



KARLY VIOLET

A HOTWIFE MULTIPLE PARTNER WIFE SHARING ROMANCE NOVEL

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UNDERCOVER



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Hotwife Undercover

A Hotwife Multiple Partner Wife Sharing Romance Novel

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Chapter One: A Dangerous Job

“Detective Nance,” Chief Sanchez says to me as I walk into his office. “Have a seat, please.” He motions toward the chair sitting just across the desk from him. I close the door and make my way to the chair, and as I sit down, he asks me, “So, how are things going with that theft ring case?”

I smile nervously at the chief as I think about one of my first cases as a detective with the Rockport Police Department. “We have it pretty much wrapped up, sir.”

“Wrapped up? Have you gotten all of the perpetrators rounded up and put into cuffs, detective?”

Shaking my head, I admit to him, “We still have two suspects to go, but we are going off actionable intelligence this morning and picking them up. By noon, this should be a closed case.” Though affable and easy to approach, Chief Sanchez is known for being a hard man at times, fixated on cases that seem to particularly offend him. The petty theft ring is made up of eight individuals who have been breaking into cars in the city and taking things like cell phones, purses, and wallets. Why people insist leaving their personal belongings in their cars along a busy city street I will never understand, but after the chief’s daughter had her purse stolen, he made it a point to find those responsible.

“Finally,” he says with some satisfaction. “It’s been a while, hasn’t it?” I can’t be certain that the comment isn’t a small jab at me, but that doesn’t

matter. As far as detectives go, I would be considered the low man on the totem pole.

“Yes, sir, but we have them all either in jail or soon to be heading there right now,” I say with some confidence. It took me quite a lot of work to get to where I am today, at thirty-five years old. More than a dozen years with the department and commendations throughout those years for my work as a police officer finally earned me a spot with the detective unit.

“Good job, Detective Nance.” Chief Sanchez smiles at me as he pushes a file across his desk toward me. “On to the next big case.”

“What’s this?”

He looks at me with some concern. “Jake, you know I wouldn’t give you anything that I didn’t think you could handle, right?” I nod my head. “Well, this one is a bit more difficult than just a few guys breaking into cars. This case goes deep, and to be honest you are one of the few detectives I would trust with this.”

“Really?” I open the file and begin to look at the information inside.

“Money laundering?”

“Money laundering,” he parrots. “And lots of it, detective. The people are moving more money in a day than you would see in a year’s pay. It’s a new syndicate of some sort and they are growing by leaps and bounds every

week. So far, they have their fingers in about five percent of the businesses in the city.”

“What?” I look at the few sheets of paper in the file. “If they are so widespread, why don’t we know more about them?”

The chief shrugs his shoulders. “What you see there was put together by Detective Racine last month.”

“Detective Racine? Didn’t he just retire?”

“Yeah, he retired,” the chief says with a strange tone. “It was sudden and without any real reason given as well.”

“What do you mean?”

The chief leans forward and looks hard at me from across his desk. “Jake, he had more than thirty years in this department and was making almost as much money as I make. He had the best health insurance coverage and every other perk the city could throw at him just to keep him on the job with us. Terry Racine was a good detective for the department, but then something happened. He just came in one day and handed me his retirement letter. It was effective immediately and he gave no reason why he suddenly wanted out.”

“Do you think he was paid off?”

Chief Sanchez shakes his head. “No, I don’t think it’s that at all. I think his new granddaughter and her family were probably threatened. That was all it took for him to move on and get out of the state.”

“He doesn’t live around here anymore?” The chief shakes his head again. “I suppose he took his whole family with him?”

“Every one of them, down to the granddaughter. They got the hell out of town as soon as Detective Racine could hand me his retirement letter.”

“You are certain there was no payoff?”

The chief looks at me and says, “I have known the man my entire life. There was no payoff. They might have tried at one time to pay him off to stay away from them, but he would have refused, and I suspect they then turned to making threats. You know Terry, Jake. The man would have taken a bullet for any one of us if he needed to. He isn’t the type to take a bribe.” He’s right. Something or someone got to him and let him know that continuing to work this case would be dangerous to him and those in his family. It’s the only way the detective would have pulled out of the case so quickly.

“I have a wife,” I tell the chief as I look down at the file. “There are two or three other detectives who don’t have family around here. Why are you offering this to me?”

“Because I trust you more than I trust them, Jake. This is not the kind of case that I throw to just any other detective. This one requires someone who will use whatever leverage they have to find the truth and to bring an end to this syndicate.”

“You mean it requires a guy with a wife who is an investigative journalist.”

The chief leans back in his seat and folds his hands. “It couldn’t hurt.”

“I’m not putting Cindy in harms way, Chief Sanchez. She isn’t a pawn for a case and I don’t like the fact that you have actually given this some thought.”

He laughs a little as he smiles. “Your wife, Detective Nance, came to see me just a couple of days ago. She has been working on a story about this group for the last few weeks. She knows things that we had only suspected, so we made a trade for information.” The chief taps the file folder on his desk as he says, “Half of what you see before you is thanks to your wife. She has been more helpful than anyone else on this case so far.”

“Shit.” Cindy and I have been married for five years now and have enjoyed a very quiet life together. Unfortunately, that quiet is sometimes interrupted by her ambitions to become a Pulitzer Prize winner and a journalist with a much larger newspaper. As the investigative journalist for the Rockport Times, she has broken open city corruption cases as they have happened and reported on things that the general public has only heard about in rumors. My wife is very good at her job, which sometimes scares the hell

out of me. What if she sticks her nose into something that causes other people to want to come after her? What if the money laundering syndicate determines her to be a threat and they try to hurt or even kill her? The hairs on my arm begin to stand up as I consider the case the chief wants me to take on.

“Look, I realize this is highly irregular, Jake, but this has been a tough nut to crack. Detective Racine, as gifted as he is, was unable to get too far into the organization. He found himself overwhelmed by a group of thugs that threatened the very fabric of his life. You, on the other hand, have no kids and no grandchildren. This is a bonus as it relates to a case like this. You can’t be bought or sold easily, and intimidation will do little good with a guy like you.”

“Which basically means that they will kill my wife without so much as threatening us first,” I say bluntly. “You want me to take a case that could be a major problem for me as well as my wife. This is dangerous, Chief Sanchez. Besides, I don’t have much experience as a detective yet.”

“Very dangerous,” he cautions, “But I know you are capable of working on this case. Look, Cindy is already on the case. I don’t think you are going to be able to talk her out of it, so you might as well work with her on it and bring these assholes down, Jake. Wouldn’t it be better if you were there with her instead of your wife working this thing alone?”

“Dammit.” I shake my head as I think about what the chief is saying. He’s right. Cindy is the sort of journalist who never stops once she has her teeth in a story. She will head straight into a hail of bullets if she thinks that she can get the scoop on a story, so I can see where this could be a very dangerous thing for her to go alone now. I need to protect her, and the only

way I can do that is if I become completely involved in the case. “Fine, I’ll do this,” I say to Chief Sanchez.

“I knew I could count on you,” he says to me with a wide smile on his face. His demeanor, however, becomes sullen as he adds, “You need to let me know if this case becomes too hot to handle, though, okay? If you start to hear things that are worrisome, I can get some protection for you and your wife. Just keep that in mind.”

I nod my head as I get up from my chair. “Is that all?”

“I guess that is,” the chief replies as he taps the folder on his desk. “Don’t forget to take this with you.” I reach down and pick up the folder before turning toward the chief’s office door. As I turn the doorknob, I hear him say to me, “Jake, I really do trust that you will do the right thing with this case. I really do believe, aside from your wife, that you are the best one for the job. I would have probably passed this to you even if Cindy was not involved already.”

I turn and look at him. “Alright. Just promise me that I have backup if I need it, okay?”

“You’ve got it,” Chief Sanchez promises. “All you have to do is ask and I’ll have guys to you as quickly as possible.” He looks through his office window at the detectives sitting at their desks outside and adds, “Just keep this case on a need-to-know basis, okay? Don’t share any information with the others.”

“Yeah, okay.” I turn and walk through the door before closing it behind me. As I stare out across the dozen or more desks spread around the large room, I wonder how many other detectives have had anything to do with this case. This is a big one, and it’s strange that only one detective would have it assigned to him. There should be three or four working such a large case, but instead the chief has chosen me. Sure, my wife could offer a unique perspective into the workings of the syndicate, but there are seasoned police professionals who could do so much to help me get this sewn up quickly. Why, then, do I not have partners on this case?

“Hey, big guy.” I look over to see Detective Andrea Bolton looking at me from her desk. “What’s he got you doing now? Purse snatchers?” The detectives in the room chuckle as they hear the remark.”

“Yeah, purse snatchers,” I reply with a sly grin. “Maybe I’ll find out which one of those guys took your purse away from you the other night, Andrea.” The verbal counterpunch is surprisingly humorous to the others in the room as her face turns red. “Have a good day.”

“Whatever.” Detective Bolton goes back to her work and I leave the building. There is a lot to do to figure out where to begin. I guess talking to my wife about what she has been up to would be the best place to start.

Chapter Two: A Concerned Wife

“What have you been up to?” I ask my wife as we sit down in a local restaurant for a nice dinner.

“What do you mean?” Cindy asks me as she picks up her glass of water.

“I think you know exactly what I mean, honey. Chief Sanchez has given me the money laundering case.”

Her eyes grow wide as she puts her glass down. “You need to drop that case, Jake. He should not have involved you.”

“No, the fact is, there should not be civilians poking around in that filth, Cindy. You need to back off of whatever you have been looking into and get away from this before the hammer comes down on these guys.”

“The hammer?” Cindy shakes her head. “You mean like the hammer that Detective Racine was going to bring down on these guys?”

There is a chill that runs down my neck as I see the resolve on my wife’s face. “You need to stop what you have been doing, Cindy. Just give me what you already know and fall back. You will get the first interview on the story when things finally come to a head.”

“Bullshit,” she retorts. “I have never waited on the police to feed me information, and I’m not about to start now.”

“You can’t do this.” My worry has got to be apparent as I stare back at my wife. I love her deeply and I worry about her already with the way she exposes people who do things outside the law. This syndicate is not a run-of-the-mill bunch of hooligans, though. They play for keeps, even if it means killing to do so. “Honey, just back off, okay?”

“No.” Cindy takes another sip of her water as she looks around the restaurant. “Where is that chicken I ordered?”

“Dammit, honey, you can’t do this. What if they decide to come after you? They will do that, you know. Just like when they went after Detective Racine.”

Cindy’s eyes suddenly turn to me. “So, they did get to him?”

“That’s off the record,” I say quickly. “Don’t you dare take a conversation with me as some kind of permission to print whatever we talk about.” My wife is a serious journalist, which is something I rarely must keep in mind when I talk to her. However, this is a much bigger case than what I have had before, so being discreet in what I tell her would probably be a good idea.

“Off the record,” she snorts. “Shit, Jake, you sound like the chief.”

“With good reason,” I reply. “You can’t put anything I tell you in the newspaper, Cindy. We have talked about this before.” We agreed when we got married that whatever I tell her in confidence is off-limits for print. Though she has lived up to that agreement before, I’m not sure she will now.

“I’m not going to print anything about Detective Racine,” my wife finally tells me. “Mr. Stewart doesn’t even want me to write about the laundering syndicate anyway.”

“Really?” I shake my head. “Has he gotten a phone call from someone?” Cindy’s eyes look back at me as she sits quietly. “Shit, he really did, didn’t he?”

“Look, this is for my own sanity, Jake. I need to find out the truth here and write about it, even if I have to use another paper to get it out.”

“That’s nuts,” I reply with a grimace. “These people are dangerous, Cindy.”

“Dangerous enough that the people of this city should know what the fuck we are dealing with, honey. That’s my job. I tell the public what is going on that should not be going on. It’s only at that point that something gets done about it.” A hopeless heroine in her own right, Cindy truly believes that she is a journalist so that she can fight the underbelly of the city. She wants to shine a light on the assholes who prey on others, even if that light allows those same assholes the opportunity to come after her.

“Look, I don’t need you in my way, fucking things up, Cindy. This is a police investigation now, so butt out. Please.” The request is forceful, so I know that I’m going to incur my wife’s wrath for it.

“Fuck you,” she says quietly as the server approaches our table with our food.

“Here you are,” the young man says as he places our plates in front of us. A second server pours us another glass of water. “Can I get you anything else?”

My wife looks smugly at me before turning her attention to the server. “You can tell this guy that he’s got another thing coming if he thinks that he can tell his wife what to do.”

The man looks nervously from my wife to me. “Um, okay. Can I get the two of you any wine this evening?”

“No thank you,” I reply with a smile, even as Cindy continues to stare hard at me. The server nods and walks away from our table.

“This is the sort of shit that I have to put up with when I am with you, Jake,” she complains as she picks up her fork and knife.

“What shit?” I ask with a chuckle.

“He ignored me. He just turned to you and asked you if you needed anything else and then left.”

“What did you expect him to do, Cindy? He didn’t want to get involved in our argument. You put him on the spot and he did whatever he could to get out of this.”

“He could have addressed me directly.”

“And said what?” I shake my head. “This is what I am worried about, honey. You sometimes see things where there is nothing to be seen. What if you begin to write about the syndicate and then they come after you because your piece sounds like you are taunting them? Then what?” I take a quick bite of the bread on my plate. “Just stop with all this, honey. Let it go.”

“The server or the syndicate?” she asks as she begins to cut her steak.

“Both.”

“Fuck you,” she says again. Cindy is not the sort of person to just let something go when she has decided that it is wrong. “I can let the server thing go, but not this story, Jake.”

“Wow.” I take another bite of my food before taking a drink of water. We both become quiet for a while as we eat, barely making eye contact the entire time. Finally, as I feel like the quiet needs to be broken, I ask, “What are you really after, Cindy? What is this going to do for you?”

“The Pulitzer,” she says immediately. “You know that’s been what I have wanted for a long time. If I can crack this syndicate wide open with an interview with their top guy, I could win that award and be set to take practically any journalism job I want.”

“Top guy?” I narrow my eyes as I look at Cindy. “How do you know that there aren’t a large number of top guys?”

She looks at me briefly before answering. “I don’t know. I guess I assumed.”

“Now it’s my turn to call bullshit,” I say as I put down my fork. “You know something that I don’t.”

“No.”

“Yes, you do, Cindy. I can tell by the look on your face that there is something you know about the leadership in the syndicate.”

She shakes her head as she emphatically says, “I don’t know about the leadership, honey. All I know is that I don’t like the idea of you working this case. Look at what they did to the last detective. I don’t want that happening to you, Jake.”

“I’m a big boy,” I answer. “I can take care of myself.”

“You think you can,” she tells me. “These people have a very long reach, Jake. They can do whatever they want to you if you piss them off.”

“What do you know?” I ask again. “Cindy, come on, I know that you know something. There’s no other explanation for how you are acting right now.”

Cindy shakes her head again. “Jake, I really don’t. I’ve given the chief everything I have on the case, and you have that already, right? I don’t know anything else right now. I swear.” Though I know better, I can see that my badgering isn’t going to help get whatever information Cindy has in her head out.

“Fine,” I say as I pick my fork back up. “Just stay out of this, honey. Let me do my job without having to worry about you. I can get you all the information you need for an article or two.”

“I have better sources,” she tells me. “If I have to wait for whatever confidential informants you have, I’ll be ninety years old before I am able to write the piece.”

“Honey,” I say as I look at her. “I promise that you will have information before any other news organization, okay? Besides, what informants can you possibly have that I don’t already know about?”

Cindy shrugs as she takes a bite of steak. In between chewing, she tells me, “Some people will talk to a journalist faster than they will speak to the police, Jake. They don’t trust your kind very much, sometimes with good reason.”

“Really?” She nods her head as she takes another bite. “Well, we are not the ones causing the local community to go straight to hell. They have the criminals in this town to thank for that distinction.”

“I know that, sweetheart, but that’s not the way they see it. The people I know don’t like the police because they have had nothing but terrible experiences with them.”

“Terrible?” Sure, there are times when some police officers become a little too aggressive with their enforcement activities, but the vast majority are caring, compassionate people. The men and women in blue are just like everyone else but are tasked with the awesome responsibility of dealing with crime. “Honey, I hope your article, whenever it comes out, isn’t a hit piece on the Rockport Police Department.”

“That will depend on where my investigation leads,” my wife says as she looks up at me. “I mean, the fact that Detective Racine left so suddenly is concerning.”

“There was no bribe taken,” I tell her. “He’s clean.”

“I never claimed otherwise.” Cindy smiles as she looks at some of the other diners in the restaurant. “I wonder how many of these people are under the influence of the money launderers, Jake.”

I look around as well. “These look like good people,” is all I can say. “None of them look like criminals.”

“The real criminals never do.” Cindy takes a quick drink of her water before adding, “Some of our biggest criminals wear suits and ties and work at city hall.”

“Dammit, honey,” I say as I sit back in my chair. “Be careful talking like that.”

“Why? Will I disappear?”

“No, but your husband might get into a lot of trouble since he happens to work for the fucking city.” I laugh a little as I ask her, “Can you please just stay out of my way? Just for a while?”

Cindy thinks for a moment as she puts down her fork and knife. I am asking a lot of my wife, but I need to know that I won't have to worry about her or the waves she could make with her writing. "Fine, I'll stand down for a while, Jake." Leaning closer to me, she says to me, "Don't hold out on my, okay?"

"Okay," I agree with a smile. "I'll make sure you are the first to know everything. Keep it out of the papers until it's all over, okay?" She nods, and we go back to our meals. It's settled. Cindy will try to stay out of my way so that I can work without worrying about what she is up to. However, I know her too well to think that this agreement will last for very long. I have a few days, tops, to do my work before the best investigative journalist in the state starts digging again. It's in her DNA. There's no way to deny it completely.

