



Murder, Mayhem, and Mistletoe

By

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Chapter 1

The party had hit its high point--five dozen people drunk on spiked eggnog swayed back and forth to a tipsy rendition of Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.

On one side of the room, an associate shouted at her boss, saying things hopefully neither one would remember in the morning. A foot away, the head of accounting necked with the UPS man, under a piece of mistletoe haphazardly scotch-taped above the door for just such an occasion.

All things were as they should be the night before Christmas.

Theodora Madison settled herself against the wall and sipped on seltzer water as she watched the night's activities with both curiosity and amusement. She had drawn the short straw, which meant she currently wore the Golden Crown proclaiming her the designated driver of the tenth floor.

She had accepted this noble endeavor and the crown, a piece of white paper covered with yellow Post-it Notes, with both regret and relief. Regret for not being able to get sloshed with her coworkers, and relief she wouldn't have an opportunity to relive last years drunken, and not well thought out, excursion on the copy machine with a very hunky guy from the mailroom.

"Theodora." Her name was accompanied by a wet kiss on the back of her neck and a pair of strong, male hands on her ass.

She swatted at the hands. "Don't call me Theodora and get off me." She had known Charlie too long to take offense at the grope.

He stood in front her, head bowed and hands behind his back, looking more like a scolded seven-year-old than a thirty-year-old, hunky, and successful dot comer. "Sorry Teddy. Do you have any idea where Beth is?"

"Last time I saw her, Charlie, she was talking to that cute guy in accounting." Thank God Teddy had been drinking seltzer water. She blotted away at the large wet spot spreading across her skirt. Two inches lower and it would have looked like she'd peed her pants.

"Crap! Why can't I get the woman to commit?"

Teddy resisted the urge to roll her eyes. "Could it have something to do with the fact you refuse to stop seeing other women?"

His expression was earnest. "I've been totally faithful to Beth."

Teddy raised an eyebrow and took a sip of her drink. It was impressive Charlie could actually say that with a straight face.

"Okay, there was a blonde last month, but it was nothing, she meant nothing to me, and Beth doesn't know anything about it."

"You sure about that?"

Charlie grabbed her shoulders and asked, "Why, what did she tell you?"

What was left of Teddy's drink sloshed onto the floor. "About twenty minutes ago she was telling everyone you were a total horn dog incapable of keeping your hands off anything in a short skirt," she answered, trying to pry of his fingers loose. The man was strong. And his steel, death-grip was going to leave bruises.

He released her and scanned the room. "Crap! Which way did she go?"

Teddy rubbed her arm and pointed towards Waswald's office.

Charlie stormed across the room, pushing bodies out of his way like a drunken Moses parting the Red Sea.

Fred Waswald, Chief of Operations, was in the throws of a mid life crisis and on the make for a young, preferably big busted, conquest, or so said the office rumor mill. Like a lion on the prowl in the wilds of Africa, the office staff watched him stalk the women of the tenth floor.

Wednesday, he made a swift and unexpected pounce on the temporary receptionist--how about you, me, and a bottle of wine this weekend was met with an icy stare and dead silence.

This very public rejection forced him to attempt a more desperate move on Friday. The prey was an unsuspecting twenty-something brunette who pushed a cart around the floor every morning between 8:15 and 8:30 selling lattes and bagels. The bagel girl wore a short skirt, high heels, seemed to have a preference for blue nail polish, and most days sported a diamond nose ring.

No one was privy to Waswald's latest attempt. He chose to pounce in private. The result--a red bruise across his chubby cheek in the shape of a twenty-something hand.

A set of long red fingernails waved in front of Teddy's face. "Charlie's off to see Mr. Wiggles?" Fred Waswald AKA Mr. Wiggles to his employees.

The redhead standing before her swayed ever so slightly back and forth. Paula, Teddy's best friend and comrade-in-arms, was tipsy and happily on her way to becoming fully intoxicated. Man, it really sucked being the designated driver. "He's off to find Beth. Have you seen her?" Teddy asked.

Silence from a chatty woman was always suspect. Teddy took one look at Paula's Cheshire cat grin and purred. "Okay, fess up, what did you see?"

"Beth was kissing Wiggles."

"Impossible!"

"I swear. I opened his office door and there she was sitting on the old man's lap, nibbling at his earlobes."

Teddy shuddered in horror at the visual. "That's truly repulsive. She must be sloshed. We've got to go save her."

Paula pointed a long, red fingernail towards Wiggle's office. "Too late, any second Charlie's busting in on them."

"Ideas?" They needed a distraction. "Come on, think! Something fast and brash, he's almost to the door."

Paula's eyebrows narrowed in concentration.

When it came to deception, destruction and distractions, Paula was one of the best.

"Start a fire? Flash the crowd?" Paula asked.

Teddy looked down at her black elegant evening gown with spaghetti straps and sexy slit up one side. She'd piled her hair into a mass of brown curls on top of her head--extra effort had gone into looking glamorous this evening. "I'm not dressed for a strip tease. How about, I'll start the fire, you do the tease."

Paula pulled on the strap of her gold sequined tank top and frowned. "Why do I

always get stuck stripping?”

Teddy shrugged, laughed, and pointed to the nearest desk.

Paula finished off her drink in one gulp, threw the plastic glass over her shoulder and sighed loudly as she started upwards. Not an easy task when sporting a red mini skirt and matching fuck me pumps.

Teddy tugged at Paula's leg. “Too late!” Charlie just walked straight into the office.” Charlie was huge, incredibly jealous, and capable of violence. He was about to catch his girlfriend shagging the boss. Things were going from bad to worse.

“Wasn't Charlie a football player in college?” Paula asked as she shimmied off the desk.

Teddy grabbed her arm, pulling her through a sea of drunk and sweaty bodies. “Defensive line. He outweighs Wiggles by fifty pounds.”

“This could end badly.”

“Do you have your cell phone?” Teddy asked, nudging the snobby blonde from reception aside with a little more force than was necessary.

Paula raised her wrist and wrestled with her red sequined purse. She victoriously held up her new four inch phone. “What's the plan?”

Teddy grabbed the phone and tried to make out the miniscule numbers on its ridiculously tiny front panel. “We burst into the office. If Charlie has Wiggles in a head lock, we call 911.”

“Do we have to call the cops?” Paula pouted. To a woman who was always one speeding ticket away from losing her license, cops ranked right up there with dentists.

“Do you think you can pull Charlie off Wiggles?” Teddy gave up with the phone and figured worse case scenario they could start screaming fire at the top of their lungs. No way was Teddy going to risk her precious body to break up a fight between two grown men. Especially when one of those men could squash her like a bug with one hand tied behind his back.

“Good point. What about getting some of these able bodied men to help?” Paula pointed towards the center of the room where the mass of bodies was most concentrated.

Teddy watched her coworkers slapping each other on the back and downing shots of tequila. Not even sober could they handle Charlie in a full rage. Cops were the only solution. Even drunk Charlie might think twice before decking a man in uniform.

Five feet from the office door, a pair of strong arms wrapped themselves around Teddy's waist and a masculine voice whispered into her ear, “Sweetheart, you look smashing tonight.”

“Thanks.” She didn't recognize the voice or the hands. The hands were moving fast. Every time she peeled one off, it reappeared somewhere else a few inches higher. At this rate, in the next few seconds, he would know her intimately.

Paula was suddenly in front of her, hand on one hip, disapproving expression plastered across her face. “Teddy, do you really think we have time for this?”

“Help!” Teddy said, peeling off fingers resting just below her ribcage.

Paula crossed her arms and looked annoyed. “Do you even know this guy?”

“I can't even see this guy. Hey buddy, do I know you?” Teddy demanded as she attempted to twirl around. He seemed to anticipate her movements and instead of facing

him, she found herself suddenly pulled tight into his body.

“I’ve been trying to meet you all night.” His breath tickled the back of her neck.

God, he had an Australian accent. If he looked as good as he sounded.... Teddy shook her head and tried to focus on the task at hand—saving Wiggles.

She glared at Paula. “SOS. I can’t get free. What’s he look like? Is he cute?”

Paula started to answer, and Teddy raised her hand. “Forget it, I don’t want to know, just get me loose.” Teddy’s other hand was busy swatting away very inquisitive fingers.

Paula grabbed Teddy’s arm and started to pull. “Dude, let go of my friend.”

Teddy started laughing. “Dude?”

Paula glared at her and kept pulling. “Would you prefer Mister?”

“Carry on. Put some muscle into it,” Teddy said, trying to ignore the delicious sensation running down the back of her neck every time her assailant exhaled.

A determined look crossed Paula’s face as she dug in her six inch heels and started walking backwards.

One moment Teddy was a prisoner. The next she was flying straight into Paula. Both women went down in a tangle of arms and legs. Teddy’s carefully prepared coiffure now covered her face.

“Sorry, I think I’ve had a tad too much to drink. Are you okay?” The Australian voice asked.

Teddy pushed curls out of her eyes, straightened her spaghetti straps, and looked up into a pair of sea green eyes.

The man was a total hunk. She opened her mouth to respond, but nothing came out.

“Ladies and gentlemen, for the third time in Teddy’s life, she has been rendered speechless,” Paula proclaimed as she tried, unsuccessfully, to get up off the floor without flashing the crowd.

Teddy threw an elbow and had the satisfaction of hearing a ‘you bitch’ when it connected with Paula’s ribcage.

For the moment Charlie and Wiggles were forgotten while Teddy’s eyes wandered across Prince Charming’s very broad chest, slowly taking in his tapered waist before her eyes settled on a rather large bulge. Prince Charming, Jr. looked happy to see her.

Paula was not a woman to waste time or opportunity. She extended a hand towards Prince Charming and demanded, “Name?”

One very muscular arm pulled Paula effortlessly to her feet. The word, “Zack” slowly escaped out of a pair of luscious lips.

Paula batted eyelids heavy with mascara and purred, “Employed?”

“Yes.” Zack answered.

“Married?”

“Single.”

“Gay?” Paula demanded.

“Straight.”

Winking at Teddy, Paula intertwined her arm with Zack’s and asked, “Teddy,

dear...what are you still doing down there?"

Zack took a step forward as if to offer assistance, but Paula pulled him gently back. "Do tell me more about yourself? Are you in town long?"

Teddy pushed herself unceremoniously off the ground and cursed Paula under her breath.

"Do you normally go around grabbing strangers?" Paula asked Zack as she leaned forward just far enough to show off her impressive cleavage.

"Not on a daily basis," Zack answered, his eyes gliding across the mounds of exposed flesh, "Your Mates put me up to it." He pointed towards a small group of men laughing in the background.

Paula and Teddy chanted in unison. "Eggheads!"

Teddy sneered in their direction. "I told you those damn computer geeks have way too much time on their hands."

Teddy waved to the computer department, and they in turn raised their glasses in salute.

It was payback. Last week on a dare, Teddy snuck into their department and while the eggheads were off eating lunch, she loaded pornographic screensavers on their systems.

If the computer dudes thought having a hunky Australian dude grope her in public was some sort of punishment, they really needed to get a life. Or a more creative ring leader.

It was time for Teddy to open her flirt arsenal if she was to compete with Paula's cleavage.

"What brings you to our party?" Teddy asked, exposing and adjusting her black garter belt.

His eyes swung from Paula's tatas to the slit of Teddy's dress showing off her thigh.

Paula mouthed the words, "Not fair," over Zack's shoulder as he turned and pointed to a fellow in the midst of the eggheads sporting a striped shirt and a pocket protector. "That's my cousin. I'm visiting the States and staying with him."

Prince Charming was related to Bob the king of the eggheads? It was hard to imagine genes that created those hypnotic green eyes, chiseled chin, and scrumptious lips were somewhere buried deep within Bob the nerd.

"Zack, how would you like to come help us rescue a damsel in distress?" Teddy purred wrapping herself around his other arm.

