

Patrol Officer Cassie Yole hurriedly rechecked her uniform one last time as she was ushered into the Captain's office. The uniform was flawless, without wrinkle or stain; just like the last four times she had checked it. As she walked through the door, she worriedly ran through all that she could have done to warrant such a visit. A couple of uniform violations from the day she was late for her shift, and then there was the time she had slapped the perp for trying to paw her breasts. But those had been handled by her sergeant days ago. This visit made no sense. She was a rookie, just a couple of weeks out of the academy. What else could she have possibly have done? She pushed it out of her mind. She was going to need to make a good impression on the Captain if she wanted to stay on the force. As good as she possibly could, anyway.

The stony face of Police Chief Stone and the equally grave expression of Detective Allyson "Bulldog" Carlson, the hottest Detective on the force, did little to relieve her tension. Fresh from the Academy, Cassie immediately fell into habit. Marching straight to the huge desk covered with papers, she snapped to attention, staring at a point some six inches above the Chief's grizzled head. "Officer Yole reporting as ordered, sir!" She thought she heard Detective Colson whisper "Christ, she's just a kid!" behind her. Cassie couldn't stop the red from warming her cheeks.

"At ease, Officer Yole" Chief Stone barked. There was concern in his craggy face. He looked a lot like an aged weasel; whipcord lean and still able to throw the younger beat officers around on the mat.

"Yes sir!" Cassie forced her body to adopt an easy posture, hands tight behind her back, stance wide. However, she couldn't release the tension from her body. She kept her face calm, though behind the mask her thoughts were churning as she tried to figure out the somber atmosphere of the office. Was she in trouble? Was she being fired? What would she do if she was kicked off the force? Visions of her working for her father's firm filled her with horror. She didn't want to be an accountant! It seemed like death to her.

"How up to date are you on Detective Carlson's case?" Chief Stone asked bluntly. His steely eyes held hers physically captive.

Cassie was shocked, and tried to come to grips with the question. She glanced at the auburn-haired detective before answering. "Very little sir! I know that there has been two disappearances from the University District and that the investigation is continuing, sir!"

Chief Stone grunted. "Well, I'll be. It seems rumor hasn't made the usual rounds through the departments then." He leaned forward in his chair, eyes intent. "Very well, Rookie, listen up. About six months ago, we received word that a young woman, a Mary Walker, had disappeared while out shopping for groceries. We could find no clues to the mystery of her disappearance. No video, no witnesses. Her phone had been dropped in a dumpster near an alley, but the only prints on it were hers. Then, two months later, a Sally Forester disappeared while walking to her apartment from the University. Her roommate couldn't get a hold of her at all, and said she had her phone with her. We never found it and the carrier couldn't either. Again, there was not a trace and almost no link except their age and hair color. Brown, incidentally." Cassie resisted touching her own short brown hair. "Then, a month later, two women disappeared. Twin sisters Emily and Jordan Drake vanished while walking home from Kelso's Bar and Grill near the university. Nothing for a couple of months, and then this month, three other women have all vanished. All of them while leaving Kelso's Bar."

Colson suddenly leaned forward in her chair, drawing Cassie's attention. "The thing of it is, is that there is no evidence, no sign of struggle. Hell, I'd settle for a damned fingerprint or a boot scuff. The scenes have been wiped so thoroughly that CSU can't even determine if they *are* the crime-scenes. That's where you come in."

"M-me, sir?" Cassie heard her voice crack slightly. *Careful, you idiot! You don't want them to think that your nothing more than another FUN!* Cassie nodded calmly, acting as if they were talking about shopping at Kasey's Boutique instead of setting her up as bait for a kidnapper and probable murderer. Inside though, her mind was whirling. Her academy training had warned her that this might happen, but she had never expected to go undercover so quickly. SO many things could go wrong. Her mind analyzed it from several angles, and unhappily concluded that they were right, it was the only way to catch him in the act.

As if the chief could read her thoughts, he spoke firmly. "Understand that we're not forcing you to do this. You can say no, and we'll find someone else."

"There is no one else." Cassie argued. "I'm young enough to blend in with the college crowd, I have the right build and hair type that he's apparently looking for, and I can defend myself if necessary against him."

"That's correct." Detective Colson spoke. She stood out of the chair and looked at her. "You also have one more thing going for you, in that you're new enough that you won't be recognized as being part of the force. You haven't been anywhere near the University sector, so you'll be an unknown. Hopefully, I'm just being paranoid, but the last kidnapping took place less than forty feet from a cruiser, and the officers inside saw nothing. Are you still willing to do this?"

