



Until We Weren't

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Description: How deep does your love grow?

Destiny and Faith were living and loving the life they'd created. They worked side-by-side at a thriving landscaping company by day and spent their nights together in a lavender haze of love. It was a happy life or so Destiny thought.

One day Faith not only moved all her things out of their apartment, but she quit her job and opened her own landscaping company. On top of that the only explanation Destiny ever received was: you know what you did.

Three years later, Destiny now runs her own landscaping company and has an opportunity to bid on a huge, career-defining project. She knows her company is too small to secure the bid, but if she can convince Faith to team up with her she's sure they could win.

The only problem is that Faith can't stand to look at Destiny and Destiny still doesn't know what she did wrong. Can these two talented landscapers bury their past long enough to let their companies flourish?

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“Those are doing well despite this heat.”

Faith looked up and smiled. “Hi, Mrs. Baker. How are you?”

“Oh honey, I’m just out enjoying this sunshine,” Mrs. Baker replied. “I’m glad to see you. I’ve told the boy who cuts the grass he’d better take care of these plants or you’ll be after him.”

Faith Fields was the owner of Lush Fields Landscaping. She had planted the grass and created the flower beds for this retirement home several years ago when she was working for another company, but she still stopped by occasionally to check on the plants and shrubs.

Faith chuckled. “Sometimes plants die, Mrs. Baker.”

“It’s been years since you’ve planted these and not one has died. The way you lovingly tend to the delicate plants to make sure they thrive makes me wonder if you give that kind of attention to other parts of your life,” Mrs. Baker said.

Faith was on her knees and stopped to look up at the older woman and smirk. “You know this was one of the first projects I was able to create and put in. It’s special to me and that’s why I come by to make sure I chose the right plants for this area. I want you to have something beautiful to look at on your daily walks. Besides, I get to see you.”

Mrs. Baker smiled. “Your friend from The Green Thumb came by earlier this week and checked on that very flower bed.”

Faith bristled and paused for a moment then she stabbed her small shovel into the earth around the vinca plant she was tending to.

“I still don’t understand why you two don’t come by together anymore,” Mrs. Baker said. “It seems to me you’d be finished a lot quicker with two of you.”

Faith pushed the dirt around the tender plants then looked up at Mrs. Baker. “You know why. We both have our own companies now and don’t work together any longer.”

“Yet you both still come by and check on these plants,” Mrs. Baker said, raising one eyebrow.

Faith sighed and tried to push down the knot that had formed in her stomach.

“Why is it again that you two opened separate companies? You did everything together to make this place beautiful,” Mrs. Baker said.

“Now, Mrs. Baker, it’s been years,” Faith said, standing up and dusting off her pants. “You know we had our own ideas about things and decided to go off on our own. Some things don’t flourish no matter how much attention you give them.”

“Mmhmm,” Mrs. Baker muttered, staring at Faith. “It seems to me that sometimes these plants get a little brown or wilt and you think they’re gone, but lo and behold there are still little shoots of green at the base. There’s still life.”

Faith put her hands on her hips and tilted her head. “When did you become a horticulturist?”

“I’ve watched these plants grow since you put them in, dear,” Mrs. Baker said.

Faith reached down to pick up her other tools.

“Some of them have withered, but you haven’t had to replace them because they keep coming back,” Mrs. Baker continued.

Faith looked into Mrs. Baker’s eyes and knew she wasn’t just referring to the plants.

“Sometimes plants aren’t the only things that wither,” Mrs. Baker said. “I live in a place where I see that happen every day. Hell, I experience it because of my age.”

“But you’re not,” Faith said with a smile. “You’re thriving.”

Mrs. Baker scoffed. “And your business is thriving, but are you?”

Faith smirked. “I’ll see you again soon, Mrs. Baker.”

“Think about it, Faith,” Mrs. Baker said. “It hurts my heart to see my friends wither away before their time.”

Faith smiled and walked back to her truck. The last thing she wanted to do was think about her friend as Mrs. Baker had called her. Destiny Green was the furthest thing from a friend. It made Faith’s stomach queasy that she ever let that woman touch her, much less trust her with her heart.

Mrs. Baker was right that they did work well together. As time passed they became more than co-workers and led their own teams within the company. Faith trusted Destiny with her ideas of how they could turn a piece of ground into something beautiful.

In turn Destiny befriended Faith and they began to spend time together outside of work. They had fun and Faith felt like she'd found a true friend. As their friendship evolved into more, Faith was hesitant at first. Her past was full of people who were supposed to care for her, yet always let her down.

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But Destiny could see past Faith's walls and had been patient as well as caring. When Faith moved in with Destiny, she finally relaxed and let herself be loved.

"You were such a fucking idiot," she muttered. She shook her head, put the truck in gear and sped out of the parking lot.

"They aren't supposed to award the contract until tomorrow. I don't know why you keep checking for an email."

Destiny Green looked up from her computer and smirked at her assistant, Monica. They were friends long before Destiny started The Green Thumb, so when Destiny needed someone to run the office, Monica asked for the job. She was tired of the long hours and stress as a paralegal. Destiny welcomed her to The Green Thumb; they worked well together and had remained friends.

"I know." Destiny sighed. "I was hoping maybe if we won the bid they'd let us know today."

"Mmhmm," Monica murmured. "I know what you're doing."

Destiny met her eyes and raised her eyebrows.

"You're making sure Lush Fields Landscaping doesn't get it."

"I didn't say that," Destiny said defensively.

