



**KEEP ME SAFE**

*Duka Dakaarai*

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# **Keep Me Safe**

**Duka Dakarai**

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to those who risk their lives daily to keep us all safe wherever you are the world today. It is also dedicated to all of you who keep me sane, well almost. Love and hugs xx

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**Prologue**

The British SAS Commander in Basra was planning one of the most risky and high-profile operations in the regiment's recent history when he discovered that the enemy was not his biggest problem. Hunkered in the nondescript HQ in Iraq's second city, the Lieutenant-Colonel watched for the umpteenth time as footage of the two hostages flashed on the TV screen in his office.

He sucked a breath through gritted teeth and rolled each tense shoulder in turn. *What the fuck was the delay in giving the command to go ahead? One of the hostages was a woman, for Christ's sake.*

Three hundred miles north, on an airfield just outside Baghdad, a C-130 Hercules special force transport plane sat on the runway, wind whipping the sand into a yellow mist. In the back a squadron of SAS troops, led by Captain Kane, were sat patiently looking at the crate of kit strapped to the floor of the fuselage, pulses quickening as they checked their Heckler & Koch submachine guns and Colt carbine rifles.

A second SAS squadron in Basra prepared for the arrival of the reinforcements. Like any mission they had made speedy plans and moved into action with calm professionalism. But this time it was personal. One of the hostages was one of their own – an ex-SAS now turned cameraman for the home investigator, Sky Sinclair. Dammit, if the blonde bimbo had only listened to her colleague and not let them straight into the lions' den. Then the call came – on a secure line from a military bunker just outside London. The Lt-Col could not believe what he was hearing. *'Permission not granted.'*

That was when the Lt-Col realised that his biggest challenge would be the top brass at home. The men waiting on the runway were flabbergasted when they heard. Captain Kane spat venom over the radio. His team, each alert and ready to go, were now being told to stand down. *No fucking way!*

Acknowledging their wrath, the commanding officer made the decision that could have seen him and his brother officers hauled over the coals. The alternative, they agreed, was to resign en masse. He picked up the phone and made the fateful call. 'We're doing it anyway,' he said. Minutes later the C-130 took off. There was no going back.

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As darkness fell, ten armoured vehicles, packed with SAS troops initiated the raid. They bulldozed through a 6ft wall to the hostage compound. The troops fanned out, firing stun grenades while helicopters hovered overhead.

The quick-fire bursts of bullets whipped through the dense night air as Sky cowered in the corner of the concrete room. Beside her, the cameraman signaled for her to remain still and try to remain

calm. “Make no sudden moves” he whispered hoarsely in her ear. Suddenly, the doors to the makeshift prison splintered and collapsed under the foot of two armed and masked troops.

Momentarily blinded by the head-cams, she felt herself grabbed roughly round the waist plastered against the solid chest of her rescuer. Without speaking, he dragged her free of her confinement before eventually releasing her inside the safety of an armoured vehicle. His hands made light work check and feel every inch of her near naked body for injuries.

“Are you hurt?” Captain Kane hollered above the noise, the adrenaline still coursing through his blood.

Sky shook her head softly.

“Answer me. Are you hurt?” Kane bellowed.

“No. I’m ok.” She shouted.

Kane turned to his ex-colleague, now sat alongside Sky. “Close one, Andy. You ok?”

Andy nodded with a snigger. “I’ve been in worse scrapes, mate. Remind me not to work with women, children or animals again, though”

Kane stared directly into the eyes of Sky. He held her gaze for several seconds before responding “Yeah, fucking women!”

At some point, after the SAS commander gave the green light for the raid, retrospective permission was granted by top brass back home.

## Chapter One

Kane poured his second cup of coffee and leaned back into his chair. He was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. His team at *Elite Defence* would saunter in very soon so every day he got to treasure this quiet time. Since starting the company four years ago with two ex-SAS colleagues *Elite Defence* had grown to establish itself as one of *the* premier executive security agencies, both nationally and internationally.

However, during this early morning reflection time, he often pondered if he had made the right decision to leave his band of brothers of the elite core of the SAS. But, as usual, as soon as Eddie (aka Storm), Dalton and May (aka Brains) arrived, he would push those thoughts back where they belong - far away in the memory bank.

Brains is always the next in through the heavily reinforced doors of the industrial unit. For a woman working with three ex-SAS guys, she holds her own. Kane and the others were not familiar working in close proximity to women but she won each one of them over with her sharp intellect and use of colourful language. And being a sixth *dan* master in taekwondo also helped seal the deal. On the second day of her employment, she planted Storm firmly on his ass when he tested her resolve by playfully patting her rear. He and Kane knew at that moment they had made the right decision.

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The shrill of the telephone shakes Kane from his thoughts. He immediately recognises the gruff voice of DCI Jack Mercer of the Serious and Organised Crime Squad at Scotland Yard. He and Jack have had their fair share of tussles on the past but have now landed at a place of mutual respect.

“Jack. What can I do for you on this fine morning?” Kane grins as he hears the grunt through the receiver.

“What’s fucking fine about it? I need to meet up ASAP to discuss a case. Are you free in a couple of hours?” Jack growls, chewing on his cigarette.

“Sure. You want to give me a heads up?”

Jack inhales sharply. “Not sure how secure we are to talk. Meet me at The Feathers at noon.”

“Not at the Yard?” Now Kane is intrigued.