Chapter Three: Very Few Options

Over the years as a police officer on the street I built up a trust with several former criminals who have become confidential informants. Whenever I have questions about what is happening on the fringes of our society, they can offer answers that will help move along an investigation. Of course, there is a certain amount of quid pro quo expected among these people, and I am obligated to meet them part way if I want to solve some cases. Chase McDowell, a twenty-eight-year-old confidential informant I have know for three years, is one of my better go-to guys. He's the one I have decided to see today about information that could lead me to the leaders of the syndicate.

“Hey, man,” the young man says to me as he walks up to my car. “Nice new digs, brother.”

“Yeah, I guess the department has been good to me,” I say as he looks over my new car.

“So, you graduated out of the rank and file and now you are a big dog? Nice.” As Chase smiles, his crooked, dirty teeth cause me to wretch a little. Though he has gotten himself out of a lot of what he had been involved in just a few years ago, Chase is still addicted to certain drugs, and those drugs are slowly eroding what is left of his teeth.

“I've moved up, yeah,” I say with a forced smile. “Speaking of moving up, I was wondering if you could tell me anything about this new money laundering gang that has moved into the city over the past year.”

“Money laundering?” Chase laughs a little as he shakes his head. “Man, that’s white-collar stuff. You normally come to see me about smaller potatoes.”

I nod my head. “I know that’s been the case in the past, Chase, but I could really use your help on a bigger fish. So, do you know anything?”

The man nervously looks around before turning his attention back to me. Leaning toward my car window, he asks, “Have you got a few bucks on you? I haven’t had a decent meal since yesterday, detective.”

The police department has a petty fund box where we can sign out money for confidential informants. We normally are not allowed to make any payouts unless we get some good information first, but I can see that Chase has something he is willing to share if he can get a few dollars to loosen his tongue. So, I reach into my pocket and pull out a twenty-dollar-bill and hand it to him. “What do you know?”

Chase looks around again. “This is big shit, man. It’s not like the sort of shit that has gone down around here before. These people mean business.”

“I know that, Chase. What I need to know is if there is one or more people running it all, or if it’s just a collective of local gangs.”

“Both,” he tells me quickly. “Somebody moved in and started gobbling up the smaller gangs and thugs, man. They have been told to either join or die.”

“Join or die?” I sit back in my car’s seat as I think about the brazenness of the new syndicate. “Are they actually threatening to kill others?”

“I don’t think it’s as much a physical threat to people as it is to their way of life. The money launderers need a lot of room to do their thing, so they need businesses to either sell out or work for them. Since a lot of these businesses are part of some of the gangs around here, it makes sense for the new guys to come in and try to move them out of the way.”

“How are they doing it?”

“Buyouts, mostly. Physical takeovers if they feel forced to do it.” Chase looks down the street. “They patrol these neighborhoods as if they are the police, man. They act like they own the place.”

“I see. What else can you tell me, Chase?”

Again, the confidential informant looks around nervously. “Look, I can’t do much for you, but I know of someone who can.”

“Who?”

“The Tenth Avenue Mob.”

“Shit,” I say with a chuckle. “That’s a penny-ante bunch, Chase.” I have dealt with the TAM before, and they are made up of nothing but a few drug dealers and pickpockets. They hardly rise to the level of a gang that would know anything about the new criminals in the city.

“No, they are for-reals, man,” Chase replies. “They want to help you.”

“Help me?” I shake my head as I look down the street at the rundown buildings in the neighborhood. The blight that has come into this part of the city has been very severe over the last decade, which is probably why crime has skyrocketed in Rockport. “How do they even know me, Chase.”

He looks away for a moment before turning his eyes toward me. “I told them you are a solid dude. They want to work a deal with you.”

I chuckle again before asking, “What sort of deal do they want and what do they claim to know?”

Chase leans closer to my car window, causing me to recoil a little as I begin to smell his odiferous body. “Their leader is an old lady by the name of Mama Risa. She’s willing to give up the name of some of the head honchos if you are willing to put in a word for her son Ricky.”

“Ricky?”

“Ricky Escovardo.” The name suddenly rings a bell with me as I think about a case more than two years ago in which a drug dealer in the neighborhood was arrested for peddling his wares on a street corner nearby.

“Ricky Escovardo?” I repeat as I shake my head. “He’s already been convicted and sentenced. I think he’s supposed to serve ten to twenty, right?”

Chase nods his head. “They want him out of jail, man. In return, they will give you the names of some of the biggest guys in the money laundering gang.”

It would take a phone call to the governor’s office to get the man out of prison, and although the mayor of our city is a close political ally to him, there is no guarantee that it would happen at all. Even if he was agreeable, it could take months to affect the clemency request and release. I don’t have months. I need information now.”

“He has a younger brother, right?” I look up at Chase. “Samuel? Is that his name?”

Chase’s demeanor changes a little as he looks down at me. “Sammy Escovardo, yeah.”

“He’s up for felony theft in excess of ten thousand dollars.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard.” The confidential informant sways from side-to-side as he nervously begins to follow my meaning.

“I can help him since that was my case. I can get the prosecutor to go easy on him and maybe just give him some kind of extended probation instead of prison.”

“They want Ricky.”

“I know they want Ricky,” I reply. “But they can’t have him. He’s already inside and that means begging the governor to let him out. It can’t happen right now.”

“They won’t work with you, man,” Chase tells me as he shakes his head from side to side. “It’s Ricky or no-go.”

“Well, then, it’s no-go.” I start my car and act as if I am about to drive away. Suddenly, Chase puts his hands on my car door.

“Wait, man. Just wait.” He steps back from my car as I turn it off. “Just give me a minute, okay?” Chase turns and walks away as he pulls a cell phone

from his pocket. He's not much for owning very many personal items, but a nice cell phone has always been in his possession. It has long been my thought that it is financed by some of the criminal gangs nearby. Chase is not just a confidential informant, but he is also a very sharp eye to those who hire him to watch for rival gang activity.

"So?" I say as he turns back toward me and puts his phone into his pocket.

"Sammy by tonight," he tells me with a stern look on his face. "Or no deal."

I nod my head. "I think I can swing that. He will have to be okay with some close supervision for the next couple of years, though. The prosecutor won't just turn him loose without that."

"Deal." Chase puts his hand out and I shake it while thinking about where it has probably been.

"I expect good information, Chase. I need names and places where they meet. Anything the TAM's can offer would be nice."

"They'll make good on it," he promises. "They want Sammy back."

"Why did they go for Ricky, then? Why not make the deal at first for Sammy?"

“Sell high,” Chase replies with a smile. “Always try to get the most out of a deal but be ready to settle for less, right?”

I can't help but laugh a little as I nod my head. “I guess you're right.” It's odd to think that Chase has gotten himself into so much trouble over the years for doing such stupid stuff. He's obviously an astute businessman in his own right, if not in any legal interpretation of it, and he is a good negotiator for the small-time crime families in the city. They look to him to share information that they want to be shared, so a quick phone call to Chase is a smart decision on their part. It makes Chase a valuable informant as well.

“Will there be anything else?” he asks as he stands up.

“Hand them my card,” I say as I pull my detective's business card out of my pocket. “They can call me at that number or they can have you call. Either way, if they give me the information in time, I'll have Sammy out by dinnertime. Otherwise, he spends another night, okay?”

Chase nods his head. “Understood, detective.” He gives one last dirty smile before turning and walking away from my car. I watch him round a corner and disappear behind a building before I start my car and carefully pull away from the curb.

“I hope they fucking know something,” I say about the Tenth Avenue Mob as I drive down the street. If they do, this case could be over sooner rather than later, and I can move on with other things in my life. Cindy could also

get that Pulitzer Prize she has been wanting for several years as well once she reports on the whole investigation and arrest of the heads of the syndicate. This will be a win-win for the two of us once I get the information I need and begin to make the arrests. It's my hope that soon everything will come together, and Chief Sanchez will be happy with the results.

Chapter Four: A Rolling Boil

“I know something,” my wife says quietly as I walk into our bedroom. It has been a long day at work and I have been looking forward to getting some sleep tonight.

“You know something?”

“Yeah.” Cindy looks nervously at me as she sits back in a small chair on one side of the room. “I found something out today.”

My stomach rolls as I shake my head. “I told you to stay away from this case, honey. What have you done?”

“Nothing,” she tells me with an uncertain smile on her face. “At least, not today. I may have set something in motion a while back and it’s finally come to fruition.”

“Shit, Cindy. What is it?”

“Keep in mind your promise, okay?” She looks at me with the same sort of expression she uses when she wants something done around the house. It works for her, and I rarely can tell my wife no when I see her pouty face.

“Promise?”

“Yeah, the promise you made about me getting first dibs on the story.” I nod in agreement as I wait for her to tell me what she knows. “I have a guy who knows what is going on with the money laundering, Jake. He says he knows things and he’s shared a little with me today.”

“How do you know him?” I ask as I become concerned that Cindy may have gotten involved in something that could cause us both problems later.

She shrugs her shoulders. “Let’s just say that I have known this guy for a long time, Jake. He has provided me with a lot of information over the past couple of years when I have needed something for a story. He’s golden.”

“Golden?” It’s a term I have used with her in the past when referring to my own confidential informants. “How so?”

“He’s inside, Jake. Not very deep inside, but inside enough that he can feed me little tidbits of information occasionally.”

“Shit, honey.” I take a step back and rub the stubble on my face. “That’s not what I want to hear that you have been up to. This group of criminals are not the normal sort, Cindy. They are pretty fucking dangerous on a good day.”

“I know. He’s told me the same thing.” She focuses her brown eyes on me as she adds, “He knows a lot, though. I have to follow up on what he has been telling me.”

“What has he told you?” I ask, my curiosity getting the better of me.

Cindy shuffles her feet a little on the floor as she sits back in her chair. “He tells me there are several in the leadership, but only one has the top spot, honey. Only one can call all the shots.”

“One guy?” It’s not unheard of for a crime syndicate or family to have just one primary leader, but it’s not the way a money laundering operation typically operates. It’s normally a cabal of several smaller white-collar criminal operations that have merged into one umbrella group. “Who is this guy?”

My wife flinches a little as she thinks about telling me. “He’s young, Jake. Very young.”

“How young? Preschool?” I chuckle a little at my own attempt at humor, but Cindy is having none of it. “Okay, fine, how young?”

“Twenty-three,” she replies with a straight face.

“Bullshit.” I shake my head as I guffaw. “There is no fucking way some twenty-something runs this sort of thing. It’s just not going to happen. Now, if you were to have told me this was a small street gang, I would have no trouble believing you. But to say that a guy who runs a hundred-million-dollar operation is in his early twenties doesn’t jive with what I know about criminals, honey. There’s just no way.”

“It’s true,” she insists. “He’s young and he’s ambitious. He has taken over for his brother, who was about ten years older and much more experienced.”

“What happened to his brother?”

“He’s dead.”

“How?”

Cindy shrugs her shoulders. “I have no idea. My source could not say for certain whether he had been killed or if he shot himself full of drugs and overdosed. At any rate, this young guy is the boss.”

“What’s his name?”

My wife takes a quick breath before replying, “They call him Kid Sid.”

“What?” I laugh a little as I shake my head. “What the fuck kind of name is that, Cindy?”

“It’s apparently the sort of name that several of the bigger gangs in the city take note of and respect, Jake. They are loyal to him for the most part, so his age doesn’t matter. The name sticks because he is so young to begin with.”

“Twenty-three.” I still have trouble believing what my wife is telling me, but I remind myself that she has often been right when I have been wrong in these sorts of situations. Cindy tends to groom very capable sources, and when she uses them she gets some very nice information from them. “Who is the source?” I ask.

My wife shakes her head. “I’m not telling you that, sweetheart. I have to protect my sources no matter what.”

“Honey,” I say to her as I go and sit down on our bed nearby. “You know that I have a job to do. I’m trying to stop a very large organization from causing financial ruin in our community. They are hurting people. Who is the guy feeding you this information?”

“Nobody,” she tells me as she looks back at me nervously. “Don’t ask me that again, okay?”

I feel myself get a little irritated as I think of how close I am to nailing whoever is running the syndicate if I can get a bit more information. “Dammit, Cindy, I need to know who this guy is and where I can find him.”

“No,” she says plainly. “And honestly, I would have expected you to have been more understanding than this, Jake. Of all people, you know how my job works. You know that I can’t reveal my sources to the police.”

“It’s just to me,” I assure her. “I don’t plan to turn the guy in or to go after him for something else. I just want to know how much more he knows.” I try to muster a kind look for my wife in hopes that she will have pity on me and my need to solve this case. However, she holds hard to what she believes and what she has been trained in her career as a journalist.

“No, Jake. It’s not happening.” She gets up from her seat and turns toward the bathroom. I follow her inside and watch as Cindy gets her toothbrush and puts a dab of toothpaste on the bristles.

“You don’t know much more, do you?” I can sense it as I watch her in the mirror. “Though you want to know more, you have no idea about any other aspect of this guy’s life or those around him. You are as lost as I am on this.”

Cindy stops and looks at me in the mirror. “Yes, Jake, I’m lost. Whenever I have made inquiries about this Kid Sid character, all I get is crickets. People just don’t want to talk about him at all.”

“Can you blame them?” I say to her. “I mean, he apparently doesn’t like people digging into his life. Detective Racine can attest to that.”

My wife turns and looks at me. “What if I can get closer to this guy? What if I can just listen in to what he and his friends are up to?”

I feel a chill go across my shoulders as I think about Cindy getting anywhere close to a member of the syndicate. “What do you mean by getting closer, honey?”

She spits out the last of her toothpaste and rinses out her mouth before walking past me and back into our bedroom. “My source tells me that there are several bars that now belong to the crime syndicate we are looking into. He says they are looking to hire some help soon.”

“Hire some help? What kind of help?”

Cindy struggles at first to be honest with me, her eyes searching for something else to look at besides my face. “A couple of the bars are looking for dancers, Jake.”

“Dancers?” I look into my wife’s eyes and realize what she means. “You mean, they want fucking strippers, right? Seriously, honey, you want to take your clothes off in front of horny men?” I take a deep breath as I allow her plan to sink in. “You can’t do that, Cindy. That would put you so far into their business that if they find out who you are you might disappear. You

use sources and informants to find things out. You don't become a fucking stripper."

"Jake, just hear me out..."

"Fuck no," I say forcefully. "You are not going to go and take off your clothes for these assholes, Cindy. I won't allow it."

"It's just nudity," she tells me. "It's not sex or anything like that. All I would have to do is dance a little and let them see some skin."

"Some skin," I huff as I shake my head. "You're not showing any fucking skin to those vermin, Cindy. Not even your wrists."

"Dammit, Jake." Cindy walks past me and out of the bedroom. I follow her into the living room and she turns just as she gets to the sofa. "What is your problem? You act like I'm some kind of delicate peach that can't be allowed to do her job. Are you really that male-centric that you can't imagine a woman doing something like this?"

"I have absolutely no probably imagining a woman going undercover, sweetheart, but you are not trained to do this sort of thing. Woman or not, you could get yourself killed before you even know they have pulled a gun on you. If you had been through some training, that would be very different. It has nothing to do with the fact that you are a woman, though."

“It always has something to do with that when the two of us are involved, Jake.” Cindy looks hard at me as she thinks about what else to say. “I’m going to do it.”

“No, you are not.” It’s not the sort of thing that I would normally do with my wife, to put my foot down and pull rank. However, I am the police officer in the family and she is the journalist. My seasoned experience in this matter wins out.

“Fuck you,” she says calmly. “I already have an interview for this Saturday. I will be going to do this whether you approve or not, Jake.” Cindy sits down on the sofa and turns on the television as she allows it all to sink into my mind.

“You can’t do this, honey. This is crazy.”

“Then I’m crazy, Jake. This is what I do for a living. I investigate when people are doing something wrong and I tell the public about it. They deserve to know what has been happening behind their backs all this time.”

“You will get yourself killed,” I say with a snarl. “They won’t give a shit that you are just an innocent woman looking to win some fucking Pulitzer Prize, you know. They will put a bullet in your head and walk away laughing. Please don’t do this.”

Cindy takes another deep breath as she sits back in her seat. “Look, I understand your concern, which is why I would like you to come along with

me and pose as my body guard and manager.”

“Bodyguard?”

“Yeah, I understand a lot of the girls hire bodyguards if they feel that they need them when they go to dance. The bars generally accept the idea that they have one around, and sometimes they double as bouncers for the bars. It’s a win-win situation, really.” Though I don’t like the idea on its face, it could work. If Cindy can get close to those who dance at the bars as well as to the management there, she might find out where this Kid Sid lives and whether there are others at the top of his organization. I might be able to get this case wrapped up very quickly if we do this.

“Damn,” I say as I realize this might be my only shot. “If we do this, you have to promise to keep it only to stripping, honey.” I feel myself get hard as I say this to my wife.

“Just stripping. Got it.” Cindy smiles widely at me. “We can do this, Jake. We can find out who this guy is and then you can bust him. This is a foolproof plan.”

“I don’t think I can say that,” I tell her, “But it might be a halfway decent one.” I struggle for a moment to think the idea through before I tell her, “Fine, we will try it your way, okay? Just be ready to run if I tell you to run, Cindy. Okay?”

“Yeah, I can do that.” She smiles at me as I sit down to watch television with her.

“So,” I say after a couple of minutes. “Naked.”

“Just the top, I think,” Cindy replies.

I shake my head. “I think it will be a little more than that, honey. We will have to wait and see, though. We will just have to wait and see.”