Chapter 2

Teddy stopped, hand on Wiggles doorknob, and took a deep breath. Whatever scene they were about to break in on would not be pretty. Teddy prepared herself for World War III. But no way was she prepared to find Wiggles alone, slumped back in his chair, with a letter opener protruding from his chest.

Teddy was once again totally at a loss for words. But Paula, as usual, wasn't.

"Holy fuck, someone offed the old man." Paula turned to Teddy and asked, "Did you do it?"

"What kind of question is that? You've been with me for the last twenty minutes."

Paula pointed towards Wiggles. "That's yours, isn't it?"

Holy fuck, she was right. A sterling silver handled letter opener with a mother of pearl curved blade was embedded into the old man's heart. The exact opener Teddy had bought on eBay a few weeks earlier.

Paula eyed Teddy suspiciously, "Are you sure you didn't do it? I wouldn't blame you."

"God, you are drunker than I thought. Moron, how could I kill him? You've been no more than three inches away from me since you last saw him alive." And then a thought entered Teddy's mind. She pushed Paula and Zack into the room and closed the door. "Girlfriend, when exactly was the last time you saw Wiggles alive?"

Paula slumped against the wall. "I think I'm going to be sick. I know I said the old geezer needed to die, but that was usually after the bastard goosed me. Shit, you honestly don't think I could stab someone with that?"

"If I didn't do it, and you didn't do it. Then who did?" Teddy walked around the desk and put two fingers on Wiggles' cold and clammy skin. No pulse. The guy was definitely toast. Teddy looked up at Paula and Zack. "Charlie? Who else would like to see Wiggles dead?"

Paula took a deep breath and hiccupped. "At least half the people that work under him, or have been under him."

As much as Charlie bugged the shit out of Teddy, he was still a half decent guy and Beth was crazy about him. Teddy hoped the dude didn't lose his mind and off the old man. But if he didn't do it, then who? "Mrs. Wiggles?" Teddy asked hopefully.

"No way," Paula answered, resting her forehead on her arms.

"Why not?" Teddy thought a pissed off wife would make any suspect list. And how could you not be pissed off when your husband was trying to seduce all the young women at his office. If the old bird did it, she really wouldn't blame her. Wiggles was far from an ideal husband.

Paula looked very pale when she raised her face. "It's not easy finding a husband that doesn't mind if you do the pool boy. And your tennis instructor. Oh, and that hunky massage therapist from Body Works."

It sounded like the old biddy was having quite a time of it herself. "And Wiggles didn't care?"

Paula's eyes settled on Wiggles' body, and she shuddered. "According to the rumor mill, he was happy to see her needs filled by someone else. Anyone else."

If it wasn't a jealous wife, who had killed Wiggles? Who had a motive? Just a few days ago Teddy had a very public shouting match with the old man outside his office over a raise he had promised her and reneged on. Wiggles had tried to screw most of the office staff one way or the other over the years. God, half the office would be on the suspect list.

But it was Teddy's letter opener sticking out from the old man's chest. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out whose name would top the list. Finding the body didn't help matters. This was starting to look really bad. They needed to get their derrieres out of Wiggles' office ASAP.

Timing was everything. And Teddy's stunk. Just as she backed away from Wiggles body, her heel caught in the rug and sent her reeling forward. Teddy's body slammed into Wiggles, and they both crashed to the floor.

"Get him off me!" Teddy screamed as Wiggles cold, clammy fingers grazed across her face. She wrestled with his dead body, trying to get out from under him. She finally scrambled clear and shuddered in horror.

"Are you okay?" Paula asked, wide-eyed from across the room.

Teddy stood and unconsciously wiped dead guy germs off her hands and onto her skirt. "No." Her skirt was tangled, and she smoothed it out, trying to regain her composure. Her fingers brushed against something hard. At first Teddy just stared, not able to comprehend for a moment what she was holding in her hand.

The murder weapon had caught in her skirt while she wrestled with Wiggles' body. She was now holding the weapon that had taken Wiggles' life. Any fingerprints that were on the letter opener had now been replaced with hers. Things had gone from bad to worse.

Suddenly, the office door opened. and there stood Beth.

Beth stared at Teddy and then at Wiggles' body, then back again at Teddy. Beth's eyes bulged as they took in the bloodied letter opener now grasped tightly in Teddy's left hand.

Teddy raised her right hand in surrender. "Nothing Beth. I did nothing. It's not what it looks like."

Without a word, Beth spun and took off out the door.

Paula hiccupped loudly. "Okay, that could have gone better."

* * * *

"I think we need an alibi." It was the first words Zack had spoken since they found Wiggles.

Paula batted her eyes and patted Zack's arm, "Alibi, that's good. We go back to the party, mingle, the cops eventually find Wiggles and no one knows we were in here."

"Except for Beth," Teddy answered, unable to take her eyes off the letter opener in her hand. "We need to go find her and explain."

"And the murder weapon?" Paula asked.

And the murder weapon? The letter opener was Teddy's. What if they couldn't find Beth in time to explain? What if Beth had all ready called the cops? Even if Teddy wiped the letter opener clean, it was still hers. If she got rid of it somehow, she could deny, deny, and deny some more. Deny ever being in the office. Deny ever seeing the

letter opener.

Teddy took a deep breath and tried to calm her pounding heart. “Okay, here is the plan. You and Zack go and find Beth. I’m going to hide the murder weapon.”

Most of the office staff was sloshed out of their minds, but she still couldn’t trounce around with a bloodied letter opener. She needed a place to stash it. Holy fuck, she was starting to sound and think like a murderer.

Teddy walked over to Wiggles, took a deep breath, leaned down, and wiped the blade clean on the back of his shirt. She lifted her skirt and placed the opener under her garter, shuddering as the blade made contact with her skin. She took another deep breath and adjusted her dress. Walking quickly across the room, she stopped with her hand on the door knob and addressed her companions in crime. “Ready?”

Paula and Zack nodded their heads in unison.

Teddy opened the door, and they followed her out.

So far so good. Everyone’s attention was on the other side of the room where the sales dept, dressed like elves, were passing out presents.

“I’m heading towards the kitchen.” Teddy motioned across the room. “When you find Beth, drag her ass in there.”

Teddy squared her shoulders and headed towards the main lobby, not waiting for their response.

Dead body, committing a felony—she needed a damn drink. On her way across the room she grabbed and downed half a dozen shots.

She sauntered into the kitchen, trying to look and act completely innocent. The room was empty. She quickly made her way to the sink and thoroughly washed the opener and her hands.

All traces of Wiggles’ blood swirled down the drain. She grabbed a paper towel and wrapped it around the end of the opener. Last thing she needed to do was get her finger prints all over it again. Now all she had to do was find a decent hiding place. She eyed the fridge--the place where all things unclaimed and moldy went to die. Opening a plastic container full of what looked like leftover lasagna, she shoved the opener under some furry pasta. Closing the fridge, she tossed the paper towel in a nearby garbage can and casually walked back into the main lobby.

Where was Beth? Hopefully the woman was sober enough to realize Teddy wasn’t the murdering kind. Teddy had known Beth since grade school. She hoped the woman would give her the benefit of the doubt.

Teddy scanned the room again and watched as a group of uniformed men entered the party.

Someone must have found Wiggles. Time to make herself scarce. There was a row of empty, darkened offices behind her, she backed up and opened the door of the closest one, sliding inside. Hopefully no one had seen her quick exit.

The office was dark, but there was a bit of moonlight shining in from the window, gleaming off the glass and mirrors in the room to make an oddly broken assortment of shadows and light. Teddy didn’t risk turning on a light. As her eyes adjusted to the change in the light, she took a step forward and smacked into a solid body.

“Shit...”

A hand clamped over her mouth.

“Sh....” Warm breath caressed her ear. “I’m seeking refuge from a heavy set blonde who had too many tequila shots.”

He removed his hand, and Teddy laughed, “I’m hiding from the cops.”

The male voice chuckled, “Seems to be enough room in here for the both of us.”

The body she was leaning against was young and firm. And her body began to hum in response to warm fingers against her bare arms. God, it felt good to be touched. And suddenly she realized how long it had been since she had been laid. Adrenaline pumped through her veins, making her incredibly horny. And wet. This new life of crime was certainly exciting.

His fingers brushed against her skin and sent a shiver running through her body. As if reading Teddy’s mood, he whispered into her ear, “What could we do to pass the time, I wonder?”

“Monopoly is definitely out of the question. Unless you have a flashlight?”

He laughed. His laugh was deep and sexy. “No flashlight. We’ll have to think of something else.” Warm lips nuzzled Teddy’s neck. “Have you been a good little girl or bad little girl this year?”

“Bad. I’ve definitely been bad,” she answered, leaning against him.

Deft hands unzipped her dress, and it fell to the floor. “Turn around,” he commanded.

She had chosen a sheer black bra and matching undies. And since it was a special occasion, black matching garter and stockings. The shadows played across his features. Teddy could only make out his caramel brown eyes as they traveled down her body, stopping at her nipples now visible against the see-through material. He slid his palm slowly against one, and suddenly the delicate tip hardened, forcing a small moan from Teddy’s lips.

God, this was hot, being seduced in an empty dark office by a hunky stranger. It had been months since she had been under a male, and she realized like someone stuck in the desert without water for too long, her body was thirsty--hungry for a masculine touch. And this man knew how to touch. Electric shocks ran across her skin, down her body.

His hard cock throbbed against her leg, and she was suddenly impatient. Teddy’s hand snaked its way down, but before she could unzip his pants, strong hands slapped hers away. She was suddenly pushed back and found her arms roughly shoved above her head and against the wall.

She was momentarily his captive. Her coworkers were only a few feet away, just outside the door laughing and shouting. Anyone could walk in--the door wasn’t locked. But as his tongue lowered onto her skin, coworkers and cops were forgotten.

His mouth teased and taunted her nipples through the sheer material of her bra, causing her to squirm and arch. Heat and wetness throbbed between her legs, soaking her panties.

She strained, trying desperately to keep quiet, but with each touch soft moans escaped her lips.

His mouth captured a hardened peak, and he slowly rolled his tongue around it, gently taking it between his teeth. Teddy gasped loudly as shivers of pleasure cascaded

across her skin.

“Please...,” she begged. Not sure what she was asking for. She was no longer in control, her body quivered and arched wildly. She was now completely his to do with whatever he wanted. She would have cried out again, but his lips crushed against hers, silencing her.

He tasted of mint. God, he had an incredible mouth. His tongue slid between her swollen lips and began to explore. Almost absentmindedly one hand trailed down her body as the other pressed against her wrists. She could now break free, but she didn’t even consider it. Every thought was now focused on his touch as it blazed a trail down her stomach.

His fingers came to rest gently on her inner thigh. Her breathing quickened. He noticed and laughed. He was enjoying her torture. And God, she was enjoying being tortured.

His fingers drew circles against her skin, his feather touch slowly moving closer then farther away from her pussy.

She was slick, wet, a heat pulsating from inside her she had never felt before. It burned all thoughts from her brain. It filled Teddy with a hunger. She needed to be satisfied. “Please fuck me...,” she begged.

He slid her underwear down, and his fingers began to explore the outside of her curly mound. Her body arched closer trying to entice his fingers inside.

After what seemed an eternity, ever so slowly, her panties were pushed aside as his hard finger slid into her. Teddy’s breath caught in her throat, and she began to slide down the wall. He pushed his body against hers, forcing her upright.

His fingers pulled out, then delved deeper. Out, then deeper. Each thrust creating a rhythmic movement that her body unconsciously followed.

She moved against him, writhing under his touch. She was getting wetter with each thrust. He drove hard into her, and she felt the orgasm as it rocked her body, causing her to wildly buck against his hand.

He kept going even though she pleaded with him to stop. She couldn’t stand it—the waves running through her now were pleasure and pain combined.

She arched again against his hand and began to cry out. His other hand released her wrist, covering her mouth. Her next cry of pleasure sounded against his palm. She barely had time to assimilate the sound of foil being ripped open when suddenly his fingers were replaced with something harder, something much larger. His hot bulging shaft plunged inside her, and she gasped for breath.