“No. The Feathers at 12” And as abruptly, Jack ends the call.

Kane scrapes a hand down through his clipped goatee beard. His mind is now suddenly alert, processing possible scenarios for which DCI Jack Mercer would need to call in his help. The specialised Crime Squad is responsible for the management and oversight of both proactive and reactive serious crimes investigations. The unit has intelligence, weapons, highly skilled operatives et al at its disposal so what has brought Jack to come calling?

A shadow is cast across the office and instinctively Kane turns his head to nod to the hulk of a man framed in the doorway. Storm folds his six foot five inch body into a chair opposite his boss performing his morning routine of a stretch and a yawn. His handsome features split into a familiar smile as he studies the serious face of Kane.

“What’s up, man?” He drawls reaching across for the coffee pot.

~~“You and I are meeting Jack Mercer at The Feathers at midday. He’s got some business for us but I don’t know any more than that.”~~ Kane takes another swig of coffee before continuing. “How come you’re in before Brains? Is she sick?”

“Ah, I left her sleeping like an angel in my bed. Didn’t want to wake her.” Storm laughs playfully.

“In your fucking dreams, Storm!” A feminine voice bellows from the back office. “You’re not man enough for me, you loser.”

Storm mock scowls in the direction of her voice. Kane shakes his head. *Again. When will the two give it up and Get. It. On?* The metal outer door creaks loudly to announce the arrival of Dalton. He sways his bulk into the main office, slumping into the nearest chair. He grunts his usual morning greeting. Both Kane and Storm arch an eyebrow in his direction.

“Don’t even ask.” He growls in response.

“Woman or Poker?” Storm sniggers.

“Woman.” Dalton smirks. “They are all fucking mad!”

Brains swings her shapely hips into the office and seats herself in the last remaining chair. Storm dances his eyes across her delicious curvy frame. She cuts him a glare. “Stop undressing me, you freak.” She snarls before the entire team erupt into their usual laughter and banter.

## Chapter Two

The Feathers Public House on Broadway is within spitting distance of the headquarters of New Scotland Yard in Westminster. Famed for its real ale and old world oak interior, it is also the haunt of many a weary and jaded London Metropolitan Police Officer. DCI Jack Mercer is also no stranger to its surroundings.

Today, however, he feels more weary and jaded than is normal. He pinches the bridge of his nose and lets out a long, harsh breath as the two men approach his table. Kane and Storm nod their greetings before seating themselves.

“So....what’s this all about, Jack?” Kane leans toward his friend, his voice guarded and low.

“Do you recall seeing a BBC documentary a few months back about the alleged cover-up of the death of a prostitute found at the home of Alexei Bortsov?” Jack pushes a folder across the table.

Kane eyes the contents, shaking his head. “Nah. Not interested in Russian oligarchs and their nocturnal habits. Why?”

“It was a Sky Sinclair investigation. And she was definitely on to something. Something which has opened up a whole heap of shit.” Jack again pinches at the bridge of his nose.

At the mention of her name, Sky Sinclair, Kane paws a large hand to the back of his neck feeling the instantaneous tension there. She was his last SAS mission. Saving her incredible sexy ass from a hostage situation....one in which she virtually walked right into by her own die hard foolishness.

“How so?” Kane gestures for his friend to continue.

“A few days later, she starts to receive threatening letters....dead flowers and the like sent to her studio.....her tyres slashed, then her apartment got broken into a couple of nights ago. She also thinks she was followed while out on her morning run. She is accustomed to having the odd threat but this has shaken her up. It was decided to place her in a Safe House while we take on the investigation. Sky was definitely onto something.”

“Ok. So where do we fit in? Sounds like you have it covered.” Kane and Storm share eye contact in agreement.

Jack leans further forward across the table, his voice low and harsh. “The Safe House was attacked last night. Her safety has been severely compromised. She’s unharmed. It was a definite hit and it reeks of Russian mob. And somehow they knew exactly where to find her.”

The two ex-SAS men shoot a questioning look. “Where is she now?” Storm growls.

“My place. Yeah, I know. But I had no alternative. I couldn’t risk another Safe House. So, apart from you too, only the Head of Command and DCI John Keaton know where she is. He’s with her now but we need to move her fast. The Russians are probably already on to us. That’s where you come in. Are you in?” Jack searches for an agreement.

“Sure. We can move her for you. To where?” Kane shrugs.

“No, not just move her. Keep her safe. Take her to one of your Safe Houses. I know you have one or maybe two. And watch over her until we’re through with the investigation.” Jack leans back into the worn leather chair releasing a heavy sigh. “Well? Are you in?”

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Kane grips the steering wheel of the Brabus Mercedes G Wagon until his knuckles ache and his face is visibly discoloured. His face is set hard with tension. Beside him, Storm clasps a hand over his sniggering mouth. Kane shoots him a glare.

“Come on, Man. What could be worse than being holed up in the Cornwall house with a fucking smoking hot woman for a few weeks?” Storm offers a laugh to lighten Kane’s mood.

“She might be smoking hot by your definition but the woman seems to think she’s Indiana Jones or fucking John McClane. If you want the job, be my fucking guest. I’ll take over babysitting the Congressman when he arrives tomorrow.” Kane snaps.

“Nah. I got that, boss. After your last meeting, you and the lovely Sky need to make friends.”