Cassie thought it over, and made her decision. A nagging feeling told her she'd regret it, but she pushed it aside. "Absolutely sir."

"Excellent." Colson said briskly. "Now, I'll give you the files of the victims and overview of this operation." She continued on while Cassie took feverish notes. She occasionally asked questions and added comments to the plan. It would take a couple of days to flesh out the plan, but now she let the emotions wash over her. She was a member of the force, and on her first major assignment. Cassie was elated and thrilled at the same time, afraid she'd fail and disappoint Detective Colson. She never once gave a thought to the danger she was putting herself in.

Cassie sighed inwardly. This was the...what was it now? Fifth? Sixth bar her group had hit in as many days. The college kids that she had been hanging out with were in a booth nearby, getting drunk on Cosmos and Hairy Ivan's. It was rather pathetic really. She had been undercover for two weeks now, and knew the group pretty well. They had welcomed her on her first day in classes, and had invited her to go drinking with them that very night. She had accepted. Now they hung out every day and went out to a different bar in the District at night. Her bottom knew every barstool and booth in a four block radius around campus. Cassie knew she was fortunate to have hooked up with the party kids as her job meant she needed to be out "on the town" every night, to lure the suspect. Still, she longed for a quiet night in with her cat and Perry Mason.

*Come on*, she urged herself, *Pay attention*. She went back to casually surveying the bar. It was crowded with kids from the University and one of the smaller colleges from across the bay. The din from people laughing and chatting was louder than the precinct on Halloween night. She wondered if the microphone hidden under her left breast would be able to hear more than the general noise if someone *did* approach her. She pushed the thought off. If something happened, Colson was just outside in the unmarked van. She would send in another officer to warn her that the equipment was damaged. She made herself relax and took a sip of the Cosmo in front of her. It was her only one of the night so far, and it was still full.

“Strange, that someone so beautiful would be studying the people around her with the intensity of a starving dog.” The cultured voice behind her made her jump. She began to turn to see who was speaking to her when she felt the room begin to spin. *What? What’s hap...happening?* She watched with a curiously detached fascination as the room faded to black around her. There was a sensation of being squeezed as if through a tight tube, and then nothing.

The street outside was lit by a flickering street lamp and the neon marquee for the bar. It was of a loosely dressed librarian on a stack of books with a martini glass in her hand. The Happy Librarian it was called. How stupid. Colson sighed irritably as she listened in on the conversations around Officer Yole. Most were simple barroom chatting, as couples met and felt each other out. The men and women figuring out who they wanted to spend the night with. It was a dance that was familiar to her from her college days as her badge. She had torn the town up a couple of times in her youth. The memory of a particularly sexy one-night stand made her smile in remembrance.

A sharp voice in the mic interrupted her thoughts. Hello, was someone actually nibbling at the bait? Colson listened closer. Hmmph. That was perhaps one of the lamest pick-up lines she had ever heard of in her career. Colson imagined him as being a dorky twenty-five year old that was probably still living with his mother. Sad. She waited to hear what Cassie’s reply would be, but only heard the sounds of the bar being cut off suddenly. Colson stared at the radio set for a second in shock before trying to check her frequency. She turned

the gain up, but couldn't get any voices. *Shit!* She grabbed her gun and charged out of the van, Sargent Joe Michaels on her tail. The two burst into the bar with their guns drawn, causing a few screams and loud curses from the patrons. Ignoring the spreading rings of silence, Colson rushed to the bar where she had seen Yole sitting earlier. The stool stood there empty, mocking her. She reached for the bartender.

"You!" she snarled. "Did you see where the young woman who was sitting here went?"

The fat man trembled in the grip of the seeming madwoman. "No, ma'am! I swear, she was sitting her just a moment ago! Gave me a big tip early this evening for making her Cosmo, and then just sat there! I swear. Don't hurt me!"

With a snarl, Colson let him go. He didn't know anything. She could see beat officers and more detectives rushing in; while her partner started questioning the patrons and especially the party kids Yole had been hanging out with. It was an exercise in futility, she was convinced. There wouldn't be any trace or witnesses to the snatch. He had done it again! How?! In a barroom full of witnesses, how had he managed to drag Yole out without anyone noticing?! Colson thought about joining the interrogations, but knew she was far too frustrated to do so. She needed...well, what she needed was to slap the cuffs on the kidnapper, but as that wasn't going to happen...

