

Caster's Unfriendly Ghost

Alicia Dean

Caster jerked his arm off his face and shot to his feet. Joey stood in the room—looking the same as he had the last time he'd seen him five years ago; dark, wavy hair, even darker eyes, his usual attire of jeans and a T-shirt—this time a Thunder basketball shirt—that big, shit-eating grin he always wore.

“You're not real.” Caster shook his head. “This cannot be happening. I'm wasted. I'm imagining things.” Caster kept a litany of denial going until Joey/not Joey held up a hand.

“Let me save us some time. I died in a plane crash a year ago, you came to my funeral. You haven't seen or spoken to my wife since. I, however, have been keeping an eye on her. She's about to make a huge mistake, and I need your help to keep that from happening. I'm sure you'll help me because, in spite of the fact that you pushed the two of us together, you care about Emily, and you don't want to see her hurt.” Joey moved toward him, and Caster stepped back. “Before we proceed, though, I apparently have to make you see that this is real, that I'm here. Pinch yourself.”

Caster shook his head. “I'm not going to do that. You're not real.”

“I would pinch you if I could, but I can't touch people. Only inanimate objects. Guess I'll have to prove it another way.”

Joey held his arms out to his sides and lifted off the ground. Just hovered there, like a... *Ghost*. No way in hell...it couldn't be.

“See, I'm really, truly a ghost. Now, are you ready to hear me out?”

Caster nodded, although he was anything but. He was ready to call the police—or a psych ward.

“I have been unable to move on since my death. My otherworldly mentor—for lack of a better title—told me it was because I can’t rest until Emily is happy. She took my death hard, and now she’s starting to see some dickwad. He’s planning to ask her to marry him, but he only wants her money.”

In spite of the impossibility of the situation, Caster could no longer deny it. Joey Tillman’s ghost was here, in his apartment, asking for a favor. He shook his head. *Son of a bitch*. “How do you know he only wants her money?”

“I’ve been keeping an eye on him—and her. He’s a greedy bastard. He found out Emily received a large insurance settlement from the insurance company—dying in a plane crash is quite a profitable way to go, FYI—and now he wants to get his hands on that money. He’s had a vasectomy, but he told Emily that he hopes to have children one day. The thing Emily wants most is children. I wasn’t able to give them to her.” He fell silent, cleared his throat, but his voice was still hoarse when he spoke again. “Like I said, he’s tricking her, using her, and I can’t allow that to happen.” He blinked rapidly and pressed his thumb and forefingers into his eyes. “Emily doesn’t deserve that. She’s the best.”

Emily *was* the best, Caster couldn’t argue with that. “So, where do I come in?” Okay, it was official. He was actually convinced Joey’s ghost was here, and that he needed a favor. Wow.

“I want you to go after her.”

“Go after her? You want me to kill your wife?” Maybe he wanted Emily to join him on the other side?

“No, of course not. I meant, go after her romantically. Sweep her off her feet.”

Caster snorted a laugh. “I thought you didn’t want her with the wrong guy. I’d be worse than the bozo gold digger.”

Joey was nodding before Caster finished speaking. Hell, he didn't have to agree so vehemently.