“Fuck you, Storm.” Kane swings the vehicle into the industrial estate housing Elite Defence Inc.

Exactly thirty minutes later, Kane has briefed the team, packed a holdall, and is stood listing off the necessary armament. He and Storm will ‘collect’ the goods from Jack Mercer’s home at 13.30 hours as arranged. They jump back into the vehicle and head out towards Greenwich. At 13.28, the Brabus snakes its way along Trafalgar Road, both men eyeing every inch of the street. Storm fingers the Sig Sauer P226 strapped tightly into his shoulder holster as they pull towards their destination.

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As the two heavy, muscular men power through the entrance to my temporary safe haven inside DCI Jack Mercer’s personal residence, my heart literally leaps into my mouth. I’m not used to feeling fear but at this moment, fear is the only feeling I know. The only warning that DCI John Keaton and I had was a brief call from Jack to say the ‘goods’ were being picked up and transferred. I know, from experience, that I am the goods.

One of the men immediately heads to the window, and crouching, positions himself there. He is a hulk of a man, several inches over six feet. His biceps strain against the material of his t-shirt as he keeps a tight hold of the gun in his holster. His eyes continuously survey the exterior of the building.

His partner stands large over me. His eyes are dark and focussed, staring intently in my direction. He nods to John before ushering me to gather all my belongings. I have exactly 2 minutes he informs me and it is the only form of communication that is offered before I am bundled into the back of an imposing vehicle. We speed off weaving our way through the early afternoon traffic as I remain huddled in a tight ball on the back seat.

Eventually, after what seems like hours, I recognise that we are pulling into a service station. I hold my position until the right hand door of the rear doors is opened and I am ushered out. I am surprised to be met by a very pretty woman of similar age to myself. She smiles kindly at me and extends a warm hand.

“Hi, Ms Sinclair. I’m May or Brains as the guys call me. You ok? Come on, we’ll grab a coffee while we make the exchange. Afterwards, you will head across country with Kane to our Safe House.”

I stretch myself out of my cramped muscles and follow her and the two men inside Camberley Service Station. Once inside, I am ushered into a booth in the corner of the restaurant area. A third man nods towards me, and as with his colleagues, there is no communication offered. Inside, I am beginning to freak out but I know I must try to remain calm. Slowly, we are all seated as May/Brains places a tray of coffees on the table.

~~A young boy rushes towards our table and is suddenly halted by the large hand of the man with the goatee beard. “She’s not talking today, kid. Go back to your mum and dad.” He talks quietly but firmly.~~

The young boy pouts out his bottom lip. “But....but, you are Sky Sinclair, aren’t you?” He looks directly at my face. I nod quietly offering a small smile.

Frustration bubbles at the surface. I throw a look at the man to my right. “Will someone tell me what is happening? Are you Police Officers? And where are we going? I have a right to be kept informed.”

All three men stare blankly at me. I scowl at each in turn. Somehow I will get a reaction and someone will speak to me. May laughs lightly before reaching towards me. “No, we’re not Police Officers, Sky. We’re private security and that’s all I can say for now. I know you are probably freaking out right now but you have to trust us, okay?” She snorts loudly in the direction of each of her colleagues before continuing. She gestures towards the man on my right. “This is Kane. We all work for him. He will be staying with you at the Safe House and ensuring you are kept safe. The man on the mountain to your left is Storm, and this is Dalton. I am May as I said but the guys call me Brains, for obvious reasons.” She laughs lightly again.

I exchange a look with Kane. There is something strangely familiar about him but I cannot figure out why. But I know I have looked into those eyes before. Deep, darkest brown almost black eyes surrounded by densely thick eyelashes. On any other occasion rather than this very one, those eyes would cause instant fluttering in the depth of my sex.

We drink our coffees in silence before Kane gestures to the others that we are on the move again. He grabs my hand firmly pulling me out of the booth. I try to shake free, instead preferring to walk beside him, but he holds me tighter throwing me a silent warning look. I increase my pace to match his strides towards the Brabus. I am gestured into the passenger seat and, without another word to the team, we head out towards the exit and onto the motorway.

## Chapter Three

A couple of hours have passed and the silence in the car is deafening. There is a top of the range music system, I notice, but it would appear he prefers to drive in silence. Occasionally, to pass the time, I steal a glance in his direction. I take in his large muscular form and the square strong jawline framed by the dark goatee beard. I cannot deny he is very handsome, easy on the eye. *Apart from the beard. I don’t do beards.* He has some form of tribal tattoo reaching from his wrist up the entire length of his arm, and I silently amuse myself by wondering where it leads to. I stifle a smirk. The last few harrowing days are finally taking their toll on me. Soon, I will be giggling like a hysterical banshee.

“Something amusing you?” Kane throws a glance in my direction.

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“Oh, you do speak.” I retort, rather more sarcastically than I had envisaged.

He throws me another look but offers no further discussion.

I cross my arms tightly around my waist. “If we’re going to be stuck together then we need to communicate, don’t you think? At least tell me where we are going.”

I feel and hear his irritated inward breath. I sigh in unison. Living with this man in a confined space is going to be torture. For a fleeting moment I rationalise the prospect of this versus having the Russian mob on my tail. In my current freaky mind, it is swings and roundabouts.

“Cornwall.” He suddenly breaks my crazy train of thoughts.