Angrily, Colson stalked out into the night. She wasn't sure what she could do. She stared at the full moon hanging above the Bank building. Wisps of clouds hovered in front of it, making it seem as if it were being seen through the looking glass. Something needed to be done. Something. She walked back into the van and put the headset back on her head. She twisted the volume knob savagely, cranking it up as high as it would go. Through the sound of the static, she thought she heard a moan and a slight grunt. Could that be Cassie? Colson went still and listened intently. Suddenly there was a sound of a door opening and closing. There were footsteps. An unidentifiable noise in the background that Colson took to be footsteps. Then a metallic click. Colson's heart went cold. She had slapped cuffs on enough people to recognize the sound of a bracelet closing when she heard it. The sound was repeated three more times. A creak of a chair, and then silence. What was happening?!

Cassie woke slowly, her head felt like it was going to come off. *What the HELL did that bartender put in my cosmo?* Cassie muzzily tried to remember what had happened to her. She had been in a bar, hadn't she? On some mission for the Force; what had it been? Of course! The University case! She had been sent to troll for the perp! It had been her job to lure him into Colson's trap. Well, it clearly had worked, she thought grumpily. She hoped she got a chance to light into the bastard before they hauled him to jail. Sweat trickled down her face and she reached to wipe it away and felt her arm jerk to a stop. Fear spurted, making her heart jump; the trap had worked, hadn't it?

Cassie opened her eyes to find herself staring at a cheery red ceiling that seemed totally at odds with what she had been expecting. Cassie turned her head side to side, studying her surroundings intently. Her cell was warmly furnished, with merry red and gold walls, her soft, four-poster bed, with a wooden chair set near her head. The walls were decorated with several paintings of city scenes. She recognized one as an aerial view of London; another as the view from Times Square. The last appeared to be the Roman Coliseum. Her bed was set in an alcove with solid walls at her head and foot, which supported the anchors for her fetters. The chains were thick links of solid chain, far more heavy than necessary. Cassie guessed that the size was meant to deter any hope of escape. The cuffs were tight about her wrists, although they had a thin layer of padding on them to prevent injury to herself. Cassie tested them again, and found that her hands wouldn't budge an inch.

The door opened and a robed figure entered, hood pulled well over his face. The shadow prevented her from seeing any detail at all, as did the voluminous robes. They were held by a loose rope at his waist, and looked similar to the robes Hollywood cultists wore. Could this guy get any more cheesier? Cassie found herself wondering. "Who are you?" She demanded. He ignored her questions and sat in the chair. Long pale fingers appeared out of his sleeves as he steepled his fingers. Cassie tried again to see under his hood, but was defeated.

"Good evening, Ms. Yole." The figure said pleasantly, asking whether she was enjoying her shopping while sipping coffee at the café.

The voice had a peculiar effect on her; her heart began hammering painfully in her chest and her body broke out in a cold sweat. Cassie found herself very afraid. She licked suddenly dry lips. "How did you find out?" She managed painfully.

"My dear young lady." He sounded amused, "A simple internet search revealed everything about you. To be perfectly frank, it was rather stupid of the police department to throw you to the wolves in this manner. You were like a young pup set to hunt lions instead of hares. The result is, of course, you lying on my bed."

Cassie shifted on the bed, stretched between the manacles. She froze. "You really think I was sent in unprepared?" She asked him innocently. *Just keep talking, you bastard.* Cassie had felt the mic nestled securely under her shirt. The fool hadn't bothered to search her for bugs! All she had to do was wait for Colson to triangulate the signal and she'd be freed!

The figure patted her arm gently, a master soothing his worried hound. "Don't worry my dear." He told her. "The mic is picking up our voices perfectly and sending them on to your friends. Unfortunately for them, I've blocked the signal source, so they cannot find us. Also, they will find that when they run the tape back, either through a computer or just off the tape, they will find only your voice on the line and nothing else."

The claim was so ridiculous that despite her fear, Cassie barked a laugh. "Right." She scoffed at the notion. "How'd you manage that? Magic?"

The figure raised his hands and held them a foot from his chest. A black twisting flame blossomed to life between them. Cassie stared, stunned. As she watched, the fire formed itself into a cage, with something golden trapped in the center. Oh, God, a portion of terrified brain prayed, it was *her*. The golden girl in the cage was *her*! Cassie couldn't help it, she screamed in pure terror. The figure chanted, placing his hands above her mouth. Cassie shrieked higher, her brain paralyzed. Silence cut in abruptly. Her mouth was still open, but no sound came out. The figure sighed in relief.