She no longer knew her own name, didn’t know where she was. Each thrust brought with it more pleasure. She was wet, she was an ocean. Teddy strained to keep from screaming out. Harder. She needed him to fuck her harder.

His mouth was suddenly again on hers. He deepened the kiss. God, he was driving her mad. His taste... the way his body plunged into hers. She melted into him, making soft incoherent noises in the back of her throat.

Pleasure built inside her, gathered, rising and collecting with each breath. She moved against him, wet abandoned, undulating with each deep rhythmic drive into her. And then it crashed over her like a wave. It burst across her body and her senses causing

her to scream as she came. And he came with her. His breathing deepening, his body shaking until one long sigh escaped and he became still against her.

Teddy's ears buzzed. She really didn't know what to say. She had never experienced anything quite so profound.

He stepped away from her, and, without his support, her body slumped against the wall. She tried to catch her breath, as she slowly sunk onto the floor. Her limbs had turned into rubber. She sat with her face in her hands, trying hard to think of something brilliant to say.

She was so caught up in her own thoughts—she didn't hear the door open and close. It took her a while to realize she was suddenly alone. The hunky stranger had come and gone—literally.

She struggled back into her dress and was reaching for her zipper when the door opened and the lights blazed over head. Teddy found herself staring into a muzzle of a gun. "Theodora Madison. You're under arrest for the murder of Fred Waswald."

Chapter 3

“You fucked the hunky stranger, then stashed the weapon?” Paula asked, taking a seat next to Teddy.

Teddy was sitting in an empty office, one hand handcuffed to a chair. A policeman stood just outside the door. “No. The other way around.”

Paula leaned forward and whispered, “They won’t let anyone leave the party.”

Teddy pushed her hair out of her face. The perfectly prepared hairdo was now a tangle of curls cascading down her back. “You don’t have to whisper. They don’t have the room bugged. Any sign of Charlie?”

“Charlie is MIA.”

“Beth?” She asked, wondering if the cop out front would be open to bribery. She really needed another drink about now.

“I saw her with a group of cops.” Paula’s eyes filled with tears. “The chick ratted you out, Teddy.”

So much for the sacred bonds of childhood friendship. “Where’s the Australian?”

The tears left Paula’s eyes and were replaced with a look of pure lust. “The darling is waiting for me just outside. He’s been a rock through this whole thing.” Paula’s expression suddenly turned serious. “I know he groped you first, but you don’t mind, I mean if I keep him?”

“No, go ahead,” Teddy raised a handcuffed wrist, “Doesn’t look like I’ll be dating for a while.”

“God, Teddy what are we going to do?” Paula wailed.

Teddy squirmed around trying to find the most comfortable position to sit while chained to a chair. “I’ve no idea. I take it since you and Aussie boy are not in here with me, Beth just ratted me out.”

Paula nodded her head.

“So I’ll be the only one going to the clinker. You think you can feed my cat while I’m doing time?” Teddy asked, trying not to break out into hysterical laughter. This was unreal. This was insane. This was like a bad movie.

Paula slapped Teddy upside the head once, then again. “Stop joking around. This is serious.”

“Ouch, stop hitting me. I’m taking it serious.” She rubbed her head. “But what can I do. This is a nightmare.”

Paula looked around the room then she put her head close to Teddy’s and whispered, “What if I distract the cop outside and you make a break for it?”

“Even if we could,” Teddy whispered back and raised her wrist, “How do you suggest I get out of these?”

“I thought of that. You can use this.” Paula opened her palm and held out a black bobby pin.

Teddy laughed loudly at the sight of her salvation. “I’m not Houdini.”

Paula pouted. “Well, it’s worth a try.”

The sad thing was Teddy didn’t have any better ideas. She stopped and seriously considered Paula’s plan for a second. It had some huge holes. “And if by some miracle I

could get out of the handcuffs and get past the guard at the door, how do you suggest I get out of the building. There are a dozen cops out there.” The room was a sparse white office. No ladders or secret exits--just a few chairs, a desk, and filing cabinet.

“No idea.” Then Paula’s face suddenly lit up into a smile. “How many floors up are we?”

Teddy shook her head and laughed again. “Tenth. And no Einstein, there is no ledge I can shimmy out to, and no sheets I can tie together to make a rope. This is real life Paula, not a romance book.”

Paula’s eyes filled with tears again. “I’m only trying to help.”

Teddy patted her arm and smiled. “I know, and I appreciate it, I really do.” She looked around again and tried to come up with a plan. Any plan. But there was no way out of this situation. “Crap, I’m royally fucked.”

“It’s your word against Beth’s.”

“That’s true. Unfortunately Beth spends her Saturdays helping the homeless and goes to church every Sunday. Between the two of us, who would you believe? Wild, party diva or weekend saint in cashmere?”

Paula jumped out of her chair and exclaimed, “Zack and I can be your alibi!”

“A little louder, I don’t think the cop outside heard you.” An equally infamous wild, party diva and a hunky Australian as her alibi--somehow Teddy didn’t think that type of alibi would go over the way Paula hoped. “And say what? We were huddled in an office having a threesome? No, if I’m going down I’m not dragging the two of you with me.”

The door suddenly opened, and two men walked in. The tallest was a blonde, blue-eyed surfer type wearing a pair of brown pants, a white collared shirt, and a blue striped tie. He carried a clipboard. The other guy was stocky, sported a mono brow and a sour expression.

The surfer dude spoke first. “I’m Detective Rogers.”

Teddy lifted the handcuffed arm as far as she could and wiggled her fingers in his direction. “Glad to meet you. I’m the wrongly accused bystander.”

She could have sworn she saw a grin flash across the detective’s face. But when she looked again his expression was deadpan.

The Detective turned and addressed Paula. “We need to ask your friend a few questions. Would you mind waiting outside?”

Paula stood and started forward. She stopped and put her hands behind her back, opening her palm and offering Teddy the bobby pin. She asked over her shoulder, “Do you need anything before I go?”

Teddy was half tempted to take it, but lock picking just wasn’t in her repertoire. “No. I’ll be all right.” She tried to paste a reassuring smile on her face. “Say hi to Lover Boy. “

Teddy watched Paula leave the room and suddenly felt very isolated and alone. She squared her shoulders and faced the hunky firing squad. “In the movies they always ask questions in a stark room with a bright light.”

She watched as yet again the corners of the detective’s mouth drew up before he caught himself and the smile disappeared replaced by a serious scowl. Even scowling, the

guy was good-looking.

He seated himself at the desk and started flipping through a small stack of papers. "You told the officer that you entered the office looking for your friends?"

Teddy tried to remember all the tell-tale signs of lying. She uncrossed her legs and kept her eyes straight ahead as she answered, "Affirmative."

The detective tilted his head and eyed-balled her from across the room. "And then what happened?"

"I saw Ms. Beth Walkins standing over the dearly departed Wiggles," Teddy answered, trying to keep her voice steady. It was one thing to lie about why you were late for work, and an entirely different thing to lie about finding a dead body. But she figured if Beth was going to accuse her of a felony, she might as well return the favor. All was fair in love, war, and murder indictments.

"Ms. Walkins in her statement says she walked in and saw you standing over the body. "

Beth was going to ignore the fact that Paula and Zack were in the room. If Beth was willing to keep the other two out of the whole mess, Teddy was happy to play along. Teddy lowered her voice and said in hushed tones, "Beth tends to hallucinate when drunk."

The detective narrowed his eyes. "We're still trying to determine the murder weapon. Care to help us out?"

She plastered a nonchalant expression on her face and shrugged her shoulders. "Sorry. I've no idea."

"Did you say anything to Ms. Walkins?"

"When?"

"When you found her with Mr. Waswald's body?"

Teddy studied her nails. "Not that I recall."

"So you opened the door, saw your work associate standing over a dead man's body. You then, without saying a word, left the room..." He opened another file and started reading a piece of paper, "To go find your friends? But you were so distraught you never stopped and considered calling the police?"

She nodded her head. "Right again."

He suddenly demanded, "Ms. Madison have you been drinking?"

She beamed at him. "Yes."

"But according to numerous co-workers you were picked as the designated driver."

The more questions she answered, the more pissed off he seemed to be getting. Unfortunately, the more cross he got, the sexier he looked. Teddy suddenly had an irresistible urge to run her hands through that blonde wavy hair. Somehow she didn't think the man currently trying to find a reason to put her behind bars would find that amusing. She cleared her throat and lowered her voice and tried to sound respectable and innocent. "That's true. But sometime during the night, I decided to resign from the position."

The door opened and a uniformed police officer stuck his head into the room. "Excuse me, Sir."

“What is it Johnson?”

“Charlie Smith just confessed to killing Fred Waswald.”

“He did?” The Detective sounded surprised. He turned back to Teddy. “Looks like we owe you an apology Ms. Madison.”

Charlie confessed to killing Wiggles. Teddy didn’t believe it, but if it meant they would be taking off the cuffs and letting her walk out of the room, then she was all for it. She gave him her best smile. “Don’t worry, I promise not to sue.” She raised her handcuffed wrist. “Now can you get these damn things off me?”

Chapter 4

“Okay, let’s run through it again,” Teddy demanded. They were holed up in the copy room with a plate of Hors D’oeuvres and enough alcohol to inebriate a frat house.

Paula took a long sip of wine, grimaced, and then began her story again. “We found Beth in the mail room crying her eyes out. She told us Charlie killed Wiggles in a fit of jealousy.”

Teddy nodded her head and started pacing back and forth across the room. “So Wiggles makes the moves on Beth. She’s drunk out of her mind and starts playing kissy face. Suddenly, she either comes to her senses or starts to make up chuck noises. Personally, I think she started to vomit, how could she not, my god she was kissing Wiggles!” If she kept picturing the two of them together, Teddy was going to lose her lunch.

Paula stopped stuffing her face with crab cakes long enough to give a dramatic shudder.

Teddy laughed and continued, “Either way, she excuses herself and heads for Wiggles’ private john. She is busy fixing her face, looking for an exit, or throwing up, when she hears Charlie shouting and threatening Wiggles. Afraid Charlie will find her, she closes the bathroom door and hides. Time passes and eventually she opens the door. No sign of Charlie, but there lays Wiggles dead as a door knob.”

Paula reached for another crab cake. “That’s what she told us. She assumed Charlie did it and then when she came back for her purse, she saw you holding the letter opener. She figured she could blame you and save her lover man.”

Pacing in fuck me pumps was impossible. Teddy kicked off her heels, grabbed the glass from Paula’s hand, and took a long sip. “Meanwhile, Charlie either did it, or he is convinced Beth had something to do with it. He comes forward and confesses. Why? Because he is a moron and doesn’t realize the cops have pinned the murder on me.”

Paula gave a long sigh, “Kind of romantic if he confessed to protect Beth.” She lifted an empty bottle of wine and frowned. “But kind of psychotic if he murdered the old man.” She looked at Teddy. “You don’t think he did it?”

Teddy shook her head back and forth. “I just can’t see Charlie picking up something and stabbing someone to death. Does that sound like Charlie? No, he even eats with his fingers. His first choice of weapon would be his fists.”

“If not Charlie who?” Zack asked. He sat in the corner of the room, picking away a platter of stuffed mushrooms.

Paula got up, grabbed a full bottle of wine, and walked over towards Zack, settling herself onto his lap. “Mrs. Wiggles was at the party. If you were married to Wiggles, wouldn’t you want him dead?”

Teddy shuddered and made a face. “God, I can’t imagine being married to that man.” She was starting to feel dizzy. The room was spinning ever so slightly. She giggled and suddenly crashed against the wall. Married to Wiggles. Talk about a living hell on earth. “You think Mrs. Wiggles took a lot of drugs in the sixties, woke up one day, sobered up, and went Holy Shit, look who I married?” Teddy shook her head back and forth trying to clear her vision. She needed a sober head to figure this all out, but instead

she was getting smashed. But who could blame a girl for wanting to get tipsy after barely escaping the electric chair.