Chapter Five: Divisions in the Family

“Hey, man, thanks for seeing me.” Chase, my confidential informant, sits down quietly at the seat opposite me in the booth at the restaurant. A greasy spoon of sorts, I didn’t pick this place because of a love for the apple pie served here. I chose it because it is on the other side of town away from several businesses where it is believed that the syndicate is working to launder illegal drug money.

“Not a problem. What do you have for me?” I take a sip of water as I wait for whatever Chase has to show me.

He fidgets around in his seat for a moment before telling me, “I don’t have anything, detective.”

“What?” Grimacing toward him, I ask, “Then, why are we here?”

Chase takes a deep breath as he looks around the small restaurant. “They won’t do it.”

“Who won’t do it?” I reply as I put my glass of water back down on the coaster in front of me.

“The TAM’s. They have decided that they can’t give you any information on the syndicate.”

“They can’t, or they won’t?” There is definitely a distinction in my line of work between the two words, though I have found that when dealing with the criminal element they sometimes do not know the difference. Either they want to cooperate but don’t have the resources to do it, or they simply have decided that working with me is not a profitable venture on their part.

“Maybe a little of both,” he tells me. “Look, the heat has turned up on everyone involved, detective. These syndicate guys have put the word out on the street that they will be looking for snitches.”

“Really?” I shake my head as I lean forward on my elbows. “Did you remind the TAM’s that that little prick of theirs doesn’t get out of the charges he has on him if they don’t cooperate?”

Chase shrugs his shoulders. “What good is being out of prison if you’re dead, right?”

“So, they have been threatened directly? Or are they being paid off as well?” I’m angry at this point as I consider that this one defection from an agreement we had could sink my entire case.

“I don’t know about any money, but I’m pretty sure they are worried about what could happen to them or their business interests if they come out against the new guys. They are politely refusing to help you in any way.”

Chase moves around in his seat nervously before telling me, “Look, I need to get out of this business as well, detective. Things are really unsettled around town and I want to leave this area as soon as I can.”

“They’ve gotten to you too, then?”

Chase shakes his head. “I haven’t been told directly that they are coming for me, but I have heard some things about police informants and what they plan to do with them. I’m not going to hang around to see if they have anything shitty in mind for me, if you get my meaning.”

I nod my head before taking another sip of water. “Dammit, this fucks up the whole works, doesn’t it?”

“I’m sorry,” Chase says as he puts down his own glass of water. “I wish things could be different, but they are coming down hard on people. This is not going to end well, I’m afraid.”

“No, it probably will not,” I admit as I sit back in my seat. Looking up at my confidential informant, I ask, “Is there anything you can offer me before you pack up and leave town?”

Chase looks around nervously again as he thinks about my request. “I guess I could let you in on what I know, but you need to give me a day or two to get out of the city before you start going after people with what I tell you. Is that a deal?” The young man looks hard at me as he waits for me to accept his offer.

Though I don't like making this kind of promise, I realize that it is pretty much the only way I'm going to get information from Chase at this point. "Sure," I say as I study his worried expression. "What do you have?"

He quietly clears his throat as he leans forward on the table. "They are buying up everything on the west side of town right now. Bars, nightclubs, gas stations, and even a grocery store or two. They need more businesses so that they can launder the money through them."

"How many businesses?" I ask as I fold my hands together on top of the table.

"At least a dozen or more," Chase replies. "Most of them are smaller places, but there are a few high-dollar establishments that have been around a long time. The syndicate is paying a lot for these places to get people moved out faster. Soon, they will be running dirty money through every legal business in the entire city."

"Damn." I look around the room as if I feel someone is watching me. It's probably the hyper-vigilance that Chase has at the moment that is affecting me to a degree.

"A name," he says quietly as he pushes his hand toward the napkin dispenser. As he pulls a napkin from the holder, a small slip of paper drops from his hand. I reach nonchalantly toward it and also pull my own napkin from its spot, scooping the paper into the palm of my hand. "Not here," Chase says quietly as he wipes the condensation from around his water

glass. “Wait until you are in your car.” I drop the napkin to my lap and then carefully stuff the paper into my pocket.

“Have you been followed?” I ask in a whisper just as I lift my water glass to my lips. Chase nods his head once as he moves his own glass around on its coaster. “Where is he?”

Though he doesn’t look around, his thumb extends from one of his hands toward a man who just sat down at a table nearby just a couple of minutes ago. It’s why Chase has suddenly become much quieter as we have been speaking. “So, how’s your wife?” he asks me in normal tone.

“Good,” I say as we try to make conversation that sounds mostly innocuous to anyone who cares to listen. “She told me to say hello to you.”

“Oh, that’s nice.” Chase feigns a smile as he takes another drink. “And the little ones?” My confidential informant has never met my wife and I’m certain that he knows I do not have children. However, this might be an attempt to keep the man who has been following him from knowing who I am.

“Well, Jesse is getting really tall now and Isaac is teething, so I guess all is good with them.”

“That Jesse. He’s going to be a basketball player, huh?” We both laugh with a mix of nervousness and genuine humor as we listen to each other speak about a family that does not exist.

“And your family?” I know Chase has a sister and maybe a brother, but that’s about all I know. More than likely the syndicate knows this as well, so I try to parlay this into something that will be more believable.

“Shana is doing better, thanks for asking.” Chase gives a wary smile. “She’s been in rehab now for a month and it seems as if she is doing really well with the program.”

“Oh, that’s great.” I lean forward and pat the confidential informant on his hand. “We have been worried about her for a while. Send her our love, okay? We will be thinking about her every day.”

“I will,” Chase replies just before taking another sip of his water. “Hey, look, I need to get to work on something this afternoon. When would you like that water heater installed?”

My confidential informant has been working recently as a handyman, and from what I have heard is actually very good at the job. If the truth were told, I would probably think first of hiring a guy like Chase to install a water heater if I needed one installed. The only issue is that I try to keep my work separated from my personal life. “Saturday would be fine,” I tell him. “Maybe around ten in the morning.”

He nods his head and says to me, “Ten it is, man. Thanks for thinking of me for the job.” Chase reaches across the table and we shake each other’s hands. The grip feels strange, as his clammy palm betrays the fear he has

from being followed and watched by the man at the table nearby. “I’ll see you later, okay?”

“Yeah, I’ll see you.” I watch as Chase gets up from his seat and walks out of the restaurant. Though I can see that the man is interested in my informant, he doesn’t immediately get out of his seat to follow him as I have presumed that he would.

“Can I get your order now, sir?” a young woman asks as she walks up to my table.

Startled at first by her sudden appearance, I reply, “I guess I’ll have the nachos, please.”

“Beef or chicken?”

“Beef, please,” I reply with a smile as I look up at her.

The server jots down the order and asks, “Where did your friend go?”

“Well, he had some work to get to this afternoon. I suppose he wasn’t as hungry as he thought.”

The server frowns a little as she says, “I hope I didn’t do anything to run him off. I mean, I know I was a little slow getting back to you guys...”

“Oh, no, no, it’s nothing like that,” I assure her. “He’s just a busy guy, that’s all.”

“Understood,” she says with a smile. “I’ll be back soon with your order, okay?” I nod and smile at the young woman before watching her walk away. It’s just now that I notice the man at the table nearby is no longer here.

“Where the fuck?” I look around slowly so as not to be so obvious. If he is still around, I don’t want to tip him off that I am looking for him. “I hope you are good at losing a tail,” I say for Chase’s benefit, though he is no longer here. Though the young man is simply a confidential informant, I really do care about what happens to him. He has had a difficult life and deserves at least some happiness to come his way. Chase has served his time for the crimes he has committed and made restitution as well. I bear him no ill will as he tries to get out of the city as soon as possible.

Settling back into my seat at the restaurant, I pull my cell phone out of my pocket and read a text message from my wife. “Just thinking about what we talked about,” she tells me. “We need to talk about this some more, Jake. I can help.” I take a deep breath as I put my phone on the table. Maybe she’s right. Maybe Cindy can help me where others cannot. My only source has dried up and for now I am out of options.

Chapter Six: Against a Wall

“I still don’t like it,” I reiterate as Cindy and I take a walk through the park near our apartment. “I don’t like it at all.”

“I know.” She squeezes my arm tightly as she looks up at me with her dark brown eyes. “Jake, it’s risky. We both have risky occupations, and yet we continue to do our work no matter what. It’s in our blood, honey. I want my story and you want your arrests.”

My wife is right. We both are highly driven individuals who want to be the best at what we do. Sometimes I think that this might be a serious hindrance to our marriage, but at other times I believe that it’s this characteristic that binds us so tightly together. We understand each other. We each know how the other thinks. “Fine,” I relent as I shake my head. “But this has to be done in a way that is as safe as possible.”

Cindy smiles at me in a way that causes goosebumps to run up the back of my neck. “You know that in college I did the wet tee shirt thing, right?”

I recall the stories my wife shared with me a few years ago about drunken parties where she allowed guys to pour water over a white tee shirt she was wearing without a bra underneath. Though I found the idea highly erotic at the time, I have since not liked the thought of having Cindy show off for other people. “I remember you telling me about that,” I reply. “You’re a few years older now.”

My wife's face turns sullen as she asks me, "Are you saying that I don't have the body for this anymore, honey?" I have the feeling that she might see my observation as being a commentary on the way she looks, but it couldn't be further from the truth.

"Sweetheart, you look amazing. What I'm saying is that you are old enough now that doing something like that should not be the sort of thing that you would accept so easily. We're talking about you getting naked in front of three or four dozen guys at a time while they are drinking. I'm not sure that you understand just what you are in for with this."

"I understand what this means, Jake," she replies with a bit of a snarl. "I've been to strip clubs and titty bars before."

"Really?" This surprises me a little as I have never suspected my wife would visit such places. "When?"

"In college. You know how people can be in college, Jake."

"Yeah, I guess so," I say as I think of the four years I spent getting a degree that has done me virtually no good in my current profession. "So, you are okay with the idea of letting people see you naked on stage while you dance?"

Cindy nods her head. "It's not that big of a deal, Jake. People get naked all the time in some places. Nudist camps are still really popular, and I've even seen our neighbor get a little sun in the back yard before."

“Mrs. Jansen?” I say with a shocked expression. Cindy nods her head and I feel the contents of my stomach rise just a little. Mrs. Jansen is one woman I don’t care to ever see in the nude if I can help it. “Okay, fine, some people like to strip down and let everything air out. It’s just that, you would be naked in front of a lot of people, Cindy. That bothers me a little.”

“It bothers you?” She smiles as she stops with me along the trail. “Jake, you do understand that it’s just nudity, don’t you? I won’t be prostituting myself out or anything like that. They will just get to get a glimpse of my body, not screw me in a back room.” We both laugh a little, though I’m sure my wife can tell that this doesn’t really put my mind at ease about the whole idea. “Look, we need to get past this, Jake. For the sake of both of our jobs, we have to treat this professionally.”

“How the hell can I treat this professionally when my wife will be showing off for other guys in a bar, Cindy?” I smile as I pull her close to me. “Do you even know where to apply for a job?”

“They are all over the place, Jake,” she tells me as we begin to walk again. “They are buying up a lot of the bars and some of the clubs.”

“Yeah, my informant told me that earlier today.”

“The guy you have been getting information from for the last couple of years on the street?” I nod my head. “And what else did he tell you?”

“Not much. He told me the same thing you just said, that they are buying up everything so that they can move more money. So, if we go to the west side of the city, we can probably find one of their places pretty easily.” I stop to think before asking, “How will we know which bars or clubs, though? They aren’t going to advertise that they have changed ownership and that now the money launderers are in charge.” We laugh together again as we turn to walk back to the car.

“They might,” my wife says as she reaches into her pocket to pull out a small notebook. “I have some information here from one of my sources.” Cindy begins to thumb through the notebook as we go to have a seat on a park bench. “Here it is,” she finally says. “There is a way that you can tell which businesses are under new ownership, Jake.” She passes the little notebook to me, which surprises me a little since she is a journalist and I am, by profession, a police detective. “Look right there.” Cindy points toward a phone number at the top of the paper.

“So, what?” I say as I look over at her. “It’s a phone number. Whose is it?”

“All of the businesses are being put into separate business trusts, right?” I nod my head. Just this morning I had someone at the police department look into whether the businesses being bought or sold in the city are going into the same umbrella group. They are not, which is probably the smartest thing to do on the part of the syndicate. “Even though they are all in different trusts and groups, they have this phone number somewhere on their signs and other places of information.”

“Shit,” I say as I look at it. “So, if they have been bought by the syndicate, they have a phone number that leads back to whoever is in charge of those businesses directly?” Cindy nods her head. “How did you think of this?”

“Like I said, I have my own sources, sweetie. He told me about this phone number and even said that their customers of the laundering side of the business are able to know where to go because of the phone number.”

“Damn.” I shake my head as I think of how simplistic this idea is. “We have been looking at all sorts of things to try to determine just what they do to link them all together, and it turns out to be a fucking phone number.”

Cindy smiles at me as she pats me on the knee. “So, I have a place or two that I could go in to try out for the dancer position.”

“Where?” My wife points out two locations on the next sheet of paper in her small notebook. “Shit, honey, are you serious? These are two of the most disgusting places in the city.”

“They are the most likely to have the top brass from the syndicate show up, too.”

“I suppose your source has told you this as well?”

“Of course.” Cindy takes the small notebook from me and tucks it into her pocket. “These two places are accustomed to girls coming in to get a job with a boyfriend or bodyguard in tow.”

“Bodyguard, huh?”

“Yeah, a bodyguard. It’s a pretty common practice now with girls who have become a bit more popular with the clientele.”

“But you haven’t been working at clubs, honey. You don’t have clientele to be concerned about yet.”

Cindy giggles a little as she replies, “You’re right, honey. But what I do have is an overprotective father who doesn’t want his little girl getting hurt while she pursues her dreams to become an actress.”

“An actress.” I almost guffaw as I look over at my wife. The idea of her becoming an actress is the equivalent of someone looking at me and assuming that I am kindergarten teacher material. “Then, the plan is to play up this idea that you want to get more exposure so that you can become a movie star?”

“That’s the plan, sweetheart.”

“Shit.” I shake my head as I think about the whole plan and where we would have to go for her to try out to dance. “Naked, Cindy. You would have to be fucking naked.”

“You can learn to live with it, Jake. You have to.” My wife stands to her feet and pulls at my hand. “Come on, we have a lot to do.”

“Like what?” I ask as I stand up and begin walking with her.

“Like going to a shop and picking out an outfit. They will expect me to try out when I get there, and I can’t just take off a tee shirt and jeans. They will want to see me do something on stage for the guys they have there.”

“You want me to shop with you for some kind of sexual outfit? For other guys to see you in? Are you kidding?”

“Get used to it,” Cindy tells me. “We have to do this, honey. Our backs are against the wall now and we need to work what we know as quickly as we can. The faster we move, the more information we will get before they discover we are not the real deal.”

“And then they kill us,” I say with concern in my voice. “I still don’t like this.”

My wife stops and pulls my face down to hers. We kiss for a moment, her tongue entering my mouth to find mine, tasting me as I get a wonderful sensation in my pants. It’s been a while since we have really done anything with each other, so this is a pleasant surprise as we stand together in the park. “I can do this, Jake. We can do this.” Cindy turns and leads me along the sidewalk as we leave the park and make our way toward some shops just down the street.

There is an eerie feeling that I can't seem to shake as we walk, though. A feeling that someone is following us and watching our every move. I brush this idea from my mind as I remember the man in the restaurant and how he disappeared not long after Chase left. Constantly reminding myself that they are not after me, I begin to think of what I can do to keep us both safe. Though I am inclined to go along with her in this venture to secure more information, I am not oblivious to the dangers involved. Things could get bad in a hurry, so I will have to use all my police instincts to get us through this safely. I will have to watch for any signs that the syndicate is aware of our attempts to find them out.

Chapter Seven: Meant for the Stage

“Mr. Gallagher,” my wife says to the man sitting at the end of the bar at the gentlemen’s club. She extends her hand and tells him, “I’m Lisa Adams.”

The middle-aged man smiles widely as he reaches out and takes her hand. “Well, hello, Ms. Adams. It’s good to finally be able to put a face with the voice.” His eyes move up and down as he takes in Cindy’s body. My wife is an attractive woman, only five-four in height and just a bit over one-hundred-fifteen pounds. An athletic sort, she works out three or four days a week at the local gym and occasionally participates in a marathon or two. Though I have tried to keep up with her, I have quickly found over five years of marriage that Cindy is far more athletic than I will ever be. She’s built for it, and I am always thankful for this when I go to bed with her.

“It’s good to meet you,” my wife tells him. Turning to me, she says, “This is Brian, my manager and handler.”

“Bodyguard,” the man says with a slight chuckle. “That’s what you mean, right?”

“Bodyguard?” I shake my head. “I just do business deals and represent Lisa any way I can, Mr. Gallagher. One day, she will be an actress in the movies.” My wife and I have agreed that I should try to avoid the title of bodyguard, hopefully disarming those surrounding us as much as possible.

“Okay,” he says to me with another chuckle. “Whatever you say.” Looking at Cindy, he says, “You told me on the phone that you want to dance. Have you ever done anything like that, Ms. Adams?”

My wife looks at me before answering him. “Like my manager says, I aspire to be an actress, Mr. Gallagher. Dancing in a club is one of the stepping stones I plan to use to that end.”

“Dancing?” He shakes his head. “Most ladies do not dance in clubs to get a leg up in an acting career. Why are you really here?”

Obviously a shrewd man, I decide to tell him what Cindy and I have already discussed would be our backup story. “Look, Lisa is needing to make some quick cash as well. There’s not much else she can do for work that will allow her as much time to be able to go in for auditions as being a dancer will. Honestly, she doesn’t want to work as a server in a restaurant or as a clerk at a gas station. Lisa needs good work for good money.”