"My." He said admiringly. Cassie stared at him, eyes bulging. "You have a powerful set of lungs. I'm impressed. You will make a fine addition to my collection. I suppose we should get on with things, but first." He chanted something under his breath. Cassie watched him as a trapped mouse would watch a hungry cat. A second later and he straightened. "Well, that finishes that. My voice has gone completely quiet to them. I

wouldn't want your friend to overhear my spells now!" He chortled at his own joke; Cassie watched him with an overpowering sense of dread, tinged with a feeling of unreality. This couldn't be happening, her mind chanted, but it was. He placed his hands just above her breasts. She tried to shrink away, but was stopped by the manacles. Her mouth opened in a silent plea, but he was already muttering in a harsh syllabic monotone. A tingle erupted from her heart and spread quickly throughout her body. It felt as if she was wearing a full-body suit of thin rubber or netting that was drawing tighter around her. His hands moved up to her head, just above her eyes. Cassie arched her back and screamed silently in terror. Her heels drummed into the bed and she yanked each way on the chains that held her. To the people listening, the sound of her struggles must have been strange, the sound of her body fighting but no scream.

An eternity passed, and Cassie felt the tightness leave her. She collapsed, sobbing hard. The figure muttered something and the racking sobs were suddenly very loud in the room. "It shouldn't have been that painful." The figure said worriedly as he released the chains. Cassie couldn't twitch a finger at all. She felt the tears continue to roll down her face.

"Do stop that crying. It's disfiguring your face." The figure commanded.

Cassie was amazed when her body immediately responded to his command. Her sobs stopped on the instant and her tears dried up. She felt awful, and probably looked a mess now, but that was the last thing she noticed. What had he done to her?!

"Stand." She swung her legs off the bed and stood robotically. The figure stood up from the chair and stepped back. He examined her slowly, the cowl barely moving. Cassie could *feel* his gaze moving up and down her body. She felt a tingle on her skin and knew that she should be flushing, yet her body refused to respond to her brain's demands. Cassie was stunned at the level of control this man had over her, it was more invasive than *anything* she had ever felt in her life. The awful truth hit her like a hammer, and she felt like crying all over again; her body was no longer her own.

"Disrobe, please." Her master commanded. Cassie watched from a tiny portion of her mind as her body obeyed the command. It peeled off her tight shorts that she had chosen for the assignment, letting them fall to the floor. She peeled off her shirt and let it drop. Her bright yellow panties were added to the pile, along with the matching bra. The mic went

with her shirt. The master grabbed the mic and examined it for a moment before holding it out to her.

“Now, I’ve restored the mic’s capabilities when I finished turning you into my slave. I thought that it might be nice to let you tell your friends good-bye.”

“Good-bye” Cassie’s body said dully. Cassie wanted to plead and beg for help, but those weren’t the master’s orders. She watched despairingly as her body stood waiting for its next instructions.

“Well, not exactly what I wanted. Was there something else you wanted to tell your friends before you actually go?”

Cassie could feel her mouth fall back under her mind’s control again. She wanted to scream from help, to howl in fear. She desperately wanted them to come rescue her from this nightmare and be free again. She knew deep down however, that the moment they found her, the master would be able to capture or kill them as well. They had no chance against him as he currently stood. She had failed. There was one last thing she could say to them. “I’m sorry.” She said quietly.

“Sorry?” The master said quizzically. “Why are you sorry?”

Her body responded to the question. “Because I failed. I was to lure you out so that the detectives could arrest you. I failed to do that.” Her mouth was still under her control, so Cassie pushed on. “I know that they will search for me; that they will do all in their power to find me.”

“They won’t succeed in that.” The master chuckled. “But I am curious. I’ve never allowed a slave to speak its own mind before. Please, go on.”

“I’m sorry because they will try to get you again, but you will have vanished or have prepared for that. I don’t want them to die.” Cassie spoke the absolute truth. She had resigned herself to her fate; she knew was going to die. There was no reason for another to die because of her.

“What makes you think I’m going to kill you?” The figure asked curiously. “I wouldn’t exactly waste all this effort and time if I simply intended to kill you, now would I?”

Cassie felt a fresh surge of hope. If he wasn't going to kill her...but maybe he was just playing her. "What do you mean, master?"