“She must have been out of her mind. Can you imagine dating a man like Wiggles if you were sane?” Paula answered, busily feeding crab cakes to the Australian hunk who was looking at Paula as though she was edible.

The sound of laughter and loud music drifted through the closed door.

Paula said, “Looks like the party is still going on,” her full attention was now on the Australian who was licking food off her fingers.

Teddy poured herself another drink. She drank deeply for a few minutes before speaking. “They’re questioning people on what they saw, pulling people into rooms to see if they can get the goods on Charlie. It doesn’t seem to be stopping the party, everyone seems to be ignoring the cops and are busy getting plastered. Sounds about right. I mean this group would never let a little murder interfere with a good time.” Teddy looked up at the ceiling and then back at her friends. “I don’t think Charlie did it.”

“But what can we do?” Paula whined.

Teddy was out of ideas. She stared down at the bottom of her now empty glass. They had to do something. They couldn’t just sit around and let Charlie take the rap for something he didn’t do. But what to do? She shrugged her shoulders. “All I know about solving crime comes from watching TV.”

“What would a great cop do?” Zack asked as he dangled a crab cake over Paula’s mouth.

“He would make his partner’s life hell, play pussyfoot with some babe, all the while questioning potential suspects.” Teddy smiled and gave Zack a two finger salute. “Stop pussyfooting with the babe, come on gang, let’s go round ourselves up some suspects.”

* * * *

Teddy stood in the corner of the room with her compadres and eyed the large group of drunken co-workers.

The party had digressed. Half the room was attempting the bunny hop. The other half seemed to be doing some sort of limbo contest. Poor Bob, the king of the nerds, had been chosen as the limbo stick. He was currently stretched out by his arms and legs, held by two hunky guys from the mail room. A small line of people took turns crawling under him. Thrown into the chaotic mix were half a dozen men in blue.

“Now what?” Paula demanded.

“Establish motives.” Zack suggested.

“That’s good!” Teddy thoroughly approved of Zack’s plan. Teddy was starting to feel like a real detective. Suspect, motives, alibis. This was more fun than playing clue. “We’ve got to figure out not only people’s motives, but whether or not they have an alibi. Let’s start with wifey. What’s Mrs. Wiggle’s motive? Jealousy seems out, since Wiggles is, I mean, was on the make for every chick in sight and she didn’t seem to mind. You said she was off boffing the tennis instructor and massage therapist? So why not divorce Wiggles’ ass, get a nice juicy settlement, and spend the rest of your days on sandy beaches with some good looking boy toy? That’s what I would do. Why bother staying?

“Money. That’s a good angle,” Paula immediately answered, “People always

seem to be killing over passion or bank accounts. Did Wiggles have a lot?"

Paula was a woman who firmly believed every man she dated should have a job, preferably one that paid a great deal of money. Teddy looked over at Zack and wondered what Aussie boy did for a living.

"Of passion or money? A whole lot of passion, more like lust, over every set of tatas in a fifty mile radius. Now money he had more than enough. They spent their summers in the Hamptons and Wiggles bought that new Porsche last month. But whose money was it? I'm not sure if it was hers or his. And if it was his, we need to find out if the chick signed a prenup."

"What about blackmail?" Zack asked.

Teddy chuckled, "Blackmail. Oh, that's an interesting idea. You think Wiggles had something on Wifey? Like maybe she did art films in college? We need to concentrate on Mrs. Wiggles until we can cross her off the suspect list. We mingle. Maybe flirt with a couple of men in blue to see if they have any info. We look around and stumble onto clues."

"And if that doesn't work?" Paula asked.

"We regroup and brainstorm ideas. Who knows more gossip in the office than anyone else?" Teddy looked across the room, taking in each coworker. Who had the biggest mouth and was most likely to spill juicy office tidbits?

Paula pointed to a white haired woman crawling under Bob the nerd on her hands and knees. "That old biddy in reception."

"You and Zack cozy up to the old biddy, and I'll see if I can find Mrs. Wiggles." Teddy wondered what she was going to do when she found wifey. How did one casually bring into the conversation something like, 'Hey did you off your old man?'

* * * *

Teddy's investigation would have to be put on hold, nature was calling. Using the wall for support she made her way along the hallway on unsteady feet to the ladies' room. Bursting through the door, she realized the place was packed.

In the middle of it all was Mrs. Wiggles. She sat on a decorative iron backed chair facing a huge golden framed mirror wiping tears from her eyes with a piece of toilet paper.

Teddy tried not to stare as she made her way to an empty stall. She sat on the toilet trying to clear her spinning head when an angry voice floated under the stall.

"Alligator tears." Teddy recognized the voice. It was one of the leggy elves from accounting.

"You don't think she's a grieving widow?"

Apparently, Mrs. Wiggles had vacated the premises and was now the object of idle gossip. Now this was the type of situation Teddy needed to get into the middle of, good old fashion gossiping.

"I think the tears seem to come out only when someone's around to see them. Earlier I saw her in the hallway talking on her cell phone and laughing."

Teddy finished her business and made her way to the porcelain sink. She tried to look nonchalant as she took in the conversation.

The leggy elf carefully applied mascara as she spoke to her friend. "As soon as

she saw me, the phone was put away and the tears came out.”

“Definitely suspicious.”

“Did you notice this year she came to the party minus the tennis instructor?”

“I heard there’s a new boy toy this month.”

“You’ll never guess in a million years who it is.”

Suddenly the two women seemed to take notice of Teddy. It probably had something to do with fact she was washing her hands for the fourth time. The leggy elf gave Teddy a sour look and headed towards the door motioning her friend closer.

Damn, Teddy couldn’t hear what they were saying. She couldn’t exactly go up and demand they tell her the latest scoop. Well, she could’ve if she was on better terms with the elf. She hadn’t exactly gone out of her way to make friends with the accounting department. They were a tad too snotty for her taste.

So Mrs. Wiggles had a new boy toy. This was information worth investigating. Teddy headed out the door.

A pair of arms suddenly wrapped themselves around her waist. She recognized the arms and leaned into the embrace. “Finally came to your senses?” Teddy purred.

“Sorry my heart’s been taken by another,” Zack whispered in her ear.

“You can’t blame a girl for trying. Where’s Paula?”

“Trying to get away break away from the old biddy. For an old broad she sure is feisty. Every time I turned around the woman was trying to make a grab for my ass. I barely made it out in one piece. I’ve been told to give you an updated report.”

“And here I thought I was being mugged.”

He nuzzled her neck, “No one said I couldn’t enjoy myself while I was reporting.”

Teddy laughed and stepped out of the embrace. “Down Tiger, remember your heart’s been taken.”

“Right you are, back to business. Apparently, Mrs. Wiggles is a kept woman--the money, according to reliable sources, is all his.”

“Did the Mrs. sign a prenup?” Teddy asked. Now they were getting somewhere.

“Don’t know. But I did hear a great piece of gossip about the guy everyone thinks Mrs. Wiggles has been spending her time under.” Zack waved at a waiter and was rewarded with a tall glass of champagne.

“The new boy toy? Don’t tell me you know who it is?” Teddy demanded.

“The old Biddy seems to think it might be Wiggles’ younger brother, Bernard.”

Bernard and Mrs. Wiggles, they were a love triangle worthy of a talk show. But how to find out if it was true? Both were at the party. She had noticed Bernard as soon as he entered. How could you miss the bad toupee, shirt open almost to the waist, big gaudy gold jewelry hanging down the far too hairy, overly tanned fifty year old chest? Bernard was the poster boy for middle age man in full blown mid life crisis.

Sexual fireworks between Mrs. Wiggles and Bernard? It was hard to imagine. Especially since Mrs. Wiggles had a thing for pretty young men. What the hell could the attraction be?

Bernard looked like a man forever on the make. There was one way Teddy thought of to find out if the old geezer had the hots for his brother’s wife. Now all Teddy needed was a bit of eye candy for bait. She smiled as she watched a juicy piece of sugar

walk right up to her.

“Paula,” Teddy said her name slowly then gave her a wide smile.

“I know that look. And the answer is NO.”

“I didn’t ask you anything yet.”

“Yeah, the answer’s still no. Whatever it is, it can’t be good. Last time you looked that happy to see me I found myself broke and stranded at some yuppie bar with a guy named Blane.”

Teddy patted her on the back and gave her a reassuring smile. “It’s nothing as harsh as that. I just need you to go flirt with Wiggles’ brother. He’s the old geezer with the gold chains.”

Paula shuddered and made a face. “You want me to seduce some old man?” Paula picked up a nearby bottle of champagne and shook it. “Man, I need another drink. Now why am I coming on to the old man?”

“To see if you can get any information out of him. He just got on our suspect list.”

“We have a list?” Paula asked.

“Sure. Charlie, Beth, Mrs. Wiggles, and Mr. Wiggles’ brother.”

“But why don’t you go hit on him?”

“I heard he doesn’t like brunettes.”

Paula pinched her nose and said in a high voice, “Paula, give the maitre d’ a glimpse of your breasts so we can get a better table. Paula, flirt with the car salesman so I can get a better deal.” Paula frowned and then whined, “What do you think I am your own personal whore?”

Teddy was taking a sip of her champagne when the question was asked loud enough every head close by turned in their direction. The question and the reaction caused her to momentarily forget how to swallow. When she was done inhaling champagne, she choked out, “First of all, I do not sound like that. And B, if that was true and you were ‘my bitch’ I would never waste your talents on salesmen and maitre d’. I would aim higher. Say oil tycoons and multimillionaires.”

Paula smiled and then winked. “I could bag an oil tycoon.”

Teddy patted her hand reassuringly. “Of course you could darling. You have skills. But you are a woman with standards. You would never choose a piece of coin over a nice piece of ass.”

Paula thought about it a moment. “So true.”

“But since you have these skills why not use them for a worthy cause?” Teddy asked. When Paula didn’t say anything she tried another approach. “Do you really want to see Charlie go to jail if he is innocent? Your flirting arsenal could mean the difference between freedom and the electric chair for the baboon.”

“The freedom or electric chair part was a bit much.”

Teddy laughed. “Agreed.”

“So you want me to go flirt with the old geezer and see what info I can get out of him.”

Teddy crossed her fingers and held her hand over her chest. “If he liked brunettes I swear I would be the first one into the lion’s den.”

“God, he looks like he is the octopus type. All hands on. I swear if the old geezer

tries to paw me....” Paula closed her eyes and lifted her drink, downing it in one long swallow.

Teddy patted Paula’s hand and said in a cooing voice, “Just close your eyes, dear, and think of England.”

* * * *

Twenty minutes later, Paula came back a glass of champagne in both hands. “No luck.”

“What do you mean?”

Paula looked down at her nails. “He wasn’t interested. Dear god, I need a manicure.”

“Impossible!”

Paula nodded her head in agreement and handed Teddy one of the glasses. “Yeah, I thought so too. I tried every move I know. The cute giggle. Flicked my hair. Fluttered my eyelashes. Bent over and gave him a great view of my tatas, but notta. Do you think the dude’s gay?”

Teddy took a sip of bubbly and studied her newest suspect over the rim of her glass. “I think he is being extremely attentive to Mrs. Wiggles.”

“Yeah, he was definitely giving her ogle eyes at the punch bowl. And according to the old biddy, he hasn’t been less than three feet from her since he got here.”

Teddy frowned and took another sip of her drink. “Did you get any info out of him?”

“Notta. I couldn’t get the old bastard to talk about himself at all. Every time I took a step closer to him, he did a side step. You would have thought I had cooties or something.”

“So we have no idea where he was when Wiggles was killed.”

“No matter what I tried or what I said he just looked at me with these big bug eyes and kept mute.”

