

First four chapters -

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## CHAPTER 5 - PARTY FOULS

The next few days were more of the same, with Marian working on her paper, Ken working on the upcoming party, and their evenings spent slowly exploring what Marian did and didn't enjoy. The second list had no entries, so far, partly because Ken was playing it safe and taking things slow and gentle, and partly because she had turned out to have as broad an appetite for kink as she did for literature.

Early on Thursday afternoon, she put the finishing touches on her paper, and passed it off to be looked over. To celebrate, Ken, Alice and Kevin took her out shopping, though there was at least one ulterior motive involved. Marian was the first one to propose it, though, which met with vocal approval from the mouse, and nods and grins from the boys.

"So how about it, Alice?" Marian inquired. "Where can I go to get a properly naughty school girl outfit to wear to dinner? And apparently this party tomorrow night has the same dress code, right? I'll need something for that, too."

"Sort of," the mouse replied. "Tomorrow will be a masquerade. Costumes and masks for everyone. I'd figure you could go as Maid Marian, if you don't have anything else in mind for a costume. And we can dress Ken as Robin Hood."

He snorted. "I am no one's paper doll to dress up. I'm going as Snake Eyes. The one from G.I. Joe."

"Figures you'd want to be a ninja." Alice stuck her tongue out, and they all had a laugh.

"Ah! Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. Alice, I trust your master is well?" The voluptuous form of Madame Han was clad only in a light robe this afternoon, and while her shop was open and business was moving, it still seemed quiet and sedate. "Thank you, Marian, for the prompt return of my jewels. Now, what can I do for you today?"

"Sir Cedric's doing great, Mistress Han. And these three need costumes! Josephine says Kevin," and she grabbed a handful of his butt to make sure it was clear who she was talking about, "should be a Roman gladiator to match her, but the happy couple needs a set, and Ken seems set on being some sort of high-tech ninja guy."

"Snake Eyes. High tech ninja is a pretty good description, though. I'm open to ideas, but I need to be able to do my job in costume, Madame Han."

"I can appreciate that, Mr. Scott. You will be assisting Josephine, then? That makes my end of things fairly simple. Let me consult with one of my younger assistants. This sort of character is more in her forte than mine."

As she strode off to consult with one of her helpers, Ken turned to his brother with a smirk. "So it's a loincloth and sandals for you?"

"Don't forget the collar," he replied with a grin. "And I'm kind of not expecting to wear the loincloth for long."

The two continued to exchange good-natured jibes until Madame Han returned, and one of her girls took Kevin off to be fitted for his costume elements. "Madeline has suggested a pair

of American comic book characters that may suit you two well. The “Punisher” and a “Black Widow” femme fatale. The masks I will have to send out for, and you, Mr. Scott, will have to provide your own hardware, but the rest is well within my capabilities.”

Ken just grinned. “Frank Castle? I can do that happily. What do you think, kitten, want to be a Russian super spy?”

Marian giggled and nodded. “Wasn’t she a mouse, though?”

Madeline, another fox, though shorter and with less curve than her employer, stepped in. “Yes, miss. But she was also a master of disguise, and in the comic books frequently appears as other species. For you, I think it would be best to mimic her appearance when she was working with the Punisher, under the guise of an American operative from the CIA. It is a pretty simple costume, form fitting and flattering with a few accessories.” She offered a pad, on which were sketched a few notes and drawings, lining out the costume.

Madame Han and Marian both looked it over and smiled. It really was a simple design. Ken’s proved to be just as simple, consisting of black jeans and boots, and a T-shirt with the character’s signature canine skull logo. Marian’s was a black body suit and boots, with a yellow belt and bracelets, and a mask marked with the red hourglass of a widow. Ken’s mask would be white, fitted to his head’s shape, and lightly marked to make it more skull-like. And even with a wait for the masks, they would both be ready within the hour.

“Now, what else were you after? Marian wanted to dress as a school girl?” That also proved to be simple. Madame Han had suitable items on hand that could be fitted to her, and the skirt shortened to be indecently revealing. Marian modeled it for her boyfriend, to a response of whistles and catcalls (from Alice and his brother as well).

“Best pick up a stick on the way home, Lieutenant Scott,” Alice offered, “because you might need to fend the rest of us off her at dinner.”

They all arrived home in high spirits, laughing and joking, and Marian’s dinner attire was as big a hit as expected. She was a bit conflicted about so many people openly admiring her body, but no matter how she looked at it, it felt good to be desirable. She was also glad that her costume for the party would be less revealing. Boy, was Lacey going to be surprised...

“...over there, against the east wall. Coat check’s in the pavilion outside, the garage is reserved for select guests, everyone else will have to be dropped off and the vehicles left with the valet, parked on the north stretch.” Cedric was orchestrating the final preparations for his party, going over timing, responsibilities and contingency plans in the early morning light.

“Security will be working two shifts, mostly. Josephine will be managing the second one, and I will handle the first. We have a lot of temporary contractors and staff in here tonight, they’ve all been vetted and checked, and will be integrated with the permanent staff. First shift will run from two in the afternoon to ten in the evening, where second shift will pick up and run until the party closes at six.

“I am not expecting trouble, but Sparks,” he gestured to a bookish little fox wearing a cheap suit and thick glasses, “has picked up web chatter that mentions this party. Nothing concrete enough to be worrying, but enough to make me notice. Most of security will be doing two things.

“Number one, tossing the bums out. I will not have rude, drunken guests at this party. There’s alcohol, but I don’t want anyone falling down drunk. Fighting is also unacceptable, outside of the designated area.

