



TRIXIE STILLETTO

**SCARECROW &
BETSY MCGEE**

Book IV

**PLANES, TRAINS,
AND BETSY**

SCARECROW & BETSY MCGEE

BOOK IV: PLANES, TRAINS, AND BETSY

...His lips moved down her body to her curved stomach. When he reached her beautiful belly button, he stopped long enough to reach for the bottle of vodka. With her watching, a look of pure, languorous desire in her eyes, he tipped some of the cold liquid into the dent of her belly. Her body tensed against the feel of the chilled vodka in her small well.

He couldn't have that, so he set the bottle down and leaned back over her. He dipped his tongue inside the small crevice and sipped the vodka from her, mimicking the way he sucked her pussy. Her body rose with each stroke of his tongue and, when he added tiny nips around the edge of her belly button, she groaned her need aloud.

All the blood in his body was centered in two places—his head, which was swimming like he'd been on a week-long drunk, and his cock, which was hard as a metal pipe.

As much as he wanted to be deep inside her, he wanted more to show her just how special she was. So, instead of moving to join their bodies, he moved his mouth lower.

Finally he reached her swollen clit and drew it into his mouth, stroking it with his tongue at the same time he inserted two fingers into her damp canal. Her shuddered release, along with the taste of her orgasm, was the greatest gift he had ever been given...

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BOOK IV:

PLANES, TRAINS, AND BETSY

BY

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Winter is a depressing time of the year for me. I don't "do" snow well but I live in a region of the United States infamous for its snow. I decided that both Betsy and I needed to break out of the rut and embrace winter. So, for the first time ever, I'm going to do the winter carnival in my city. I'm sure I won't have quite the adventure that Betsy and Roarke do but I'm hopeful it will help me get over the winter doldrums a little easier. With that in mind, I'd like to dedicate Planes, Trains, and Betsy to all the winter lovers everywhere.

CHAPTER 1

Betsy sat straight up in bed. Something was wrong.

She put her hand over her chest, where her racing heart was beating as rapidly as if she had just completed a marathon, and listened intently. The house was quiet, but she got out of bed and nearly tripped over the family dog snoring peacefully at the side of her bed. He grunted a bit and then went back to sleep. Not reassured since he didn't even have the gumption to bark at the mailman like any other self-respecting member of the canine family, she went to check on her son. Like the dog, he was deeply asleep, his covers kicked off his legs and sprawled on his stomach. She smiled and then felt another tremor of anxiety run through her.

That only left one important person unaccounted for—Roarke.

Suddenly she knew that was what had awakened her. Roarke was in trouble and needed help. She went into the kitchen and picked up the phone. He had given her a number when he left Buffalo six weeks ago

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for his deep undercover job. She hadn't heard a word since, but hadn't been worried. Until tonight. Was she just being jittery? She put the phone back in its cradle. It was two in the morning and every other house in the neighborhood was dark except for Mrs. Johansson, who was a notorious insomniac.

Betsy sighed and sat down at the kitchen table. She couldn't even stand next to it without thinking about the afternoon eight weeks ago when Roarke had surprised her by turning her out-dated kitchen into a sensual interlude fit for a princess. It had been a romantic, loving afternoon that touched her heart and her soul. She'd seen something in his eyes that day, and the days and nights afterward that told her Roarke had felt it as well.

As improbable as it seemed, there was a deep connection forming between them. Betsy was no star-stuck girl. She was a divorced woman with a child. She'd been to the school of hard knocks and was proud she was still standing.

Roarke was... Well, Roarke was the type of man who would be comfortable wearing a tailored tux and escorting debutantes to formal embassy dinners.

Betsy was most comfortable in worn-to-softness cotton and athletic shoes with the rubber soles pastry thin.

He could speak comfortably and knowledgeably in what seemed to Betsy's untrained ear like a thousand different languages and take out bad guys using every weapon known to mankind and some unknown.

She could speak pig Latin and barely defend herself—although she was getting a bit better on the last part.

He was filet mignon.

She was ground round.

But he had told her before he left she was the best partner he'd ever had.

Betsy sighed and looked at the phone again, willing it to ring. It

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remained stubbornly silent, and the feelings of looming disaster rose again.

What could it hurt? Roarke wouldn't have given her the special number if he didn't want her to use it. If he didn't answer, she'd put things aside and go back to sleep. Or clean out the kitchen cabinets until it was time to get Bobby off to school.

She picked up the phone and dialed the number she had committed to memory. It rang once and she heard the sound of Roarke's voice telling her to leave a message. She closed her eyes at the wave of need that rose in her just hearing him. She wasn't a schoolgirl calling a boy she admired from afar just to hear his voice, then hang up. But she still missed him so much it seemed unfair. Trying to push the loneliness away, Betsy punched in the four-digit code that would directly link to either Roarke or his messages.

"Betsy, sweetie, if you're listening to this, something has gone terribly wrong. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done this job alone, but it was personal." Roarke's voice was warm and solid. It was hard to rectify its sound with the dangerous picture his words were painting. "I wanted us to have a special holiday together, sweetie. My plan was to be back and take you and Bobby on a wonderful Christmas vacation. The three of us together, anywhere you guys wanted to go."

Roarke paused.

Betsy could almost feel his anguish coming across in the digital hum of the voice mail.

"Anyway, I wish I could tell you to go talk to my boss Peter Melrose about this, but I was ordered to stay away from it. The higher-ups didn't want to step on friendly toes. But I couldn't let it go. Not after what we talked about our last night together. So, love, it's all my fault, but I couldn't let you think I'd just left without letting you know what happened."

Betsy hung up the phone. She had to think quickly and be very

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Careful. Roarke's words had been casual and, to anyone else, perhaps a little sappy. But he'd told her if she ever heard that type of message from him, there was trouble. They had developed a code around the words "sweetie" and "love." She knew she couldn't write it down, so she pictured the code breakdown in her mind.

When that was only partially successful, she traced the letters on her palm. She was probably being over-cautious, but it only took a couple of times watching the forensic science shows to learn that paper left a traceable trail, as did the computer.

She took a deep breath and tried to concentrate. There were windows in her kitchen and, although she doubted anyone would be watching through them, she wasn't about to blow the gig before they even got out of the gate. First thing she had to do was figure out a safe place for Bobby. Then she'd have to call her boss and tell him she needed some personal time. Betsy laid her head on her arms on the table as if in abject depression, just in case. The whole time her mind was spinning like a washing machine. How was she going to get across the border and to Roarke without alerting any watchers to her goals? How was she going to rescue her hero?

She thought for a moment. She'd never been much of a planner. So, she'd just wing it. There was a way in and a way out. She just had to find them.

* * *

Roarke spat a mouthful of blood onto the concrete floor. Damn, he was cold, and these guys took great joy getting their hourly jollies beating the shit out of him. Well, there wasn't much he could do with his hands and feet bound while out-numbered six to one.

Roarke shook his head, trying to clear away the cobwebs. He was only partially successful.

Damn, it's cold, he thought as he huddled against the concrete wall. As his consciousness wavered he remembered his last night with Betsy.

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There'd been nothing cold about him then...

* * *

They were dancing in her kitchen to a melody that touched him to his very soul. He, a man who took great pride in his lovemaking technique, was being made love to in his mind, his heart, even his very bone marrow by an amazing woman who was coming to mean everything to him. He luxuriated in feeling her lips open beneath his and tasting every inch of her mouth. Her little sighs of pleasure were as welcoming to him as his own. The touch of her fingers on his skin, either hurried with need or slow with tenderness, seemed to be tied directly to the beat of his heart. He couldn't breathe without taking in her scent, nor did he want to.

As they stopped moving, all he could think about was seeing every inch of her, pleasing every inch of her. He removed her clothes leisurely and enjoyed the way she removed his. Finally they were able to touch, skin to skin, with nothing in between them. It was more intense than any other coupling he'd ever known. It was also more intimate.

While he fondled her breasts, he licked his way across her upper lip.

"Oh, my God, Roarke," she begged, "please let me take you. Now." He smiled at her and replied, "Any time, anywhere."

She pushed him over, and he fell back against the floor, smiling up at her. She climbed on top of him, her legs straddling his hips.

It seemed like she hovered there for an eternity, the tip of him nestling just against her trembling lips. He was huge, hot and hard and wanted nothing more than to thrust himself home. But she was in charge. He could feel her come leaking from her inner canal, wetting the tip of his cock. She rubbed against him, letting him feel her body, but keeping the ultimate prize away from his grasp.

"Betsy," he groaned. "Please, love, take me."

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She started to shake her head. He felt power surge through him. It was basic; it was animalistic. He had to thrust. He had to drive his cock deep inside her pussy. But he also wanted to let her keep control. So he said the only word left in his mind.

"Please," he implored.

She closed her eyes as the sigh escaped her. She flowed over him, finally giving them both what they hungered for. He thrust upward at the same moment and he was seated deep, so deep he couldn't tell where he began and she ended. Their orgasm was like the rush of a storm tide flowing endlessly and forever, never seeming to break, never seeming to ease.