The older man smiles as he looks at me. “Now that sounds like the truth,” he says as he looks back over at my wife. “Okay, so you understand that this is not ballroom dancing, right?”

“I understand,” Cindy answers meekly.

Mr. Gallagher clears his throat. “You are expected to take off your clothes while you dance. You get that this is a part of the job, correct?”

My wife nods her head as she looks at me briefly. “But he gets to stay with me, okay? I would just feel better knowing that Brian would be here with me.”

“Of course,” he replies as he looks down at a notepad. “Well, we should get on with the interview then.” The club manager looks over at the bartender and tells him, “We are going to stage three, Mark. Be sure to give us a little music over there for the show.”

“Show?” Cindy look nervously at the man.

“Well, of course, sweetheart. You can’t expect me to hire you without having at least a peek at what you can do on the stage, can you? This is a sort of audition for the part, if you like. It’s standard procedure when a new lady comes in and wants a job.”

My wife looks at me nervously before turning her attention back to Mr. Gallagher. “Nude?”

“Full nudity,” he confirms. “Don’t worry, your friend can come along too and make sure that I don’t take advantage of you.” He laughs a little as he walks around the bar and begins to make his way to the stage at the far end of the club.

“Come on,” I say to Cindy as I take her arm. “We either do this or we leave, honey. It’s up to you.”

“We do this,” she answers as her face turns a light shade of pink. “Oh, shit, I’m really about to do this, Jake.”

“Yeah, you are,” I say quietly into her ear. “Just be convincing, okay?” I look down at her as we walk to the end of the large room and Mr. Gallagher has a seat close to the stage.

“So, what you need to do is go back there through that door.” He points toward a small door that opens to one side of the stage. “Get yourself ready and come out once you hear the music come on. Dance around a little first, and then begin to tease off some of your clothing. Start with your shirt, then your pants, then finally your bra and panties. Take your time and remember that the typical dance should last five or six minutes. You want to give the audience as much of a show as possible if you want to get the maximum tips.”

I look around the club and see that only a couple of guys are drinking here at this time of day. Cindy and I decided that coming in the early afternoon would probably be the best time to catch the manager available to speak with us. “When does business pick up?”

Mr. Gallagher looks over at me. “Around six in the evening or so. It gets really hopping around here at eight and then keeps busy until about eleven o’clock or midnight. Of course, that depends upon the time of week as well as the time of year.”

“I see.” I nod my head and sit back in my chair.

“Start the music, Mark,” the older gentleman says to the man at the bar. He nods his head and some music begins to stream out of a couple of large speakers on either side of the stage. Cindy walks out while trying to smile in our direction. “Give us a little dance, sweetie.” My wife begins to sway to the music a little as she reaches out toward the pole on stage with one hand. “That’s it. Show a little guts in your performance, Lisa.” Mr. Gallagher smiles widely as his eyes follow every move she makes, causing my cock to stiffen a little. I’m surprised by the effect, as I thought I would have found the idea of another man watching my wife dance very irritating.

I nod at Cindy as I watch her twirl around the pole. “She’s good, huh?” I try to play up my wife’s performance to the man beside me.

“A little offbeat, but we have girls who can work with her to correct that,” he replies. “Go ahead and take off your tee shirt, honey,” he says to her as he continues to watch her move.

Cindy’s eyes go to me as she begins to pull up on her shirt. “Go ahead, show him what you can do, Lisa.” Though it feels strange to encourage my wife to get naked in front of someone else, I like the thought of seeing her do it. Slowly, her hands pull her light blue tee shirt over her head so that her B-cup, perky breasts are hidden only by the small lacy bra she is wearing over them.

“Very nice. Move around the pole a little.” Cindy does as Mr. Gallagher asks, her athletic body moving right to the slick, shiny rod that stretches from the stage to the ceiling. I begin to wonder to myself just how many women have made their way around that pole and how many men have watched them do such a thing. I would have to imagine that there have been dozens if not hundreds of women who have danced here, showing off their breasts and nether regions to the men in attendance. There is honesty on this stage of the sort in which most women would not care to take part.

My wife begins to pull down her pants to reveal a matching pair of thong panties just beneath them. “Holy hell, she has a nice body, doesn’t she?” The manager of the club looks over at me as he smiles. “She needs more work on the routine, but she has the sort of body a lot of guys would love to just stare at. I haven’t seen any stretchmarks or cellulite yet.”

“She’s practically flawless,” I admit quietly. “It’s why we think that we can get her into acting.”

The man nods his head. “You might be right.” Looking at my wife, he says to her, “Go ahead and wrap this up, okay? You have two minutes to get the rest of it off and to make your way to the edge of the stage. You need to have a grand finale here in front of us.” Cindy nods and reaches around to remove her bra. It only takes a moment for her beautiful breasts to spring out from behind her bra as she drops it to the floor. She is obviously embarrassed to have a stranger stare at her chest, but I get even harder as her small, pink, hard nipples point straight out at us.

My wife pushes her panties to the floor as well, her waxed muff now visible for Mr. Gallagher to gawk at as she wraps one leg around the pole and

swings around. “Dammit,” he says as he elbows me. “She is so fucking hot.”

“Yeah, she is,” I reply as I try to move and adjust my cock without letting the manager or Cindy see me do it. I turn and see that the two men already in the club have moved from the bar to the stage to watch the impromptu show.

“Bring it on in, sweetheart,” the manager says as he beckons my wife over to the edge of the stage. She walks over as she looks from me to the other men around the stage. Getting down on the floor, Cindy sits and opens her legs slowly so that we can watch her small pecan open. “Holy fuck.” I can sense the Mr. Gallagher would love to reach out and play with her clitoris, and I almost invite him to do so, but I restrain myself for fear of offending my wife. The last thing I need is to cause her any worry right now.

“Is she new?” a guy next to me asks as he pulls some money from his pocket.

“Just hired her,” Mr. Gallagher responds with a smile. “Let her know how welcomed she is here, guys.” The two men both put money on the stage next to Cindy as she spreads her legs wide open so that they can get a good, close-up view of her pussy. She then surprises me as she reaches down and fondles herself with her fingers for a moment.

“Motherfucker,” I hear one of the other men mumble as he leans forward to get a better look.

“That’s right. She’s my newest dancer.” The manager turns to me and offers his hand. I shake it and he tells me, “Have her here on Saturday afternoon at four o’clock sharp. Lisa is going to headline that night and we will see just how good she is in front of a real crowd.” He pauses and adds, “We will have a few other girls here that night as well, and they can show her the ropes a little. Also, there will be the other things she will be able to get a little cash for.” Though Mr. Gallagher doesn’t tell me exactly what he means, I can see by the expression on his face what he’s getting at. Sexual favors are very common in places like this club, and more than likely Cindy will be asked to perform them. I’m not comfortable with that, so my wife and I will have to have a serious discussion about how she is going to avoid doing something of this nature.

The music stops, and my wife gets up from the stage. She collects the money sitting nearby and turns to get her things. “Another dance,” one of the men says with a smile on his face.

“Now, guys, save it for Saturday. Come back then when she is fresh and ready to go.” They get up from their seats and walk back over to the bar, disappointed that the dance is not going to continue. “So, be back here then, okay?” Mr. Gallagher smiles at us both before turning and going back to his paperwork at the bar.

“Fuck,” Cindy says as she begins to shake. “Help me get these on, Jake.” I reach out and help my wife off the stage and then pull her tee shirt over her head. “I don’t care about the bra or panties. I just want out of here.”

“Are you alright?” I ask.

She nods her head without looking at me. “It’s just harder than I thought it would be, that’s all.”

“Yeah, I can see why.” My cock is still a little hard as I help her get dressed, but I work to keep that from her. “Are you sure you can do this, Cindy?”

“I can do it,” she says immediately. “We need to find out about this group of money launderers, Jake. There’s no other way to do it than to get close to them.”

“There is always another way.”

“No, there’s not. Our sources and informants are drying up, honey. This is going to be how we crack into the organization. I can do this. Trust me.” Cindy gives a brief smile as she finishes getting dressed. “Let’s go home. I want a shower.” Together, we walk out of the club, passing the bar and speaking a few niceties with the bartender and the manager, before leaving to get into the car. Very little is said between us on the way home, and maybe that is for the best. My wife has had quite the afternoon, considering she took her clothes off for strangers for the first time in her life. Cindy is a strong person, and I admire her for it. I just hope that I am strong enough to control my own urges as we walk down this dark path together.

Chapter Eight: Dancing for the VIP's

Though my wife has been dancing now for almost a week, I can't seem to get used to the idea that she is showing off her naked body to other men. It makes me horny, to be sure, but it's still so strange to me. "Shit," I say under my breath as I sit a short distance away from the stage and watch Cindy dance around the pole. She has gotten very good at this, especially since a couple of the other dancers have taken her under their wing and given her some pointers.

"Dance on, little angel!" I hear one of the horny club customers say as he watches my wife slowly remove her top to reveal her perky breasts. "Damn, I'd like to suck on those!" I almost get to my feet to go over to the man to teach him a little respect, but I then remind myself of how important this case is to me and to my wife. Both of our careers are on the line to some extent. We need whatever information we can glean from this place as she dances.

Cindy's tiny shorts stay on this time, as it is only her first dance of the evening. The song ends, and she goes to the front of the stage where she collects the money sitting on the floor. As she does, a man offers her more money to touch her breasts. She declines his offer, in part because it's just not something she has come to allow yet, but mostly because it is against club rules as well as the local city ordinances. Cindy can be nude in the club, but there is nothing sexual supposed to happen.

As my wife leaves the stage, a man approaches her. He's good looking, maybe thirty-five years old, and dressed in a nice sports jacket. I have seen him here before, maybe two or three times, and each time he watches my

wife he gets a big smile on his face. There is no doubt that he likes to watch Cindy move around on stage, but this is the first time he has approached her like this. As he hands her several bills of cash, I realize what is going on. “Lap dance,” I say to myself as I briefly catch a glance from my wife.

She turns and leads the man toward the VIP section of the club, a large room with several comfortable sofas where men can pay extra to be entertained away from the riff-raff in the lager part of the club. As they enter the room, I see Cindy hand the money to a man at a small table. He’s the bouncer for the room, and he typically keeps an eye on what happens with the dancers while they are inside the room with clients. However, he soon leaves after looking at the man who is with my wife.

“Important,” I say quietly as I watch the man go to one of the far sofas. I need to get closer to the two of them without causing him to become suspicious, so I make my way to a walkway just behind where they are going to be seated. Customers are never allowed along this walkway, only employees, so I know that he will not see me as I am just a few feet away.

“You are a beautiful woman,” I hear the man say to my wife just as I get to the area just behind their sofa. “A very beautiful woman. What is your name?”

Cindy clears her throat before answering, “Lisa.” I can sense that she is a little nervous as she sits down beside the man. It’s only the sixth time she has come to the VIP area with a man, and each of the previous visits involved a simple dance in private. This one, however, seems to be starting out far different than her previous experiences.

“A beautiful name for a beautiful woman.” The man reaches down and takes one of Cindy’s hands. Pulling it up to his lips, he kisses it lightly before releasing it. “My name is Darien.”

“It’s nice to meet you,” my wife says as she looks around. Her eyes suddenly meet mine, but then turn away so that she does not tip the man off that I am nearby.

“Very nice to meet you as well,” he replies. “I have watched you for a couple of nights now, and I think you are probably one of the most talented girls in the club.”

“Thank you.” Cindy forces a smile as she looks at him.

“That’s why you are back here with me now. I really need something good to help me relax tonight. Do you know any dance moves that could get my mind off everything from today?” The handsome man smiles as he puts one of his hands on my wife’s knee.

“Um, sure,” she tells him as she pats his hand. “Long one or slow one?”

“Long one, of course.” The longer song sets cost considerably more money than the shorter sets. The one my wife selects for the man will cost him fifty dollars just to enjoy watching her dance. Of course, there are the unspoken extras, such as allowing him to touch her ass or her breasts.

“The long one it is, then.” Cindy reaches around the man and presses her fingers into an LED display just above the sofa on the wall. Sound begins to softly move out from the speakers hidden on each end of the leather piece of furniture. My wife then gets up and begins to move her body around provocatively for Damien.

“Very nice,” he says as he leans back in the sofa. “Show me your breasts.” Cindy does as he asks, dropping her small bikini top again, allowing her breasts to move close to his face as she straddles one of his legs. He reaches out to touch her soft mounds, but she moves back.

“Not so fast,” she says with a smile. “It costs more to touch. If you want to touch, I will need another fifty.” The man doesn’t bat an eye at the idea of handing my wife more money as he reaches into the breast pocket of his jacket.

“How much to feel of your pussy too?” He looks longingly at Cindy’s crotch. She has yet to pull down her small shorts.

“I don’t do that,” she tells him nervously as she glances in my direction. “The manager...”

“He’s not here,” he tells her. “Besides, he knows me, and there won’t be any trouble for you.” Damien pulls a one-hundred-dollar bill out of the roll of cash he has in his hand. “Will this allow me a touch?”

Cindy looks at the money and shakes her head. “I don’t do that. I’m sorry.”

The man huffs a little as he pulls two more bills just like the first out of the roll and places them on the sofa. “How about this, then?”

My wife is becoming a bit more nervous as she looks at the money and then at the man. Allowing another man to touch her pussy crosses a line for my wife, and we have already talked about how she would refuse such advances while in the VIP room. There have not been any men ask to touch her pussy yet, though, so this is her first time to have to refuse such a request. “I don’t know what to tell you, Damien. There are strict rules...”

“Sid would never put up with a manager keeping a girl from an honest living,” he tells her quickly as he puts two more hundred-dollar-bills on the sofa. “That’s four hundred now. Can I touch your pussy?”

“Sid?” My wife perks up a bit as she looks intently at the man on the sofa. She sits down on his lap and becomes more seductive as she runs her hands around his neck. “Kid Sid?”

The man nods his head. “You’ve met him?”

“No,” she admits. “But I would like to sometime. Do you know him very well?”

Damien smiles wryly at my wife as he tells her, “Sure, I know him pretty well. Maybe I could introduce you to him sometime.”

My heart thumps hard as I realize Cindy has found a way in to the man who is purported to run the entire money laundering operation. This is our chance to get some kind of meeting with him. “Okay,” she says to the man on the sofa. “You can touch it.” Cindy picks up the money and puts it on the table beside the sofa. She pulls down her shorts to reveal her smooth, waxed muff.

“Motherfucker,” Damien says as he admires my wife’s pussy. “That looks so soft.” My wife steps closer to him as she turns red in the face. The music hasn’t ended yet, but it must be getting very close. Cindy puts one foot on the sofa so that her soft labia open just enough to allow him to see her clitoris.

Damien reaches toward my wife’s twat and gently fingers her clit. “Fuck,” she says lightly as her body bucks a little from the sensation of another man’s finger on her lady bits.

“You’re a little wet,” he tells her as he runs his fingers the full length of my wife’s valley. “Maybe more than just a little.”

“What are you doing?” she asks him as he begins to insert a finger into her wet hole. I fidget with the swelling meat inside my pants as his digit disappears into my wife.

“I just want to feel you,” he tells her softly. “You are so soft inside, Lisa,” he tells her as he pushes a second finger into her. “So fucking soft.”

Cindy seems to be enjoying what Damien is doing to her as she grinds around on his hand a little. “You are rubbing it.”

“Rubbing what?” Damien says with a wicked grin.

“My G-spot.” My wife loves to have her G-spot stimulated during sex. It has always been a big thing with her, and so I often work hard to make that happen for her when we are in bed having sex together. Cindy’s orgasms are intense when she is stimulated just right, and this man appears to know exactly what he is doing as he finger fucks her.

“Do you like this?” he asks my wife. Cindy nods her head. “Do you want to come?” She looks briefly at me before nodding her head again. I can’t believe that she is going to let a stranger fondle her until she has an orgasm. My hardness pushes against the front of my pants and I want to pull it out to play with it. I don’t, considering that at any moment someone could come along and see me.

“Oh, shit,” Cindy moans as Damien works hard on her. He reaches up to one of her breasts and begins to play with it with his other hand.

“I’ll bet you come hard, don’t you?” My wife doesn’t answer as the music ends. Neither one of them seems to notice, though, as Cindy gets closer to sexual relief.

“I’m going to…” My wife bites her lip as she tries to fight the urge to come.

“I know,” the man tells her as he leans forward and begins to gently nip at one of her nipples with his mouth.

“Shit, this is intense.” Cindy reaches out to steady herself, putting her hands on the man’s shoulders. “Faster, please.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he replies quietly. Damien’s fingers move rapidly in and out of her vagina as her wetness dribbles out onto his hand.

“Fuck…ohhhh…”

“Just go with it,” he tells her. “Let it go, sweet lady.”

“Fuck…” As Cindy’s face suddenly turns bright red, her pelvis grinds into the man’s hand and she begins to come. “Uhhh…OHHHH!!!”

“Cindy,” I moan quietly as I reach into my pants and play with myself.

“Ahhhh! SHIT!!!” My wife thrusts her hips back and forth as the man’s fingers move in and out of her. I’ve seen Cindy come hundreds of times before, but nothing has been so intense. The idea of having another man’s

fingers inside her causes her to experience a height of orgasm beyond anything she has felt before. “Naaahhhh!!!”

“Damn, you are fucking horny, huh?” Damien laughs as he leans forward and bites at my wife’s nipple again.

“Ohhh...ohhh...uhhhh...” Cindy pulls his head to her chest hard as he keeps nibbling at her breast. “Fuck, stop it!” My wife gets back from him, causing Damien’s fingers to slip out of her cunt.