“Number two, is enforcing the mask rule. NO ONE is allowed to take off a mask other than their own. Anonymity is the only reason many of our VIP guests can attend. So if anyone other than medical is reaching for a mask, shut them down quickly. Now, everyone get to your group stations for final briefings. Party begins in just four hours, and there’s a lot to get taken care of before then.

Josephine, Cedric, and Ken walked from group to group, going over specific responsibilities for each, outlining the procedures for keeping the riffraff out, both at the front gate and along the perimeter. The party was invitation only, and the invitations themselves were works of art rivalling most modern currency. While no one claimed they were impossible to forge, the time frame and limited availability of original copies was a strong deterrent, as well as the cross-check at the entrance. Invitations that didn’t match the list that the gate had would be turned away without possibility of argument or protest.

The perimeter patrols were numerous, in groups of two, and followed no clear pattern. The estate was walled off as well, with cameras and motion sensors scattered about to provide further deterrent to party crashers.

Security inside had more interesting and difficult duties. Fortunately, everyone had actually studied the handout they had been given, and there were no questions beyond simple procedural things. “One thing that I hope the guests have paid attention to is the blue collar rule,” Cedric mentioned.

“Internal security is supposed to respond to the use of “safeword” by forcibly halting the scene if it doesn’t end on its own. The exception to this are people wearing powder blue collars. They are, in effect, voluntarily giving up any rights and safety for the duration of the party. Anyone can do anything they want to them, without fear of consequence, with the exception of killing or maiming them, or a few other extremes covered in your handbook. The blue collars are being worn by only a few people that I know of. Gate is going to warn incoming guests about it, if they have blue collars of their own. But no amount of “I changed my mind” once inside is going to make them safe. Understood?”

The chorus of nods and short replies was good enough, and they moved on to the next briefing station.

Several hours later, the party was well underway. Guests were arriving steadily, already nearing a thousand people scattered through the three floors and three wings of the mansion. While the largest crowds were in the grand hall, dining hall, and conservatory, any room that wasn’t a closet had at least a few people in it, and most of them were doing things they’d never be able to get away with in public.

Activities ranged from fucking against a wall in the hallway to elaborate bondage, from servitude both willing and forced to punishments that made Marian pale just from glancing at them.

Since Ken was busy making security run smoothly, Marian was being escorted by Alice, dressed in a blue skirt and top, with a wide-eyed mask on her face. The skirt didn’t even cover

her tail, it was so short, and she blatantly wore nothing underneath. Marian's outfit, while it was quite close-fitting, at least covered everything, and was blissfully comfortable to move in. Madame Han had done an excellent job.

She was also present, wearing nothing but the smoke diamond jewels and a kabuki style mask. Another vixen was on a leash, and on her hands and knees, wearing only a collar and a matching mask. Both were frequently the center of attention for males and females alike. Apparently, busty was a popular attribute.

Josephine and Kevin had both taken charge of a feline who showed up just as the party started, wearing only a blue collar, blank faced white mask and her ginger stripes. Marian was a little shocked. Aside from looking a bit younger and curvier, the girl could have been her twin. At the moment, the three of them were engaged in demonstrating some rather rough play, in one corner of the main hall.

Kevin was tied down to a chair, loincloth long gone, unable to do more than buck his hips a little. His dick was buried up the tabby's ass, all the way to the knot. Getting that in had made her howl and cry and beg for mercy, which only made Josephine smirk. After that, she had been strapped down in similar fashion, so all she could do was squirm her hips.

At that point Josephine had pulled out a rack of different tools, and commenced to working the girl and boy over roughly. Everything from clamping weights onto her nipples to flogging her from tits to thighs until tears were pouring from her eyes. Kevin got off a bit easier, as his body was mostly covered by chair and cat, but his exposed sac was constantly tormented by the panthress, stretched taut by a cuff and weights and frequently swatted with cane or crop until he howled as well, or bit the cat's shoulder to stifle his protests.

Marian was confused. He wasn't wearing the blue collar, so if he wanted to, he could have stopped the scene with a word. He was clearly in agony, but he didn't stop it, even though he could. Had he forgotten the word?

"He doesn't want it to stop," Alice explained. "He's a masochist, and all that pain is making him hard as a rock. I'll bet he's come at least twice in that girls butt, and not gone soft yet. If he weren't tied down, he'd probably be fucking her stupid. Come on, let's leave them be and go watch the sun set. Balcony off one of the west wing bedrooms should be open."

The sunset was beautiful, but the air was cold already, and Alice shivered in the dimming light. "God that's cold on my nethers. Wish that husky boy was free to warm me up. Or that you were more into girls and inclined to play. A tongue's a really nice way to warm up."

"I know. Ken did that to me our first time. It was magnificent." She was blushing a little, but they were in private, as Alice had locked the door behind them, so she was less self conscious.

"Yeah, the times Sir Cedric's taken me out on one of these balconies in the colder months...mm, such a good time. It's cold, but he's like a walking furnace, and once the sex starts getting energetic... you don't notice the cold at all."

They wandered back into the room, but left the balcony door open, sat on the bed and continued chatting, mostly about sex and their respective playmates, but the conversations veered now and then into more mundane topics like clothing, dating and sometimes into questions on submission and kink.

Sometime around midnight, things went haywire. A loud crash and several explosions started the catastrophe, all ringing from the north, toward the gates. Security responded quickly, ordering everyone to cover or hide while they braced for a fight, but it was one sided. The armored truck plowed right through the front doors, gunfire pouring from the open windows, and three more lighter vehicles followed, each pouring out a half dozen armed mice. Resistance was quickly subdued, as they went about their objective.