"Mine," he murmured just as she collapsed against his sweaty chest in the aftermath. "Mine."

* * *

What he wouldn't give to hold Betsy in his arms right now. But that wasn't to be. He'd left her the message on his voice mail, but that was more to reassure her and in the faint hope she'd remember the code he'd taught her.

He didn't want her to think he'd just walked off and left her after they'd broken the smuggling ring in Amherst. But he also knew that, even if she played the message in a few weeks, it would be too late to get him any help. Besides, the only thing he was sure of at this moment was that there was a mole inside the S.A.S., and the way the odds were stacked against him now, it looked like the mole was going to win.

Roarke tried to battle the wave of nausea that washed over him. He wanted to sleep, but was afraid if he did, he wouldn't wake up. Or if he did eventually wake up that the next thing these guys had planned for him would be his death. They were trying to break him and that wouldn't happen. Death would come first. He just wished he could hear Betsy's voice one last time.

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* * *

Well, getting here had been easy, almost too easy, Betsy thought as she looked at the long, concrete block building two hundred yards away from her. She was about twenty miles northwest of Quebec City in La Belle Province, Canada. But what was she going to do now?

She burrowed deeper into the down lining of her winter jacket. It was cold, but that wasn't surprising since it was New Year's Eve. She had been lucky when she'd gone through customs. Either she had an extremely honest face or the agent was in horrendous need of a vacation. He neither bothered to look in her trunk nor asked to see her purse and luggage. Of course, she knew by driving her own personal vehicle across the border, they knew she was in Canada.

But they had probably figured what could a woman in a beat-up sedan with a soccer ball in the back be up to? She'd had a moment's regret about lying when they'd asked her if she was bringing in any weapons.

But she'd lied in any case.

Of course, even if they'd searched her luggage and trunk, she'd packed light. She had her mace and a hunting knife, which may have raised some eyebrows, but probably wouldn't have gotten her detained. Her duffle bag included just enough gear to make her purpose of experiencing the winter season in Quebec City sound logical. Quebec actually had a winter festival known as the Carnavale de Quebec that ran from the end of January to mid-February. Betsy had a feeling Roarke didn't have that much time to wait for the Carnavale to begin.

But once she left customs, her real quest began. Her first stop was a dollar store. One could find such handy items there without busting the budget. Twenty-five Canadian dollars bought her almost everything she thought she'd need.

She put her hand in her pocket, reassured by the weight of the weapon she'd picked up in one of the alleys on a street that wouldn't

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make anyone's beautiful city docudrama and had cost a bunch more than twenty-five beans. Quebec City was a beautiful, historic municipality, but as in all cities today, it had an underbelly where a person could find trouble, or a thing or two to stave off trouble as the case may be.

She would have adored exploring Quebec City in the winter or summer. She'd even had a quick daydream that one day she and Roarke could bring Bobby here. She knew it wasn't likely to happen. But a girl could dream.

Well, the gun in her pocket was a nice little Glock. If she got captured, she knew it would be found right away. But she was counting on the fact they wouldn't find the other little surprise she had hidden in her special place until it was too late. It had been more expensive than the Glock and was a girl's best friend.

So, she was as armed as she was going to be. Now she had to figure a way to search the building without getting captured or worse. It was a long shot, but according to the coordinates buried in code in Roarke's voice mail, this was the latitude and longitude where he'd been when he made the call. And she'd done a fairly thorough search of the surrounding area. As close as she could tell, this was the only building for miles on this quiet country road.

Still, she stood quietly just behind one of the large trees about twenty yards away from the front entrance and watched. Her white parka and snow pants should blend in with the snow and ground cover. But she wasn't about to lay in the cold white stuff until it was necessary. Although the outfit had been guaranteed by one of the hip outdoors outfitters to withstand extreme conditions, she was certain her idea of extreme wouldn't mesh with some marketing guru's. She looked down at the doll she had strapped to her chest like an infant. The toy looked amazingly life-like and had cost her a big chunk of her cash. Still, if the ruse worked it was worth it.

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She had scoped out as much as she could from cover and there seemed to be only one entrance to the cabin. It was the door she'd been watching for the last twenty minutes.

She waited another five minutes, then decided she'd wasted enough time. It was going to be dark soon since the days were very short this time of the year. The white snowsuit that had been good protection in daylight would stand out like a beacon in the dark. Then there was every chance Roarke might not even be inside. If he was, she had a bad feeling he was going to need more than just a helping hand to get out. Betsy took a deep breath, squared her shoulders and moved forward, praying if anyone saw her they'd believe the lame story her car had broken down and left her stranded.

She stayed among the trees as long as she could, but eventually she had to cross open space. She hoped she wouldn't be picked off as she walked, but she didn't have any choice. Her strategy was simple: wing it.

She walked up to the battered metal door, unzipped the snowsuit a bit and felt the cold air bite into the tops of her breasts. She took a deep breath and was looking for a good place to knock when it swung open.

"What do you want?"

"Oh, I am so glad to find someone," Betsy said hoping the fierce-looking, extremely large man would buy her frazzled act. "My car broke down and I am so lost. I'm afraid my little girl is getting sick as well." She reached her right hand out to grab the man's arm as if she were truly distraught.

When he looked down at the baby against her chest and ogled her unbound breasts a bit, she went into action. She gouged her sharp fingernails in the tender spot at the bend of his elbow and almost simultaneously raised her leg and kneed him in the general area of his testicles. When he bent forward, she went in for the kill. She hoped she had enough strength, but the rock she had hidden in her left palm

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helped. She brought the rock down against the back of his head and stepped out of the way as he fell forward.

She didn't take time to breathe a sigh of relief. She could see they were in a large front room. There was another wall with a door about halfway back in the room to the right of the front door. She stepped over the man and ran for it. This was the only place they could be hiding Roarke. The door was locked.

Damn.

She turned back to the man, thinking her time had run out, but he still lay prostrate on the floor. She must have hit him harder than she thought. She stepped back over him. She didn't think he was dead, but she didn't let it concern her. If Roarke wasn't here, she'd figure something out. She did a quick search of the man and found a gun, a wickedly sharp-looking switchblade and a set of keys.

Jackpot.

* * *

Roarke sincerely hoped he wasn't hallucinating because that would mean he had a lot more than a few bruises and contusions to worry about. After his trip down memory lane with Betsy, he had fallen into brief sleep. Then he had sworn he smelled her. Not the smell of memory, like his mind was playing tricks on him, or the smell of the mind sometimes caused by hallucinatory drugs, but the actual smell of her, all warm and delightful, baby-powder and competence.

"Roarke. Roarke, wake up."

It even sounded like her voice. When he felt a hand against his shoulder shaking him, he opened his eyes expecting to see one of the goons.

"It's you."

"Yes, Roarke. I know you're hurting, but I really need you to try and stand up. I can't pick you up and we can't hang around here much longer."

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Roarke blinked again. “It *is* you. How the hell did you get here?”

She smiled and ran her hand over his face. “My car.”

Roarke knew he was definitely concussed and he was in a lot of pain. His shoulder had been yanked out of the socket and there was a good chance his ankle was sprained or had a slight break from the last time the goons had come to beat information out of him. The one guy must have had steel-toed boots...at least that's what it had felt like when he'd been given that last kick. So he shook his head a little. He could hardly believe Betsy was here, but he knew she hadn't just told him she'd simply driven up here. That was stretching things, even for Betsy.

“Okay,” she said again. “I can see we’re going to have to go to plan B. I really don’t know if I can pick you up...”

“No. I can stand. Just give me a hand,” he said.

She smiled and held out her hand. He took it and let her help him to his feet. He put an arm around her shoulders and, as she looked up at him, he grinned at her. What he really wanted to do was pull her to him and never let her go as he explored her mouth and body with his own.

“Damn, I’m glad to see you,” he said, lowering his head and meeting her lips with his. She tasted better than he remembered, and his Johnson sent up an exultant cry of joy at the possibilities even though both he and his cock knew it was false advertising for the rest of his body.

“I’m glad to see you, too,” she said, as she pulled slightly away from his kiss. “You look like they’ve worked you over quite a bit. I wish I could check you out, but we’ve really got to fly. I disabled the guard, but I don’t know how long he’s going to be out. He’s a big fucker.”

“Yes. There should’ve been more than one. There were six the last time they came to talk to me,” Roarke said.

“Talk, huh? That’s what you call it?”

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“Well, that’s what they kept saying as they were beating and kicking me,” he admitted.

He leaned his weight against her and gingerly tried to put some of his weight on his ankle. It was killing him, but one thing he’d learned early on was to ignore pain. When he’d first gotten into the business, he’d spent six weeks training in the Buds’ program. So he told his mind that the pain didn’t exist and tried to stand on his own. He wavered for a moment or two, then firmed his mouth and nodded.