“Cornwall? But what about my work! DCI Mercer assured me that I could still support the investigation.....and I have other work commitments. I can’t be in Cornwall!” I can hear the pitch of my voice rising.

Kane shakes his head in frustration. “You are going to Cornwall. End of discussion. When we get there and are settled, we will sort your damned work commitments then. Now, do both of us a favor and do something useful. Go to fucking sleep!”

“I can’t go to sleep.” I spit back.

“Why the fuck not?” He growls.

“I need a pee.” I slide down further into my seat curling my legs into my chest.

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I must have fallen asleep, that or the stimulating conversation sent me into a coma. Either way the next movement I feel is being lifted from my car seat. I fist a hand in each eye struggling to awaken from this drowsy state. I am enveloped in strong arms, my head resting lightly in the crook of a firm neck. Weary and slightly disorientated, I nuzzle closer into the deliciously masculine smell and inhale deeply.

“Hmm. Yum.” I murmur squeezing myself tighter against the skin.

A groan deep in the chest of the person carrying me springs me instantly alert. I wriggle in the arms of Kane as he strides towards the entrance of a large impressive coastal house. Unlocking the door with ease, he walks through several rooms before dropping me firmly into the nearest chair. He re-enters the house moments later carrying our bags. He stands with a hand on each hip and eyes me intently before speaking.

~~“Are you awake now? We need to go through some house rules.”~~

“Rules? I need to freshen up first and have a drink at least.” I stretch out each arm slowly and rub my neck.

“Later. Now listen up. The rules are to keep you safe.” He talks determinately and firmly. I tilt up my chin and worry my bottom lip. I know he is right. I await the lecture.

“I’m listening. Let’s hear the rules.” I peek out through sleepy eyelashes.

“Rule number 1 – drop the attitude. I’m here to help you and keep you safe.” He begins, halting me as I make to scowl. “Rule number 2 – you must do as I say at all times, for the very reasons I have just mentioned. Rule number 3 – we cannot draw unwanted attention so for the entirety of our time here, we will act as a couple. You will have seen when I carried you in that we have neighbours. For their benefit, we are just a couple spending some time together. They all know me so it shouldn’t be hard to convince them that I have brought a woman / girlfriend / whatever to holiday. This home actually belongs to me.” He finishes abruptly and turns, heading towards what I assume is the kitchen, oblivious to my wide eyes and open mouth.

I scamper out of my seat chasing after him. “You cannot be serious! Act like a couple? Is that entirely necessary? I could be here on business for Christ’s sake.”

He swiftly turns to face me, his face set hard. “Why would Sky Sinclair be in my family home on business? Why would you be in Cornwall on business? What are you investigating will be the obvious question? Your big Bambi eyes and pouty lips are recognised wherever you go. Saying you are here on *business* will draw questions we don’t need. But a couple having some free time together is perfectly explainable. Now follow Rule number 2 – you wanted a shower, go have one.” He barks.

I cross my arms defiantly and lean against the kitchen work top. “Fine. But don’t think you can touch me. Couple in name only.”

Suddenly, he strides swiftly across towards me. He places a hand on either side of the work top pinning me tightly in place. Leaning down until he is a few inches from my face, he scowls in frustration. I can feel the heat radiating from his body. “Touching you at this very moment, or the near future, is the last thing on my mind, sweet cheeks.”

I thrust my chin into his face. “Ditto, Kane. And don’t ever call me sweet cheeks again. Unless you want me to call you something entirely suitable at this very moment...now, if you will excuse me your *girlfriend* needs to take a shower.”

Kane steps back allowing me to ease around him. The smirk on his face does not escape my notice.

Kane rolls his neck in a circular motion trying in desperation to release the tightness. This damn woman will test my patience he grumbles under his breath. He reaches down to adjust himself inside his combats aware that his cock is standing in salute at her sassy mouth. *And you can behave....*

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## Chapter Four

After my shower last night, I looked around the bedrooms and eventually decided on a room that was definitely not the master bedroom. Deciding that the least time we spend together in this confined space the better, I climbed straight into the large bed willing myself to sleep.

But I didn't sleep. Instead my mind and damn female hormones decided to play havoc with me. Every time I closed my eyes and began to drift into unconsciousness, I saw dark goatee beards and sultry dark eyes. I grew restless and frustratingly aroused. *Damn it, why did the man have to be a Neanderthal yet such eye candy at the same time?*

So as the early morning light streamed through the curtains, regardless of the hour, I chose to get up and start the day. I decide that if I have to play the role of *girlfriend* then I should make the effort to look like I am happy and in holiday mood. I throw on some denim shorts, a bikini top and a light cover-all. I brush my long blonde hair settling to leave it loose. My sleep deprived eyes need a sweet of mascara and a slick of eyeliner. *Bambi eyes indeed!* Yes, they are large, and that along with my lightly freckled nose, would give some the impression that I am Bambi-esque, I suppose. *Still, I'm surprised he even noticed.....*

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Kane is immediately alert from his sleeping position in the chair as he hears the movements of his houseguest. Now that he is awake, he is also aware that it was a pretty dumb decision to sleep downstairs rather than in the master bedroom. But he didn't know which room she had chosen and certainly didn't want to be accused of walking in on her as she slept. Sassy mouthed as she is, he did not want to provide the bullet to kick her mouth off again.