The door to the west wing room where Marian and Alice were hiding flew open with a crash, broken off the hinges, and three of the attackers burst in, weapons aimed at the pair almost instantly. All wore the sprayed on, garish dye markings of various gutter gangs, but their weapons were top of the line.

"We found the other one. Which one are we taking?" One of them spat into a headset radio.

"This one's with that cunt mouse the Baron owns." A short pause. "Leave the one with the husky. That's the American bitch, she's of no use to us. I've got the Princess here. We'll take the mouse too, added insurance."

Marian was too frightened to think, and Alice knew better than to resist. Not that either was given a choice, as the chloroform sent them both into unconsciousness.

"Breach in the north wall! The gate house is gone!" The explosions had rocked the house only seconds before, and the security teams were already responding. The furthest teams along the perimeter were charging in toward the house, while Sparks, buried in his computer room, was organizing communications and notifying the police and military of the intrusion and assault.

"All internal teams, take up positions in the Grand hall and attendant corridors." The Baron seemed calm and unhurried despite the chaos. "Get the guests into side rooms and under cover."

Tables were turned up, both to help cover the thousand and change guests, some of whom were immobile due to bondage or being knotted to a partner, in the case of canids. Those who could move were ushered into bedrooms, the cellar, or other out of the way spots.

Ken swore with passion and fury, as he opened a ground floor window on the front of the house and shouldered his borrowed MP-5. The lead truck was heavily armored, with plates of steel welded to the outside, but the windows looked unaugmented, so he fired a few bursts at them, though his fire was ineffective. Other guards were firing as well, and at least one of the trucks following the lead turned sharply and rolled as the driver took a fatal bullet and lost control.

The whole house shook as the lead truck plowed through the front doors after running through the fountain out front, and a sleek sports car that had just been emptied of arriving guests. Even as he turned to charge into the house, he could hear small arms fire roaring out. He had only just opened the door when he was engaged, the two mice at the end of the corridor spotting him and ducking behind statues before opening fire. Ken swore again as he ducked back into the room, dropped prone, and squirmed to the edge of the doorway before returning fire.

While it seemed like forever, the fire fight only lasted a few seconds, before Ken was joined by three more guards, and weight of fire overwhelmed the mice. But just around the corner were another three, this time with better cover, and at least one of them had a heavy rifle of some sort, possibly a SAW.

That fight took too long, as two of his impromptu squad went down, one still and dead, the other coughing blood. By the time Ken managed to take down the three interlopers, he could hear the trucks roaring back out the hole they'd made, still trailing and trailed by gunfire. He moved quickly into the grand hall, noting dispassionately the bloody chaos all around. The far corner, where Josephine, Kevin and their Marian look-alike had been, was surrounded by bodies, mostly the ragged, gang-banger mice, but also a dozen or more guards.

Josephine was unconscious, bleeding from a head wound, and Kevin was struggling to get loose of the bonds that had been holding him to the chair for the last several hours. He was fatigued from the endurance torment and constant sexual need and frequent release, but had already managed to get a hand free, and was working on the other knots.

He shook Ken's attempt at helping off. "Go find Marian! I think they were after this one, but they might have taken her. She went up west with Alice, third floor somewhere, on the end."

Ken ran into the west wing, up the stairs. "Did anyone see what they were after?" he called out over the radio. "Sparks, anything on your cameras?"

"Nothing, one of those blasts was an EMP. I'm lucky we have a hard line phone I could use to get emergency response on the phone. Medical is en route, police as well, but I doubt they'll do much good."

Someone else broke in. "Silence on the line! They broke out with two bodies, unconscious, not dead. One mouse, tan, one cat, ginger tabby. Repeat, prisoners taken, mouse and cat."

"Shit, the Baron responded. "Is the princess secure?"

Another voice replied affirmative, and the Baron sighed. "Ken, they've got Marian and Alice. Meet me in the garage. We don't have much time."

Ken stopped, looking into the room where his girlfriend had been. The door was smashed in, and her belt was on the floor.

In the garage, Josephine was hissing as someone bandaged her head. Cedric had a wrench in one hand, and was using it to pound on the hand and fingers of a bloodied, screaming mouse. "Where are they going?" he asked in a quiet, steady voice, betraying no emotion. He simply repeated the question, and each time the response didn't come, he smashed another part of the prisoner's arm.

Some time after both of his elbows were mangled lumps of shattered bone, he finally caved, identifying an address in London, a warehouse near the docks. After that, the Baron calmly snapped his neck, and dumped the lifeless body on the floor.

"Sparks should have his computers up and running shortly. He'll be able to get satellite video, and we'll find these bastards. Meanwhile, the Land Rover is gassed up, and the trunk is loaded. Josephine, Ken, would you do the honors of hot pursuit and excessive mayhem?"

The grins that replied had no humor, only a malice that made the lone medical technician blanch, and mutter a quiet prayer for the souls of the two predators already climbing into the

bulky SUV.

The first portion of the ride was spent in silence, disrupted only by the occasional short status update from Sparks. Josephine had simply tapped a few buttons, and a route map and markers had projected onto the inside of the windshield, allowing Ken to drive without knowing the route already.

It also allowed Josephine to work in the back of the SUV, which resembled a compact armory. If the upcoming engagement were a party, they had party favors to spare, ranging from the little, harmless sort up to the kind that left large holes in the walls. The panthress seemed to be sorting through some items, arranging two piles of gear as they drove.

"Okay," Sparks crackled onto the radio, "I'm up and running again. I've alerted all the local police along your route not to interfere with you. I'm realigning a satellite that's got the proper sensors, trying to spot our unwanted guests."