“I’m not going to be up for running any marathons, but I think I can walk out of here on my own two feet.”

Betsy looked at him, and he could see her eyes were brimming with tears. He shook his head slightly, and she nodded. He wouldn’t be able to take her pity now, and, frankly, they didn’t have time.

“You just wait until I get us out of here. I’m going to soothe every ache and pain you’ve got.”

He smiled. “God, I’m counting on it.”

He hesitated. He knew they shouldn’t be going through the door together. That wasn’t standard procedure. He also knew he had to move on his own or he could put her in danger. But he couldn’t quite force himself to let go of Betsy just yet. He really couldn’t believe she was here, although, after what she’d done for him in the past, he also hadn’t expected anything else.

She looked like she was experiencing the same thing, but she sighed and tightened her arm around his waist for a second, letting him know what she was feeling. Then she stepped away from him and headed for the door.

“Considering things, I think I’d better let you go first. I don’t want to leave you behind,” she said. She reached in the pocket of her enormous coat and pulled out a matte-black Glock. “Here...you may need this.”

He cocked it and made sure there was a round chambered, then

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looked at her again. “I don’t know if I’ve told you lately, but you’re amazing.”

Betsy smiled at him again, and the way it lit up her face and eyes nearly took his breath away. “I think you’re amazing, too.” She leaned in and gave him a quick kiss.

He wanted to deepen it, but like so many times since he’d met her, the timing wasn’t right.

“Are you ready?”

He breathed once and nodded, then moved slowly to the door. The lone guard was curled up in a fetal position and Roarke nodded. He looked back over his shoulder. “Kicked him in the nuts?”

“Well, kneed him,” she said. “Then I hit him over the head with this.”

She held out the rock that had been in the pouch she was wearing on her chest. For the first time he noticed that and the amazingly life-like doll nestled inside it.

“Did some shopping on your way in?” He was amazed his voice was so calm when what he wanted to do was burst out laughing.

“Well, yeah. I stopped at a dollar store in Quebec City. I figured they’d be less likely to attack a mother and child without at least letting me get a word in. It also gave me a handy place to hide the rock and this.”

She pulled out a sleek, little Smith & Wesson .38-caliber revolver. “I figured they’d find the Glock, but this would be my backup.”

Roarke paused a moment, soaking her up. He’d never wanted a woman more than he wanted Betsy in this moment. Finally he couldn’t hold it in any longer. “Betsy, my love, when we get back home, I’m going to set you up with the heads of the S.A.S. We could definitely use you training the new agents.”

Betsy smiled. “I think that’s a compliment.”

“Oh, it is. It is.” Roarke laughed. “Let’s get out of here.”

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Roarke knew a bit of the layout around them from when he'd first found the gang and their hideout. They were storing the goods in an old, abandoned logging camp, and apparently this gang had found the perfect place to store their cache of weapons.

Before Roarke had been caught, he'd seen evidence of everything from automatic firearms to the ingredients for stinky bombs. These guys weren't fanatical terrorists. They were just willing to sell their stash to the highest bidder. He'd been trying to infiltrate them and had thought he was golden.

That's how he knew there was a mole in his department of the S.A.S. He had been ordered to stay off this case by Melrose because the higher ups didn't want to step on friendly toes, but still, no one but Melrose and his sometime partner Libby McClellan would have been able to figure out that he'd disobeyed the order.

So that left him with some very unsavory options of where the leak was, but he couldn't worry about that now. For the moment he had to worry about not getting Betsy any more embroiled in this mess than she already was.

They moved as quickly as his ankle would allow. They had made it through the main room and out the door when things started getting dicey. They heard the sound of the vehicle coming down the hill from behind the cottage.

"Shit, I think reinforcements have arrived," she said.

"Yeah. Where's your car?"

"Just around the bend," she answered. "Come on and lean on me. That way I can help support your weight while we try to run for it."

She didn't smile. Nor did he. He wouldn't be able to run, but he'd jog as far as necessary. If they got caught, it wouldn't be because of his ankle.

"Let's go," he said.

He moved forward, but wouldn't rely on her strength to help him, at

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least not until he could no longer walk on his own. By the time they reached her car, he was sweating like he was running a marathon on the hottest day of the summer in the Australian Outback. A couple of times the pain had almost caused him to black out. But he made it. He started to get into the driver's seat, but she pushed him aside.

"I'll drive," she said. "We may need you to keep the bad guys away."

He nodded and slid across the bench seat and checked the Glock again.

"There's something with a little more punch in the back seat," she added.

He turned and smiled. Sure enough, lying harmlessly on the seat was a nice AK-47. "You really could teach the agency a thing or two."

"Thanks. Now let's get us out of here." She started her car and pulled off. At that moment, a car came crashing around the bend. She jerked the gearshift into reverse and backed them away.

Now that his weight was off the ankle and it didn't feel like someone was stabbing a red-hot lance straight through it, Roarke could actually see without his vision graying. He stuck the AK out the window and started firing it in short, steady bursts. Betsy kept the pressure on the accelerator. They were backing down the road with a finesse that would do a Hollywood stunt driver proud. But Roarke also knew they were waging a losing battle. Unless he got lucky and disabled the gang's vehicle fairly quickly, that is.

"I think I need to get us going in the right direction and, if I remember correctly from my drive in, there's the perfect spot for it about fifty yards up the road," Betsy said.

"Go for it," Roarke said in between the rounds spitting from the AK.

"On one," she said. "Three, two, one. Go!" She slammed on the brakes.

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Roarke held on as she twisted the wheel hard right and spun the ancient Chevy into a perfect, tight, three hundred-and-sixty-degree turn. They were stopped only for a few seconds and Roarke took advantage and aimed right at the front grill of the black SUV barreling toward them. He fired three shots into the grill, then aimed for the front tire as well for a just-in-case shot. He saw a little blast of steam coming from the radiator of the SUV and felt a moment of satisfaction. That moment shattered right along with the glass of the back window of Betsy's car. He heard the bullet thud into the well-padded seat.

"Thank God for American auto makers," he said.

He saw Betsy's answering grin as she pressed her foot hard against the accelerator and they raced off.

CHAPTER 2

“Well, damn,” Betsy said about fifteen minutes later.

“What?” Roarke turned in the seat expecting to see their company or more like them barreling behind them. All he saw was empty road.

“I’m out of gas.”

“Shit. Did you have a full tank when you came to get me?” he asked.

“Yes. Do you think one of the bullets could’ve hit the gas tank?”

Roarke sighed. “Damn, it’s possible. Or it could’ve been struck by shrapnel or a bullet. They were shooting at us, you know. It’s possible they could’ve hit the gas tank.”

“Or this old piece of junk could just have a hole in it,” she added.

Roarke didn’t respond, but he felt a twinge of guilt. He’d known, almost from the first, that Betsy’s money situation wasn’t the best, largely due to the fact her low-down ex had taken all their money and run off, leaving Betsy and her son holding the bag. When...if...they got

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out of this mess, Roarke was going to make it his number one priority to get Betsy some well-deserved vengeance.

"It looks like we're going to be stuck in a few minutes," Betsy said glumly. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm not ready to teach at the academy quite yet after all."

"No, this isn't your fault. You couldn't know they'd shoot out your gas tank," Roarke said.

"That's true, but I could've stopped, gotten a gas can and filled it just in case," she replied.

"Nah, that would've taken too much time and we can always find a gas station somewhere, as long as there isn't a hole in the tank. The thing is, I don't think it's a very good idea to be driving around looking for a station now. We need to find a good place to hide, at least for the night," he said. "Wait a minute. I remember something. See the next road ahead? Take a left."

Betsy raised her eyebrow and nodded. "Okay. Hope you know what we're doing."

"Believe it or not, I do," he said.

They drove up a small hill and then Betsy gasped. Laid out in front of them was a large compound of buildings made completely out of ice, standing like lonely sentinels from a forgotten time as darkness enveloped the area. It was like something out of a fairytale.

"Great. It looks like they haven't opened for business yet."

"I don't know what business they're in, but are you sure it's a good thing they're not open?"

"Oh, yeah because, believe it or not, we couldn't afford to stay here if they were open," Roarke said, a smile on his face. "This is a hotel that's only open from January to April. It's modeled after the first one in Sweden and the architecture changes each year. It's made completely from ice."

Betsy looked around. "Wow. People actually pay for this?"

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“And how—upwards of a thousand bucks a night for the special package,” Roarke said. “Hey, come on, it’s better than spending the night in the car, right?”

“Uh, sure. But do you want to call in some help first?”

Roarke shook his head. “There isn’t any help this time. We’re on our own.”

“I was afraid of that when I deciphered your message. What is going on?”

Roarke had expected to answer her questions much sooner. Well, that wasn’t really true. In fact, he hadn’t expected to be able to see her again. Now the shooting was over for the moment, it hit him what a truly amazing person she was, coming all this way to rescue him without knowing what to expect. As she started to get out of the car, he stopped her with a hand on her arm, pulling her to him for a quick, intense kiss. “You are truly an amazing woman. Thank you.”