“We have to find out if he has an alibi.” Teddy tapped her glass with her finger nails. “And I think I know just the person to ask.”

Chapter 5

Teddy cruised around the room looking for the hunky cop. She finally found him leaning against a wall, drinking a bottle of seltzer water.

She stood in front of him. "I like that shirt. The blue matches your eyes."

"Thanks."

"What made you decide to be a cop?" she asked, grabbing a drink from a passing tray.

"Do you want anything in particular?" he asked, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Just making conversation." She looked around the room then back at him. "It's an interesting job."

"It can be."

"Bet you meet all kinds in your line of work. Does your wife mind the long hours?"

"I'm not married." His eyes narrowed. "Why the sudden interest in my life?"

Teddy tried to look nonchalant. "Man, has it been that long since you've been hit on?"

The detective's eyes widened in surprise. "You're hitting on me?"

"Yeah."

His eyes narrowed again, and he studied her, not unlike a bug under a microscope. She cleared her throat a few times before she asked, "So what are you doing next Friday night?"

"I don't know, why?"

"You want to go out?"

"You're asking me out on a date?" By the tone of his voice you would have thought she was asking him for a kidney.

"Yeah. Let me guess, you don't like brunettes? Only have a secret passion for blondes?"

He laughed. "No, I like brunettes just fine. Are you always this forward?"

"Usually." She took a sip of her drink and eyed him over the rim of the glass. "So, do you do a lot of this? You know, murder and mayhem."

"My fair share."

"Do you really think Charlie did it?"

"I can't discuss the case."

"Does Wiggles' brother have an alibi?" She asked in the sweetest voice she could muster.

He glared at her.

"Wink twice if yes, once if no."

The detective didn't respond.

"Cough once if no, and twice if yes."

He raised an eyebrow in amusement.

"Hmm, he must have an alibi or you would be dragging his bony ass down to the station, right?"

He grabbed a crab cake from the plate of a passing waiter. "Gee, I wonder who

hypothetically you have in mind? “

“Let’s say, hypothetically, Charlie didn’t kill Wiggles. And let’s say someone else did. Someone who has an alibi? A long list of people I’m sure wanted the man dead, but I can’t name anyone off hand that would seriously jeopardize their freedom to off the guy. Unless they had a really good reason. Any ideas what that would be?” Teddy tapped her fingers against her glass as she looked around the room at her coworkers. Something in her gut told her Bernard might have done it, but how could he if he had an alibi? The cop seemed immune to her flirtation. Man she must be losing her touch. When she younger she would have gotten him to spill his guts and asked for her number in under two minutes.

She watched the caterers bring out more champagne. And an idea formed in her head. If you could hire someone to cook for your party, it made sense you could hire someone to kill for you. When he didn’t respond she continued, “Let’s say someone decided to kill Wiggles. If they didn’t want to get their hands dirty, what could they do? Hire someone to off Wiggles for them?”

The detective opened his mouth, but before he could speak a buxom blonde wrapped her body around his, like a snake devouring it’s prey. “David!” her high pitched voice exclaimed.

“Tiffany. I told you I can’t talk now, I’m working. I’ll get someone to take you home as soon as I can.”

The curvy blonde pouted and pushed her body away from his, “I am so sick of hearing your excuses. You’re always working.”

The detective spoke in the blonde’s direction but kept his eyes on Teddy. “When someone is available, you’ll have your ride home.”

“Fine.” The blonde turned her attention to Teddy. “Good luck, Honey. You’re gonna need it.”

Teddy watched the blonde wiggle her way across the room. “Do you normally bring your dates to homicides?”

He laughed. “No. We were at that Italian place a block away. She was instructed to stay in the car.”

“Not so great at following directions is she?”

When he didn’t answer she gave him a big smile and continued, “Casually dating or serious girlfriend?”

“Girlfriend.” He paused and then coughed. “Well, technically past tense girlfriend.”

“When did you two break up?”

He looked at his watch. “About twenty minutes ago.”

She didn’t try to hide her grin. “That’s too bad.”

He matched her smile. “You almost pulled off sincere.”

“You have to admit, you don’t look really broken up about it.”

“Tiffany is a high maintenance woman.”

She puckered her lips and blew him a kiss. “Aren’t we all?”

This time she got a laugh out of him. “Some more than others,” he admitted grudgingly.

“How long do you figure your mourning period will last?”

“At least a week. We were together a year.”

“Sounds like an eternity.”

“Felt like an eternity.”

Paula tapped her on the shoulder and whispered in her ear, “Omecay ightray ownay. Issesmay igglesway ustjay eftlay ithway ernardbay.”

It took a moment for Teddy to make sense of it, and when she did she burst out laughing. Come right now. Mrs. Wiggles just left with Bernard. Paula’s idea of a secret code was to speak in Pig Latin.

Teddy turned to the detective. “Excuse me. Girl stuff.”

She followed Paula across the room, down a hallway through an exit door, into the stairwell. “Hey, secret agent man, what’s shaking?”

Paula started waving her hands in excitement. “Mrs. Wiggles just took off with Bernard.”

“Where’s Zack?”

“Making sure they stay where they are. Come on, they’re on the twelfth floor.”

Teddy hiked up her dress and started up the stairs behind Paula. “What are they doing on the twelfth floor?”

“Guess.”

Teddy started laughing, “Holy Viagra, batgirl. They’re really up there doing it?”

Paula laughed. “You should hear the noises coming from the boardroom.”

“I guess it gives you hope. I mean if the aged can still get lucky.”

“Can you imagine all those wrinkles? And I am not talking on his face.”

Teddy shuddered. “Ewwwww.”

Paula put her finger to her lips and opened the entrance to the twelfth floor. They made their way down darkened hallways lit only by a thin line of bluish lights running down each side of the ceiling.

Zack greeted her with a two finger salute and whispered in her ear, “Now what fearless leader?”

“Follow the two love birds when they get done. From the sound of it, it might be a while. I’ll take the first shift. No use all of us being forced to listen to this.” Teddy motioned towards the office where loud moans could be heard even through the closed door. “You two go enjoy what’s left of the party. Come back in half an hour. If they aren’t done by then, you take your turn at guarding the sex crazed grandma.”

Zack nodded. He walked over to Paula, planted a kiss on her lips, grabbed her hand, and pulled her with him down the hall. Paula giggled and gave Teddy a goodbye wave.

Teddy was alone. She found the perfect spot to hide. Slumped against the wall, behind a row of gray metal filing cabinets, Teddy listened to the couple doing the beast with two backs. An occasional scream of pleasure would send a barrage of mental pictures through Teddy’s mind. She grimaced and tried to keep her mind blank. Some things were better off not imagined.

Cold fingers grazed across her cheek, and Teddy started to let out a scream. A hand covered her mouth, and a female voice whispered in her ear, “Houston, we have a

problem.”

“Shit Paula, what the hell are you doing, trying to give me a coronary?”

Paula lifted her head as a very loud shout emitted from the office. “They’re still in there?”

“Yeah, going for round three by the sound of it. Who knew old guys could keep it up so long.”

“He can’t.”

“Who can’t?”

“Bernard.” Paula pointed towards the office. “That’s not him in there.”

“I don’t understand. I thought you said you followed them up here.”

“We did, but then we got a bit distracted. Bernard must have taken the elevator back down to the party because I just passed him a few minutes ago, heading for the punch bowl.”

Another cry of pleasure filled the hallway. “If he’s not in there, who is?” Teddy asked.

“Good question.”

“Where’s Zack?”

“Keeping tabs on Bernard.”

“Okay, how do we find out who the widower’s currently doing?” Teddy asked, trying to imagine who could be the widower’s current sex partner.

“No idea.”

“We have to get closer.”

Paula’s face took on a defiant look. “You don’t expect me to crawl across the floor in this skirt do you?”

Teddy tried to keep from laughing. Teddy was worried about going to jail, and Paula was concerned about messing up her wardrobe. Paula was a woman who would risk much to help a friend, but Teddy knew that list did not include a recently purchased designer skirt, which Paula had gotten on sale. “From the sounds of it we could bring a marching band in here and they would barely notice.”

They slowly made their way to the door, and Teddy opened it a few inches until she had a decent view of the room. Paula squeezed next to her, and the two of them eyeballed the couple who were completely naked and laying across a walnut desk.

Mrs. Wiggles did not have the body of an old biddy. Her tanned calves were firm and tapered into a world class ass. Smooth honey colored skin curved up and around a lower back tattoo. Teddy squinted and whispered to Paula, “Is that barb wire?”

“Hmm, no. I think it’s a line of butterflies.”

Teddy pulled Paula’s back away from the door and motioned with her hands for Paula to follow her. When they were a few feet from the door she whispered, “No, shit. She looks pretty good. You think she had an ass lift?”

“She can afford to have all the plastic surgery she wants. Any idea who the boy toy is? I couldn’t see his face, but man what an upper body. Did you see those biceps? Double yum.”

“It’s the mailroom hunk.”

“The guy you got busy with last year? How can you tell?”

Teddy didn't answer but just raised her eyebrows. Paula gave a wide smile. "Hmm, the dude seems to know what he's doing."

Teddy sighed, "Yeah, he really does. Unfortunately, he's dumb as a post. Sex is the greatest, conversation after sex is non-existent. Let's see, the list of Mrs. Wiggles' boy toys include the tennis instructor, Wiggles' brother, and now the mail room hunk. What does that tell us?"

"Mrs. Wiggles is a slut?"

Teddy nodded her head in agreement. "A slut and a cold-hearted bitch. Kind of heartless to be climaxing when your hubby is dead a few floors below, don't you think?"

"It's not that odd. Remember the movie we watched last week, that chick's friend died, and next thing you know, right after the funeral she was doing the cop."

"You're saying this is normal behavior?" Teddy couldn't believe her ears. Nothing about this night was normal. Least of all Mrs. Wiggles going at it with some hunk shortly after her husband was offed with a letter opener.

"I'm saying the mail dude has a reputation for being great in the sack if I remember your glowing recommendation about him after last year's party. So who can blame her? Maybe it's her way of grieving."

A string of dirty words erupted into the room, and Teddy suddenly felt the urge to laugh. Grieving my ass. She motioned towards the door and headed back to spy on the couple, whatever new game they were playing it sounded too good to miss. She slowly inched the door open and realized the couple had taken their act from the desk onto the floor.

Mrs. Wiggles' head was thrown back, her long dark hair fanned out against the red carpet. Her eyes were closed, and the expression on her face was that of absolute bliss. Her full breasts and pink-tipped nipples were swollen with desire. The golden hair of the mail hunk cascaded down her belly, and his lips caressed a honey-colored thigh. He moved his lips slowly up and down her thigh, each time edging closer to the mound of dark curls between her legs. He grabbed the naked woman's buttocks and lifted, burying his face into her pussy.

Suddenly, Teddy had a flash of those lips on her skin and that delicious mouth on her thighs. And with the memory Teddy felt her body begin to hum. God, he had a wickedly clever tongue, and the way he had sucked and licked at her clit, he had brought her to a fast, hard climax. She watched as Mrs. Wiggles enjoyed the same skills, her body writhing on the floor, her hands plucking at her own nipples as she encouraged him on. "Oh god, yes, harder, oh yes...." The woman's body undulated as she moaned god's name over and over, her voice rising until there was one long shudder and a loud scream as Mrs. Wiggles climaxed with a final shattering release.

Teddy had been so caught up in watching the couple she was oblivious to the sound of the elevator doors opening just a few feet away. One minute she was lost in her own fantasies and memories, feeling the heat burn through her own body, the next she was being dragged behind a desk by Paula.

"What the" Her words were cut off by Paula's hand against her mouth.

Paula removed her hand and put a finger to her lips, then mouthed the word Bernard.

Teddy nodded her head to let Paula know she understood. She crawled to the edge of the desk to see what the hell was going on. The door was closed. She could hear angry voices shouting, not quite able to make out what was being said. She didn't have to wait long, the door suddenly burst open, and Bernard stormed out shouting, "You fucken whore!"