Josephine climbed back into the passenger seat, and tapped a few more buttons. "The warehouse?" she spat sharply, and was met with an immediate array of data, including floor plans and ownership documents, shipping manifests and a wire-frame model of the warehouse. A few adjustments and she was able to get a good view of the building they were shortly to be assaulting. Ken was too busy following the road to get a good view of what she was working on, but the predatory growl emanating from the seat beside him spoke of an extremely poor time to be on her bad side in the very near future.

"I've got the convoy you're chasing. They're about an hour ahead of you, but losing some ground. That armored hulk of theirs was never meant to handle that kind of weight. I've also started to get some ID on a few of our more fortunate uninvited guests. All of them are IRA thugs and low-lives, or from closely affiliated street gangs and warrens. No big names, just a lot of low level scum."

The baron spoke up for the first time since their departure. "Josephine, Kenneth... I don't think I need to explain how unlikely it is that any negotiations would achieve a peaceful resolution. This is already a black operation, and I fear it must follow the rules of such. If you can get in and get them out without being seen, that's the best scenario. If not... there must be no escape. I want those girls back in one piece as much as you do, but not a single one of those filthy miscreants must ever breath free air again. You only have room for five in that truck, and there are four of you that I would dearly love to have home safe. Understood?"

Both made soft, unhappy noises of assent, as the truck roared on into the night.

Two buildings over from the target, this one was torn halfway open, ruptured from within by an explosion some time ago and never repaired. A good place to tuck the SUV, close enough to get to in a hurry, far enough that their approach had not been noticed. At the moment both of them were behind, working out a quick plan with the aid of Sparks' thermal satellite feed and wire diagrams.

At least, Ken was trying to work out a plan. Josephine was stripping out of her gladiatrix outfit, down to tight black shorts, and donning minimalistic armor, from one of the piles she had arranged during the trip. Some distant part of him had to admire the compact, powerful body and the lack of self consciousness that allowed her to be so matter of fact about full nudity. Still

the situation demanded the lion's share of his mind, so this admiration was fleeting and all but unnoticed.

When she donned a matte-finished mask that covered most of her face, including the front of her muzzle, he blinked. She tapped it with her knuckles, and grinned at the dull metallic sound. "Steel." A quick reach into the van, and she offered him one more suited to his canine features. His, however, was a matte white, a convenient match to the Punisher mask he had left behind.

"This give me a bit of an idea." He pulled off his costume t-shirt, and donned the kevlar vest laid out for him. With the shirt pulled tight back over it, he nodded, and pulled on the mask for a moment, then started strapping into the rest of his equipment. "This ought to scare the piss out of them. Okay, so, here's the plan-"

*This is almost insulting*, Ken thought as he glided through the fog and shadows. *The only sentry they left out, and he's sitting in a pool of lamplight, blinded by the fog and his own stupidity. Amateurs.*

He settled into a crouch half tucked into the doorway of the nearest building, and waited for Josephine's signal. Right now she was gliding under the water under the exterior door that would normally admit a small boat into the warehouse itself. The door was closed, but only extended to the water line, an oversight that the original owners never thought better of. She had taken only a single pistol, suppressor attached, and an assortment of throwing knives. And a single flash bang grenade, the signal he was waiting for.

He was heavier armed, with several grenades, both concussive and flash bang, as well as two suppressed pistols and a similarly muffled MP-5. He had one of the pistols in hand, trained on the lone sentry, and a concussion grenade in his off hand, waiting to execute what was, to his mind, the sort of plan that only worked in the movies. But, since it relied on the established lack of training and professionalism displayed by these gutter punks, he wasn't inclined to be too skeptical.

There it was, the unmistakable roar and flash from the building's lone front window. The guard turned toward the door, then dropped as Ken put two rounds through the back of his head. The grenade was already out and rolling along the front of the warehouse, toward the larger, truck sized door at the far end. As it detonated, the confused and blinded occupants turned and fired wildly at the source of the noise, turning away from both his entrance through the man door and Josephine's deadly stalk through their midst.

The confusion was almost pitiful, but again, only a small and distant part of his mind registered the thought. The remainder was given over to the methodical exercise of pinpointing an enemy by the bursts of errant fire, and dispatching him without alerting his friends.

A burst of automatic fire drew three quick pffts of response from him, the suppressor devouring most of the sound, leaving only the fury of high-speed lead. The body twitched, then fell lifeless, and he tracked his pistol left, toward the east side of the building. Josephine was somewhere to his right, as the sudden disappearance of one fighter or another proved. Every now and then there would be a short exclamation, cut off with a gurgle or a short-lived scream.

The blindness only lasted a moment, but it was long enough for the two experienced soldiers to devastate the opposing force. But he still hadn't located the girls.



Finally one of the mice got his sense back well enough to identify him, or at least his costume. The wide eyed look and puddle at his feet were more than enough reaction for Ken, who simply took the offered hesitation as an invitation to track three rounds up the boy's center of mass.

*A boy. That's all. He can't be older than seventeen. Tonight was probably the first time he saw real violence. The equipment and the plan were too good for this. Something isn't right.*

His first pistol ran dry, and rather than reload it he holstered it and swung the MP-5 into place against his shoulder. Four more times he tracked a burst of fire along a surprised or otherwise unprepared opponent, until he realized that there was no more sound of violence, only an occasional groan or whimper as someone protested their transient state.

"Jospehine, do you copy?"

"Copy. The girls?"

"I haven't seen them. I don't think we have very long before the local authorities respond to the gunfire."

Ken glanced down, and noticed that the mouse next to his foot was still breathing, shallowly. He briefly debated taking a prisoner, but Josephine made the decision for him when she rolled the boy onto his back.

"How? Shot you. In the head." The scarred, painted mouse wheezed.