She smiled at him and it lit up her wonderful eyes. “Oh, you’re welcome. But I think we’d better get you inside and take a look at things. Then you can tell me what’s happening.”

He released a sigh of contentment. It was against all logical reason, but he did feel contented. They were still in a world of hurt, and his ankle had started throbbing with renewed force to prove his thought true. Fact was, there was no one else he’d rather be with at this moment. Roarke Stetson, renegade of the Security and Safety Agency, who figured working alone was better than ever having to depend on anyone else, even a highly-trained operative, had found more than just a partner for his job. He’d found a friend and lover extraordinaire, and she was a single mother. He opened the passenger door as she loaded her arms full of stuff from her trunk.

“Where’s Bobby?” he asked.

“He’s with my mom. They think it’s great fun to have him for the holiday.”

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“Still no word from your ex?”

Betsy frowned and shook her head. “No. It doesn’t matter to me. I mean I know he’s a scumbag, but it’s getting harder and harder to make Bobby understand it isn’t anything he did.”

Roarke opened his mouth, but closed it firmly before saying anything. He wasn’t ready to give her tips on parenting or her ex. Even though he was dying to—at least about her ex. Yes, when he got back to Buffalo, things on that front were going to change. *Gu-aran-teed*. Betsy’s next words interrupted his dark train of thought.

“Okay, that’s enough for now. Let’s get you inside. After we see how things are set up, I’ll come back out and get whatever else we need. How long you figure we’ll have to stay here?”

“We’ll probably only be safe for the night,” he said as they moved slowly to the front entrance. The door was unlocked, but when they stepped inside, he could see why. There really wasn’t anything for anyone to steal. Still, the view took his breath away. The place glimmered and shimmered like a dream. “Tomorrow we’ve got to figure a way to get to Quebec City. From there we’ll worry about getting out of Canada and home.”

Betsy nodded. “Well, let’s see what we’re dealing with tonight and we’ll worry about tomorrow when it comes.”

Roarke smiled and pulled her into his arms for a quick hug and kiss. “That’s my girl,” he murmured. They stood for another moment and looked over their home for the night.

“It is beautiful, isn’t it?” Her voice was low and almost reverent.

He looked at the cavernous room before them. Built completely of ice, there were towering columns so perfectly formed they looked like glass or plastic. As they stepped deeper into the area, he saw a huge chandelier glittering in the brilliant white moonlight flowing through the clear ice ceiling. At the back of the hall was a huge fireplace, the only thing he could see that wasn’t carved from ice. Perhaps they

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would be warm after all. There were carved ice benches and even a large square dais right in front of the fireplace.

“Yes,” he agreed. Roarke felt a sharp pang of regret. He wished he were bringing her to this place when it was open and they were on a vacation. He’d never taken her anywhere. He vowed, when they got back to Buffalo, that would change. She deserved the best of everything, and he was determined to make certain it happened.

“Come on,” Betsy said. “Let’s get some of this settled and I’ll get a fire started.”

“I didn’t see any wood outside that wasn’t wet,” he said.

“Don’t worry. I picked up something at the dollar store. Just in case.”

She moved forward and he followed. At least he wasn’t feeling like a total idiot as he helped her carry the largest two of what appeared to be at least a half-dozen bags. He knew she had brought some of this stuff from home and wondered again how she’d managed to get it past Customs.

Finally they reached the dais and he sat his bags down and rested the AK he still carried against the edge.

“Okay,” Betsy said. “Somewhere...ah, there it is,” She reached for one of the bags he carried and opened it. She pulled out a self-starting fire log. “I figured this would work if we had to stay overnight outdoors. It’s supposed to burn for at least five hours. But that’s in a home fireplace, so I got another one just in case. They were two for ten dollars.”

She handed the logs to him and asked, “Can you get these going while I get everything else?”

“Sure,” he said and hopped his way over the short distance to the fireplace. He put one of the logs inside and then searched the bottom of the bag. Sure enough, there was a disposable lighter at the bottom. He lit the log, and a few minutes later a satisfying flame burned. Feeling

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like he was at least able to accomplish something, he turned back to Betsy. She'd been busy. There were two Artic-rated sleeping bags sitting atop the ice pedestal. She was just finishing zipping them together. Despite everything, the sight of her preparing their bed started the blood thrumming through his veins, heating his body like the fire couldn't do in a thousand years or with ten thousand logs. She looked up when she realized he was staring at her and smiled almost shyly.

"Why don't you lie down here?" she suggested. "I've got some protein bars and a couple of packets of hot chocolate. I'll get the water started over the fire, then, while it's heating up, I'll take a look at the damage they did to you."

"I'm fine."

"Well, let's just take a look anyway. I don't know what I can do, but maybe we can make you feel a little better."

She jumped up and scurried away. Roarke turned and watched her go. He started to feel a little flushed and wondered if he was perhaps running a slight fever because there was no way the fire was putting out that much heat yet. He watched as Betsy hurried away from the main hall where they were set up. Wearing the white snowsuit, she was truly a spectacular-looking woman and a feast to his very hungry eyes.

Before Betsy, Roarke hadn't really thought about a woman's derrière except in the most general terms. But now he was definitely an ass man. Her caboose, outlined in those tight little snow pants, was enough to make a man get down on his hands and knees and thank his maker.

Then, if the man had the sense God gave a goose, and Roarke certainly did, he'd pull that ass closer to him and make love to it into eternity. He'd like to trace the outlines of Betsy's butt, then allow his fingers and tongue to trace a wet path down over the curve of each cheek, which together formed a perfect "W" with rounded edges. Roarke pulled at the neck of his sweater. He knew now he was running

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a fever. The fever's name was Betsy and she was zinging through his blood like a marvelous drug.

She came back into view and she was grinning widely.

"I hit the mother lode," she exclaimed. "I found caviar, crackers and the pièce de résistance...vodka! Just what we need to help warm things up."

Roarke smiled and reached for her hand as she got close. "It sounds great."

"Well, it's variety anyway." She hopped up and sat on the sleeping bags, her legs crossed Indian style. As he watched, she opened one of the packages of crackers and the jar of caviar. She spread a good-sized dollop on one and handed it to him, then made one for herself.

"What?" she asked when he looked at her instead of eating.

"This is prime Beluga caviar."

She shrugged. "Yeah. Bobby would say, 'Yuck. Fish eggs,' but I dearly love it, even though it's been forever since I had any. I'd feel guilty, but they do have a lot of protein in them, right? Which, after the beating you took, you need. I looked for some bread, but I couldn't find any. The vodka is one-hundred-proof, so that should kill any lingering germs."

A picture of him feeding her caviar as they lay on a bed of white fur popped into his mind, and he felt an urgent call begin to work its way through his body.

He managed to keep control until they'd eaten their way through two packages of the crackers and half the caviar. But when she licked her lips after the first taste of the vodka, he reached the end of his rope.

He moved forward and pushed her down on her back. She smiled up at him and said, "Don't you want some?"

"Yes," he answered. "I'll take mine from you."

"What about your injuries?" Betsy whispered.

"Nothing hurts that you can't fix."

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Before she could respond further, he merged his lips with hers. Her giggle soon turned to a sigh and a moan. She tasted of caviar and vodka. Salty and sweet and oh-so-heady...he'd never felt anything like this with anyone else. He was beginning to think he would never feel it with anyone else again.

Kissing became the most important thing in the world. All his senses narrowed to the feel of his tongue mating with hers. The rush of her caviar and vodka breath into his mouth before becoming his own breath was better than having his own portion.

He knew it was impossible to get drunk on the breath of someone else, especially when that person had only taken a small sip, but the flood rushing through his blood and pumping through his heart to his lungs felt like a pure oxygen rush.

The kiss spun out of control, and he lost count of how much time they lay together, still fully clothed but as mated as he'd ever been in his life. Finally their lips separated as if neither wanted to break the contact, even for life-sustaining breath. He rested his forehead against hers, keeping his lips a breath from hers and looking into eyes he knew could see into his soul.

As if Betsy could read his mind, her arms, which had been tight around his neck, moved and her hand began undoing buttons and snaps. His hands moved as well and his fingers unzipped her jumpsuit. He wanted to feel every inch of her against him. Although his blood was flooding urgently through his veins and making his cock swell to its full length, he felt no driving urgency to rush to completion. He needed just as urgently to stretch this out as long as possible.

Betsy's nipples puckered. So did his.

"You cold?" he asked concerned. He wasn't, but how could cold win the battle when need for Betsy was heating him like a steel mill furnace?

"N-Nooo." The word stuttered out, as if desire was making it hard

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to speak.

“Good.” He slowly began to make love to her. There was no spot he left untouched. There was no spot that wasn’t a treat for his fingers and lips.

Her moans and groans made his heart beat ever faster and his penis throb with delight.