"What do we do now?" whispered Paula, her eyes wide.

"We can't stay here, the love birds will be coming out soon and might see us. I say we get the hell out of Dodge."

They scrambled from behind the desk and made their way along the hall and down the stairwell as fast as they could. They raced through the door and back into the main party.

"Holy shit!" Teddy laughed, bending over at the waist trying to catch her breath.

"That was crazy. Man, Bernard seemed pissed."

"There he is," Teddy pointed across the room. Bernard was talking to a dark haired man and motioning wildly.

"Do you recognize the guy he's talking to?"

"Too hunky for the computer department." Teddy scanned the tall, lithe body. He was dressed all in black, the clothes tailored and expensive. His hair was dark and curly, but the most stunning thing about him was his ass. It was shaped like one of those Greek white marbled statues Teddy had seen on the historical channel. Hard, round and perfect. She had no idea what he looked like from the front, but from behind the man was mighty tasty. Teddy grabbed a drink and headed casually towards the two men.

Paula followed her. "What are we going to do?"

"Get close enough to eavesdrop. They're too busy fighting to notice us anyway."

Mr. tall, dark, and tasty looked livid as he bent over and spoke, his face inches from Bernard's.

The party was still raging around them. It looked like a little murder hadn't affected office morale. Teddy and Paula edged their way closer. The trick was to get as close as possible while still looking like they were just normal drunken party goers enjoying the festivities.

Teddy turned her back to the two men and sidestepped until she could hear tall and dreamy saying, "I was making my way out when I got detained."

"Detained how?" Bernard demanded. "Antonio, I want vengeance!"

"You should calm down little man."

Tall and tasty's voice lowered and sounded dangerous. Dangerous, but sexy, and as she listened Teddy realized where she had heard that voice before.

"What's wrong?" Paula asked.

Teddy couldn't answer. The shock of the recognition made her speechless. All she could do was gesture over her shoulder.

Paula leaned closer and whispered, "Great, I love charades." She peeked over Teddy's shoulder, "Okay, you're pointing to the hunky dude. And?"

Teddy gulped down the rest of her drink, let the glass fall to the floor, and with two fingers from her right hand she formed a circle, with a left finger she poked in and out of that circle. The only word she could get out was, "Antonio."

“You fucked a guy named Antonio?”

Teddy nodded her head and motioned behind her.

“Antonio is the hunk? Was he any good? He looks like a man who knows how to use his hands. Teddy, what’s wrong, you look odd?”

And then suddenly it seemed to dawn on Paula, her face filled with an expression of awe, “Antonio is the guy you fucked in the office? Are you sure?”

Teddy nodded her head.

“Well, damn he is hot. Woman, go give him your number.”

She should do it. He was totally hot, and the sex had been completely mind blowing. How often did you run across such a combination? But what? Walk up and introduce herself holding out her hand and saying, “Hi, remember me? We met when you fucked my brains out in the office a while ago?” Not exactly a great ice breaker. She was trying to figure out how she was going to approach him when Paula decided for her. Paula suddenly shoved her towards the two men. Teddy had little choice but to stumble backwards, arms flaying.

Strong arms caught her before she hit the ground. “What do we have here?” Antonio’s voice was low and seductive.

Teddy looked up and into a pair of caramel brown eyes. “Hi.”

A smile broke out across his face. “Hey gorgeous! Sorry I had to leave so quickly before. I’ve been looking all over for you. Where’ve you been hiding?”

“You have?” she asked, her voice more than a bit breathless.

“Sure I have. You’re a hard woman to forget.” He lifted her to her feet in one flowing motion.

“Antonio!” Bernard sounded and looked annoyed.

“Bernard let me introduce you to a friend of mine. This is....”

“Teddy.”

“Bernard, have you forgotten your manners?” It sounded more like a threat than a question.

Bernard seemed to mentally shake himself before extending his hand towards Teddy.

Teddy took it. Bernard had sweaty palms and the grip of a five year old kid. As he shook her hand he watched her intently, his glance darting from her to Paula, who had edged closer to the group and was trying her best to look nonchalant.

Teddy said in a loud voice, “This is Paula, a friend of mine.”

Paula spun around quickly and made her way towards the threesome. “Very nice to meet you,” she purred as she held Antonio’s hand longer than was necessary.

“You’ll have to excuse Bernard ladies, he’s a little upset.”

“Upset! Damn right I’m upset! She is up there screwing some nineteen year old twit!”

“Nineteen. No way, the guy is at least twenty-two,” Paula said.

Teddy realized as soon as the words were out of Paula’s mouth they were in trouble.

“What have you two girls been up to? Antonio, they know!”

“Bernard, they don’t know anything.” Antonio’s tone was casual, but his eyes

filled with anger. Teddy felt a shiver run down her back. Tall and tasty suddenly looked dangerous and deadly.

“Like hell they don’t!” Suddenly a gun appeared in Bernard’s hand, and he waved it towards them. “Okay, no funny stuff you got me. You’re all coming with me upstairs.”

Teddy couldn’t believe her eyes. Bernard had a gun, and he was waving it in their direction. She expected any moment to hear someone scream in protest. Turning her head, she realized no one from the party was paying attention to them. Everyone on their side of the room was now gathered in a circle and chanting around some computer nerd who was chugging a bottle of champagne.

Paula looked as though she was going to scream or make a run for it. And by the look of Bernard’s shaking hands, any reaction would set him off. Teddy’s hand locked down on Paula’s arm, and she whispered in her ear, “Stay calm, he’s off his rocker.”

“Stop that whispering! You think it’s funny, don’t you, that she’s off screwing some man when I’ve done everything for her!”

Antonio took a step towards Bernard and hissed, “Man, get a grip on yourself!”

Bernard pointed the gun towards Antonio’s head. “I don’t care how good you are, no one is that fast. One more move and I blow your head off.” An insane giggle came out of Bernard’s mouth, “I’ve always wanted to say that! Okay, folks, we’re all heading down the hallway to the stairwell. We need to hurry. I’ve some unfinished business with the two love birds.”

“Anything you want. Just stay calm.” Antonio turned towards Teddy. “It’s better if we do what he says, for now.”

Teddy nodded her head in agreement, never taking her eyes off the barrel of the gun now pointed back in her direction.

Bernard motioned with it, “Ladies first. One shouldn’t forget his manners even in the worst circumstances. Isn’t that right Antonio?”

“Sure Bernard. Just make sure you keep your finger off the trigger. You don’t want the gun to go off by accident.”

They marched up the stairs, Bernard following them, never lowering the gun. Teddy opened the door to the twelfth floor and had to squelch the urge to call out a warning. She had no doubt if she warned the couple Bernard would shoot her in the back. The man was completely unhinged.

“Keep going. Okay everybody, over to the left. That’s right, in a group so I can keep an eye on you.” Bernard turned and shouted towards the office. “Get out here now!”

When there was no response, he walked over to the office door and shoved it open.

There they were, the two love birds now standing side by side, naked as jay birds staring at Bernard and the gun.

Bernard advanced on the couple. The mailroom hunk showed his true colors when he pushed himself behind Mrs. Wiggles using her as cover.

“Bernard, what are you doing?” Mrs. Wiggles’ voice was full of panic and her expression was one of sheer terror.

The rest of the group was forgotten as Bernard focused his attention on Mrs. Wiggles. He walked up to her and pointed the gun at her face. “I’ve always loved you.

You never deserved it, but you've always had my heart."

"Bernard...." Mrs. Wiggles took a few steps back.

"Shut up bitch. I've had enough. Do you understand enough? I don't think you do. I should have been enough. But I wasn't. All those years we were together behind my brother's back," Bernard started waving the gun wildly in the air, "I thought I meant something to you. Always the promises you were going to leave him. One day we would be together. And it never happened. I spent my better years pining for you. And how do you repay me. By fucking twenty year-olds."

Mrs. Wiggles cried out, "Bernard, you don't understand."

With her words Bernard advanced, and the barrel of the gun was thrust against her temple. "I understood he had the money. Don't you think I tried to make my fortune over the years? But every time, something happened. It wasn't my fault I had such bad luck. I tried. You know I have. And I never blamed you, did I? The life you had before. I know how much you needed to feel financially secure. You needed the money. It wasn't your fault. You were trapped in a loveless marriage. I always understood. I was always there for you. Until you started this insanity." Bernard swung the gun towards the mail room dude who was trying to shove himself under the desk. "When did you become a whore? When did you become a woman who fucks boys?"

Mrs. Wiggles covered her face with her hands and began to wail. "I swear he means nothing to me. I love you."

"Shut up. I can't believe I've been such a fool. I would have done anything for you. I had my brother killed for you." Bernard turned around, and the gun swung with him. He now pointed it at Antonio. "I had that man kill my brother so we could finally be together."

Antonio stood with his hands in his pocket looking unconcerned as Bernard waved the gun around the room.

"But that's all over. I'm done being a chump." Bernard advanced on Mrs. Wiggles again. "I wonder how your new young man would like you with your face blown to pieces." He laughed and raised the gun to her head, "Any last words, my sweet, before I blow your brains all over this office?"

Paula grabbed Teddy's arm, her voice high and hysterical, "He's going to shoot her. Do something!"

Do something. Great idea, what? No strip tease or fire would get them out of this mess. In about thirty seconds Bernard was going to blow a hole through Mrs. Wiggles' head.

Teddy looked over at Antonio. He looked neither horrified nor upset. And worse he didn't seem to be making any move to help Mrs. Wiggles. So much for tall and tasty saving the day.

Teddy was not about to stand there and watch someone be murdered in cold blood. She was a woman of action. A weapon, what she needed was a weapon, but there were no letter openers conveniently left on the desk. There was nothing within reach that she could use. Then it dawned on her, she did have something sharp and wicked on her person. Teddy took off her high heels and threw them one after the other at Bernard's head. The first one hit him squarely in the back. He turned and easily ducked the second.

“Antonio, you never mentioned how fun this all is. Maybe I should take up a new career. You seem to like killing people for money. Maybe it’s something I should try. What do you think?” Bernard pointed the gun at Teddy, giving her a wide smile and laughed as he pulled the trigger.

Teddy stood frozen, unable to believe what was happening. She closed her eyes and waited for the impact of the bullet to hit her body.

Dead. She was going to die.

Something hit her hard, and she felt her body fly sideways then slam into the ground. Her head bounced off the carpet, making her ears ring. Teddy opened one eye and then the next and when her vision cleared she realized Antonio was lying across her.

He looked down into her face, his brown eyes filled with concern. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” she purred. So, tall and tasty was the hero type after all. She wrapped both her arms around his neck and planted a kiss on those luscious lips.

“I don’t mean to break up this romantic scene, but someone’s bleeding,” Paula’s voice sounded high and strained.

Teddy looked down at the stain of blood on the floor. “Holy shit. I’ve been shot.”

Antonio lifted himself off Teddy and helped her to her feet. “No, you haven’t. It’s me.” There was a hole in Antonio’s shirt, and a stream of blood poured out from his forearm.

“Holy shit, you’ve been shot!” Teddy looked around for help.

The Detective stood a few feet away, but instead of helping he was pointing his gun at Antonio.

“What are you doing? Get him help, he’s injured,” Teddy demanded.

“Did you miss the part where he’d killed your boss?” The detective reached behind his back and held out a pair of handcuffs. “Are we going to have any problems here?”

Antonio smiled and raised his wrists. “No problem whatsoever officer. I’ll come along peacefully.”

Maybe the fall to the ground had knocked something loose because she could have sworn the detective just accused tall and tasty of killing someone. She looked at Antonio who didn’t look surprised, outraged, or shocked.

Teddy blinked a few times, trying to clear her head.

“What happened to Bernard?”