"I got better," was her only reply before returning the sentiment, though with much more permanent results. "The truck?"

Ken nodded, the execution a sharp reminder that this was not a nice or gentle person he was working with. As they stalked toward the hulking monstrosity that had breached the mansion's defenses, Josephine ended three other lives, though none of them were as coherent as the first.

The girls were in the back of the truck, indeed. Unconscious, bound, heads in cloth bags. He glanced at Josephine. "Pull our truck around to the door, we'll have to load them in fast and get the hell out of here."

"No time." Indeed, he could hear the faint wail of sirens in the distance, but they would be here soon.

"This has all been too easy, Josephine. It would be a shame to get caught now."

Each of them shouldered their girl of choice, and booked it for the door, and from there the truck.

"How are they?"

"Marian came to in the truck." Josephine was uncharacteristically talkative, after the tense few hours. "Alice only a short time ago. Alice is taking it better."

Cedric frowned, and sighed. "Sparks says this could have been prevented. He blames himself for not catching the signs beforehand. I can't share his opinion, though. I have been in the intelligence business for twice as long as he has been alive. I missed every sign. As did you.

"No blame." He held up a hand. "For anyone. Everyone did their job, fought bravely, and far too many died. And now I have to find a story to tell everyone that will keep my niece from being disinherited, and will properly honor the dead and wounded."

Josephine just nodded, her face dour and gloomy. This could not be swept under the rug, could not be kept quiet. The explosions here in Staffordshire might not be connected to the gunfight on the Thames, but neither could go unanswered for, unexplained. Not for long.

The crowd of reporters outside the Globe was uncharacteristically quiet, watching as the old lion took his place behind the podium in the late afternoon gloom. Never before had it worn the royal seal, nor had he ever been flanked by the brilliant red of the royal guard. Things had changed, dramatically, in only a few hours.

“Last night, two events occurred in England that I must explain. One act of craven cowardice, and one of selfless courage. I expect that the hand that set this in motion wants me to try and sweep this under the rug, to avoid exposing my hand at any cost.

“The people of England, and her dead, deserve better.

“At 0135, members of the Irish Rodent Army and affiliated gangs assaulted my estate in Staffordshire. They used rocket launchers, armored vehicles, and military grade weapons. Their intent was to kidnap one of my guests, though why they chose her, I cannot say. They succeeded, and took one of my employees as well.

“We were able to track them via satellite, and dispatched two individuals to rescue the kidnapped girls. A retired American soldier and my head of security. Despite being outnumbered eighteen to two, they successfully penetrated the kidnappers bolt hole, neutralized all of them, and retrieved the two girls, unharmed. This occurred on the banks of the river Thames, a firefight that the police have not been able to explain.

“I am sure you have many questions, but please, wait a little longer. I have a few more things to say.

“My name is Baron Sir Cedric Fitzherbert. Most of you know that I earned my title and knighthood serving as an officer in Her Majesty’s Army during the conflicts in Asia. What you do not know is that I have given up a title as well. In deference to Her Majesty, I have privately declared something that I will now publicly declare.

“My father was King David. I am the long lost royal bastard, born of his dalliance with an Algerian immigrant. I hereby declare that I will not seek the throne of England, nor will I accept it if offered. I, and any heirs I may sire, are not in the line of succession, and can not, will not, and should not ever inherit the throne of England.

“Her Majesty is my half sister, and while our public relationship has been rocky, at best, the truth is much simpler. I have never wavered in support of her, nor has she ever truly disapproved of my actions.

“We maintained the public feud because Her Majesty needs, and will always need, someone to do her dirty work, to do things that need to be done, however distasteful they may be. I have worked alongside MI-6 for the last thirty years, coordinating operations that I cannot tell you about in any detail, however vague. This may not be America, but the veil of national security still applies, in some way.

“I can no longer be that person. Last night, the people I hold most dear were put in danger. I will be burying more than a dozen of my friends and employees. My home, my castle, has been violated. As I have refused my heritage, I also retire, here and now, from my duties as an intelligence coordinator for Her Majesty.

"Now, if you will all excuse me," he ignored the clamor of questions, and turned to go, "I owe my sister a long overdue conversation."

"You five have put me in quite a predicament." The queen was every bit as old as Cedric, but showed it more, her orange fur greyed around the muzzle, and her eyes weary from the years. She sat in a large, comfortable recliner, by a crackling fire, while the rest of them were arrayed in front of her, Marian and Ken sharing a similar chair while the two girls flanked the Baron on a couch.

"I trust, Cedric, that you at least have a few suggestions for a successor, since you've up and quit on me? I look forward to reading through them, in the next few weeks.

"Now, as for the rest of you. Cedric has filled me in on the details that he kept from the press, though they're having a field day speculating on who was kidnapped, and why. Miss Rourke, if you had not been there, my granddaughter would have been kidnapped. You are the reason she is safe. I owe you a great deal of thanks."

Marian was completely speechless. The Queen of England was thanking her. For nothing more than being herself, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"Josephine Antara Pariyar. Formerly one of my Gurkha soldiers. One who has come to my attention before. It is a rarity to see someone who can be such a brutally efficient killer and yet care so deeply about her family. But you were not the only factor in this rescue.

"Kenneth David Scott. American Army Rangers, Lieutenant, retired. You've worked with my brother before. Let's see... in one scenario, you went to war for your girlfriend. Admirable in so many ways. But would you have done any different, had it been my granddaughter that was taken? No, that is a rhetorical question. I know the answer already.

"You two have already proven your courage time and again while you were in your respective uniforms. This time you went above and beyond, a night of heroism that should by all rights be legendary. But neither of you wants to make a spectacle of this?"