His lips moved down her body to her curved stomach. When he reached her beautiful belly button, he stopped long enough to reach for the bottle of vodka. With her watching, a look of pure, languorous desire in her eyes, he tipped some of the cold liquid into the dent of her belly. Her body tensed against the feel of the chilled vodka in her small well.

He couldn’t have that, so he set the bottle down and leaned back over her. He dipped his tongue inside the small crevice and sipped the vodka from her, mimicking the way he sucked her pussy. Her body rose with each stroke of his tongue and, when he added tiny nips around the edge of her belly button, she groaned her need aloud.

All the blood in his body was centered in two places—his head, which was swimming like he’d been on a week-long drunk, and his cock, which was hard as a metal pipe.

As much as he wanted to be deep inside her, he wanted more to show her just how special she was. So, instead of moving to join their bodies, he moved his mouth lower.

Finally he reached her swollen clit and drew it into his mouth, stroking it with his tongue at the same time he inserted two fingers into her damp canal. Her shuddered release, along with the taste of her orgasm, was the greatest gift he had ever been given.

Her tremors were still shaking her body when he rose against her and slid his cock home into her welcoming warmth.

His orgasm, strong and sure, felt like it was a tidal wave that wouldn’t be stopped. When she wrapped her legs around his lower

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back and held on for dear life, he started thrusting harder and faster, spiking both their desires back into the red haze of hot desire as if their long leisurely ride of moments before had been but the warm-up.

The second time he came it was hard and hot and sucked his breath away like he had just run up Pike's Peak, his cum exploding deep inside her. He collapsed against her, resting his head against her breast, thinking he would never be the same again.

* * *

Betsy felt the total relaxation in the strong muscles of his arms and shoulders the moment he fell asleep, his head still on her breast and his semi-hard cock still buried between her twitching pussy lips.

If she'd had any doubts about his physical condition, they were completely banished now. He had made love to her as if she were his salvation.

She sighed and ran her hand gently over the skin on his sweaty back. She felt so relieved she'd been able to find Roarke and that he was basically unharmed.

Although she had downplayed getting to him, the fact was, she had been shaking from the inside out ever since she'd decided to rescue him. Although he teased her about it and she rode along with it, she was aware she was totally over her head with this stuff. She knew she had been incredibly lucky. She also knew she had been afraid her luck would run out and cost her everything.

What had her options been? She couldn't have lived with herself if she hadn't tried something. Roarke was the type of man who didn't ask for help. She sighed softly.

Well, her luck had held this time and she had freed him. Now she'd let the expert take care of getting her home. Once there, she had to come to grips with where this relationship was going.

She was long past the point where she thought of this as just an adventure. That's what she'd wanted when she had gone to the Triple D

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spa last summer looking for a way to get some of her self-respect back.

She knew a man who was a super spy and homeland security agent rolled up into one package had captured her heart in a way that no other man had.

It still boggled her mind. She was a middle-aged woman with a child. She was a woman who wasn't anyone's idea of glamorous. She knew she was closer to Roseanne than Angelina Jolie.

For some inexplicable reason, Roarke didn't seem to care—at least for the moment.

Part of her, the woman within, who hungered for his touch, cheered that thought. That woman wanted to just go with the flow and deal with the consequences of the breakup she felt was inevitable when it happened.

The other part of her was afraid. So afraid she would never be the same.

She looked at the sleeping face of the gorgeous man with her now. If it were only her heart involved perhaps she'd still take the chance. But Betsy had more than just herself to consider.

She wanted her son to know this man, to have him in his life forever. Could she risk the chance Roarke would leave them both with broken hearts?

She was still wrestling with the answer to that question when she fell asleep.

* * *

Roarke woke slowly to a bright winter sun shining in his face. It only took a fraction of a second for him to realize where they were. He looked down at Betsy as she lay against his chest in the grand entrance hall of the Ice Hotel in Quebec. She was warm and smelled like sex, but he tightened his arms around her waist and kept her close to him. No, she didn't smell like sex, she smelled like heaven. He wished more than anything that he could spend the entire morning making love to

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her. He'd spend the morning, the afternoon and the night wrapping her in his arms. For the rest of his life.

Roarke paused, and his hands, which had been stroking down her spine and over her beautiful round, creamy, white butt, stilled.

God, the thought of being with Betsy forever was thrilling. It was also impossible. She needed a helpmate and a man who could be the kind of father Bobby needed. As scary as the thought was of what kind of lame husband he would be, the thought of screwing up fatherhood was enough to cause a cold sweat to break out. His own father hadn't been any prize. Roarke frowned. One thing was absolute—he'd never do what Bobby's real father had done and walk away from them. How could any man walk away from this woman and her child?

Betsy stretched a bit, waking with a smile. "I've never been a great fan of winter sports, but I can see I'm going to have to reassess things." Her smile dropped. "You're sweating. Are you running a fever?"

"No." He bent and planted a gentle kiss on her lips. "I feel fine. Great, in fact."

She looked worried for a few more minutes, and he decided to take her mind off his body and get it back on one particular part of his body. They were still perfectly aligned from the night before. The only difference was, they were lying on their sides facing one another. Roarke pulled her leg up over his hip and slipped inside her. Last night had been all about slow, but today was about speed. It didn't make any sense. As many times and ways as they'd been together there shouldn't be any urgency remaining. Roarke had learned nothing was as he expected with Betsy, though.

Right now, all that mattered was taking her completely. The need in Betsy's eyes told him she was with him the entire way.

So he started thrusting from the moment they slid together. Hard and harder, fast and faster their bodies mated. When his climax roared out of him, she took it all, and her pussy, pulsing around him,

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demanded more.

* * *

It was a long time later, when both their hearts had slowed back to normal, that Betsy lay in his arms. It was like being in a wonderful, hot dream she wished would never end. But end it must. She could tell by the way he was stroking her skin he knew it as well. She also felt his reluctance to separate them. But separate they must be, and wanting time and the world to stop for them was like burying her head in the sand. She wasn't that kind of woman, even if sometimes she wished she could be.

"I guess we'd better get going," she said softly.

"Yes," he replied. "Now that it's daylight, the car will be easier to spot."

"What's the plan?" she asked.

"Well, the car's out, so I guess we go on foot for a while. If the car ran, we'd probably only have about a thirty-minute drive east to reach Quebec City."

"You know, when I was hunting up the snacks and vodka last night, I saw a brochure talking about snowmobile rentals. You think they have them stored somewhere even though they aren't open yet?"

Roarke smiled at her. "I think it's a very good chance. Let's take a look. Even if we can't find a snowmobile right here, there are probably several around. This section of Quebec is loaded with parks and resorts. We're probably not all that far from a lodge that's already open."

* * *

Betsy nodded. She sat up and started putting on her clothes. Roarke watched regretfully as her beautiful body was covered up, but, knowing she was right, started pulling on his own clothes. His ankle, although still painful, didn't throb quite as much this morning...probably from keeping his weight off it for the night. He was about to pull on his

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shoes when Betsy stopped him.

“Wait a minute. If we’re going to keep that ankle from really being a mess we need to give it a little support. I’ll be right back.”

Now dressed, she climbed out of the sleeping bag and stepped off their pedestal. He watched her as she headed to the front desk area of the hotel and went around behind it. She returned a few minutes later with a first-aid kit.

Inside were three cotton-stretch wraps. She took the thickest of them and wrapped it around his ankle. She tucked the loose end under the last strand and then helped him pull on his boot. It was tight now around his ankle and he hoped it would stay that way as the day wore on.

Then Betsy helped him stand and he put weight on it for the first time since yesterday.

“What do you think?” she asked. She was worrying her bottom lip with her teeth, and he knew she could tell what the truth was by the look on his face.

“I’ll do.”

She sighed. “Okay. Let’s get this stuff packed up and then I’ll look for those snowmobiles.”

They worked quickly and efficiently. Soon they were outside in the low morning light. The hotel was nearly ready for tourists and the opening Betsy knew would be happening later that week. She had a moment’s regret, wishing she and Roarke could be here when it was open, enjoying it as nothing more than a couple in love. That wasn’t the case. Fact was, as Betsy looked around them, she could tell they were sitting ducks now in the early morning light.

That made leaving even more vital. All the bad guys would have to do is get up in the air and they would be able to spot the car sitting in front of the hotel in seconds. But because of the white emptiness it was also easy to spot the snowmobiles. They were lined up like sentries

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waiting to be used. She went over to one and looked at it. She knew nothing about the machines and wasn't even sure how they started. She saw what looked like an ignition and was wondering if it worked like her snow blower at home.

She heard a sound of glass breaking and turned. Roarke had broken into a small building off to one side. "I figured they'd have the keys in here," he said.

"Do you think the keys fit any machine?"

"One way to find out," he replied, bringing the entire stack of them over. It was quick work finding the right key, then she returned the rest to the shack and came back outside. Roarke had loaded their stuff into the storage area under the seat and had thrown his leg over the body of the machine. "Hop on," he said.