“Okay.” He smiles as he sniffs of his fingers and then licks them. “Maybe sometime soon we can have a little fun in bed with each other.” Cindy only nods as she looks down at him, her body still shaking from the sudden orgasm. “I need to go for now, though.” Damien gets up and steps up to my wife, giving her a quick kiss on the lips. “Until next time.”

As he turns to leave the room, Cindy asks him, “Can I meet Kid Sid?”

Damien looks back at her and asks, “Why would you really want to? I’m better looking.” The man laughs a little as he stands in place.

“I just want to meet him,” she replies while trying to cover her naked body with some of her clothes. “I’ve heard of him and I want to be an actress. Maybe he could help me to get a leg up in the business.”

“Oh, you are a shrewd woman,” he tells her. “You want to get the guy with some money to sponsor you in Hollywood, right?” Shaking his head, Damien says, “I doubt he will do it, but you are welcome to try. Maybe he would be willing to help you out somehow. I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you,” my wife says as she pulls up her shorts.

“No, thank you,” he replies as he winks at her. Within a few seconds, the man has left the room and I come down from where I have been hidden.

“Wow,” I comment to my wife as I stop just in front of her. “Where did that come from?”

Cindy shakes her head. “You know what we are going to have to do if we are going to get the information we need, Jake. This is just the tip of the iceberg.”

“Maybe,” I reply as I try to hide my hardon. “It’s still really weird to see you do it.”

“I hope it will always be too weird for you, honey.” We both try to laugh a little as I work to come to grips with what I have just witnessed my wife do. There is a little jealousy on my part, but I think I can hold it off, especially considering how horny this has made me. I enjoyed seeing Cindy with another man. There is no way I would admit such a thing to her, but I did enjoy it thoroughly. There is a high likelihood that this is not the only time

she will do this for another man. At least, not judging from what I have seen so far.

Chapter Nine: The Underbelly

“Jackson Tiel,” I say as I look at my laptop screen. “A nice list of prior convictions for lots of white collar crimes.”

“It’s the sort of guy we are looking for, right?” Cindy gives me a quick smile as she finishes fixing her hair and makeup while looking in the dresser mirror.

“Yeah,” I reply dryly. “But I’m worried about going to his house, sweetheart. He’s not the type of man to be screwing around with.”

“It’s just some dancing,” she tells me as she turns around to face me. “So, what do you think? Do you like my hair up like this?” I look at my wife’s light brown hair and admire the way she has put it up in a frilly, fun do. She looks younger this way, which I’m sure is the point of the hairdo in the first place. Cindy will be absolutely attractive to the men at Mr. Tiel’s home, which worries me a little. Dancing is one thing, but the last thing we need is to be trapped in an unfamiliar place without backup. The mansion is far enough outside of the city limits that my police department would have no jurisdiction to come to our aid, should we need it.

“It’s risky,” I insist. “A little too damned risky, really.”

“Not risky enough.” Cindy finishes a bit of lip gloss before putting down the last of her makeup. “This guy is definitely a bigger fish than what we

have seen so far, but he's not big enough, Jake. I need an interview with Kid Sid himself."

"I need to slap some handcuffs on him too." I give a nervous chuckle as I think of the way our career goals have intersected with this case. "You just need to be very careful, Cindy. There is no way to know how these guys will behave tonight."

She nods her head. "I know, honey. I'll be careful. You just watch my back, okay?" Cindy reaches over and pulls my head to her chest just as I put my laptop down on the bed beside me. "I love you, Jake."

"I love you too, sweetheart." There are days that I wish my wife wasn't so damned attractive. Today is one of those days as I think of the danger she could be putting herself into. If she were not the beautiful woman that she is, there would be no dance tonight at Jackson Tiel's home, and I would not be worried about her. Sure, there would probably still be the case against the money laundering syndicate, but this would be one less concern that I have to bear this evening.

"We need to go," Cindy tells me as she pats me on the shoulder. "Remember, you are just there as my manager. No guns."

"I know about the gun thing," I reply with a snarl. "I don't like it, but these sorts of people never let strangers carry a weapon into their homes. We will both be frisked at the door."

“You can take care of me without a gun, Jake. I’ve seen what you can do.” Cindy is referring to a couple of years ago while we shopped in a small grocery store in the south of the state. I didn’t have my service weapon on me at the time when a thug walked into the store and shot off a round from his own pistol in the general direction of a cashier. He wasn’t trying to hit the cashier, but he quickly made it understood that he wasn’t fucking around. The thug wanted money, and he wanted it within seconds. That Saturday afternoon, he didn’t notice me as I came up behind him and took him to the floor. There was a look of genuine shock as his back made a deafening thud on the concrete behind him just before I disarmed him. It was a good day, my adrenaline flowing so hard that I thought I might explode. Cindy and I had the most intense sexual encounter of our marriage after we got home that evening.

“Yeah, I can do things,” I confirm. “I’m just limited, that’s all. I can’t beat the hell out of a dozen armed men, Cindy.”

“We will be fine,” she promises as she pulls on my hand. I get up and follow her to the front door. “Here we go.” Cindy opens the door and soon we are in the car and making our way to the mansion outside of town.

The drive feels longer than I thought it should have, probably because of the heavy traffic on a Friday evening. “Dammit, we are going to be late,” I say as I look at my wristwatch. “Fuck.”

“Calm down,” Cindy says as she gently touches my arm. “You have to bring this down a notch, Jake. You can’t go into Mr. Tiel’s home all keyed up and ready for a fight. They won’t let you in if you act like this.”

“I’m fine,” I spit back. “I’ll be good when we get there.”

“Please.” My wife continues to touch my arm lightly. She knows that there are few other things that will calm me the way that her touch will. Cindy is everything to me, which is why I am so worried right now about this whole thing.

“They can’t take you anywhere for a private dance, okay? You have to stay in whatever room I am in. I have to be close enough to help if anything goes wrong.”

“Okay, honey. Just be calm.” I have never had this sort of reaction before an undercover operation of any type. Sure, I get nervous whenever I go into a situation I am not certain of, but it is normally with other police officers and not my wife. This is not an ordinary infiltration at all. There is more on the line that I would have liked to have gambled.

I take a long, deep breath. Cindy is right; I need to be calm to better protect her. “I’ve got this,” I say as I look over at her and smile. “I’ve got this.”

“Good boy,” she says with a playful tone. We continue to travel along the state highway until we reach the mansion, which is overlooking the valley below where the city sits. It’s a beautiful place, with several trees lining the driveway. I’m surprised as an iron gate opens automatically to allow us to enter the lined driveway and make our way up to the home.

“Good evening,” a tall, muscular man in a dark suit says to me as I open my door. “Stand up and hold your arms out at your sides.” I do as he says, allowing him to run a metal-detecting wand up and down my legs, side, and arms. “Clear here,” he tells the man on the other side of the car who is doing the same to my wife.

“And here as well,” the other man says. “This way please.” I nod slightly at the man in front of me as he moves out of the way to allow me to follow behind my wife and the second man. For a moment my eyes lock with the one who checked me, and it seems as if he is stuck in thought. I wrack my brains to see if I can remember his face, but I cannot. If he is someone I have arrested and taken in before, I don’t know it. However, there have been a lot of criminals I have dealt with in my short professional life, and there is a possibility that I could be identified tonight if the wrong person sees me. This prospect just adds to the anxiety that I already feel about his whole situation.

My wife and I walk up a set of steps to the front door of the mansion as the man leads us. He opens the door and nods at a man standing just behind it. The man behind the door stands to the side and I get a brief glimpse of the butt of a black Glock hidden just inside his jacket. Of course they are armed. One of the higher-ups of the syndicate lives in this palatial estate. Cindy, even though she is experiencing much of the same overwhelming visual experiences as I, does not break a step as she smiles and walks along behind the man in black.

“Welcome!” a voice suddenly booms from in front of us. “I have so been looking forward to seeing you here!” A tall man, maybe six-feet-six in height and weighing nearly three-hundred pounds, walks up to my wife and gives her a quick embrace. I narrow my eyes as I try to imagine where I might have seen him before. I don’t think that I know him, but his profile

from the computer is suddenly spot-on. Jackson Tiel is, indeed, a hulk of a man. “How was your drive?”

“Fine,” Cindy says with a smile as she plays with the man’s necktie. “Thank you for having me over here.”

“Thank you for coming.” He smiles broadly, his medium skin tone glistening in the bright lights of the large foyer. “You know, I have not had the pleasure of watching you dance, so tonight will be a first for me as well as for my associates. I am Jackson Tiel.”

I grimace a little as I watch him take Cindy’s hand and kiss it. “Well, Mr. Tiel, I am Lisa, and this is my manager and keeper, Brian McAllen,” she says to the tall man.

Jackson looks at me and smiles. “Hello, Mr. McAllen.”

“Please, feel free to call me Brian,” I say as I smile back at him.

He nods his head. “Brian it is, then. You may feel free to help yourself to any drinks or food that my associates will be enjoying as well.” Jackson looks down at my wife and offers her his arm. “Follow me, madam.” Cindy giggles a little as she takes his arm and walks with him to a large room. I follow behind, but I notice that the man who led us into the house is sticking close to me. Assuming that most of the underworld white collar sort are the same, I would say that this man is my minder. He is here to keep

an eye on me and to make sure that I remain on my best behavior. There is no way that I will be allowed to wander this mansion alone tonight.

“There is your stage, Ms. Lisa. Just behind it is a small dressing room and bathroom if you would care to freshen up and prepare for your show.”

“Thank you very much.” My wife walks across the stage and disappears into a door behind it.”

“So, you actually have a stage in your home?” I say as I try to make some mild conversation.

Jackson nods his head. “I have a stage in here, sure. There are girls who work at clubs and bars all over the area who come in here and entertain my guests and associates on occasion, so it turned out to be a sound business decision to have it built.”

“Is it tax-deductible?”

The man turns and looks at me before starting to laugh. “Tax-deductible?” He laughs some more as he looks at a couple of other men nearby. “This guy is funny.” I smile as well, my mind racing as I count up the number of men in the room. To my understanding, there appears to be around a dozen guys, most in a variety of business suits or business casualwear. “So, Brian, how did you get to know Miss Lisa?”

It's the sort of question I knew would eventually come, especially if I were to be separated from my wife. I'm prepared to answer as I say, "We found each other, really. She was in college and studying in a library and I was taking a course on campus. When I went into the library to find a particular book on a topic, she was at a table reading quietly. As I walked past her, I tripped somehow and ended up falling across her table, knocking everything she had into the floor. It was embarrassing as hell to me, but she thought it was funny." Though I have tried to come up with a good backstory, Cindy convinced me that the best backstory would be one that was overwhelmingly convincing. So, we decided to use our actual meeting story with a few tweaks to keep our identities hidden. I really did meet her in the library and I really did trip. I just didn't hit her table directly.

"That's very interesting," Jackson says as he walks over to a small bar where a man in a black outfit makes him a drink. "So, you are in love with her?" His eyes glare toward me as he takes a sip of his adult beverage.

"In love? No." I shake my head as I look back at him. "I'm just her manager and keeper."

"Bodyguard," he retorts. It is the second time that someone has insisted that I am Cindy's bodyguard. "You keep an eye on her and keep her safe. I get that. I respect it." Jackson takes another drink before putting the glass down on the bar counter. "But I think you are in love with her as well."

"No, we're not..."

“I’m not accusing you of fucking her, Brian. I am only stating a fact that is based upon the way you look right now. You would die for Lisa, I know you would. You are a man who is acutely aware of his surroundings and more than willing to kill any man who touches her in a way that is not okay with you. Brian, you are just like me.” Jackson smiles at me as he walks up to me and pats me on the shoulder. “I guess the question I have, then, is do you allow other men to touch her? Surely you know that she does other things at the club.”

“I know about those things,” I say as I try to keep myself calm. “What Lisa does is her own business. As long as she is making money, I let things play out however they need to play out. That is all that I do.”

Jackson chuckles as he nods his head. “That is a very well-worded response, my friend. You are indeed very sharp.” The hairs on the back of my neck stand up as I consider whether I might have been made. From what I have read about Jackson Tiel, he is a shrewd business man and his insights into the underbelly of illegal trade and financial gain is exactly what the syndicate needs to grow and survive. He is also a man of brute strength and power. It would take very little for him to pick me up and toss me into the mirrored shelving behind the bar.

“I just manage her,” I tell him resolutely. “Yes, I care for her and don’t want to see her get hurt, but my job is my job. She doesn’t pay me to interfere in her personal affairs.”

“Good to know,” Jackson says as he walks past me and waves his friends over to some chairs around the small stage. “Come on, fellas, it’s time to enjoy the show.”

“Would you care for a drink?” the bartender asks, causing me to turn around to look at him. “Wine? Whiskey? We even have several brands of beer.”

“Beer,” I say quickly. “Something dark and bitter.”

“Yes, sir.” He smiles before turning to find a bottle in the cooler behind him. After locating the perfect beverage, he pops the cap and slides the bottle in front of me. “You should be very careful, you know,” the bartender says in a quiet tone. “Mr. Tiel does not like to be shown up by anyone.”

“Shown up? I’m not trying to...”

“I know who you are,” the bartender says nervously. “I know your wife too.” He nods toward the stage, where Cindy has just come out and introduced herself to the group of men.

“What are you talking about?”

“Detective, I know who you are.” The use of my proper title causes my skin to crawl as I look back into the bartender’s light blue eyes. “I have passed information to your wife for several weeks now.”

“You,” I say as I lean toward him. “You are the guy who has given her information to get inside?” The bartender nods his head as he looks past me at the group of men in the chairs.

“You have to be careful with him. Mr. Tiel is the smartest guy in the whole fucking thing. If he thinks you are lying to him, he will make sure that the two of you never get home.” The bartender suddenly stands up straight and wipes the bar with a small towel.

“Chester, how about a whiskey for your old friend, eh?” A tall man sits down nearby and looks at the bartender.

“No,” the man behind the bar replies. “You are not allowed to drink when the boss has someone over here. You know the rules.”

“Just a small one, Chester. Just a taste of the new stuff.”

“No,” he says again. “If Mr. Tiel were to find out...”

“You fucking little cunt.” The man tries to reach over the bar to take hold of the bartender, but the small man is too quick as he scurries away from him. “Come here, you jackass!”

There is a commotion behind me and I turn to see Jackson walking up to the bar. “What’s this all about?”

“This guy, Mr. Tiel. Am I right?” The man nearby looks up and gives a goofy smile at Jackson.

“Are you fucking drunk again?” the large man roars at the man seated at the bar. “Get up, Bobby.”

“Mr. Tiel. I’m sorry, I won’t...”

“Get the fuck up!” Jackson reaches down and pulls the man up to his feet before throwing him to the floor. “I have told you more than once that you are not to drink around here!”

“But, sir, I...” The man stops talking as Jackson nods at two men nearby. They pick up the man and begin to move him toward the door. “Please, Mr. Tiel. I swear it won’t happen again.”

“No, it won’t.” Jackson turns and looks at me and the bartender before saying, “I’m sorry you had to see that. He’s been a problem employee for some time now.”

“Thank you, sir,” the bartender says. Jackson nods and goes back to the seats with his associates.”

“Chester,” I begin to say as I lean forward.

“That’s not my fucking name,” he says with a grimace under his breath.
“That’s just what he called me. My name is Nelson.”

“Fine. Nelson, thanks for the heads-up.” I nod at the bartender before turning and getting up to go to where the music has started and my wife is dancing around. Her top is already coming off, falling to the floor just as I take a seat nearby. Jackson Tiel and his friends are completely enthralled by the sexy young woman they see on the stage, as their hoots and catcalls can attest.

For several minutes Cindy dances, her arms and legs working wildly and seductively around herself and the bar on the stage. She’s a wonderful woman and an incredible dancer, especially after a bit of training by the other ladies at the club. So, at first, I’m not worried as she takes off her bottoms and shows off her bald muff. Not until Mr. Tiel pulls his large cock out of his pants. “Come here,” he tells her with a big smile.

“Shit,” I mutter quietly to myself as I see how big the man’s cock is.

Cindy walks right over to him and goes to her knees. She takes Jackson’s large phallus into her hand and pumps it a couple of times before putting it into her mouth. Shocked, I watch as my wife stretches her lips and cheeks around the massive manhood and wonder how the hell it could fit inside her mouth.

“Fuck,” Jackson moans as everyone watches. Cindy pushes her head down on his nine or more inches of manly meat, trying to take as much of him in as possible, but her small lips cannot reach the man’s large balls. He’s too big for her mouth.

“Here,” he says after a moment of getting sucked on by my wife. Jackson helps her up and then gets up from his seat. The large man gets behind her as Cindy holds on to the back of the chair.

“Whoa,” I say as I get up from my own chair. A couple of men in suits approach me as if to keep me from doing something stupid.

“Do you wish to stop me, Brian?” Jackson says as his large penis gently taps at my wife’s puffy pussy lips. “Are you jealous?”

“No,” I say quickly as I look at the two men nearby. “There’s no jealousy. This is just highly irregular, that’s all.”

The tall man looks down at my wife. “Would you like me to stop, Lisa? I think your manager would like me to stop.”

Cindy looks briefly at me and then at the man behind her. “No, you can fuck me,” she tells him. My heart beats hard in my chest as his cock then begins to disappear into her wet hole. “Oh, shit,” Cindy moans as the full girth of Jackson’s shaft puss her labia far apart.

“Fuck, she’s tight,” Jackson says as he looks over at me. “Well, come on over,” he says as he nods at the men beside me. Each one takes my arms and moves me toward the large man as he begins to fuck my wife. “Does this look good to you, Brian?” I look down and see his hard pecker moving in and out of Cindy. “She’s wet, man. Would you like to take a turn?”