"You didn't have to," Monica said. "I'm not sure what you hope for more. That we

get the job or Faith doesn't."

Destiny scoffed. "Of course I want us to get the job."

"Come on, how long have we been working together?" Monica said. "Who knew the landscaping business was so cutthroat? I think I need to pitch a reality show. We could call it Landscape Wars."

"What!" Destiny exclaimed.

"You and Faith are the perfect enemies."

"That's not funny."

"It's not supposed to be funny," Monica said. "As much as y'all hate each other it'd make for great TV and probably put both our companies on the map. You'd be turning jobs down."

"I don't hate Faith," Destiny stated.

"Okay, whatever you say," Monica grinned. "I've only known you for ten years and we've worked together for three. It's not like you and Faith weren't both my friends at one time."

Destiny stared at Monica. She could feel her cheeks getting warm.

"You know, they say there's a fine line between love and hate," Monica said.

Destiny looked back at her computer. "I'm actually doing a little research. Do you know that new construction off Interstate 35? It's going to be a huge business complex."

“No comment and a subject change,” Monica said. “Okay, that conversation is closed. Yes, I know the area you’re talking about.”

“They plan to take bids to do the landscaping for the entire complex, but they’re also looking at breaking it into different sections and tying them all together in some way. If I can come up with something creative and different, this job could boost The Green Thumb’s exposure and make it one of the top landscaping businesses in the state.”

“But that place is huge. Can we pull off something like that?”

“We’d have to put everyone on it, but I think we can,” Destiny said.

“Is that where you were this afternoon? I wondered why you had dirt on your pants when you came in. You rarely have time to work in the field anymore.”

“Uh, no,” Destiny replied. “I had to check on something else.”

“Don’t tell me you were at the retirement home again.” Monica shook her head. “What is it with that place? The Green Thumb does not get a penny from that establishment.”

When Destiny didn’t say anything, Monica continued. “Before starting your own company, you were working for the Galloways at Landscape Artists, right?”

Destiny nodded. “Yes, and they taught me to not only take pride in my work, but also to be attentive. The land can change over time and sometimes your design needs to change with it. Going back and checking on projects I did when I worked for them is valuable in how I bid on jobs now.”

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“I wonder if Faith does the same thing. She worked there, too, right?” Monica said.

Destiny sat back in her chair and stared at Monica. “If you must know, I go back there not only to check the grounds, but also to visit with one of the residents.” She smiled just thinking about Mrs. Baker. “When Faith and I were putting in the flower beds we made a friend. Every time I go back, Mrs. Baker appears while I’m tending to the plants and we have a nice visit.”

“Maybe I should ask her what happened between you and Faith because no matter how many times I ask, you won’t enlighten me,” Monica said.

“Maybe because it’s none of your business,” Destiny said.

“Oh, but it is. I’m concerned with your well-being and I know Faith has a lot to do with that.”

Destiny laughed sarcastically. “How so? It’s been three years since Faith and I were together.”

“Three long years since you’ve been on a date or smiled when talking about another woman,” Monica said. “I’ve tried to set you up several times.”

“If you haven’t noticed, I’m trying to run a company,” Destiny said defensively. “That leaves no time for dating or much else.”

“Oh, you could make time. That’s what I’m for. As your assistant, I’m supposed to take some of the burden off of you.”

“And you do,” Destiny said.

“Why did you and Faith break up again? I forget,” Monica said. “Was it because you worked all the time? Because that’s all you’ve done since you two broke up. Come to think of it, you and Faith didn’t do much with us or our friend group when you were together.”

Destiny looked back to her computer. “You’d have to ask her,” she muttered.

“What was that? I should ask her? Come on, Destiny. This is the closest you’ve come to telling me what happened,” Monica pleaded.

Exasperated, Destiny sighed. “I said, you’d have to ask her. She never told me why she left.”

Monica stood in front of Destiny’s desk with her mouth hanging open. “Really?”

“Yes, really.”

“All this time, she has never told you why she left?” Monica said, unbelieving. “I thought you’d eventually open up about it, but you really don’t know?”

Destiny shook her head. “Please don’t ask me about this again, Monica.” She could feel the familiar stab of loss in her stomach. It was accompanied by sadness now that the anger had washed away.

“Okay, Des,” Monica said softly.

“It’s time to close up for the day. You go ahead,” Destiny said, still staring at her computer screen. “I’m going to stay for a little longer.”

“Don’t stay too long. We’ll be busy in the morning starting that new job we’re going

to win.”

Destiny smiled. “That’s right.”

“See you tomorrow,” Monica said, walking out of the office.

Destiny sat back in her chair and sighed. It had been three long years since her life imploded. She knew that was a little dramatic, but that’s how it felt. She had to work late one night and when she’d gotten home, Faith was gone along with most of her things. When she tried to call her, she discovered Faith had blocked her number.

She tried to find her at work the next day, but Faith had cleaned out her locker and quit. Destiny began to call their friends including Monica and her wife, Kim, but they didn’t know what was going on either. She finally cornered a worker on Faith’s crew who was also a friend. Destiny could still remember the sad look on Mark’s face and the hurt in her heart was just as sharp today as it was back then.

“She said to tell you that you know what you did,” Mark said.

Destiny looked at him with such confusion, but he shrugged.

“That’s all she told me,” he said.

“But what did I do?” Destiny pleaded.

“I don’t know,” Mark said. “She just said, ‘she’ll know what she did.’”