She jumped on behind him just as he started the engine. It was loud, louder than Betsy's snow thrower at home, which sounded like a lawn mower on steroids and in need of a muffler. The engine throbbed between her legs, reminding her of how it felt when Roarke went down on her. She pushed the erotic thoughts out of her mind. Like a motorcycle, the power control of the snowmobile resided in the handlebars. Betsy was glad because that meant Roarke could allow his ankle to rest. He revved up the engine and then yelled, "Hang on."

She wrapped her arms around his waist and put her head between his shoulders as the snowmobile shot out across the snow in a blur of speed.

With the noise the snowmobile made and her ear pressed against Roarke's back, it was amazing she heard the shot and the other sound. But she did. She turned and looked over her shoulder. It appeared their retreat had been discovered.

"Roarke," she yelled and tugged on his arm at the same time, just in case he didn't hear her. "We've got company!"

He looked over his shoulder to where Betsy pointed.

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“Shit,” he yelled. He opened the throttle full, and the snowmobile bucked even faster over the snow. Betsy didn’t know if it was going to be enough. It seemed Roarke’s captors had not only found them, but had also brought along a few playthings. Betsy recognized the man she’d knocked out. At least she had the comfort in knowing she hadn’t killed him. Of course, it looked like he wasn’t worried about returning the favor, as he put a portable rocket launcher to his shoulder and appeared to be aiming it right at them. She couldn’t help it...she had to grip Roarke’s waist tighter.

“I see it,” he yelled in response either to her tighter grip or her scream of panic.

At that point, Betsy felt like she was watching the whole thing unfold in slow-motion. In reality it happened so fast it was almost like having a dream while hopped up on speed. She saw the little puff of white smoke as the rocket was launched out of the tube on the man’s shoulder. At the same time, the snowmobile they were on bounced high, as if they had hit a snow-covered obstacle. They were flying through the air. She also was grateful they were airborne because the rocket went right under the runners of the snowmobile, so close she could almost count the black marks on the rocket’s points. And when it blew a huge hole in the large wall in front of them, she knew they had narrowly missed going down for the count.

Wall? Oh shit, they were heading right for a wall. Screaming wouldn’t help, so Betsy did the only thing left, grabbed Roarke tighter around the waist and closed her eyes. She didn’t want to see their death meeting them head-on.

“Yahoo,” Roarke shouted, as she realized they were still flying through the air. It was like they were at a carnival and he was a kid on his first ride.

Betsy’s response was a heartfelt, “Oh, my God.”

After what seemed forever, she felt the huge thud as the

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snowmobile finally landed. It slid sideways momentarily, like a car skidding on an icy road, then Roarke righted them and they continued down the trail. Betsy knew it wasn't over, but she could finally breathe normally again.

Feeling like a cat who had expended all her nine lives in just a few minutes, Betsy closed her eyes against the glare of the sun on the pristine snow. If it weren't for the fact there were a half-dozen bad guys on their trail, she could see how riding along with Roarke on this machine, when he was so obviously having a ball, would have been enjoyable. Right now, all she could think about was the rest of the arsenal she feared would soon be trained on them.

Roarke turned the snowmobile and now they were heading southeast as opposed to due east. Betsy wondered if Roarke was going to try to throw off their pursuers. The tracks the snowmobile made weren't conducive to stealth, but neither was the sound of the throaty engine. In fact, Betsy could now understand all the naturalists who protested allowing the crafts into parks and nature preserves.

Betsy told herself that thoughts like this were normal for a woman who'd driven across the border into a foreign country, purchased illegal weapons, attacked a citizen in the process of rescuing her man, driving them away while said man was firing an AK-47 out the window of her battered sedan, and then making wild, passionate love to him on a block of ice in a closed upscale hotel only the nouveau riche would think classy.

Then they'd stolen a snowmobile because her car's gas tank had a hole in it and now they were fleeing across the Canadian wilderness on that snowmobile, while the bad guys were firing rockets at them.

Yep, just another normal day in her life since she'd first met Roarke at the Triple D Spa in a vain attempt to bring some excitement into her humdrum life. Suddenly she felt the smile spread across her face.

It was exciting. She was loving it!

CHAPTER 3

Betsy was just starting to get used to the sound and vibrations of the snowmobile when Roarke pulled into a copse of trees and shut it off.

It took a few seconds for Betsy's hearing to return, and when she looked at Roarke, he was getting gingerly off the snowmobile.

"I think we've put about four or five miles between us and them," he said.

Betsy nodded. "So what do we do now?"

"Well, if I'm not completely lost, I think I may have circled us back around and we should be near a train station. We're going to try to get on board."

Betsy nodded and reached into one of the duffle bags under the seat. It took only a few moments for her to pull out a small handheld device. She pushed a button and after a second or two, the color screen popped on. Roarke took it from her and saw it was a portable GPS monitor.

"This is something I found on eBay," she said. "I was going to give

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it to Bobby for Christmas, but it didn't get here in time. I brought it along because I didn't figure I could just drive up to your coordinates or stop and ask for directions without looking suspicious."

Roarke laughed. "Well, you could've said something sooner and I wouldn't have had to rely on just my instincts."

Betsy smiled. "Well, you could've given me a clue what your plan was and maybe I'd have shared my toys."

Roarke pulled her to him for a hug and a quick kiss. "Do you have anything else in those amazing bags?"

"I might, cowboy. I might," Betsy answered with another quick kiss.

After a moment they parted. "Okay. I was closer than I thought," he said. "According to this, the train track should be about two football fields that way."

"Good. Are we just going to hope it isn't an express train and will stop or what?"

"Please. What do you think this is, Hollywood?"

Betsy laughed. She felt a calm settle over her. No matter what happened, it was right being here with this man now.

* * *

In point of fact, getting on the train was as easy as buying a ticket in the little kiosk and getting on board. Roarke wanted them on a train and not out waiting like pigeons, so they boarded the first train that came through. The way the trains ran, no matter which direction they wanted to go, they had to get to Montreal first and then work their way either east or south to the US, depending on which was their preference. Betsy had crossed the border south of Montreal instead of closer to Buffalo, hoping to keep below any official radar for longer. Now, she thought the plan would be just to get back home as quickly as possible, but Roarke had assured her the men who were after them were just as dangerous on United States' soil as in Canada.

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Once on board the train, Betsy got some ice from the dining car and put it on Roarke's ankle, and it was while they were sitting in their sleeping car that he told her everything about the operation and why he was hesitant to call in backup.

"You don't really believe either Mr. Melrose or Agent McClellan is the leak, do you?" Betsy asked.

"I'm not sure. I just know there were only four people who knew my location and cover story. Yet the gang was waiting for me, as if they were completely aware not only of my cover but when I'd come in and look for the weapons. Everything..." Roarke paused. "And one of those four didn't know until she got my message, decoded it and showed up here. That doesn't leave many options."

Betsy smiled. "Well, it's your own fault. I had a dream you were in trouble. You didn't expect me to just ignore that, did you?"

He chuckled and pulled her into his arms. "No. I didn't. You're the only person in the entire world I could count on. You didn't let me down, love."

They hugged and kissed for a few moments. Then Betsy spoke slowly. "I don't know Agent McClellan very well, but she didn't strike me as the type of person who'd betray friends."

"We're not exactly friends."

"What would you say you were?"

"Co-workers at best."

Betsy frowned and shook her head. "Co-workers are people you just do a job with. What you guys, all of you guys who volunteered to join S.A.S., do isn't just a 'job.'"

"Maybe it isn't just a job, but it isn't like we're in the army or anything," Roarke said.

"Believe what you think, but when people do what you do, putting your lives on the line for the good of the rest of the nation, that's something more than just a job," Betsy said, feeling her ire rise. That

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was starting to bother her about Roarke. He was constantly downplaying the true heroic nature of his job.

He ran his hand down her arm and pulled her into his lap. She could feel his erection rising through his clothes. She knew he wanted her, and she wanted him. But she felt strongly about this and wouldn't let him put her off with desire.

She opened her mouth to protest more, but he cut off her words with his kiss. As always with Roarke, the taste and feel of him overwhelmed her quickly.

Last night he'd made beautiful love to her. Again this morning, he'd taken care of her pleasure first. Now it was his turn.

She pushed away from him and stood.

"Not so fast, lover boy," she said, shaking a finger at him. "You sit right there and just watch. No touching allowed."

Roarke raised his eyebrows. "You want to be the boss?"

"Yep. And you have to do everything I say."

Roarke's smile belied his words. "I don't know if I can handle that."

"Oh, I think you can handle this," Betsy said. "Take off your sweater."

He removed it and Betsy drew a sharp inward breath. In the light of the train and with the hours that had passed since the last beating he'd taken, his rib cage had become a rainbow of colors, all of them bad.

Betsy went down on her knees in front of him and laid gentle fingers against his skin. "Oh my poor, poor darling," she murmured. "They really worked you over. I'm so sorry."