Ken looked at Josephine, who nodded just a bit, then turned back to the queen. "Your Majesty, I want to go home with Marian, and get back to life as normal. I sincerely doubt that would work if my name gets attached to this. I know Josephine feels much the same."

"Anonymity will be hard to maintain, you two. And I feel I should reward you both, personally, even if the government of England can't. Medals and titles just aren't right, either. Can you think of anything that I can do, to thank you?"

Ken didn't respond immediately, but Josephine did.

"My father. Can you grant him citizenship here?"

"I think I can nudge the proper people into signing the papers, yes. It may take a week or two, but it will be done. Mr. Scott?"

"It seems crass to ask for money, your Majesty, but I have a good reason."

"Please, inform me. I may like what I hear."

"My education is paid for in full. In fact, I've got a rather nice standard of living for a university student. Marian, however, is going to accumulate quite a pile of loans to repay before she completes her degree. Would you grant her freedom from those debts?"

"I offer you a favor, and you think of another." She turned to Marian with a wry grin. "Don't let this one get away. He's a keeper. Very well, very well, I can arrange something for

this little problem. And should you two ever visit London again, I hope you'll say hello. And have a much less exciting time."

"So... now what?" Marian settled into the limo's seat next to Ken.

"Well, I suppose we ought to make plans to get you two home." Cedric put an arm around each of his girls, and nodded. "The townhouse, Kevin. I don't think I'll be using the estate again soon."

"True. Classes start again on Monday, and it's Saturday night already." Ken grinned and nuzzled into Marian's neck. "Still, I'll be sorry it's all over. A lot of this was fun. And educational?"

Marian giggled a bit. "A lot of educational. Some of it even related to the paper. And some of it I know we'll be talking about, and experimenting with, for a long time to come."

"That's good to hear. Now then. Alice, are you up to flying them all the way home?"

"I think so, but I'd like a copilot."

"I have a better idea. Alice, Josephine and Kevin will all accompany you. And I'll spend some quality time getting all my paperwork dealt with and advising my sister on who to replace me with."

"Wait, I'm going to what now?" Kevin exclaimed from the front of the car. "I know this is somehow going to end badly for me. If not on the trip there, on the way back."

Even Marian had to laugh, and Alice just snarked right back. "You know you like it. Every little bit. I saw you last night, balls deep in the princess and loving every swat, bite and stretch."

"Okay, guilty as charged. But if you two are going to spend the whole trip home taking turns wearing me out, I'm going to take the next day off to recover. Maybe two."

It was Ken's turn to get in on the teasing. "Oh come on, little brother. What happened to that legendary endurance? You used to brag about being able to out run me on the distance, that stamina that wouldn't quit."

"It didn't quit. I just got smarter about it. I'm still young, but a body can only take so much before it needs time to recover. Don't tell me you've never gone at it so long and hard that you ached for a day or two afterward."

"Touche`."

Cedric just smiled. "I have one request, for this flight. I cannot and will not force this on anyone, but I would be very pleased if the cameras stay on for any debauchery that may occur, there or back. You won't be taking a diplomatic flight, though. I have my own jet, appointed more to my, and your, tastes."

Ken just laughed. "You have a flying dungeon?"

"Dungeon? Certainly not. Am I the dungeon type? Professionally, perhaps, but I prefer more sumptuous appointments for my personal play. While it lacks instruments of torture beyond the more mild ones, it does happen to have facilities to make a long flight far more pleasant than simply sitting and waiting out the hours."

Alice sighed a little. "I'm going to be piloting the whole time, aren't I? No fun for me, just watching."

It was Cedric's turn to laugh. "No. I have made arrangements for a pilot to handle

things. For all of you, this flight is purely recreational. But for now, we have a dinner date. There are a few people waiting for us. Nothing too exciting, I hope. Or if it does become exciting, at least in a pleasant way.”

The townhouse was in a quiet neighborhood, and there were only a few cars in front of it. Lights were on inside, casting a warm glow onto the sidewalk as the party pulled up on the street. Only two cars, and their own did not stay on the street. After everyone had exited, Kevin drove it around back, into the alley, and into the rear-entrance garage back there.

Marian was curious, as they mounted the front steps, about the two vehicles, one a nondescript but clean black town car, and the other an ostentatiously fox fur red Miata. It even had white details at the front and a white spoiler, giving it a decidedly vulpine appearance. Custom plates, reading V1X3N, added a bit more distinction to the already unmistakable vehicle.

There was a large wolf in a neatly tailored black suit sitting on the front steps, and Marian noticed the bud in his ear and the dour expression. Some form of security, probably to go with the black town car.

Inside, Marian was able to put people to the vehicles rather quickly. The Miata was a clear match to Madame Han, who was sprawled along the length of a sofa in a slinky green dress, looking relaxed and untroubled. Not so the tabby feline, in unremarkable skirt and blouse, sitting on the floor in front of her, who looked somewhere between worried and pensive, despite the petting and caresses of the older woman. When she heard the crowd coming in, she looked up, and forced a smile to her face.

“Uncle Cedric, and everyone else. I’m glad I at least get to meet the people who dealt with my would-be kidnappers.” Her voice, Marian noted, sounded rough, and her eyes were red, probably from crying. However much they might look alike, she knew the princess was younger than she was, and her life was being tossed around without much regard for what she might want. It was hard not to feel sympathetic. She was just a person, a young woman, though others might try to think of her first as a political implement, or the future leader of a nation, though given her recent “outing” that seemed unlikely.