Paula pointed, and Teddy’s eyes followed her finger until her eyes fixed on a body lying on the floor. She regretted looking at Bernard’s now motionless body. It was twisted at an unnatural angle, and blood oozed from his head. “Is he....” She couldn’t finish the question, but she didn’t have to, Paula finished the sentence for her.

“Dead as a doorknob. That detective is one terrific shot.” Paula’s arm wrapped around Teddy’s. “For a second there I thought you were a goner.”

“Yeah, me too.” Teddy suddenly felt light headed.

“Are you okay?” The detective asked. His gun was back in it’s holster.

She looked around and spotted Antonio now a few feet away being guarded by two men in blue.

Teddy's hands went to her head. "I don't know how I feel. Like Alice going down the rabbit hole."

The detective's hands were suddenly poking at her scalp. "Are you sure you didn't bump your head when you fell?"

She swatted his hands away. "My head's fine."

He shoved some fingers in front of her face. "How many do you see?"

"Three." She took a step forward and realized her knees felt weak.

Strong hands circled her and lowered her into a chair. "Maybe you should take it easy until the medics get here."

"I told you I'm fine."

His face was suddenly level with hers. "That was an incredibly stupid thing you did."

"Which part?" she asked.

His fingers gently grazed her cheek. "God, you're a pain in the ass."

His hands felt warm against her skin. She looked him in the eye and tried to smile. "Do you sweet talk all the girls this way?"

His expression was one of worry. "Stay put until the medics can check you out."

"That's it?" she demanded. She didn't want to be alone. Her body was chilled, and her hands were trembling every so slightly. She had come too close to being killed. What she needed was a strong drink and even stronger arms wrapped around her.

He watched her, looking for she didn't know what. Did he think she was going to pass out? It was still a possibility.

She put on a brave face and gave him a wide grin.

His fingers slid across her cheek and gently caressed her lips. "Okay, I take it back. You're a royal pain in the ass."

The contact made her skin hum and warmed her body. She batted her eyelashes at him. "But, you got to admit. I'm cute."

He actually laughed out loud. "I'm getting myself back to work before I do something I'll regret."

She sighed out loud. "Promises, promises."

He stood up and patted her on the head like a child. "Be a good girl. Stay out of trouble. Get checked out by the medics. You could have a concussion."

She gave him a salute. "Yes, sir."

She watched him walk across the room and out the door.

No matter how many times it went around her head she still couldn't believe it. There was only one way to make sense of the whole thing.

She got up and made her way over to Antonio. At first she had no words. She just stood and stared at him in silence. She knew the question she wanted to ask but still couldn't believe it was coming out of her lips. "You killed Wiggles?" How could this man be a killer? He was too hot for words. Who knew a one night stand in the office could turn so wrong, so fast.

Antonio gave her a wide smile and a wink. "I'd rather not answer that question surrounded by cops, and without my lawyer."

Except for the blood soaked bandage now wrapped around his arm, he seemed

calm and collected, in a room full of panicked people. Mrs. Wiggles was crouched over in a corner sobbing. The mail dude was on the floor with his head between his knees.

Paula had come over and now had a death grip on Teddy's shoulder.

Teddy turned to Paula. "He killed Wiggles?"

"That's what Bernard said. And the hunky cop seems to think so. You look pale, I think you should sit down."

"Where'd he come from?" Teddy motioned to the detective now surrounded by a small mob of men in blue.

"Apparently while we were eavesdropping on hunky but deadly and Bernard, Beth was eavesdropping on us. The queen of cashmere scuttled away and blabbed to the nearest cop first chance she had. Zack tried to stop her, but for a snobby bitch she's incredibly fast."

"Where's Zack now?"

Paula pointed across the room. "Over there giving a statement to some dude in blue. Zack is extending his vacation. He's staying an extra two weeks."

"That's terrific."

Paula looked over at Zack and sighed, "I've always wanted to travel. What do you think about taking a vacation with me to Australia this summer?"

Chapter 6

“Hey gorgeous. Can I have your number?” Antonio asked. He was currently in handcuffs and surrounded by four of the city’s finest.

Teddy tried to ignore the smirks of the police officers standing on either side of him. “Do they let you make calls from prison?” she asked.

“Depends,” Antonio answered. His shoulder was now bandaged and he was about to be dragged downtown and charged with murder, but he looked completely at ease and, if possible, even tastier than she remembered.

“On what?”

“What type of prison and who you know.”

“What’s the going rate for murder?” she asked, trying to sound nonchalant. God, he had the most delicious, full lips. And she wouldn’t soon forget what those lips had been doing to her a few hours earlier.

“That depends too. On the type of murder and the subject.”

“No, I don’t mean how much do you get paid for killing someone. I mean how many years do they put you away.”

“Depends.”

Teddy laughed, “Let me guess, on how good your lawyer is and how many jurors you bribe.”

His brown eyes scanned slowly up and down her body. A sexy grin spread across his face. “You got it, baby.”

You never did know what could happen. So maybe he was a convicted killer, at least he was honest about his work, and he had a job. He seemed to be relatively stable, apart from the whole hired assassin thing. Antonio was smart, funny, and extremely sexy. And he had saved her life. Teddy was not at an age where she could turn her back on available attractive, sexy, funny men, even if they were cold blooded killers.

Teddy grabbed a sticky note from a nearby desk and jotted down her number. “Leave a message if you don’t get me,” she said, leaning forward and stuffing it into his pocket. The men in blue turned in unison and began leading Antonio out the door. “Antonio?”

He turned and looked at her. “Yeah?”

“Take care of yourself.” As the words came out of her mouth she knew she really meant them. He wasn’t such a bad guy. Well, maybe Wiggles wouldn’t agree, but Antonio had definitely spiced up her Christmas.

Antonio winked at her. “No worries, baby.”

She walked away and smiled as she heard him give out a loud wolf whistle. The universe had a funny sense of humor sometimes. The first single, hot man she had sex with in ages, and he gets arrested for murder. At this rate she was going to end up an old spinster, downing tequila on weekends while surrounded by cats. Teddy shuddered at the visual. Why were all the good men taken or incarcerated? Come to think of it, there was a man she was interested in who was not on his way to the big house. But the dude she had in mind was fresh out of a relationship, and if she went after him, she would be the rebound girl. God, everyone knew rebound relationships never worked. But this dude was

too cute and too smart to stay single long. If she didn't give it a shot now, in six months he could be married and living behind a white picket fence.

Rebound girl was a risk she was willing to take.

* * * *

Teddy looked at her watch. It was 4:00 am. She was too wound up to sleep and still more than a little drunk. Just drunk enough not to care what he would think about finding her standing at his door at this ungodly hour. He was going to kill her. Kill her or invite her in. Either way, she was determined to see him. She leaned against the wall and pounded her fist hard against the door.

It opened, and the detective stood in the doorway, looking sexy and disheveled like he just got out of bed, which he probably had.

"Do you know what time it is?" he demanded.

She smiled and held up her arms. "I brought coffee and donuts."

"How did you get my address?" The detective scowled at her.

"Paula has skills. And it wasn't the officer's fault. I mean, he's young and impressionable. You have to cut him some slack." She brushed past him through the door and into his apartment. "Nice place."

"Thanks. Make yourself at home." His voice was laced with sarcasm, but she ignored his tone and sat down on the couch. She'd come straight over from the party, which had carried on many hours after they'd carted Antonio away.

"I do have one question."

"Shoot. Oops, I shouldn't say that to a cop, right." She looked around the room. "Where do you keep your gun?"

"Under my pillow."

"Sounds dangerous," she purred, giving him a saucy wink.

"What I want explained to me is the sudden appearance of the murder weapon, sitting on one of the copy machines, covered in what smelled like spaghetti sauce gone bad, and moldy ricotta cheese."

She started to take a donut out of the bag and looked up at him with her best innocent look. "Murder weapon?"

"Yeah, a letter opener. Know anything about a letter opener?"

"I used to have one, but it was stolen out of my office. Cops still like donuts right?"

"What exactly do you think you're doing?"

"Having breakfast. Stop scowling at me. You're just pissed you didn't get to fingerprint me." She wiggled her fingers in his direction. "You want to fingerprint me now? Where do you keep those handcuffs? Want to play cops and robbers?"

"Get out!" he ordered.

She ignored him and picked up a donut. Walking towards him she asked, "Or what, you'll arrest me?"

He didn't move. Leaning her body closer, she suddenly pressed her lips against his. She half expected him to push her away. Instead, he wrapped his arms around her and deepened the kiss. By the time she pulled away she was more than a bit breathless.

"Where are you taking me tomorrow?" she asked, trying to regain her composure.

“Tomorrow?” he asked, concentrating his lips on her collar bone.

“Don’t cops get Sundays off?”

“Yeah.”

“Great, where are you taking me to dinner? And do you have a first name?” she asked.

“Jason. How’s French food?”

“I love Chinese.”

He mumbled the words ‘High maintenance’ as his fingers pulled down the strap of her dress.

She started to say something, but he placed his fingers over her lips. “Shh, anybody ever tell you that you talk too much?”

She pulled his fingers away. “Look, it’s not that I don’t want to properly thank you for coming to the rescue. It’s just I’ve been up all night, and usually before breakfast I take a shower.

“So let’s take a shower.” He didn’t wait for her to answer. He turned and walked out of the room.

She had no choice but to follow. The bedroom was a surprise. A four post bed dominated the room. In one corner sat a Mahogany dresser, in another a free standing old fashioned dressing mirror. Green and white window treatments matched the bed covering, a big quilt that looked hand made. Every surface was covered in knickknacks. On the dresser sat an old fashion water basin and pitcher. Either the cop was a romantic or his last girl friend watched too many home decorating shows.

“Love what you did with the place.”

“I didn’t do anything.” He shouted from the bathroom. She could hear the water running.

She walked past the bed and stopped. One side of it was unmade, sheet and blanket rumbled and pushed towards the edge.

She couldn’t help herself, she lifted the pillow. He hadn’t lied, nestled in the sheets was a .38.

Her hand recoiled back as though it was a snake. That would have to change. No way was she sleeping with a gun barrel pointing at her head.

On the nightstand next to the bed there was a pair of metal handcuffs. She picked them up and walked into the bathroom.

She held out the handcuffs. “Cops and robbers, but who gets to be the cop?”

“I’m never the bad guy.”

He was now completely nude. Her eyes took him in slowly. Undressed he was a surprise. His shoulders seemed broader and his arms were bulging with muscles. The cop in clothes didn’t look the jock type, but out of them--the only word that came to mind was Yum.

He motioned for her to turn around. He unzipped her dress, and it fell to the floor. One hand slid across her back and came to rest on her stomach. Callused fingers against her soft skin sent shivers down her back. With his other hand he undid her bra.

“One-handed bra removal. Something they taught you in the academy?”

“Hmm...,” his mouth nuzzled her neck while both hands made their way down

her back.

He suddenly spun her around and put both his hands on her ass. "Nice."

"Thanks, I do pilates."

"You were saying you wanted to get wet?" he asked, his hands now skimming across her back.

She was having a hard time focusing on his words. She was enjoying the feel of his hands on her body when he suddenly broke contact and moved away.

She started to protest until she realized he was opening the shower curtain.

He adjusted the water and stepped into the shower. He turned back, his eyes slowly scanning her body, taking in each curve. Appreciation gleamed in his eyes as he smiled and motioned for her to join him. "The water's warm."

She stepped out of her underwear and into the shower. The water was warm. It slid down her skin and relaxed her muscles. She leaned back against him and closed her eyes. She ran her hands down his leg, enjoying the sensation of having his rock-hard body support her.

"The handcuffs?" he asked.

Teddy forgot she still had them. She raised them and smiled. "And what do you think you are going to do with these?"

He took them from her hands. "You wanted to play cops and robbers."

She laughed and put both hands in front her. "Does this mean I am under arrest, officer?"

He took her left hand and raised it, stepping forward and forcing her to move back. A click and her wrist was suddenly encircled. Her left hand was raised and captured.