Roarke grimaced. "It looks worse than it is."

"Let me kiss it and make it all better," Betsy said.

She touched her lips against each bruise, starting at the top of his ribs and working her way slowly downward, across his abs until she reached the buckle of his belt. She undid it and pulled the belt from the

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loops. Then she unbuttoned and unzipped his pants and pushed them wide on his hips.

She continued kissing her way downward. She followed the outline of his hardening cock through the material of his boxer briefs, using the flat of her tongue to trace from the bottom to the top.

When she'd pushed the briefs down, freeing his cock and balls, she looked up at his face, wondering if he was in pain. What she saw wasn't pain but desire, glittering in his eyes and tensing the lines around his mouth.

She smiled and then went back to him. She buried her face in his muff, the crisp bed of black hair that surrounded his sex. She could smell the musk of him and it was the most enticing scent she'd ever known.

She palmed his swelling balls and held them close to the base of his cock with one hand, while the other hand stroked his shaft. Bottom to top she stroked, using her thumb and fingers to provide a pressure similar to the way her vaginal muscles worked him. She resisted the urge to measure his slit with her tongue. That would come later. Right now, she wanted him to have the ultimate hand job.

Her hand was moving faster now, tugging and caressing his length, rimming the head of him, and stroking down the line of flesh and nerves between his cock and balls. The area shrank as his balls drew closer and closer to his cock, signaling how near he was to his release.

She slowed her touch. He groaned, then placed a hand at the back of her head. Betsy leaned back away from him a bit.

"Now, now, remember...no touching allowed," she admonished.

"Betsy, please," he grunted. "I'm so close."

She smiled again. "Oh, I think you can get closer."

She moved forward again. This time, her hand was joined by her mouth and tongue. The rocking motion of the train moving along the track added to the motion of their bodies and gave Betsy a sense of

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amazing strength.

She started with slow licks, using just her tongue to almost airbrush the mushroom-shaped tip of his cock. It was bobbing wildly as if desperate to be inside her mouth.

She was desperate as well to taste him, to feel him pumping in her mouth.

But she also wanted to give him everything. So she delayed it even longer.

An upward stroke of her hand.

A quick sideways swipe from her tongue.

A downward stroke from her hand adding a tiny pinch at the start.

A long lick upwards from her tongue.

On the fifth move, his hips were thrusting madly.

“Betsy, my God, please,” he groaned.

So she did.

She opened her mouth and took all of him. She could taste cum leaking steadily from him and swirled it around on her tongue. But it was short-lived. He was too far gone and he immediately began thrusting. He held her head in place while he thrust, and she didn’t complain. She wanted everything he had to give her. It only took a few thrusts before he shot his load into her mouth. She swallowed every drop and then licked him clean.

When they’d both rested for a bit, she pushed him flat on his back and climbed on top of him, her legs astride his hips, her wet cunt lined up perfectly with his flaccid cock.

She knew he couldn’t come inside her yet. She’d drained him dry, but she was so wild and close to her own orgasm she knew even the feel of him would probably send her over the top.

But Roarke was an attentive lover. He knew her sometimes better than she knew herself. Using his thumbs he gently spread her pussy lips and helped her move up and down on his cock. She was so wet she

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knew she was creaming all over him. He didn't offer any complaints. If anything, it seemed to be turning him on as well, his cock already beginning to harden. She slid up and down against him, faster and faster. When she was so close she was starting to see stars, he inserted a finger deep inside her canal, finding her g-spot and sending her over the edge. She screamed as she came, the rocking motion of the train as it tore around a curve adding to the sense of riding a bullet named Roarke.

* * *

Much later, Roarke reached down and pulled the blanket at the bottom of the bed over their cooling bodies. Betsy was asleep in his arms and he relished the feel of her against him in complete relaxation and trust.

Even after all they had been through he couldn't quite believe what she'd sacrificed for him. She'd been so cute when she was arguing with him about how important his job was. He didn't mean to belittle it or the people in S.A.S. who had volunteered for the hazardous duty. Fact was, he and they had all come from professional law enforcement or intelligence careers. They were highly-trained operatives and knew every risk and possible reward they faced. But as he looked into the beautiful sleeping face of Betsy, he was awed. She took all the risk without the training or the reward, and for what? Him.

His hand shook as he ran it over her back and caressed her spine. *She* was the hero.

* * *

Betsy woke up to the sound of the train slowing. She shifted and realized that while she'd fallen asleep in Roarke's arms, now she was alone on the stiff, lonely train bed. She sat up and she saw Roarke was getting dressed.

"What's up?" she asked, as she hurriedly did the same.

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“Trouble, I think.” He was looking out the window while keeping the privacy shade pulled. “The train is stopping and this isn’t one of the scheduled stops.”

“Could it be just waiting for another train to pass?”

He shook his head. “I’d like to believe that, but I didn’t get to be the ripe, old age of thirty-five by believing in the tooth fairy or Santa Claus.”

Betsy cringed a little at his sarcasm, but she knew he was right. It was just too much coincidence to think they could just ride into Toronto and Niagara Falls without any more incidents. Betsy finished dressing, wincing a little at how stiff she was. She’d been shot at, spent the night in an ice palace, ridden a snowmobile through a wilderness and then hopped a train. This was beginning to sound more and more like the far-fetched plot of a movie.

“So what’re we going to do now?” She laced up her boots and zipped up the duffle bag that held their stuff as she spoke.

“I think it’s time we got off and found another way home.”

Betsy nodded. “I’m for that. Are we going to boost a car?”

He smiled as he opened their cabin door and checked the passageway. It was clear and he headed out. The AK was strapped around his shoulder and he held the Glock at the ready in his left hand. She had her pistol loaded and ready in her hand, and her duffle was slung over her left shoulder. She thought about asking him how his ankle was feeling, but she knew he’d just shrug it off. His hero genes were definitely kicking in and all she could do was roll with it.

“Are we going to jump off while the train’s still moving?” she asked, skepticism in her tone. She didn’t think she wanted to risk jumping, and she sure didn’t want to think about what that would do to his ankle. He gave her one of those don’t-be-nuts-looks and moved down the passageway. The train slowed to a crawl and finally rolled to a stop. He opened one of the doors and looked down the track, then

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shut it and opened the opposite one.

“Okay, here we go. I don’t think anyone can see us from this side,” Roarke said, pulling her forward.

Betsy looked down and gulped. They were on the edge of a cliff. Although the track was on solid ground, three paces away all she could see was a long, long drop. Good thing she wasn’t particularly afraid of heights because, if she had been, she would never have been able to handle this. Fortunately, though, Roarke followed right behind her and urged her away from the front of the train.

“What are we going to do?” she asked. “Wait until the train starts and then run?”

“No, I think these guys are going to search it completely. This looks to me like a Royal Canadian Mounted Police—RCMP—operation.”

Betsy gulped. This made Roarke’s theory that someone on the inside of S.A.S. was pulling the strings against them more likely. She didn’t think a bunch of crooks could pull in that kind of favor.

“Who could do that?”

Roarke didn’t answer, but instead urged her to move faster down the row of cars. Betsy didn’t really expect an answer. When they got to the last car, which wasn’t a caboose but just a passenger car, he lead them back across the track. Now came the hard part. They were in an open area. The winter landscape didn’t offer a lot of cover.

Betsy waited behind Roarke and tried to pick out what he was seeing or hearing. Nada. She guessed it was just like when she’d decided to make her move on the cabin—instinct—because she sensed Roarke’s muscles were tensing, readying.

“Okay. Run toward the snow bank. As quickly as you can, roll over the top and down the other side. I’ll be right behind you. The bank isn’t high on this side, but, unfortunately, I don’t now what’s on the other side, so be prepared for anything. Ready?” He looked over at her.

Betsy held up one finger and put her gun in her zippered pocket.

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She didn't think she was ready to run with a loaded gun. She didn't want to accidentally shoot herself in the foot—or worse, shoot Roarke.

When the gun was properly stowed, she nodded.

He grinned and whispered, “Go!”

She tore off. Running after Bobby had been helpful or else all the exercise she'd been getting with Roarke had increased her stamina. Although she certainly wasn't ready for the Olympics, she was pleased with how quickly she crossed the tracks and tumbled over the edge of the snow bank. Her slide on the downside may have been less than a ten on the graceful scale, but she made it. Roarke's slide down the slope followed hers and he almost slid right into her. He bounced up and offered her a hand to stand up as well.

Her heart was racing and she was gasping for breath. He didn't seem like he was even breathing fast.

“Okay, first hurdle over. Now, I want you to stay as low as you can. I'd say scoot on our stomachs, but as cold as it is, we'd freeze before we even got one hundred feet,” he said.

Betsy nodded. She didn't quite trust her voice not to betray her breathlessness yet.

Finally she whispered. “How far are we trying to go?”

“See the trees?”