“No,” I say to him coldly. “I’m good.” I try to walk away, but the two men beside me stop me.

“Stay and watch,” Jackson says as he picks up the pace.

“Shit. Fuck!” Cindy almost loses her grip on the chair as the big man pounds her hard from behind. “Oh...”

“She likes it,” Jackson tells me with a smile on his face. “Lisa likes to get it from behind.” His mammoth cock moves in and out as his balls slap my wife’s glistening clitoris, causing her to grip the back of the chair tightly as she begins to get close to an orgasm. “I think she might come, Brian.” There is something about the way he looks at me that convinces me he is doing this merely to upset me. It’s working. I just hope that I don’t try to do something stupid because of it.

“Uhhh...ohhh...” The look on Cindy’s face tells me that the large penis in her pussy is feeling really good to her right now. I don’t know how to feel about this as she tenses up and grinds her ass into the tall man behind her.

“Dammit, I’m going to pop.” Jackson’s eyes close as he humps my wife faster and faster. “Fuck, I’m...uhhhh...” The tall man begins to launch his jism into Cindy’s soft, wet pussy as he comes inside her. “Ohhhh...fuck... FUCK!!!” Slamming into my wife’s backside, he creampie her thoroughly as Cindy begins to come with him.

“Uhhhhh! OHHHH!!!” Cindy grinds even harder into him as she receives his spurting semen. “Mmmmmm...”

“Ohhh...OHHH!!!” My cock gets completely stiff as I watch Jackson spew into Cindy over and over again. There’s enough of his white man sauce that it eventually begins to seep out of her hole and onto the floor below. I gasp as I try to understand how this has so quickly turned into a sexual encounter.

“Shit...” Jackson pulls out of my wife and allows her to stand up. Cindy gives me a quick look before turning around and going toward the stage, the man’s ejaculate moving down her legs in long, white lines.

“Where are you going?” Our host asks as he puts his wilting cock back into his pants. “You still have a couple more hours of dancing to do.”

Cindy looks at me and then back at the man. “Can I go clean up?”

He smirks as he looks over at me and then at her. “No, you can dance like that. Go ahead.” Several of the men in the room let out a few hoots and cheers as they sit down near Jackson. The two men with me lead me to a

chair and have me sit down as well, pissing me off a bit as I look at my wife and the semen running down her legs.

“Fine,” she says as the music turns back on. I watch her begin to perform again, nude and with streams of white spunk running down her legs, as I adjust my cock inside my pants.

Chapter Ten: Only a Little Time Left

It's been three days since my wife danced for one of the higher-ups in the syndicate, and I'm still rattled by his audacity. Jackson Tiel intentionally fucked Cindy in front of me to prove some kind of point that he tried to make with me earlier in the evening. He claimed that I am in love with my client, and I denied it. The man could see through my attempts to distance myself from the character my wife was playing, and so used her to cause me a level of angst that I have not experienced in a long time as it concerns my wife. Though upset at the time, I was able to keep my cool. Cindy had talked me through it before we got to the mansion, which was a good thing. Otherwise, there would have probably been a lot of trouble after the man touched her the way that he did.

“Come in,” Chief Sanchez says to me as I walk through the office door. “Close the door.” I do as he asks before taking a seat in front of his desk. “Where are you in the investigation, Jake?”

I shrug my shoulders as I look down at my hands. “We are looking at a guy who is called Kid Sid around town. We haven't found him yet, but we have made contact with Jackson Tiel, one of his biggest money handlers.”

“We?” The chief looks hard at me from across the desk. “Who else is involved?”

I clear my throat. “I have been able to make contact with a stripper who works at one of the clubs, chief. She has been instrumental in helping me get into the world of this syndicate.”

“What’s her name?” he asks.

“I can’t tell you that,” I tell the chief. “She’s a confidential informant, and I have promised to keep her name just to myself.”

I can see from the police chief’s reaction that he is not pleased with my response. “You won’t share her name with me, Jake?”

“She doesn’t want me to share her name with anyone at all, sir. It was the one promise I had to make to her to get her to cooperate with me. So far, she has been very helpful in finding out that Jackson Tiel is involved with this organization.”

“Yes, I read his file,” the chief replies. “Very interesting guy, huh?” I nod my head as I sit back in my chair. “Detective, you don’t have much time left on this case before I have to close it.”

“What?!” I sit forward in my chair and lean against Chief Sanchez’s desk. “Why?”

He takes a quick breath before answering, “The mayor is concerned about the number of phone calls the city is getting right now. There is a rumor out that we are investigating this syndicate, and the businesses that have been getting harassed have told us that the harassment has worsened since your

investigate began. They are being punished for the police getting more involved.”

“That’s impossible,” I tell him. “We have been very quiet with our work. There is no way that the community should be able to know that there is an active investigation going on.”

“Regardless, there is a rumor going around that there is, and that’s all that it takes sometimes to rattle nerves.” His eyes settle upon me as he adds, “What you are doing is an important and awesome responsibility, Jake, but you only have a week left. It’s all I have been able to buy you with the pull that I have at city hall.” After a moment of thought, he adds, “Maybe it would be a smart move to just shut it down right now.”

I get up from my chair and begin to pace around in the small office. “What the fuck is going on?” I growl. “Are we really so afraid, or does the mayor’s office have something to do with the syndicate and their criminal operations?”

The chief stands up and points a finger in my direction. “You need to be very careful about what you say about the mayor and the city, Jake. If the wrong person heard you, your career would be over.”

“Vindictive, arrogant assholes,” I spit back at him. “That’s what they all are, chief. They use politics to advance their own special interests and then when the kitchen gets a little too hot for them they hop out of the way and let the bad guys march right on through. Why the hell are we having to put up with this?”

“They hold our jobs in their hands, Jake. That is why we do what we are told when we are told to do it. There is no other way in a city like ours.” Obviously frustrated himself, Chief Sanchez looks down at his desk before looking back up at me. “Look, I have bought you a little time. So, I suggest that you do everything that you can to get the information you need to make an arrest, okay? I’ve done my part to open the door, Jake. Get what you can and run out of this burning house before it comes down around you.”

I huff a little more as I think about all that I have done during my tenure with the city. I have been a good and loyal cop, trustworthy enough that I even gained a commendation a couple of years back for my work to bring down a crooked cop in the county. The city council and even the county government seemed to have more guts back then. So, what has happened now? “They are scared that I will find out too much, aren’t they?” I look directly at the chief. “Some of these people have business dealings with the syndicate.”

“None of us know that for certain,” He replies. “All I can say to you, Jake, is that there are some big power-wielding individuals willing to take you down if this stretches out for too much longer. Get what you can by this time next week, and either present the prosecutor enough evidence to take somebody down or get out of the case entirely.” The chief walks up to me and puts a hand on my shoulder. “Look, I know it sucks, Jake, but this is just the way that it is. There is no other play on the table right now.”

I shake my head as I think about what the chief is telling me. Then I say to him, “Fine, I’ll wrap it up in a week. Even so, I’ll have the top guy’s head, Chief Sanchez. That will definitely not be a happy moment for those involved in any illegal business activity. Especially if those people are employed in local government.” After giving the head of the police

department one last sour look, I get up and walk out of the office without another word being said. “Fucking asshole,” I mumble about him as I walk between the detective desks set up around the large room. Though I would have never guessed it any other way, I can see now that the chief of police is involved with the syndicate in some way. He put me on the case thinking that I would fuck it up, but now that I am finding out some things, there are those who want me to stop doing what I am doing. I believe that the chief is one of those people. So, yeah, I’ll lock down a suspect and come back to throw it in their faces. I’ll see that at the very least there are some people to answer for their deeds, whether they claim to serve the best interests of the city or not.

Chapter Eleven: A Bold Confession

“Hey, Lisa, can I have a moment with you?” I use my wife’s stage name as we are in a room with a couple of other club dancers. She nods her head and walks out the door with me into a small staging room where I close the door.

“What’s up?” Cindy asks quietly.

I can feel my nerves on edge as I tell her, “We don’t have much time left, honey. The chief says we are close to shutting down the investigation.”

“What?” My wife looks around the room as if checking to see if there is anyone close enough to hear our conversation. “He can’t do that, Jake.”

“He can, and he will,” I reply. “There are people who apparently have a lot at stake with what is happening here, and they want closure. I think there may be city government people with skin in the game.”

“In the syndicate?” Cindy’s eyes grow wide as she watches me nod my head. “Who?”

“I don’t know,” I respond before adding, “The chief might be one of them, but I don’t know that for certain. At any rate, the mayor and some of his

friends in the city certainly are.”

“That’s illegal!”

“Don’t you think I know that, Cindy?” I feel my muscles tense in my neck and shoulders as I think about the way I have been played so far. I was put on the case to show others that the city was trying to reign in crime, while at the same time the people involved in the city government thought that I would either give up or just not find anything. Now that there is progress, they want me out. They want this investigation stopped.

“I’m sorry,” she says to me quietly as she gives me a quick hug. “What do you want me to do?”

“Just keep working your dance moves. Maybe eventually that Sid guy will show up.” A strange look crosses my wife’s face as I look down at her. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Cindy says as she shakes her head. “I’m sorry, I really should have been completely honest with you in the beginning.”

“Honest? What do you mean, honey?” The look my wife gives me right now is the sort of look I have seen on her before when she has spent a great deal of time trying to keep something from me. There is something here that she has purposely failed to share with me, and I want to know what it is. “Spill it, Cindy.”

Her eyes avert from mine as she tells me, “He’s been here a couple of times already.”

“Who has been here?”

“Him.” At first, I don’t understand who my wife is speaking about, but then a cold chill runs down my back.

“Kid Sid? Are you fucking kidding me, Cindy? He’s been here, you have known about it, and then just didn’t tell me?!” I feel my face turn bright red as I turn and walk away from her. Although I would never lay a finger on my wife in anger, I certainly would be willing to share a few choice words with her that could cause the two of us to be discovered by the club management.

“Honey, I’m sorry,” Cindy says as she walks over to me and puts a hand on my back as I lean over a chair. “I just thought that I would work on getting him used to seeing me before I told you. I need that interview so badly that...”

“You thought I would pull him out from under you,” I interrupt as I look back at her. “You fucking kept the fact that he has been here away from me because you thought I was going to screw up some fucking story you want to write about the guy, right?” I stare hard at Cindy as I wonder why the hell I have allowed her to be involved in this case with me at all. “Dammit, Cindy.” Walking past her, I run my hands through my hair to try to calm

myself down. At the moment, there is nothing that my wife could do to calm me down herself, so it's on me to do that job for myself.

"I'm so sorry, Jake. I know I should not have done it, but there's just so much that I want to ask him before you take him to jail."

"I promised you a fucking interview, didn't I? I would have held up my end of the deal, Cindy, but apparently you are not able to do the same. This is just like every other fucking journalist I have had to deal with while being a police officer."

"I'm not the same," she insists as she puts her hand on my shoulder. I walk away from Cindy as she adds, "I'm sorry, I won't keep anything away from you after this, Jake. I'll tell you everything that I know."

"Everything that you know. Do you promise?" I ask the question in a way that Cindy automatically understands that I am being facetious. I don't trust her now, and that is the part that grinds the both of us. My wife has violated an understanding we had, and it's a major violation as far as I am concerned. "We're done." I begin to walk to the door where the manager is sitting just outside.

"Wait." Cindy runs over to me and takes my arm. "Please, Jake, don't screw this up yet. We are so close to getting this guy."

"You mean that you are so close to getting an interview. You don't really care whether I lock the bastard up or not, do you?" I give a cold stare back

at Cindy as I shake my head. “We don’t need to stay on this path since it’s obvious that you are not willing to keep to your end of things, Cindy. It’s time that we tell the manager that you have an offer to audition for a movie part and that we need to go now.”

“No.” My wife pulls at me again as she looks into my eyes. “Please, Jake. Don’t do this to me. Just let me work this another few days, and I promise that you will have him.”

I have always found it hard to deny my beautiful wife whatever she wants. Cindy has been everything to me for five years now, and every day I have enjoyed going home to her. She is a wonderful wife, but an excellent journalist, which is why I know that I have to allow her to have her time with this man. It’s why I cannot just drop this case while there is still time. “Fine,” I tell her while shaking my head. “But you are not going to keep things from me anymore, okay?” Cindy nods her head as she begins to cry a little.

Wiping the tears from her face, she says to me. “He’s here tonight.”

“No shit?” I look at the closed door. “You have seen him?” Cindy nods her head as she stands close to me. “Where is he?”

“In the back,” she replies. “Always in the back. He’s the guy in the tee shirt and the jeans. He looks like a college guy.”

“A college guy?” I have watched the people who have come into the club every single night that my wife has been on stage. There are lots of people who come in, but most of them are better dressed and from some of the office buildings downtown. Occasionally, there are a few college guys who come in, but one in particular has always had a group of well-dressed men who sit near him. I have thought that the well-dressed men were just there to watch the show as well, but now I realize they are Sid’s bodyguards. They are how he gets around, and he’s just eccentric enough to blend in as if he is some sort of young college man. “Holy shit,” I say as I realize who he is. “Blonde hair, slim build.”

“Yeah.” Cindy looks nervously at me. “He introduced himself to me about two weeks ago and said that his name is Sidney. At first, I didn’t think much of it, but as he kept coming around, I noticed that he had this air about him. Something is very different. So, I have to assume that he is the same guy we are looking for.”

“Hiding in plain sight.” There have been other people who have led criminal enterprises by being in plain sight of everyone else. According to some, it tends to be some kind of sexual desire that they are trying to address by making themselves a part of the public atmosphere, but to me these types of people are simply making it more difficult to suspect them of anything at all. A plainly-dressed college man would never raise the suspicion of a guy like me. At least, not until someone points him out.

“What are you going to do?” my wife asks.

I shrug my shoulders. “I’m not sure what I can do, honey. He’s here and we need to get closer to him. There’s no way I can take him down out there with all the security he has around him.”

“Yeah.” Cindy looks toward the door and then back at me. “I think Jackson Tiel was a test, Jake. I think Sidney used him to check us out and see if we were on the up-and-up or if we were a danger to them. I just wonder what they have decided.”

“We would already be dead if they thought we were a danger, honey,” I say with gravity. “It’s sad, but true. There are very few people who survive the syndicate if they cross anyone in it. This is why we have to get this thing sewn up before something happens to us.”

My wife becomes nervous as she walks toward the door. “I need to get out there, Jake. Are you going to be keeping an eye out for me while I dance?”

I take her hand and kiss her forehead. “I’ll always watch out for you, honey, no matter what kind of shit you pull.” We both laugh a little as I pull her into my arms. “You just have to be careful what you say out there if this guy comes up to you, okay? Be pleasant, but do not agree to go anywhere with him without me, Cindy. Tell him you have to have me along for the ride.”

Cindy nods her head as she opens the door. “Wish me luck.”

“Good luck, my love,” I tell her as she walks through the door. I follow and get ready for what could be a very memorable night with Kid Sid in the audience. Hopefully he will take the bait and soon his ass will be in prison.

Chapter Twelve: A Surprise Visit

“Hide,” my wife says quietly as she walks into the dressing room after dancing. I have only just gotten here a moment before her, so I’m stunned. Still, I go to a small closet just to the side of the room and wait with the door just slightly open.

After another minute or so, the dressing room door opens, and a man walks in. “Hello again.”

“Hey.” Cindy looks nervously at the closet door and then back at the tall, young man in the room.

“You have been a little bundle of talent around here, haven’t you, Lisa?” He smiles at her as he runs a hand through his shoulder-length mop of light hair.

“I guess.” She smiles at the young man and I realize that she has brought Kid Sid into the dressing room.

“So, how long have you been working here?”

My wife clears her throat before replying, “About six weeks, I think. The time has just flown by, so it could be a week or two longer than that.”

“Six weeks. Wow.” The young man looks around the room as he begins to pace a little. I can’t see any of the well-dressed men who normally accompany Sid to the club, which doesn’t surprise me considering that he probably does not see Cindy as a direct threat. “Where is your manager?”

Cindy shrugs her shoulders. “I think he might have taken a break. He does that sometimes when the nights get a little too late for him.”

“Has he gone home?”

“I don’t think so,” she says. “Just taking a break.”

“Good.” Sid walks up to my wife and reaches out toward her. He runs his hand down her soft neck and onto her bare shoulder. “I like this halter top you have been wearing tonight. It really brings out the glow in your cheeks.”

Cindy shakes her head and smiles slyly at the young man. “That’s bullshit and you know it.” The comment causes me to gasp a little as I watch Sid smile softly at her.

“Bullshit? You don’t think I’m being sincere when I tell you that this is a nice top?”

“I think that you are just trying to flirt with me a little, to be honest. Besides, you know that you are not allowed back here.” Apparently, it has not been made abundantly clear to my wife that the man she is with is a bigwig in this part of the city. That is a smart move, considering we do not need someone figuring out that we are working on a case together.

“I’m not allowed?” Sid smiles at her. “You don’t know who I am?” Cindy shakes her head nervously as the man looks around the dressing room. “I introduced myself to you a while back, remember?”

“I know that,” she says quickly. “Your name is Sidney. The thing is, though, if you are looking for a lap dance, it has to be in the VIP room.”

“Oh, that’s a nice room,” he quips. “Considering that I designed the thing myself.”

“Designed it?” Cindy continues to play the part well as she shakes her head and asks, “Are you the owner?”