“I wanted to thank you all, personally. Miss Rourke, if you hadn’t been there, they would have taken me. Kevin, if you hadn’t been... with me, they would have chosen me instead. Josephine, Mister Scott, you did amazing things to rescue your two girls. I can hope that if it had been me taken, you would have done the same.” both of them nodded. They knew, too, that they would have, and fought just as fiercely. “Alice, you kept your head and didn’t give away their mistake. I don’t think anyone’s told you how important that was? And Uncle, you kept me safe, and orchestrated the rescue.”

The Princess bowed, and Marian kept quiet. She wasn’t sure what to do, really. Nothing in her upbringing had prepared her for dealing with royalty, certainly not royalty that had recently had all too common and base flaws on open display. Nor anyone, royal or otherwise, thanking her for being in the right place at the worst possible time.

“Thank you all. Beyond whatever Grandmother has done for you, I owe you all my life. If there’s ever anything I can do for you, all you have to do is let me know. Though... i suppose I’m probably not going to be queen, in the future.”

"Hmph," the Baron grumbled. "There are only three living descendants of my father. The next closest to the bloodline are all foreign nobility, mostly French and Swiss. Parliament and the Kingdom will have to decide whether it is preferable to have a deviant on the throne, or a complete stranger. It will be up to your public relations folk to make sure they choose you, when that time comes. Listen to them, young lady, and do as they say. But don't stop being yourself."

The younger feline nodded softly, and there was a long silence, long enough to become awkward, until Madame Han spoke up. "Come come. Alice, you and our little princess come help me in the kitchen, and we will get a feast prepared, to celebrate that we all live, and those who would harm us do not. Cedric, would you have your lady and your stud set the table while you and your guests relax?"

Before the lion had time to respond, she had swept out of the room, clearly expecting to be obeyed without question. For his part, the Baron just smirked, and shooed Josephine and Kevin off to the dining room.

"You might be wondering what our foxy friend has to do with this all." Ken nodded, and Cedric continued. "She's been a friend of mine since she and her auntie set up that shop, but she also has family in China still. And she is a fantastic source of unedited information on what goes on there. From what some of her cousins have said, this attempt may have had Chinese backing. It's no secret that our relationship with China has gone steadily downhill since they purged almost all of the predators from the country. This would certainly be in character for certain individuals in their government, though I'm sure they'll deny everything, and have mountains of meticulously documented proof."

Ken furrowed his brow, then shook his head and sighed. "One of these days, they're going to slip up, and it'll be world war three. I hope they wait a century or two. I'd like to be long in my grave before I ever have to worry about someone taking Marian away again."

Cedric grinned, an almost knowing smile, and Marian felt, not for the first time on this trip, that there was a joke being passed about over her head. "On to dinner, happier things. Same rules apply, however. My version of dinnerwear is still required."

Marian glanced at the two men, still wearing dapper suits, perfectly suitable as dinner formal attire. And then at herself, in jeans and a sweater. And her cocktail dress was likely still at the Baron's estate.

"You two are incurable, terrible perverts." She griped as she started getting out of her clothes. It was fortunately quite warm inside, enough that she was comfortable even naked, though she still turned and clung to Ken as soon as she'd folded her clothes and set them aside. As he led her into the dining room, she tried to figure out who else was suitably dressed, and who would end up bare. Alice would strip for the hell of it. Kevin too. Josephine would have to. The princess might. Would have to, she mused, if she read Madame Han correctly.

She was right, for the most part, and it was strangely pleasing to see everyone paired off so neatly. She sat snuggled up with her husky, sharing a bowl full of deliciously succulent Chinese fare. Josephine was on the Baron's lap the whole time, as Alice was on Kevin's. And the Princess spent the whole meal on her knees beside their chef, being fed little tidbits from the fox's fingers. A week ago, it would have been surreal and uncomfortable. Now it was comfortable and relaxed, even for the novice of the group, Marian.

After dinner, the Princess and the Fox returned to their respective homes, though Madame Han made sure that Kevin overheard her asking the Baron when she could “borrow” him for a day or two. Marian had to giggle at the look on his face, a mix of dread and eager anticipation. But all of them were exhausted from the last few days’ ordeals, and sleep swiftly claimed them all.

## CHAPTER 6 - RETURN TO SENDER

The following morning was a bright and brilliant one, sunlight sparkling off the light dusting of snow that had fallen sometime early in the morning. There was a surprisingly large amount of luggage being loaded into the back of the Land Rover, but both it and the smaller town car were already warmed up by the time Marian and the rest of the travellers mounted up for the ride to the air field.

There was an almost nervous buzz to the banter on the way, though Kevin and Josephine had to keep eyes on the road in their respective vehicles, that didn’t keep either of them from conversation, and the two cars were kept in touch with a rather clever short range radio set up. The mood was jovial, the jokes raunchy and debauched, and they made the trip seem far shorter than it was.

There was a minor surprise waiting for them at the air field, though Marian was more than happy for it. Doctors Brehon and Scarborough were both waiting for them, for her mostly, as the cat held a neatly bound package bound in brown paper. “Your paper, young lady, as well as copies of those bits of research not yet published. And should you ever feel a desire to delve into the Bard’s life again, you would be most welcome here.”

“Indeed I feel the same, young lady cat,” the bear added, “t’would be a great honor to have you back.”

“Thank you both so very much,” Marian replied. “It was a great time working with you both. I learned a lot more than from Doctor Duncan.”

Marian was only mildly surprised when Alice said her farewells by kissing each of the gentlemen on the cheek. Her farewell for the Baron was more involved, and Josephine joined her, each taking one side of him and giving it a strong hug, a few kisses and nuzzles, and various more lewd attentions.

He managed a put-upon expression, and swatted both rumps. “Get on the plane, you two, before I change my mind. No dallying, either. I want you all back here safe and soon. Understood?”