Betsy nodded when she wanted to moan. The trees he was talking about were nearly a half-mile away. That was a large area to cover when the Mounties were on their tail.

“I hope they won't start looking off the train until they search all the cars. We didn't use our names when we bought the tickets so that should buy us a little time.”

Betsy nodded. There was no hope. She just had to keep moving.

Amazingly, they made it to the trees and then kept going. Betsy was beginning to think they were going to walk forever when Roarke stopped and held a finger to his lips. He pointed in front of them and

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she grinned.

Sitting on the snow-covered field that rose out of the trees like a phoenix was a small plane. "Can you fly it?" she asked.

"Yep," Roarke said.

"Great. We broke into a hotel and stole a snowmobile, so how much more trouble can we get into stealing an airplane?"

"That's the spirit." He walked over to the plane and opened the door.

Betsy didn't know spit about planes, but she knew one thing. If it flew that's what mattered. She followed Roarke into the small cabin and watched as he went through a quick pre-flight check. In a flash, he had the engine firing and they were sliding along the snow. Seconds later they were airborne. Betsy looked down, saw treetops and sighed.

"So do we head straight for the border?"

Roarke nodded. "Yes. We're probably going to get met by a squadron from the Air Force, but at this point, I think I'd rather to take my chances with them than try to outrun the Mounties."

Betsy nodded and went back to watching the terrain pass below them.

They had been flying for about a half an hour when things turned bad again. The jet that came upon them was big, fast and, Betsy could see, loaded like it was heading for a bombing run. She congratulated herself when she only jerked a little when the commanding voice came over the headset she was wearing, ordering them to land their unidentified Cessna immediately or risk being shot down by the United States Air Force.

"Well, this is it," Roarke said after answering in the affirmative. "Time to pay the man."

* * *

Betsy watched as Bobby ran off to catch the school bus one week later. Well, she'd started off her New Year with a bang, being

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interrogated by the United States government in a base in northern New York. Fortunately, they'd only questioned her for about six hours. Then, just as suddenly as her adventure with Roarke had come to an end, the interrogation had ended as well. When she'd asked about where Roarke was and what had happened to him, she'd been told to forget everything about it and return to her home in Tonawanda.

Before she could ask how she was to accomplish that, she'd been escorted off the base and hustled onto a helicopter, which had taken her to the Niagara Falls Air Force base. Once there, she was given a ride by a nice, very quiet young reservist the short distance to her home south of Niagara Falls. She'd tried calling Roarke's phone number, but even his voice mail was wiped clean. If she hadn't known much better and hadn't been a veteran of S.A.S. operations in the past, Betsy would have been tempted to believe she'd dreamed the entire adventure.

But Betsy had four Roarke adventures under her belt and she knew everything had happened. She just had to figure out how she could find out what was up with Roarke. She had a feeling, not unlike the one that had woken her up ten days ago, but one that told her Roarke was not back in the area. Frankly, her curiosity was killing her. And she missed her lover.

For now, though, Betsy had to solve her first problem. She had to have a car. She assumed hers was still parked in front of the Ice Hotel. She picked up the classifieds and looked over the ads again. She wished she could afford a new car, but that wasn't going to happen. Still, she couldn't concentrate on reading the ads, which all claimed their cars were "like new," while her thoughts continued to worry about Roarke.

She knew her concern was silly. Roarke certainly could take care of himself. Despite his fear that Peter Melrose was the leak, Betsy didn't think so. She stood and walked over to the phone. She knew calling Roarke wouldn't accomplish anything, but there wasn't any reason why she couldn't call the S.A.S. She hung up the phone. She wouldn't call.

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She would catch the bus downtown and go in person. Surely Mr. Melrose wouldn't turn her away. As Betsy turned to go upstairs and change, she heard a noise outside.

A large tow truck was backing slowly into her driveway.

"What the heck?" she murmured.

When she reached the driveway, a beautiful, candy-red sedan was being unhooked from the truck.

"Excuse me," she called to the man lowering the car. "What's going on?"

"You Betsy McGee?" the driver asked.

"Yes, but that isn't my car."

The man looked at the invoice sheet on his clipboard. "It says to deliver to Betsy McGee at 26 Hill Street. That's here and you say you're Betsy, right?"

"Yes, but I didn't buy a car."

"Hey, lady, I just do what I'm told and I'm told this is your car. Maybe you won it or something."

Betsy gave him her best what-planet-are-you-from? look.

The man laughed. "Well, hey, lady, like don't look a gift horse and all that. I need your signature here, though, so the boss won't think it's parked in my driveway."

Betsy frowned and signed the clipboard he shoved her way. It was really too beautiful to believe. The candy-red color called to her and it looked better than new to her eyes. She ran her hand over the smooth, cold metal of the door, then opened it and inhaled. Oh, man, it even had that new car smell.

She heard the tow truck leaving as she ran her hand over the smooth leather on the inside of the door. She couldn't remember the last time she'd smelled a new car. She closed her eyes. Yes, she did. It was the last time she'd ridden in Roarke's car, when they'd gone to find Charlie the delivery boy. When she put her hands on the steering wheel, she

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noticed the small note taped to the horn.

With shaking hands, she pulled it free and opened it. *Thanks. I love you, Roarke.*

Betsy smiled and held the note against her breasts, and suddenly she knew she wasn't alone. She turned and he was there. She flew from the car and right into his arms.

"I've been so worried," she said, between covering his face in kisses. "I tried to find you, but they hustled me right away from the base. Then I called you, but even your voice mail was erased. I was just going to go down and camp out in front of S.A.S. until they told me something."

His arms wrapped around her waist and he pulled her close.

"I know, I know. I told them to tell you everything was under control, but they didn't listen to me. They had orders that you didn't have security clearance, so they just kept quiet," he said.

When she started to ask him more questions, he stopped her temporarily by kissing her hard, deep and long. In seconds, Betsy forgot all the questions she wanted to ask, reveling in the strong, steady feel of his heart beating underneath her hands on his chest, and the feel of him safe and strong in her arms.

Betsy tried to put everything she was feeling in her heart in her kiss and was rewarded by his immediate response. Since their night at the Ice Hotel, she felt as if he was an intricate part of her soul. One she couldn't live without.

Finally they broke their kiss, but he kept his arms around her.

"I love the car, but I can't accept it," she said softly.

"Please," he said. "It's the least we can do."

"But Roarke—" She began.

He covered her lips with his fingers. "Shush. You have to have transportation and the Canadian government is being slow about releasing yours. They have it impounded for evidence until the trial is

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over.”

Betsy frowned, feeling anger creep in. “Why evidence? You’re not on trial, are you?”

Roarke chuckled. “My little tigress. Ready to defend me at the slightest danger. No, I’m not on trial. Neither are you. The Canadians have very strict gun laws and they’ve got our bad guys on attempted murder of a law enforcement agent.”

“Oh,” Betsy said, slightly mollified.

He ran a finger down her nose and tapped her lips lightly. She rewarded him by drawing the fingertip into her mouth, twirling her tongue around it and sucking gently. His gaze narrowed and she knew he was remembering when she’d taken his cock into her mouth and given him pleasure on the train. She was remembering as well and her body was already demanding a repeat performance.

“I’m glad. I just wish the Canadians had the death penalty,” she whispered fiercely.

Roarke just smiled. “Now, now, kitten, sheath those claws.”

She bit his finger, letting him feel her teeth. “What about the leak in your department? Did you find who it was?”

He frowned. “Yes.”

“Don’t keep me hanging here.” Betsy paused. “No, it wasn’t Mr. Melrose. It couldn’t be.”

“No. You were right on that count,” he confirmed.

“Oh, God, it *was* Agent McClellan.” Betsy closed her eyes. “I’m so sorry, Roarke. She was your partner. She was your friend.”

Roarke shook his head. “No, she wasn’t. We just worked together on a few cases. I’ve never had a partner. No one I could really trust. That is, until you.”

Betsy felt tears welling in her eyes. She couldn’t let it mean too much to her. He was just trying to be nice. But, oh, just the thought he may really mean those words meant the world to her. Almost as much

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as seeing “I love you” written on a piece of white paper had meant a few minutes ago.

“Thank you. That’s so nice of you to say, even if it can’t possibly be true.” When she saw his frown she knew he was about to protest and she didn’t want to spend her time with him arguing.

“Come on...it’s getting cold out here. Let’s go into the house,” she said quickly. “We can have some coffee and you can tell me everything that happened after the Air Force kicked me out.”

Roarke took her hand and followed her. “It’s an awfully long story and it’s classified. I don’t know if I should tell you.”

Betsy looked over her shoulder at him feeling her pulse spike again. “I have ways to make you talk,” she growled playfully in her best imitation of a vamp.

His smile was slow and sure and warmed Betsy from the inside out.

“I’m sure you do. I’m sure you do.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

TRIXIE STILLETTO

“Life is a smorgasbord of men. I believe in diving in like a starving woman hitting an all-you-can-eat buffet!

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