Sid smiles at her. “I am the owner, Lisa.” He extends his hand and shakes it as he says, “I’m Sidney Craven and I took this place over from the previous owner about three months ago. You are one of the first hires we made after the change in ownership.” The young man walks up to my wife and begins to use his fingers to play with her hair. “I have heard that you are one of our most popular dancers as well.”

“Thank you,” she says to him. “I have worked hard to get to where I am today.”

“I know you have,” he replies. “You are probably our best example of what a dancer should be, Lisa. As such, I would like to make you an offer.”

“An offer?” Cindy nervously sits down on a stool nearby. “What sort of offer?”

The young man sits down nearby on a small chair. “Well, the sort of offer that would help you to advance your career with us by helping me with some of the needs that I have once in a while.”

“Needs?” My wife looks at him and then at the closet door where I am hiding. “What kind of needs, Mr. Craven?”

“Call me Sidney,” he insists. “All of my friends do.” He leans back in his chair and pats a growing bulge in his pants. “I get to where I need a little extra care in some areas, if you get my meaning, Lisa. Sometimes I need to be serviced to just help me through the day. Sometimes I want to be serviced just because I am bored. The problem has been finding the right woman to do the job, and a friend of mine tells me that you have a knack for making a man happy.”

My cock gets hard as I pull it out of my pants. Gripping it with my hand, I begin to stroke myself while watching Cindy and the syndicate head look

each other over. “You want me to have sex with you, don’t you?” my wife asks.

“Yes,” he replies simply. “Although, that could include just a blow job or a hand job once in a while, I suppose. Sex would be nice whenever I need it.”

“I see.” Cindy sits quietly on her stool as she considers his words. “What would I get in return?”

Sid stands to his feet and begins to pace the room. “That’s an interesting response. I don’t think I have ever gotten exactly that response before.”

“What about my response is interesting?” she asks.

“The part where you ask me what you will get in return. Most people who know me do not dare to ask this sort of thing.”

“But, you’re just a club owner, right? You are offering to promote me, I presume?”

With a slight chuckle, Sid shakes his head as he looks into a mirror nearby. “You are every bit what Jackson claims you are. He told me you would probably be very strong and independent.” Sid turns to look at Cindy. “I admire that in a woman, you know.”

“I’m glad.” My wife seems a little put off by the way the young man is acting, though she knows very well who the hell he is. I am worried that she will not control herself and that she might say something that could get her into trouble. If that were to happen, I’m not sure what I could do to help her.

“The truth is, I own a lot more than just this club. I guess you could say that I am a very wealthy owner of a large corporation.” Sid walks toward my wife and puts his hands on her shoulders. I have money and a great deal of influence. I can help you get whatever you need to get in this city, Lisa. How’s that for an offer?” Sid turns and walks around the room a bit more, almost seeing me peeking through the small sliver of open door at the closet.

“Okay,” Cindy says tepidly. “I guess I could try to help you out occasionally.”

“Excellent!” The leader of the criminal syndicate walks over to her and puts a hand on her breast. “This was nice, by the way.” He squeezes her lightly while looking into her eyes. Though I feel an urge to run out of the closet to help my wife, I know that I can’t do that. I must stay put as I pull gently on my hard manhood. “Let me see it again.”

Cindy lifts her top and pulls it over her head, allowing her perky, small breasts to fall out from behind it. Sid’s hands go to her nipples and he begins to play with each one, causing them to harden and bunch up on her breasts. “So, do you always just take what you want?”

Sid laughs a little as he pulls his hands from her breasts. “Take is such a strong word, Lisa.”

“But you do, right?” I realize as she is talking to him, she is interviewing the man who has just fondled her mammarys. Cindy is a smart, tactical woman when it comes to getting a story for her newspaper. This is a move so slick that I almost missed it.

“I guess I sometimes do,” he tells her. Bending down, the young man takes one of her nipples into his mouth and begins to nibble and suck on her.

“Shit,” Cindy moans as she puts a hand on the back of his head. “Easy.”

“Or what?” Sid asks as he lifts his head. “Are you going to slap me for being so forward with you? Will you punish me for eating your breasts?”

“I’ll come to quickly,” she tells him flatly as she pulls his head to hers. My wife begins to kiss the young man passionately as she runs her hands through his thick hair. It seems almost as if she is horny, taken by the thought of giving in to a man like him. Cindy’s body begins to lust for the man who owns the club, and I begin to lust for her, a small drop of pre-come oozing from my johnson. I use it as lubricant so that I can play with myself a bit more, an orgasm probably lingering in my near future.

“Fuck, you are a little minx,” Sid tells my wife as he pulls away and begins to work on getting his pants down. Cindy helps as she goes to her knees, her hands working expertly at getting his things off.

“How old are you?” she asks nonchalantly as she works his jeans and boxers to the floor.

“Twenty-three,” he says as Cindy takes hold of his manhood. His body lurches a little as she pulls hard on him, a bit of pre-come exiting his cock just as some had from mine earlier. Cindy bends down and licks off the slippery, thick concoction, causing the young man to close his eyes and tilt his head back slightly.

“So young,” she tells him as she plays with his balls. “You must be a prodigy to have taken over a large business at your age.” Cindy bends forward and takes Sid’s cock into her mouth, sucking him down quickly as she forces her chin to his balls.

“Motherfucker!” Sid puts his hands on my wife’s head as she siphons his hose. “Dammit, he told me you could give great head, but fuck!” The young man humps around on Cindy’s face as he enjoys her giving him a blow job. “Um, I guess I just got lucky on the business. My brother ran it first, and then left it to me.”

Cindy keeps sucking him for a few seconds more before pulling off him. She rubs his cock as she asks, “So, your brother ran the business before you?”

“Yeah,” he says while looking down at her. “He was a lot older. He knew what he was doing, but I’m a quick learner.” My wife goes back down on him and he once again closes his eyes. “Fuck...ohhhh...”

My wife pulls off him and clamps the base of his cock with her fingers.
“Don’t come yet,” she tells him sternly. “I’m not finished with you.”

“Shit, I nearly lost it.”

“I know.” Cindy gives the young man a devious smile as she slowly starts to stroke his cock again. “You come quickly, don’t you?”

“Sometimes,” he admits. “It’s just that you are really beautiful. You’re not like the other girls here.”

“Not like them? I strip on the stage just the same as they do.”

“Sure, you do, but there is something different about you.” Cindy pulls hard on his cock and he pre-comes. She slips her hand all over his shaft as she looks up at him.

“So, do you want to come in my mouth or in my hands?”

“Neither,” he says as he helps her up from the floor. “I want to fuck you, Lisa.”

“Shit,” I say quietly inside the closet as I get close to getting off. Though I have come to expect my wife to have to do blow jobs and hand jobs for some other guys, this full sex thing is a recent development. It worries me on the one hand because my wife isn’t on the pill right now. It worries me on the other because she has gotten so far into this world that I think she might begin to like it.

“Fuck me?” Cindy looks at his hard cock as she pulls on it. “I can get you off with my mouth, you know. I can swallow.”

“I know,” he tells her. “But I want to come inside of you, Lisa. I want to do this if you will let me.” Cindy nods at the man and gets up from the floor. She pulls down her small skirt and reveals her bare muff to Sid, who immediately gets even harder.

“Shit,” he says as he runs a finger into her wet pecan. “You are so sexy.”

“Thanks,” Cindy replies as he pushes her toward a dresser.

“Up here.” Sid reaches around my wife and picks her up, setting her down on the edge of the dresser. Opening her legs, he asks, “Can I fuck you, Lisa?”

“Yeah.” Cindy says to him as she leans back. The young man begins to press his eight inches against her tight hole as my wife puts her feet on his shoulders. “Shit,” she moans as he pierces her cavern.

“Fuck.” Sid begins to thrust in and out of Cindy as he plays with her nipples. “You really are tight,” he tells her with some satisfaction in his voice as he fucks her. “Jackson was right.”

“Did you really ask him to fuck me?”

“Yeah,” Sid admits. “I told him I wanted him to sample you, Lisa. We share things sometimes in this business, and I guess you are just another thing that we have shared.” The young man gives a strange smile as he quickens his pace. For her part, my wife begins to play with her clitoris as he moves in and out of her.

“Shit, you’re deep,” my wife complains. She has a shallow cervix when her legs are put back, so there is no doubt that the young man is hitting the muscular ring inside her vagina.

“I like deep,” he tells her as he thrusts harder. “It feels good to hit your cervix, Lisa.” It would seem that Sid enjoys causing my wife a little pain as he fucks her. Her face grimaces a little each time he reaches her cervix, his balls slapping Cindy’s tightly puckered asshole over and over again.

“Shit, this is intense,” she tells him as he rubs against her G-spot. “Damn, this feels good.”

“For me too.” Sid reaches down and slides a finger into my wife’s twat along with his cock. “You’re so wet.” He then pulls it out and pushes it against her asshole.

“Oh, fuck,” she moans as he fingers her anus. My wife isn’t much for that sort of thing, but for a story like this she would probably do just about anything the man wants her to do.

Pulling out of her pussy, Sid pushes his cock against her asshole. “I want to do this, Lisa.” He then pushes into her asshole without my wife first telling him it is okay with her. She says nothing, though, allowing her lover to pierce her tight sphincter with his large phallus. “Oh, wow...mmmm...” Sid lunges hard into my wife as he fucks her in the ass, his balls still slapping her hard. I pull at my own meat as I get close to coming and wonder where I will put my jism when I do shoot off.

“Easy,” my wife moans as he pushes deeply into her. “Shit, this is so fucking intense.” Cindy plays with her clitoris by swirling a couple of fingers over it. She’s wet, really wet, and the moisture from her sweet snapper is keeping the young man lubed and her little lady very happy.

Sid moves faster and faster as he pushes my wife’s legs back to the mirror. “I have wanted to do this since I first met you, Lisa.”

“Me too,” she replies. “Uh...” Her body begins to react to what is happening with her. Each thrust is somehow stimulating Cindy and soon she will enjoy an orgasm with Sid. “This is so intense,” she says for the third time as her abdomen tenses. “So, fucking...nahhhhh!!!” Cindy bucks

hard as the man on top of her beats his balls against her. “Fuck! Oh, FUCK!!! Oh, FUCK!!!” My wife squeaks a little as she screams out with the powerful orgasm that Sid is giving her. “Shit! SHIT!!!”

“No!” I say quietly as I begin to spurt against the closet door. I pull hard on myself and try to be as close to silent as possible as I lose my wad in the dressing room closet.

“Ohhhh!” Sid suddenly spurts his own hot load into my wife’s ass as he slams into her over and over again. “OHHHH!!!” I can only imagine what Cindy’s asshole feels like as he strains to overcome the tightness of her bung hole so that he can deliver his white sauce deep inside her anus. “Mmmm...Lisa...OHHHH!!!” The young man acts as if this is his first time as he pulls my wife hard toward him as he comes inside her. His jism begins to cream out of her asshole as he continues to thrust, and I wonder whether I could ever have anal sex with my wife. Though I have tried many times over, I have yet to actually do it. Cindy has always professed to hating it.

“Uhhh...” My wife wiggles around underneath Sid as she finishes her own orgasm, her body quivering as she relaxes her legs onto his shoulders. She then gives the young man time to finish emptying his nuts into her ass, and as he pulls out she says to him, “You have no idea how nicely I have just treated you, Mr. Craven.”

“Really?” He smiles at her as he begins to clean off his cock and helps her to her feet. “How so?”

“I have never let anyone come inside my ass.” Cindy’s admission almost causes me to come again in the closet, but instead I keep my wits about me and finish cleaning up.

“Was it good?” he asks her. “The way that I did that, was it okay for you?”

“It was great,” Cindy tells the young man. “It was very nice.” She pulls him toward her and gives him a quick kiss on the forehead. “I need to clean up and get ready for my next dance, please.”

“Yeah,” Sid replies as he seemingly comes out of a trance. “You need to get ready. I totally understand.” He pulls his cock back into his pants and then moves toward the door. “Maybe again later this week?”

“Yeah, that would be nice,” Cindy tells him. “Maybe we could talk more before the sex too.” They both laugh, and Sid leaves the dressing room.

I come out into the dressing room, the smell of my nut sauce all around the inside of the small closet. “That was crazy,” I tell my wife as I chuckle.

“This didn’t upset you?” she asks. “You were okay in there? I thought you might come running out and ruin everything.”

“No, I was okay,” I say. “And you were great.” I smile as I look at a steady stream of jism moving down my wife’s legs. “You need to get cleaned up,

though.”

“I know.” Cindy uses a towel on a rack at the end of the room to clean up and soon she has a new outfit on. Before she walks out, though, she looks at me to ask, “Did you jerk off, Jake?”

I nervously look back at her and answer, “Maybe just a little.” A small smile crosses my wife’s face as she leaves the dressing room and I stay behind to have a quick thought to myself. I can’t believe I have just enjoyed seeing Cindy have sex with the criminal mastermind behind the syndicate. I can’t believe that she has compromised enough with herself just to get a story for the newspaper. This woman is so far from the wife I have known for the last five years.

Chapter Thirteen: Coming Clean

Jackson Tiel's luxurious mansion is a ridiculous statement to the opulence afforded to the criminal underbelly of the city. However, to say to someone that what I see right now in Sidney Craven's home is the complete opposite of that opulence would be an understatement. "Come in," the young man says to the two of us as he stands to the side. We walk past the two burly men in black outside the door as we make our way in. Sid closes the door and asks, "Can I offer either of you a drink?"

"I'm fine," I quickly tell him as I smile uneasily.

"And you?" he asks my wife.

Cindy blushes a little as she looks from him to me and then back again. After some thought, she asks, "Do you have any bottled water?"

"Absolutely," he replies with a laugh. As he walks straight into the small kitchen, he asks, "Do you really distrust the public water supply in this part of town so much?"

My wife nods her head and says, "They say that this part of town has a lot of public utility problems, including sanitation and purification. I would prefer to play it safe."

“As do I,” Sid tells her as he gets a bottle of water from his refrigerator. He carries it to my wife and then we go to a small sofa and a small set of chairs to sit down.”

“So, do you live alone?” I ask dryly as I look around.

The head of the syndicate shakes his head as he looks down and laughs a little. Looking back up, he asks, “This is far from what you expected to see, huh?”

Cindy answers first. “Mr. Tiel has more extravagant tastes, I guess.”

“He does,” our host replies as he nods. “Jackson is a little too much of a showboat for my liking.” He turns his eyes toward a painting on the wall of the low-rent apartment. “I think this might be the most valuable thing I have in this place.”

“Who painted it?” I ask while trying to make conversation. I have never known much about art or anyone who produces it, nor do I really care. All I care about is the fact that we are standing in the home of the man who runs the entire money laundering syndicate in our city.

“Who gives a shit?” the young man says with a smile. “I found it at a yard sale last year while on a date with a beautiful woman. It cost around ten dollars, I think.” Sid smiles as if he is recalling some sweet memory, but I can see that there is pain in his thoughts as he grimaces a little.

“We need to talk,” my wife tells him as she puts her water bottle down on a small table in the tiny living room.

“I thought we might,” the man replies with a slight grin. “Go ahead. I am all ears, Lisa.”

Cindy looks at me and then back at Sid as she says, “I’m not really an exotic dancer.”

“Stripper, you mean?” He laughs a little as he sits down in a chair nearby. “Yeah, I figured that out on the first day I saw you.”

“I can dance,” my wife interjects. “There’s no way you could see that I am not a real dancer on the first occasion.”

“Oh, I can tell. You don’t have the same sort of hang-ups as a lot of the ladies in my club. You don’t smoke, you apparently don’t drink...and you don’t do any drugs. These three things are a constant problem for most of the young women who come into my clubs to dance. So, I figured you were something else entirely when I saw you that first night. It’s why I wanted to get to know you better.”

My mouth feels dry as I stare at the young man hard. Right now, I wish I had my service weapon on me. Any pistol or even a knife would be nice, just in case we need to defend ourselves. Unfortunately, the men at the door

would not have allowed us in had we been armed. I'm going to have to rely on my bare hands if anything should happen today. "You mean, that's why you wanted to have sex with her. You hadn't had sex with a woman like her before, so this was a rush for you." I try not to seethe with hatred, but the smug and arrogant attitude of the wealthy young man in the living room with us makes this a difficult task.

"You're right," he offers. "I wanted to see what it was like to have sex with Lisa." He leans forward. "If that is even your real name." Leaning back, he continues, "I thought that you might end it before it ever started, so imagine my surprise when you actually went along with it."

"I'm a journalist," Cindy tells him with an enormous amount of resolve. "I'm trying to do a story on the syndicate in this city and I wanted to get close enough to you to get an interview."

"An interview?" Kid Sid laughs as he folds his arms. "Are you joking with me? You have gone through all of this just to ask for an interview? I could have saved you a lot of extra work had you just come straight to me to begin with and asked."

"You're not exactly in the phone book, are you?" My wife looks at him without fear as she responds. "What I want is an in-depth interview that covers when this all began, who runs it, and why it is inside our city. That's not the kind of story most criminals want to allow to get out to the papers."

"A newspaper reporter," Sid says with a wry grin.

“Journalist,” my wife insists. “I’m not just reporting the news, I am developing a large story that will be seen all over the state, the country, and maybe even the world.”

“Oh, wow. That would make me famous, wouldn’t it?” The young man laughs again as he shakes his head, his eyes turning toward me. “Okay, she’s a journalist. Who the hell are you, then?”

“He’s my bodyguard,” my wife answers immediately.

“Hang on,” I say as I put a hand out toward her. Looking at Sid as I lean toward him, I reply, “Yeah, I’m her bodyguard and I am here to try to keep her safe. But, I am also her husband and partner in this all.”

