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About 700 words

## The Box

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Hailee sat with her feet curled under herself as she read the first few pages of the novel a friend of hers had let her borrow the day prior. With the book in her lap, she held her glass of brandy in her left hand that Jake had poured for her before he ascended the stairs to their shared bedroom. She fingered the old corner of the story's page, about to turn it over, when doorbell chimed in the foyer. Instead of the quick clicking of heels, she only heard silence.

"Jake must've sent Penny home for the night." She murmured to herself before closing her book and padding softly to the front door. She downed the remains of her drink before pulling open the ivory painted barrier.

The darkness greeted her with cricket chirps and seagull squawks, the waves crashing on her beach front property casting a bitter saltiness than the suffocating exhaust fumes she had left behind in the city. "Hello?" There was no reply as she looked for a shadow of any kind. Stepping out of her grand fortress, her foot caught and nearly caused her tumble down to the stone driveway. Catching herself on one of the cement columns, she grimaced as it tore at her skin. Her heels danced on the edge of the step momentarily before she regained her footing and turned to find what had stubbed her toe.

A shallow, rectangular box sat on the welcome mat with no sticker or delivery tag of any kind. The tape holding it shut had no signs of peeling or dirt or damage of any kind. The same could be said for the box. There wasn't even a letter or number written on the cardboard.

"Hello?" Hailee called out again as she turned back to the driveway. Too afraid to leave the stoop of her house, she picked up the box and went inside, turning the lock to secure the dead bolt. Turning over the box, she started picking at the tape as she made her way to her office. Once she had a good chunk of it off, she wrapped the sticky side around two of her fingers and yanked the rest of it off.

Biting off the tape from her fingers, she spit it back out once her hands were free to open the box up on her desk. Inside,

a white laptop sat with a sticky note on top that said **Watch me. I need your help.** Pulling the small post it off of the smooth surface, she opened up the device to find it was already on.

**Jake Crawford: A Good Lawyer or a Corrupted Crook?** The familiar article popped up on the screen. She had read the article many times since it was published three years ago. Soon, more articles started to pop up on the screen. All of them revolved around Jake's practice and his high success rates in court.

"Another crazy conspiracy theorist." Hailee sighed before murder scene pictures started to pop up on the screen.

"Have you ever figured out who drugged you that day?" A recorded voice played. Hailee went rigid hearing the disguised voice. "Have you figured out why you ended up in prison?" Her mug shot flashed onto the screen, reminding her of her own day in court. "I know why. Who gave you your coffee that morning?" Another picture of Jake slide across the screen in front of her prison photo. "I can prove who did it, and I can prove who murdered Judge Walter Gordon. It's the same person." Every pop up and article left the screen to reveal a hooded figure with a light showing their outline from behind them. "I can prove all of it. But, I need your help. Will you help me?"

Hailee saw the next pop up with the question, giving her the option of yes or no. She put her index finger on the cursor pad before she heard her name. "Hailee?"

"Jake," Hailee breathed looking up to see her husband in the doorway. "What are you doing up?"

"It's one in the morning. You should come to bed, babe." Jake said squinting against the light coming from her ceiling fan.

Hailee smiled at her groggy husband. "I'll be up in a minute." She watched as he turned away before looking back at the screen, hitting the green button that said **Yes**.