He palms each eye awake waiting for her to descend down the stairway. A fleeting thought hits the frontal lobe of his brain. *Please God, make her dress head to toe in a shapeless smock...preferably a burka....so I don't have to be tortured by that smoking hot body all day long. And better still, put a bag over her head.....if I look into those baby blues.....*

As Sky enters the sitting area, sweeping her way through into the kitchen, Kane slumps his head into his hands, a loud groan erupting from his mouth. *Denim shorts and a bikini top! God, what have I done to deserve this...*

Willing his cock to play ball and remain calm, he follows her through to the kitchen.

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I look at each empty cupboard in the kitchen. Of course there would be no food. There was no time for preparations. I eye Kane as he enters behind me through the kitchen door. He looks weary and crumpled. I assume he stayed awake all night or dosed in a chair. Now is probably not a good time to push my luck so I plaster on my big smiley face.

“Good morning, boyfriend! We’re all out for breakfast. Black coffee or tea?” I smile as sweet as possible, hoping to lighten his disgruntled face.

“There was no time to prepare. We’ll need to do a quick supply grab or better still order in. In the meantime, black coffee would be good.” He offers the beginnings of a smile. I think.

“Ok, well if you want to grab a shower, then I’ll make us a coffee and prepare a shopping list.” I turn and begin to busy myself. I am aware he has not moved so I turn to face him again. “Something wrong?”

“Shopping list?” He growls low in his throat. “We’re grabbing a few supplies, not doing the weekly shop!” And with that, he strides out of the kitchen.

Before I can stop myself or rational thought, I stomp after him. “Being your *girlfriend* is so much fun! Bring on the next couple of weeks!”

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Kane leans his head against the chill of the tiles in the shower enclosure. He breathes in deeply, releasing each breath slowly. He deserved her retort. He didn’t mean to snap at her. But something about her very presence make his thought processes cloudy....*and his cock as hard as nails*....and he knows he must remain focussed.

He quickly dries himself, choosing to dress in his familiar combats and t-shirt, mentally preparing himself for her scowl or maybe even total silence.

He enters the kitchen and finds her seated at the breakfast bar nursing a cup of black coffee. She looks utterly cock teasingly beautiful, even with a scowl.

“So, have you done a list?” He offers a smirk and a gentle shrug of the shoulders.

“No. It wasn’t on the list of rules. I’ll remember not to think for myself while I’m here.” I tilt my chin, matching his smirk.

“Okay, okay.” Kane throws his hands in the air in mock surrender. “Let’s just try to get along?”

I shrug my response. I know I’m being petulant but something about being in his presence makes

my thought processes cloudy.....and my sex pulsing out of control....

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A few minutes later, and once Kane has surveyed the exterior and is satisfied we are secure, we leave the house and climb into his Brabus. As we pull slowly down the driveway, we are flagged down by the neighbour to our immediate right. I hear Kane curse quietly under his breath. Before lowering the window to acknowledge her presence, he throws me a warning look. I quickly nod my understanding.

“Kane! We thought we heard you arrive last night. It’s been so long since you were here last. It must be over six months. Oh, and you have a visitor?” A woman, perhaps mid fifties, waves a greeting in my direction.

Kane quickly puts a hand on my knee, patting it lightly, before responding. “Ah, Jean, you never miss a trick. This is my girlfriend. Sky, meet Jean, an old friend of the family.”

“Hi Jean, pleased to meet you. What a lovely part of Cornwall you live in....I could live here permanently. But please forgive us but Kane promised me a slap-up breakfast and I’m starving!” I smile rather too enthusiastically and sit back in my seat.

“Oh you too go ahead. Lovely to see Kane with a lady. Never seen it before. Aren’t you the lovely girl from the television? I’m sure I know your face. Such a pretty thing, my husband always says. How did you meet?” Jean steps in closer to the window, inquisitive.

Kane and I exchange forced smiles. “Oh, it’s a long story which I’m sure we will delight in telling you later.” Kane offers, making to close the window. Jean presses further, causing us both to silently sigh.

“Well, how about tonight? We are having a barbeque and I insist you come. Please. We haven’t seen you in ages, Kane.” Jean smiles broadly searching our faces for an agreement. We nod in unison and wave our goodbyes.

We head into the village of Mylor Bridge. There is a post office, newsagent, grocery store, fishmonger, butcher's shop and a pub called the Lemon Arms. The larger towns of Truro and Falmouth are only a short distance away, however, as we only need to buy some basic supplies then the village will suit our purposes. We grab what we need and hastily make our way back to the house. As we are silently unpack our goods, Kane eyes me. “You did well with Jean. I don’t think she suspected anything different from what we gave her. Now we just have to get through this damn barbeque. There was no point arguing with her, and besides, we’ll be here for a least a couple of weeks so we can completely avoid the neighbours or we really will draw attention to ourselves.”

I turn to face him. I nod my agreement. “Will we be safe? I know it seems a daft question but I don’t know.”

He reaches across giving my shoulder a light squeeze. “We’ll be safe. But remember we have to keep in role, ok?”

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## Chapter Five

My hand is clasped tightly and totally engulfed within Kane's large strong hand as we approach the house next door. Strangely, as he rubs a reassuring thumb across my knuckles, I feel secure and safe, and do not want to let go of this connection.

