry, to doubt. I owed you the truth.”

She hears the rest in what he isn’t saying. “And?”

“And I needed you to be the one to report me.”

“Because even the President was starting to suspect me.” Nobody would confirm this to her, but she wasn’t stupid. It was in President Bartlet’s tone when he spoke to her, Oliver Babish’s dismissal of her questions, Margaret’s subpoena.

“You were trying to protect me.” Not a question; she knows him too well. He was right about that, though CJ cannot make sense of this. This new piece of the puzzle won’t fit.

She hates puzzles.

“I love you best, too,” she tells him.

“I know.” His sad smile carries through the line.

“Toby?”

“Yeah?”
“Why did you do it?”

“To protect the people I love,” he says simply. Sincerely. “And many, many more.”

“Okay.”

They sit on either end of the distance between them, just being for a minute. It’s CJ who breaks first.

“Okay,” she repeats. She takes a deep, shuddering breath before adding the final, necessary word. “Goodbye.”

Toby closes his eyes. “Bye.”

They don’t speak again for months, and by the time she arrives at his apartment unbidden, everything and nothing has changed.

Danny’s come striding back into her life, turning it upside down again like he used to. She’s going to move away, she’s going to become a mom. She’s going to save the world.

It is too late for them.

It always was.

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End Notes

Title from "You're All I Have" by Snow Patrol.

This has not been beta'd. All mistakes are mine.

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