She wasn't sure what to make of this new game, when he lifted both her hands and placed the links of the handcuffs over the shower faucet. She was now held immobile, captive, both arms extended over her head, completely at his mercy.

She never knew law enforcement types had a kinky side. "Do you think it will hold?"

"Yes."

"Tell me, officer, have you done this before?" She asked, wondering what he would do next.

"I refuse to talk without counsel present."

"Someone get the man a lawyer." Usually in dominance games she played the dominatrix. Nothing like a black leather cat outfit and a whip to make a girl feel powerful and sexy.

It was different being on the other end. Exciting. Slightly dangerous. Whatever he wanted to do, she was now his to play with. And the thought sent shivers down her spine.

"You know when I play these types of games we usually have a code word, something to say in case it gets too intense." She said, trying to keep her voice casual.

"You mean like a get out of jail card?"

God, she was turned on. His body was so close to hers, his hands almost touching her right nipple, yet he didn't move.

"Exactly," she said breathlessly. When was he going to touch her? She refused to

demand it, to ask for it. She was used to being the one in charge.

He suddenly leaned in and kissed her hard. Her lips parted as his tongue plunged into the depths of her mouth, tasting, conquering.

She felt a heat spread between her legs and realized he was getting her wet just from kissing her. Imagine what the sex would be like.

As they kissed, his hands wandered freely across her body, grazing her nipples, gliding down ever so slowly, coming to rest just below her belly button.

He stopped, and she took a quick intake of breath and felt her nipples harden at the thought of his hands lower, his fingers inside her, bringing her to climax.

She wanted desperately to run her own hands down him, feel his rock hard penis, stroke it, kiss it. Bring him to the point of ecstasy. But she was bound, and all she could do was strain against the restraints and deepen the kiss.

His hands began to slide down her belly, down her thighs, making their way across her body until they found refuge in the moist slit between her legs. His fingers explored her pussy while he tasted her mouth again and again.

This man knew what he was doing. And he did it exceptionally well. She moaned, but it was caught against his lips.

Her body arched against his, her hips moving rhythmically against him, matching the motion of his fingers. As they went in, her body pulled away. She pushed back and forth harder and harder, wanting to feel him deeper inside her. She was now forcing his fingers in and out of her pussy. He was motionless, except for his mouth, which suddenly broke away and captured a hardened nipple. His lips surrounded the rosy peak.

The sensation of the water running across her skin, his mouth on her, his fingers driving ever deeper in and out of her was almost more than she could stand.

She moaned, "God. Feels so good. Oh, yeah. That's it."

He licked her, his mouth surrounding her, ever so gently sucking her nipple. He increased the pressure and began to suck harder.

Pleasure and pain combined, and she writhed under his touch again and again. Her body was like an ocean with waves of delight coming in and out like the tide, building and building until it was too much. One long hard shiver and she felt herself come, and as she did she collapsed against him.

She was still suspended by the handcuffs. He smiled and pushed her up against the wall with one hand.

If the detective was this creative with his handcuffs, what kind of game could they play with his nightstick?

He kissed her again, and this time he was a bit breathless when his mouth broke away from hers. He moved away from her, picked up the soap, and began slowing rubbing it between his hands.

"That was incredible." She said, trying to find her voice.

He laughed. "That was just the appetizer." His left hand reached out and rubbed soap across her breast. "I want to see you come again."

He turned the facet so the water no longer hit her body. It streamed to the side. She shivered at the change in temperature. Before she could say a word, his hands were all over her. The soap slid across her body, long smooth strokes moved along her,

lingering on the curve of her hip, the small of her back, and the sensitive nape of her neck.

Her nipples rose under a grazing touch and her body arched.

God not again, she thought. I won't be able to survive.

When every part of her had been lathered, he pulled back. He rubbed the soap between his hands, once again lathering them. Dropping the soap he brought his hands down until they surrounded his own penis. He stroked himself, his eyes never off her face, watching her with eyes that had turned blue-gray with passion. He rubbed himself until his shaft was completely covered in suds. And then he moved forward, shoving her against the wall.

He was no longer gentle, and she didn't want him to be. He pushed deep into her, slamming her against the wall with each thrust, but she didn't care. Her legs moved up and wrapped around his waist. His body now supported hers. She was his prisoner, his for the taking. And knowing she was helpless made it that much better.

God, it was good. Shivers of delight ran up and down her body starting out small, then bigger until she was withering under him. She rocked beneath him, her breath now coming out in gasps. Each time he penetrated her, she could feel the climax building. She was ready to explode.

He suddenly stopped and pulled himself out until his shaft was just resting at the very entrance of her pussy.

"How about, 'you have the right to remain silent?'" he whispered in her ear.

"What?" She tried to focus on what he was saying, but she having difficulty concentrating. God, why did he stop?

Her body ached. She wanted him to fuck her hard and relentless. She wanted him to release her. Her body was quivering, her mind blank, except for the feel of him.

He leaned away from her, and his fingers gently encircled her nipples. His fingers plucking them ever so slowly. "You wanted a code phrase. In case you wanted to stop."

"Uh?" It was like he was speaking in tongues. All she could think of was his penis, just touching the entrance of her cunt. She wanted him in her, now.

"God. Please."

"So you don't want to stop."

He pushed a little inside her, and she felt a jolt go through her. Her head pushed back, and she moaned. "No. God no."

He didn't need any more encouragement. He pushed into her hard and fast. Her breathing was now harsh and uneven. Her mind unfocused as he took her, filled her, plunged inside her moist center. And she thrashed against him until she felt her muscles clench deep inside.

And then the sudden sweet release--her body exploded, and she screamed out his name in pure ecstasy.

At her cry his body stiffened and an uninhibited cry of satisfaction ripped through his lips.

This time they had come together.

He was still against her, his breathing heavy as though he had run a marathon.

"That was...." There were no words, except mind blowing. But she couldn't get

them out.

His hand came up and grasped her breast, squeezing it hard. "That was the first course." He said, nipping at her shoulder. And then slowly he began to move again, thrusting into her.

He was trying to kill her. And there was nothing she could do about it. She was his pleasure prisoner. It was the last coherent thought she had as she screamed out his name again against his throat.

* * * *

Holy crap that was a seriously mind blowing fuck. Teddy put her hands up to her ears. They were still ringing.

They had moved from the shower onto the bed. More like collapsed on the bed.

"Dude, check out my wrists. I think you broke them."

There were dark purple bruises encircling each wrist where the handcuffs hand made contact and cut into her skin.

"Sorry about that. Next time I'll make sure they're padded." He reached over and raised her wrist, pulling it to his lips.

Next time. That was a good sign he was already considering future fucks. She hid her smile and mentally moved him off the list of one night stand, rebound boy, and onto the list of boyfriend material. It was possible for him to get out of one serious relationship and into another. Anything was possible. And she was more than willing to hang in and give it a go, especially considering how good he was in the sack. Make that in the shower. This man knew how to play a woman's body like an instrument. And she was more than happy to have him play her anytime. Actually, she was ready for more now. She was looking forward to seeing how creative he was in a bed.

Her stomach grumbled. The problem with mind blowing sex was that it made you hungry. It was a great extra curricular activity for burning calories.

She rolled over and declared, "I'm starved."

He raised an eyebrow.

She laughed. "For food."

"Hmm, I don't think any take out places are open this early. But you brought donuts, right?"

She sat up and wrapped the sheet around her body. "Do you have any coffee?"

"It should be all ready to go, just hit the on switch."

She leaned over and gave him a kiss. "Be right back."

He lifted one hand, still handcuffed to the bedpost. "You better come back, the keys are on the nightstand on your side of the bed."

She laughed. "You could always call 911."

"Yeah, and never hear the end of it."

"Don't go anywhere."

"Funny. You could undo me." He looked so incredible sexy, laying there against the rumpled, white sheets, his arm lifted against the headboard, bulging with rock-hard muscle. That wasn't the only thing that was rock-hard.

Her eyes scanned down his cut golden stomach and onto his throbbing, glorious shaft. She realized she wasn't just hungry for food anymore. Who knew this man was so

magnificent out of clothes. His ex was a moron.

Thank God Paula had a man, because if girlfriend ever got a good look at the boy toy currently lounging on the bed, Paula would make a clear run for him. And who would blame her. Any sane woman would go after this quality piece of ass. Even better, he wasn't just a pretty boy. He was smart, and sarcastic, and incredibly giving.

She chuckled as the words 'finders keepers' rang through her head. She made a mental note to make sure he was always fully clothed when she brought her friends anywhere near him.

She gave him a pretty pout. "You said it was my turn."

"What are you going to do, feed me donuts and coffee and then have your way with me?"

"My turn means my fantasy. And my fantasy means you stay where you are, for now," she purred as she leaned down and ran her hand down the length of his body.

It was good to make him wait. Men shouldn't get used to the idea of an always ready and available piece of ass. What was that saying, don't let them drink the milk without buying the cow. That was a bit extreme, more like leave them always wanting more, so they never forget just how incredible you are.

She smiled and blew a kiss towards the bedroom. This one just might be a keeper. Time would tell. She headed into the kitchen and turned on the coffee maker. She jumped up on the counter and waited for it to brew. She hadn't checked her messages since last night. She reached over for the phone.

Two messages.

The first message was from Paula. The woman, as usual, sounded a bit breathless and talked a mile a minute. "Teddy. How's the cop? He looks like a man who'd be good in the sack. Call me when you get home. You won't believe what Zack did to me. It's something he saw on the animal channel. Oh, hey, I wanted to give you the heads up before I forgot. You know the dude that offed Wiggles. Antonio, the hunky, but ever so deadly, killer? Get this. Because he was shot, instead of zooming him straight to jail, they took him to the hospital. The dude somehow got loose. It's on the news right now. Stop that! Zack, behave, I'm on the phone. I got to go. Zack says...."

Two loud giggles, followed by the dial tone.

It sounded like Paula was having a good time.

Antonio was free and roaming the streets with, Teddy suspected, half the cops in the city hunting him down.

He was a wanted man. The question was, did she want the man? The thought barely crossed her mind when a masculine voice came over the receiver she still held in her hand. The second message.

He didn't have to say his name. His voice by now was etched into her brain. Tall and tasty. On the run. A bounty on his head.

"Hey, gorgeous. I guess you're not home. Too bad, I find myself looking for a dinner companion. I've got two first class tickets to Antigua. I thought maybe I could talk you into a taking a mini vacation. What do you think? You and me in the Caribbean? Sun, sand, and margaritas. Interested? I'll give you a shout tomorrow."

Tall and tasty not just on the run, but on the make. The man had gall. He had to

know she would hear about his escape. Did he really think she was the type of girl to help a felon skip the country? Well—was she?

She put down the phone and slowly opened cabinets until she found a mug. She poured herself a cup of coffee and tried to take in what had just happened.

Teddy had no idea how long she had been sitting on the counter, sipping coffee, and trying to gather her thoughts when a voice called from the other room, “Where’d you go?”

The detective. For a moment she had forgotten all about him. What if she came clean and confessed she had a one night stand, make that a one night moment, with the hired killer? What would the hunky detective currently handcuffed to the bedpost have to say about the whole business? Worse, what would Jason do if he found out Antonio was calling and leaving messages on her phone.

From what she knew of the detective, he would immediately jump out of bed and get back on the job. He seemed very task oriented. Her body hummed remembering the way he had worked with single minded effort to make sure she was more than satisfied. You had to cheer on any man who not only grasped, but embraced, the concept of multiple orgasms.

She was ready for round two, and she was not about to spoil her first decent date in months. If she got lucky, the city’s finest would do their job, get the bad guy, and there would be no second phone call. And more important, no decision to be made.

There was no use worrying about tomorrow, until tomorrow. Especially since she had a more than willing and able man chained to the bed, waiting to be ravished.

“Are you coming,” Jason yelled.

“Not yet, but I’m sure I soon will be,” she murmured under her breath as she picked up a donut and headed into the bedroom.

THE END