“Shit.” Sid leans back and laughs hysterically as he kicks his feet just slightly off the floor. “Are you fucking kidding me? You are both married to each other?” He continues to laugh as I look over at Cindy. I can tell that she did not want me to share with him that we are a couple. In her mind, it could make it easier for Sid and his underworld buddies to hurt one or both of us. In mine, however, it lets the man know very quickly just how serious about Cindy I really am. Hopefully he will be less likely to test my resolve is he believes that I might be crazy enough to do anything to protect my wife.

“Can I have the interview?” my wife says as she crosses her own arms and watches Sid finish his joviality.

Kid Sid looks at the two of us and says, “I’ll tell you what. I am willing to give you a great interview if you are willing to do something for me.”

“What’s that?” I ask as I look steadily at the young man.

“Well, I want to have sex with your wife again.” There is no humor in Sid’s voice this time, as he stares directly at me before turning his eyes to my wife. “I get to fuck you however I want, and you don’t get to have an orgasm.”

“What?” My wife’s eyes grow wide as she looks over at me.

“No, this isn’t happening,” I say evenly as I get up from my chair. Taking my wife’s hand, I tell him, “We’re leaving.”

I fully expect one of his men to come in and stop us, but there is just silence as my wife stops me and I look back at her. “I need this story,” she tells me quietly. “Besides, we have already had sex. How is this any different?”

“That’s the spirit!” The young leader of the criminal syndicate stands to his feet and begins to unbuckle his pants. “Just take off your clothes and come over here.”

Cindy releases my hand and turns to do as he says, causing me to breathe hard as I realize that I am losing control of this whole situation. “Honey,

please.”

“No,” she says back to me. “Don’t say anything.” Cindy walks over to the man and begins to remove the tee shirt and jeans she is wearing. It doesn’t take but a minute or so for her to be completely naked in front of the man with a hardon.

“Here,” he says while he leads my wife to the sofa. Turning her away from him, he pushes Cindy down over the arm of the leather furniture. “You are a really beautiful woman, whoever you are,” he tells her as he presses his cock against my wife’s muff. “You are such a nice fuck.” Sid slowly slides his long manhood into Cindy and I just stand and watch as he begins to hump her, not certain how I should react now that my wife as scolded me to back off.

“You’re an asshole,” I say under my breath as I sit down in a chair.

“Yeah, I know,” he replies as he thrusts faster and harder. “But I’m a rich asshole, and rich assholes get to make all the rules.” Sid gives me a strange smile as he grips Cindy’s hips tightly. Slapping one of her hips hard with a hand, he seems to be trying to get some kind of reaction out of me. I know better, though. My wife wants the interview with this guy, and I need to know more about the organization if I am going to take them down. Maybe something in the interview will give me what I need to win a conviction against him.

“Shit,” Cindy says as she grips the sofa cushion. She’s not enjoying the speed with which Sid is fucking her, especially considering she isn’t going

to get off as well.

“Fuck, you’re nice,” Sid says again.

“My asshole,” Cindy whimpers as she turns to look at him. “Are you going to come in there again? If not, can you wear a condom?”

“A condom? Seriously? You didn’t say anything about a condom the other day,” he replies to my wife.

“You went to my asshole, so I didn’t,” she tells him. “I’m not on the pill. I could get pregnant.”

“I hope so,” the man says callously as his balls slap her labia. Sid pushes my wife back down to the sofa cushion as he continues to thrust in and out of her. “I’m close.”

“Dammit.” I feel myself getting hard, but I don’t dare pull out my cock to do anything for myself. Cindy would never let me hear the end of it if I did.

“Shit,” Sid says as he leans over my wife a little more. “Shit...ohhhh...” The young man begins to shoot his wad into my petite wife as his balls hammer hard into her wet pussy. “Ohhh...uhhh...nahhh!!!” His stomach muscles ripple as he moves his hips in sync with the spurts he is delivering to my wife’s wet hole. “Uhhh...FUCK! OH!!!” I want badly to come as

well, but I sit back and feign displeasure at the whole thing. I like seeing my wife fucked hard, but this was probably a little further than anything I would have ever suggested to her.

“Fuck,” Cindy mutters as Sid pulls out of her, his man sauce slowly running down her legs.

“That was a lot,” the young man jokes as he reaches for his underwear. “I don’t think I have come that much in a long time, Lisa.”

“Whatever,” she says as she stands up and begins to work on getting her clothes on as well. Cindy barely makes eye contact with me as she clothes herself. “Are you going to keep your end of the deal?”

Sid nods his head. “Of course I will. What purpose would it serve me to lie to you?”

“I don’t know, but I have a feeling that you lie to a lot of people in your life.”

Sid replies, “Yeah, I guess I do. Look, you have been lying to me for the past couple of weeks, so there’s really not much moral ground for you to stand on.” He gives a disgusted look at the both of us as he begins to walk to a doorway beside the small kitchen. “I’m going to take a shower. Then you can have your interview before I kick you out of my home.” With that, Sid goes into the bathroom and leaves us alone.

Chapter Fourteen: A Stunning Story

A very different man emerges from the bathroom than the one who went in as he walks over to a chair to have a seat. “What would you like to know?” he asks my wife calmly.

“Everything,” she tells him with a quick breath while adjusting herself in her own seat. “I guess we should begin with how you got to where you are today.”

“Ah, the origin story,” Sid replies with a slight grin. “Well, it was never my idea, to be honest. It was more like something that my brother wanted to do.”

“Your brother?”

He nods his head. “His name was James. We all called him Jim or Jimmy and he started out by working in a large company as an accountant.”

“He is older than you?” Cindy asks.

“Yeah. He was about ten years older. Jimmy is gone now, though.”

“Gone?” My wife looks over at me before pressing the young man, “What happened to your brother?”

His eyes turn toward a small window at the side of the room as he thinks for a moment. “Things went south on a deal he had with a couple of members of a street gang in the city. Though he was trying to help them get some money moved from the streets into a bank account so that they could take it out of hiding, they figured he was stealing from them. So, one night while he was working late at his office, somebody walked in and shot him.”

“Shit.” Cindy shakes her head as she writes down what Sid is telling her. “Did they ever find the men responsible?”

“The cops?” Sid chuckles a little before becoming much more serious. “The police are worthless in this town when it comes to finding some sort of justice for a guy who is a known criminal, Lisa. My brother happened to cross white-collar crimes into street crimes, and that was all it took to destroy him.” He runs a hand over his hair before adding, “I didn’t want to be the leader of this thing, you know.”

“You didn’t?” Cindy jots something else down on her pad. “So, why are you here, then?”

“Revenge,” he answers almost immediately. “I wanted to take down the gangs in this city and replace them with something that was less dangerous to the community than a large number of thugs running free in the streets.”

“How do you figure that you could take them down?” I can’t help but ask the question, though I get an annoyed look from my wife.

“If you take away their business, they die. That’s all I was doing at first. I offered to shelter money for those who were doing business in a way that didn’t directly impact others in the city. Though that was a tall order, I watched as some people went from selling meth on the streets to selling black market watches online. It doesn’t pay as well, unless someone can help you hide that money from the government. If there are no taxes, then you get to keep a lot more of it.”

“They are still criminals,” my wife says to him.

“Yeah, but they are criminals who have lost most of their teeth. If a guy is scamming someone out of a few dollars to buy a fake Rolex, I can live with that better than the thought of some young kid getting himself killed because his best friend was doing a deal that went bad.”

“I see.” Cindy continues to write down what Sid is telling her, but I have decided to rely upon my own methods of keeping up with what is being said. Hidden inside my jacket’s collar is a micro camera and audio recording device. I intend to get whatever information I can and run with it, whatever that information might be. “So, you are trying to clean up the city?”

The expression on his face changes some as he admits, “Sure, that was the plan. Then I got rich.” Sid stands up from his chair and begins to pace back and forth in the living room. “All the money started to come in and

suddenly everyone wanted to work with me or for me. That's a lot of responsibility for a guy my age."

I smile a little as I say to him, "You don't live in a nice home because you are ashamed of what this has become. You are afraid that you might be dishonoring your brother's memory."

Though it appears at first that Sid might become angry, he does not. Instead, he nods his head and tells me, "You are probably correct in your thoughts. I don't like the idea of taking all this money and then making a spectacle out of myself the way Jackson Tiel has done. I think it needs to be more about those who deserve some help. There are people who suffer because of the crime in this city, and I want to see it disappear."

"By either absorbing the criminals or running them out of business," I say with some disgust. "All you are is a large corporation of sorts running the little guys over. You aren't getting rid of crime, Sid, you're just replacing it."

"Agreed. But like I told your wife..."

"There's no excuse, though. You are running a crime syndicate that people are afraid of. You have those under you threatening others so that they can enrich themselves even more, and for what? So that you can feel like you might be honoring your brother in some way now that he's gone? You are a criminal, that's all there is to it. The people who work for you are too." There is anger inside me as I talk down to the younger man. He's undoubtedly had a tough time with the loss of his brother, but how can he

claim to be any better than anyone else out there if he's taking and hiding money? How can he be any better if there are people using him to get their own ill-gotten gains into a bank account so that law enforcement will never see it? Sid is trying to play the saint here, and I am just not buying into it.

"There's no excuse," he admits. "That's why I am going to tear down what my brother started and what I have grown."

"Tear it down?" Cindy looks cautiously at the young man standing in front of her. "What do you mean?"

"Brick by brick it has to come down. What better way to do this than to get a newspaper article out about those involved in the syndicate?" The young man looks at the two of us before sitting back down again. "I can give you some names to publish, but I am going to tell you now that there is a lot of risk in this. They will not be happy that they are outed once you print it."

"What sort of people are you talking about?"

"The sort that are not normally associated with crime in the city. The sort that should be protecting the city." A chill runs down my back as I hear Sid make the claim.

"Who?" I say as I try to remain calm. "Is it the police?"

Sid shrugs his shoulders. “Not really the rank and file, but those at the top.”

“The chief of police.” Sid nods his head. “Do you have proof of something like that? If my wife runs something like that in the newspaper, she needs to be able to corroborate what you are saying with someone or some piece of information somewhere.”

“There’s a bank account,” he says calmly as he reaches into his pocket. Producing a business card to a bank in the Bahamas, he adds, “The mayor and some of the city council members are involved as well.”

“Shit.” I look at the card as well as the account numbers on the back of the card. “This will rock the entire city to the core if it’s true.”

“Yeah, it will,” he says with a smile. “Just get all of your shit together before you run with it. Don’t do it piecemeal. I want them all to get hit for this at the same time. Nobody gets away.”

“So, you think there will be charges coming for these men?”

“Racketeering, money laundering, bribery, and extortion. You name it, they have done it,” he tells my wife. “Just don’t print my brother’s name. He doesn’t deserve to have his name dragged through the mud.” Cindy nods her agreement to his request. “So, anything else?” he asks.

“No,” Cindy says, to my surprise. “I want to get right into figuring out what these people have been up to.” My wife puts the card in her small clutch purse as she stands up from her seat. “I’ll let you know when the story is about to run.”

“That would be nice, thank you,” he says with a smile. “Have a safe drive home.” My wife and I leave the apartment and walk right past the two men guarding the door. As we go downstairs, she asks me, “What do you think of all this?”

I shrug my shoulders. “It could be good information, or it could be some kind of smokescreen he is trying to put out to throw us off the trail. Either way, we need to look at all of the angles and come to an educated conclusion.”

“What are you going to do about the chief and the mayor?” my wife asks.

I shake my head as I think of the two men and how difficult this is going to be on the city. “I’ll figure something out. First, I have to be certain that there are no surprises waiting for us in all this.”

“Agreed,” Cindy says as we leave the building. “I’ll start writing and you can start to unravel this case.”

Chapter Fifteen: Recompense and Redemption

“What’s going on?” Chief Sanchez barks at me as I walk into his office with several state police officers.

“Chief Sanchez, I need your badge and your sidearm. You are under arrest.” My heart pounds as I look down at the man sitting in his chair.

“Are you out of your fucking mind?!” His face turns red as he stands up. Two state police officers walk over to him and take hold of his arms, one of them removing his pistol from his belt. “What the hell is going on here?”

“You are under arrest for charges including public corruption, soliciting and receiving bribes, falsifying official documents, aiding and abetting in the commission of felony offenses, as well as a list of other things I’m sure the state’s prosecutor’s office will want to add to the docket.”

“This is insane!” The chief looks wildly at me and at the officers in the room. “I have never done anything wrong.”

I reach into a folder in my hands and pull out a paper that I lay on his desk. “Does this look familiar?”

He looks down at it and his expression suddenly changes. “I want my attorney.”

“I’ll bet you do,” I say with some satisfaction. “So will the mayor.” The state police officers handcuff the police chief and take him outside to a waiting car which will take him to a nearby county for lockup. As of right now, the local police departments, including this county’s sheriff’s office, cannot be completely trusted with the task of keeping an eye on the people who will be coming in today due to their involvement in the syndicate.

“Holy shit, you have really done it.” A state’s prosecutor walks up to me and hands me another file folder. “We have the mayor and even a couple of other members of the city council. The county sheriff’s department has one detective in custody and we are questioning another about what he knows about the money laundering operation.”

“Kid Sid?” I ask as I peruse the file folder. “Did you collect him this morning?” I waited for my wife to get her story into the newspaper before launching the arrests. Just this morning it ran with the early edition, which greenlit me to go ahead and take the perpetrators into custody. Cindy and I have found so much more than what Sidney Craven gave us during the interview, but I think that he somehow knew that we would. The bank account that he gave up links to dozens of other accounts and a large number of people and businesses that have had close ties to the syndicate. For all intents and purposes, the syndicate is finished and those who have been a part of it are either in custody or soon to be in custody.

“No,” the prosecutor says as he shakes his head. “We went into the apartment where you met him, as well as the building where a lot of the business was tied up, but we have not seen him yet.”

“Jackson Tiel?” I ask with some disappointment.

“We got him,” the prosecutor tells me with a large smile on his face. “The guy was prancing along Main Street in a lavender business suit. He’s larger than life, isn’t he?” I chuckle as I nod my head. “Don’t worry. We have a large number of state police looking for this guy. There are road blocks set up everywhere and the perimeter has been pretty much sealed off. If he’s in here, we will find him.”

“Thanks.” I watch the prosecutor turn and go back to a car that is waiting to take him back to his office. “Where did you go, Sid?” I ask into the air around me.

A car pulls up in the parking lot of the police station just as I turn to walk back in. Recognizing my wife inside, I turn and walk up to the driver’s side window of the car. “Hey, what are you doing here?” I ask.

Cindy hands me an envelope. “I think you might want to see this, honey.”

I take the envelope from her and open it up. It’s addressed to Cindy by name, but there is no return address. There are several sheets of paper inside, so I pull them out and carefully unfold them. As I begin to read, I can feel my face become hot. “Fuck, is this a joke?”

“No joke,” my wife tells me. “Can you just get in the car with me and sit down for a minute or two? It makes me nervous that you are reading that

out in the open.” I turn and walk to the passenger’s side of the car where I open the door and have a seat.

“He got away,” I say as I gasp a little. “I guess I should have expected it, but it’s only been a week. I mean, the guy said to run the story, right?” Cindy nods her head before I go back to reading the letter. Inside, Sid explains to us how thankful he is that we have broken up the syndicate with him. Sid lists several more people we may be interested in and blames the organization for his brother’s death. Though I could sense that there was something in him against the idea of running the money laundering operation, I did not feel like he had as much hate for it as he apparently does. “The guy used us.”

“Look.” Cindy points toward a slim sheet of paper that is barely sticking out of the envelope by a corner.

“What’s this?” I say as I pull it out. The name on the front of the long slip of paper is mine, which surprises me a bit. “He knew?” My heart skips a beat as I think of the fact that Sid was apparently not fooled by the way we infiltrated the syndicate. He knows that I am a police detective, he knows that my wife is a journalist for a specific newspaper, and he knows where we live. “All this time, he has played us.” I look at the piece of paper and realize that it is a cashier’s check. “Shit!”

“It’s five-hundred-thousand dollars, Jake.” Cindy’s hand shakes as she reaches over to take it from me. “Is this a trick to entrap us?”

“Entrap us for what? We haven’t done anything.”

“But if we take this...”

“Don’t even think that,” I caution her as I put the slip of paper back into the envelope. “It’s dirty money, sweetheart. We can’t deposit it anyway.”

“It’s money we could use.” Cindy’s eyes watch me finish putting everything back into the envelope before looking back over at me. “Would it really be so bad?”

“Sweetheart.” I reach over and put my arm around her. “This is not the way we want this all to end, right? I mean, you got your story, I was able to take down a huge criminal enterprise including my own chief of police, and apparently the big fish got away. This has ended really well, considering the current situation.” I smile at her as I allow my dry sarcasm to soak in.

“We have this too.” She holds out another envelope with our names on the front of it. “I guess we will never know what happened to Sid.”

“What’s that?” I grapple for the envelope, and my wife finally releases it to me. As I open it up, I ask, “That little asshole is in Barbados?”

“Yep.” Cindy smiles as she taps the first envelope. “That check is from a bank in Barbados. Guess where we might have to go cash it so that it looks more legitimate?” She reaches into the envelope I am holding and pulls out two airplane tickets.

“He wants us to go there?”

“To see him,” she replies. “For another interview. This one would be the story for after the capture of everyone else in the syndicate.”

“Damn.” I can’t help but laugh as I imagine flying to Barbados with my wife. “So, we fly there, we cash the check, and then we hang out with Kid Sid?”

“Sounds like a plan, right?”

“Sounds like a plan.” I lean over and give my wife a quick kiss on her cheek. I have vacation time coming up, and I think I have earned it. Maybe it is time to take a nice trip to an island to clear my head. Maybe its time to get a tan on another man’s dime.

THE END

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