As we enter, I take note that this house, *Creek Retreat*, is a mirror image of Kane's family home *Creek Haven* - a detached 5 bedroomed, 4 reception roomed waterfront house set in mature gardens around half an acre with about 200ft. of direct water frontage, 32 foot long boathouse, workshop and slipway. It's a beautiful family home and certainly a unique 'Safe House'.

Jean gushes to greet us beckoning to a silver haired, lofty man with a wide easy smile. "George she's here with Kane. I told you it was Sky Sinclair. Look how pretty she is!" She wraps me in a hug as I am ushered out through the French doors to be met by a small gathering of neighbours and local villagers.

Before long, I am passed through the throng of people, kissed and hugged, like a treasured long-awaited new baby. I blush with the attention finding myself searching for the security of Kane. However, I sense, I know, that his eyes have never left me.

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The food was delicious. Smoky ribs, crayfish and lobster, prime steaks and every salad I could dream about. I think Jean and her husband, George, could become my new best friends or even my adopted parents. The party is now relaxing, after stuffing ourselves to oblivion, into small circles of laughter and banter. Throughout, Kane has sat close by, but I am aware that he has not fully allowed himself the comfort of being relaxed, remaining still in full alert working mode.

He listens intently as I answer question after question about the life of a television presenter. Suddenly, a voice from across the gardens beckons towards me. "How did you end up in investigative journalism, Sky? You get yourself into some pretty tricky situations."

Before I respond, Kane interrupts, assuming on my behalf. "I think Sky just wants to switch off for a while, don't you, sweetheart?" He smiles tightly in my direction. He pulls himself out of his chair seating himself next to me. He wraps a playful arm around my shoulders initiating a loving couple façade. I feel a breath catch in my throat as his fingers dance innocently across the bare skin of my shoulder. I hear and feel his similar response as he too feels the jolt of electricity as we touch.

“Oh, no more questions, we promise. But we do want to know how you came upon investigative reporting. No offence, but you could be a fashion model with your looks.” George implores me further.

Again, Kane tries to ease the conversation away but I sigh resigned to answering one more question. “It’s ok, Kane.” I smile at him. “I’m happy to answer. Wikipedia probably has my whole story anyway.” I laugh lightly before continuing. “My father was an investigative journalist and idolised him. When he was killed.....murdered.....I suppose I was determined to go after the bad guy. Somehow, chasing the criminals keeps me strong in a crazy kind of way. I bet you wish you hadn’t asked now. I’m sorry if I’ve put a damper on the party. But I’m so accustomed to just telling it how it is....well, there you go.”

I glance quickly towards Kane for reassurance that I somehow haven’t totally blown it, whatever *it* is, and am momentarily taken aback by the softness of his features. For a moment our eyes seem locked together as though magnetically transfixed. He rubs a tender thumb across my cheek before suddenly catching himself and resuming his working stance.

“So, a total change of subject.....how do you cope with beard rash?” A scrawny teenager sniggers behind us.

I snap my head in the direction of the question. “Excuse me?”

The teenager, the youngest child of the local butcher I am soon to learn, presses on. “You can go on TV with beard rash. So you can’t kiss Kane very much.” The young woman flutters her eyes adoringly towards Kane. There is a round of laughter and teasing, all aimed in our direction. I feel the flush in my cheeks rising.

“We kiss often enough, don’t you worry, Janine.” Kane responds gruffly.

“Yes, we do. So I don’t need a stand-in, if that’s what you’re hoping!” I tease her in retort, hoping that we can steer the conversation away.

She huffs from embarrassment folding defiant arms across her chest. “Well, I still say you don’t. My older brother has a beard and his girlfriend is always complaining of getting beard rash.”

“Oh, for God’s sake, Janine. Drop it now.” Her father reprimands her. “Sky, kiss him and maybe then she will shut up about it and stop her mooning.” He laughs heartily.

Suddenly, all eyes are on me. The seconds drag as I tennis ball glances between the circle of friends and Kane. His eyes are wide and momentarily, he seems genuinely out of his comfort zone. *Sky, you have been in worst scrapes than this.....*

I lean inward towards Kane holding his face between my hands. I run my tongue softly along his bottom lip, gently nipping and sucking, drawing his mouth open. A stunned groan escapes from his mouth. I feel his arousal overtake him as he pulls me firmly into his chest. He grasps the opportunity of my parted lips, plunging his tongue deep into my mouth. His taste is exquisite, intoxicating and I want more, my tongue finding his, circling and dancing in tune. My moan vibrates across our lips and we hungrily crave to deepen the kiss further.

~~We snap apart as we hear the gasps of those surrounding us, cheers and wolf whistles echoing~~ the night air. Kane stares at me, breathless, with hooded lustful eyes. I feel a flush spread across every inch of my skin.

## Chapter Six

*Alexei Bortsov launches himself out of his Orbit leather recliner striding angrily towards the two incompetent fools stood before him in his study. “I said find her....not bring me excuses why you have failed! You fucking idiots! I want you to find Sky Sinclair. How fucking hard can it be?!” He turns away in disgust, balling each hand into a tight fist. “Get out of my fucking sight! Find her!”*

*Viktor and Yury immediately depart the study. Viktor glares at his partner, his lip snarled in fury. “You lost the Brabus. This is your fuck-up!”*

*“Get out of my face, Viktor! We need to find her and fast!”*

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Several days have passed since the night of the barbeque. And *that* kiss. Kane and I left *Crete Retreat* shortly afterwards and each departed into our own room without a further word spoken between us. Since then, we have danced cautiously around one another keeping any communication to a minimum. The air in the house is thick with tension and I sense that Kane is feeling as suffocated as I am.