Both of the women nodded, with Alice adding “Sure thing, Sir!” in her usual chipper voice.

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It was a few hours later, somewhere over the east end of the Atlantic ocean, when the fun really got started. Alice had stripped almost as soon as they got the doors shut, well before

the plane had left the ground, and bounced around the cabin, showing Ken and Marian the various facilities. And Kenneth was forced to admit that the jet was more than suitable. While all the furniture was securely bolted to the deck, everything was absolutely sumptuous and indulgent, with soft cushions everywhere, all in deep blues and greens, or lighter gray and cream.

There were a half dozen seats along the back wall, and as they taxied to the runway, all five of the passengers buckled themselves in place for takeoff. Alice sat between Kevin and Josephine, and squeaked when she found a hand on each of her thighs, rubbing and teasing as the nose of the plane tilted upward. Ken, for his part, just chuckled and glanced over to see how Marian was taking things so far.

She seemed a bit intimidated by the assortment of toys and furniture scattered about the cabin, but was showing no signs of jealousy or embarrassment, which was a huge improvement from earlier in the week. She still seemed tired and worn, just a bit, but it was nothing too terrible, too extreme. If anything, the most powerful emotion seemed to be curiosity, a curiosity he would be happy to spend the flight indulging.

By the time they reached cruising altitude, Alice was moaning and trembling, and couldn't get her seat belt off fast enough, nor Kevin's. She only paused when Josephine took hold of her ear, prompting a squeak as she was unceremoniously dragged toward a spanking bench toward the starboard side. The panther steered her rodent into place and strapped her down, even going so far as to fasten a cuff onto the naked pink tail and buckle that cuff to her ginger hair.

Kevin just chuckled, and let himself be steered in front of the mouse, let Josephine strip him quickly. After that, he was simply pushed up close to let Alice start licking his crotch. Around that moment, Ken was given a motivation to look away, as he felt a bit of cloth land on top of his head. Marian's panties, and she was standing stark naked, leaning against a hip-high sawhorse looking thing with a padded top.

"Show me what this is for?" she inquired, grinning even wider when she saw him start walking over. "Or tell me first, so I can decide if I want a demonstration?"

"Probably a safer bet, but where's the fun in playing it safe, kitten?"

"No, no. Just tell me first, please."

"Fair enough. It actually," they both paused at the excited squeal coming from the bound mouse, and Ken chuckled. "It has two modes, more or less. One is to have you bend over at the waist, across the padded section, and tie you down like that. Allows for things like spanking and fucking from behind. The other one's to have you straddle it, which usually isn't so... active."

"Active?" Marian tilted her head and ran a hand over the padded top. "What do you mean?"

"That's the sort of play where the top sets things up, and pulls up a chair to watch as things happen. Oh, sure you can keep an active hand in things, use a paddle or something to keep your victim squirming, but in that position, the real enemy is her own weight, and time."

He watched as she chewed that idea over, then shook her head. "Not on a plane, hon. That's just not kosher."

Ken nodded and gestured back to the trio. Josephine had a handful of auburn curls, and



an equally good grip on Kevin's tail, and was using the two to accomplish forceful oral sex with two... he couldn't call either partner unwilling. But from her dazed look and frequent gasping for air, Alice wasn't in any sort of control.

"Is that safe?" his tabby girl wondered aloud.

"Not for beginners. Pretty sure that all of them know what they're doing, most especially Josephine. See how she's watching Alice's face so closely? She's monitoring her consciousness and her panic. Not letting her get too scared, or pass out."

Marian just shook her head and deliberately turned away. In turning, she found something else to distract her, well away at the far end of the cabin. At a casual glance, it would look like a simple chair. Closer inspection showed it to have no actual seat, just the frame of one, and several eye bolts in various strategic places, clearly for attaching someone to it.

"What about this caught your eye, kitten?"

She hesitated, running fingertips along the worn wooden back of the chair. "I'm not sure. It looks like it has a lot of options? I'm not sure what they are, really, but I'm starting to get some ideas."

"Please, indulge me. Tell me about one of them."

"Well... I think I could be tied to it like this," she stood in front of the chair, facing it, and put her hands on the back. It only leaned her forward a little bit, but it was enough to be an interesting position. "And... well, I couldn't stop you from doing anything to me."

"You like that part, don't you?"

Again, hesitation. "Yeah."

"I didn't expect you to open up to the idea this quickly. I'm not going to say no, mind you," one hand took gentle hold of her wrist, "but I'm still a bit surprised."

Surprise clearly didn't stop him from gently, patiently guiding her into place. Nor from using a handy set of cuffs to secure her wrists and ankles to the chair. Marian tugged firmly at her wrists, then smiled in brief satisfaction as she reminded herself that it was only a carabiner holding her in place. She could undo it if she wanted to.

Her ankles were a lot further apart than she had expected. He hadn't buckled them to the chair legs themselves, but a pair of bolts spread quite a bit wider than the chair itself. But after buckling her in place, he hadn't done anything but stay out of sight behind her.

Just as she was about to turn her head to look for him, something slipped over her eyes and robbed her of sight. The scent of satin and the utter blackness said blindfold quite clearly. With that in place, she felt knuckles stroking along her cheek, a soothing little caress, then a soft bite and following kiss along the side of her neck.

"So what sorts of terrible things were you imagining I'd do once I had you helpless like this?" His voice came from somewhere to her left, which fit with where his hands were. "Hoping I'd spank you? You really enjoyed that last time. Or maybe just have my way with you, while you can't resist? That does sound rather fun, now that I think about it."

Marian mulled the options over in her mind for a little while, soaking up the stroking and petting her boyfriend was using to calm her nerves.