Thankfully, Storm is due to arrive today to bring us an update on the investigation. DCI Jack Mercer may accompany him but if there is any hint of an increased risk that he is being ‘watched’ then it is agreed that Storm will relay the information on his behalf. Either way, I am relieved to have further news but more so to have another person and distraction in the house, even for a few hours.

I busy myself until then making sandwiches for lunch and endlessly researching Alexei Bortsov on the internet. Since I began this investigation, there has been a constant niggle picking at the base of my mind, and frustratingly I cannot fathom what it is. But there is something more to find. I just do not know what. Yet.

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A rumble from the driveway leaps me from my chair. Kane has sprung into action, his hand signalling me to still, his finger already stroking the trigger of his Sig Sauer P226. I hear a singular low bird call witnessing Kane visibly relax. Moments later, a gentle two tap knock on the door indicates that Storm has arrived. He folds his bulk through the doorway grinning broadly at his boss. DCI Mercer follows closely behind.

The gentle giant robotically scans the room before settling his eyes in my direction. "So how are the things in the happy house?" He guffaws. "I see you haven't killed each other yet."

"Storm!" Kane growls, throwing Storm a warning glare.

"Oh, I've been tempted....believe me." I drawl lightly in response, flashing a smile at the two arrivals. I make my way through to the kitchen to collect the prepared refreshments onto trays. The three men busy themselves with general catch-up chatter while awaiting my return.

Storm leans across the coffee table towards Kane, his voice deliberately low while I am out of earshot. "So, what's the story? You could cut the sexual tension in here with a knife....no, fuck...chainsaw."

DCI Mercer sniggers loudly, arching an eyebrow at Kane. "Yeah, I felt it too. Is your cooing twitching after the lovely Miss Sinclair, Kane?"

Kane scrapes a hand aggressively across his jaw. "Fuck the pair of you!" He growls, shaking his head in frustration.

"Might as well spill it now, boss, before you implode." Storm beckons.

Kane eyes his partner, a slow guilty smirk spreading across his face. "We accidentally kissed."

"Accidentally?" Storm exchanges a puzzled look with Jack Mercer.

"Long story. But yeah, it happened." Kane slumps back in the chair, pawing a hand across the back of his neck.

"And?" Jack pushes, leaning in towards Kane. Storm follows suit.

"For fuck's sake! I wanted to throw her over my shoulder, toss her sweet ass in my bed and fuck her until she couldn't walk straight. Happy now?" Kane leans his elbows on his knees, enveloping his head in his large hands.

Storm releases a low whistle. He has never known Kane to lose his cool....not while on the job and especially not over a woman. But the acknowledging silence between them is the recognition that

Kane cannot pull himself from this mission. *Always finish the job....*

---

As I enter the sitting room I am confused as each man snaps his head in my direction. It would appear that I may have just missed some crude laddish joke at my expense. I shrug it off placing the tea and coffee on the table. "So Jack, you have an update for me?"

He coughs lightly, forcing himself back into professional mode. "Indeed. There have been several developments."

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Jack Mercer takes a long slug of his coffee. He nods before speaking. "Your gut was right, Skye. The second autopsy on the victim showed up traces of Hydrogen Cyanide in her blood stream. It was missed at the first autopsy. So we are definitely looking at homicide...unless of course, the victim decided to top herself in plush surroundings. But I doubt that. But it shouldn't have been missed at the first autopsy."

I shake my head. "No, it would be easy to miss HCN if you were not looking for it. It is virtually undetectable. That is why it is *the* favoured method of killing especially amongst certain criminal groups."

"Indeed. But we now need to track the source where it was obtained before we can finger anyone as a suspect."

"I would hazard a guess that it was not bought. It was probably made. Unfortunately, it is easy enough to make it." I shrug. I notice Storm and Kane exchange looks, both intently listening to our conversation.

"Made?" Storm enquires.

"Yeah. Made. Probably in someone's kitchen. All you need is to get hold of some ethanol, in the form of vodka or wine usually, or another drink with a high percentage of alcohol. Then mixing with ammonia under the right conditions will produce HCN. If you have no ammonia, substitute for some fertiliser, the high nitrogen and hydrogen content will suffice. Simply 'mix' these ingredients and warm them at around 200C for about 20 minutes. The resulting liquid should be majorly ethanol however a small amount of HCN will have formed, enough to kill a mammal up to the size of a horse."

I palm through the rest of the file that was handed to me previously. I note the silence in the room. Looking up, I encounter the wide eyed expressions of all three men. "What?"

"Damn. You know your stuff, lady." Storm grins at me.

"You sound surprised. Did you think I have some underpaid researcher do all my work for me? That's not my style. What else have you got for me, Jack?"

~~I lean back into my chair bring my knees snugly into my chest as Jack continues with the rest of the developments.~~

## Chapter Seven

The days following the update of the investigation settled into our now usual routine communicating with each other only when it was absolutely required. I want to raise the subject of our kiss but as time passes, it seems almost pointless now. However, occasionally, I catch Kane eyeing me intently before he snaps his head away.

Today, according to the weather forecast, is going to be hot. I am beginning to feel stir crazy and need desperately to work off the anxiety and tension that sits permanently in every muscle of my body. Kane has announced that he will be in the gym, housed within the boathouse, for the next hour. I decide to throw on a bikini and sit outside in the gardens.

I am restless. The sun is high in the sky, I have an array of books from the study, and my laptop is open but still I cannot focus or settle. I make my way across to the boat house. I peek through one of the smaller windows, a breath catching instantly in my throat. Kane is stripped bare wearing only a pair of work-out joggers slung low on his hips. Sweat glistens off his body as he alternates between side kicks and punches on an old boxing bag suspended from the ceiling.

I am transfixed watching as singular muscles ripple, flex and contract as he repeats each motion over and over. His body is a solid mass of muscle, from his wide shoulders down to the delicious shape leading to.....OMG

I can feel myself beginning to pant as my breathing becomes laboured and my arousal deepens. I squeeze my thighs together tightly to release some of the ache building in my sex. I mentally trace my finger along each delicious curve and line of his tattoo which, for the first time, I can now see clearly. Black inked curves run down through his hip, down through the v but ending where?

Rational thought escapes me. I throw open the wooden doors and enter the gym. "Can I join you Kane?"

He snaps his focus across my near naked body. His eyes narrow, his nostrils momentarily flaring. "You are hardly dressed for a work-out." He grunts gruffly.

I scan the triangular pieces of material barely covering my modesty, tilting my head up in challenge. "I can cope if you can."

~~A slow smirk spreads across his lips. "I can cope, just fine."~~

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"I can't do it!" I pout, frustrated.

"Of course you can. Just spread your legs a little wider!" He barks at me.

"I said...I can't!" I stand up from my stretching position that Kane (aka drill sergeant) has tried to put me in, stamping a foot in deeper frustration. "You are trying to split me in half....and stop shouting at me like a fucking drill sergeant!"

Kane stands before me, hands firmly on each hip. He smirks at my tantrum. "I thought spreading your legs was easy for a woman."

I whip my head around and throw him my best death glare. "What did you just say?"

He throws up each hand in mock surrender. "Ok....that was below the belt. I just couldn't resist it. I was enjoying the tantrum too much."

I snatch up a pair of boxing gloves and hurl them with full force at his head. "Boxing gloves Now!" I snarl at him.

Ducking out of the launched missiles, he laughs loudly. "You cannot be serious. You want to fight me?"

I struggle each hand into a boxing mitt. "Right now I want to wipe that smirk right off your face!"

He shakes his head stifling yet another laugh. Picking up the mitts that narrowly missed his head, he slides each large hand into the tight fitting glove. "So shall I give you a head start, sweet cheeks? Shall I shut my eyes?"

I square up to him until we are nearly toe to toe. I lift both hands into a defensive position and prepare my attack. He lifts his hands to mirror mine throwing me a wink. Suddenly, I drop my hands. "Hold on, I have an itch." I thumb my right breast free from its triangular enclosure exposing the rosy bud of my nipple. As I watch his wide eyes divert to the distraction, I throw an uppercut smack into row three of his superb six pack. "Ha, ha sucker!"

He flinches, but only for a split second. "Nice. Now let's see you handle this!" He growls playfully as he launches towards me, tackling me to the ground.

I cry out in pain as he accidentally elbows me in the jaw. Involuntary tears spring into my eyes as

sob jumps from my chest. He throws off his gloves, anxiety etched on his face. “Christ, I’m sorry.” He cradles me into him stroking my jaw. “Are you ok? I didn’t mean it.”

“I know you didn’t.” I try to shake free from his tight hold. “I think I should go back to my sunbathing.”

“Sky.....” He whispers, before tenderly thumbing again across my jaw and across my bottom lip. He leans his face towards me brushing his lips softly along my jaw. “Shall I kiss it better?” He murmurs against my throat, nipping and suckling the length of my neck. A moan escapes my lips as I melt into his hold, already parting my lips, waiting hungrily for his mouth on mine. He brushes his thumb across my bottom lip, stroking me slowly, seductively, before leaning into me, licking the same spot with his tongue. I moan at the heat of him. He locks his lips across mine, pressing harder into me, his tongue searching for the comfort of my mouth. Our tongues dance and circle, stoking the fires of our arousal. He groans full into my mouth.

He folds me down until we are lain, limbs entangled on the floor, pressing his groin against my hardening erection against me. I grind myself against the thickness of the shaft seeking a deep connection. I arch my hips into him as he presses himself harder into my sex. Locking my fingers around his neck I pull him harder into me, drunk on the taste of him.

“Sky.....” He groans, slowly separating our connection. “We....we have to stop.” He is breathing hard, still nibbling at my neck. “We have to stop.”

“Kane...”

He pulls harshly away from me. He rests his head in his hands. “We can’t do this. You are my client. I’m here to protect you. I need to remain focussed.” And with that he strides out of the boathouse, leaving me a melting mess of arousal and frustration.

## Chapter Eight

*Viktor walks cautiously across the manicured lawns of the Russian oligarch’s £147 million Kensington Palace Garden mansion. His boss looks relaxed in a lounge by the vast swimming pool. He is surrounded by paid lovelies all more beautiful than the next. Alexei guffaws as two girls wrestle each other in the pool, their firm breasts bouncing in unison. He palms his twitching cock underneath his Vilebrequin swimming shorts.*

*Viktor sighs deeply. He is about to put his boss in a very bad mood.*

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