The figure held back. "I'll show you, soon enough. But first, it's time to sign off." He dropped the mic and then ground his heel into it. Silencing it forever. "All right slave. No more talking. Let me show you what I have planned for you. He opened the door and beckoned. Cassie rode along as her body walked out the door following her master's instructions.

At the precinct, Colson slowly lowered the headset. She stared at the stunned faces of the chief, her partner and the techie on duty.

"Did—did we get that recorded?" Colson asked, still disbelieving what she had heard.

The tech quickly rewound the recording and ran it back through the computer. Everyone leaned in closer to the speakers as the recording began the playback. They heard Officer Yole's voice perfectly, her movements and breathing, and nothing else. Not even the sound of the manacles made it through. Colson leaned back. How had he done it? Her mind wondered. She was too experienced to believe his tale of magic, but after hearing the eerie silence of the tape mixed with Cassie's voice, she felt a deep, primal fear awaken in her. *Magic.*

"Can we at least locate the source of the microphone transmission?" The chief asked.

"Um, no sir." The tech responded.

"Why the hell not!" The chief roared. Everyone jumped. "I thought you boys could triangulate any transmission you found!"

"Yes sir, I can. Usually, unless it's scrambled or encoded. As for this one, I couldn't even tell if it originated on Earth!" the tech said heatedly.

Colson shifted uncomfortably. Could the person have taken Cassie to a different planet? Or even a separate plane? She seemed to remember magic users being able to hop realities the way one hopped onto airplanes. The chances of rescuing Cassie suddenly seemed much smaller.

"What do we do, chief?" Colson asked quietly.

The chief stared at the radio set as if demanding it produce Officer Yole from its transistors. Colson asked the question again. She saw his shoulders slump. "Nothing." He sounded old and tired.

"What!" Her partner said disbelievingly.

"You heard me." The chief snarled. "We can't locate Yole, and judging from what I heard tonight, then I'm not going to risk any more personnel baiting him until we can damn well guarantee their safety. I want to know who, and what is behind this."

Colson couldn't agree more. There was something off about the man's speech. Something she couldn't quite put her finger on. She shared her partner's disbelief that they weren't going after Yole, but understood it. They didn't even have a starting point. The bar had come up completely empty—again. Colson had simply thought that the perp was a regular or maybe meticulous in covering his tracks. This though...*who'd have thought magic would play in this?* Colson thought about calling the FBI for all of three seconds before rejecting the notion. They would have thought she was nuts! No, the only hope Yole had now was if Colson could find her. Colson shuddered as she ran through Cassie's voice after...whatever...had happened. The dead voice, completely devoid of emotion. Colson wouldn't admit it, but that voice had scared her. There had been *nothing* there. No sign of Cassie until the man had released her mouth. What could have done that? Colson needed to do some research. But where would she start?

Her partner, a fiftyish sergeant of sixteen years' experience on the force, stormed up beside her. "Can you *believe* that shit!" He snarled. His hand drifted towards his belt. "I can't believe we're going to leave the kid in there like that. Col, we've got to do something."

"Like what." Colson snapped. "Tell me, Joe. I'd love to be able to get Cassie out of this mess. Tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

She waited, but Joe subsided into splutters and half mutters that they needed to *do* something. Satisfied, she began striding through the precinct. "I know Joe." She said as he easily kept her pace. "I want to save her too, but for now we've got to figure out *how* before we can figure out *where*."

"So, what do we do?" Joe asked. His thick eyebrows dropped down over his eyes as he shot her a swift glance. "I know you, Alice. You've got something cooking, and I want in."

Colson shot him an exasperated look. "I have a basic idea. But first, I've got to do some research."

"And then?"

Her face would have frightened the hardest criminal into repentance. "Then I go and take the bastard and make him give Cassie back." She said quietly. A detective coming out of the elevator looked up from his piles of paper, caught one look at her face, and dove headlong out of the way, papers flying. Colson ignored him and stepped into the elevator. Pushing the *down* arrow, she watched the doors close swiftly and take her away.

Bright lights gleamed in the workroom, illuminating the pillar of amber that stood in the center. The hands working on it caressed it gently as they finished the last letter of the name. Inside, the body of Cassie Yole stood stoically. Her face held a hint of fear, but determination shone through. He was rather proud of that, it had taken hours of trial and error before she got it right. She was nude, of course. He enjoyed French art; those people really appreciated the body, and Cassie Yole was a fine specimen. The cleanliness of her lines was good, and her body was free of any disease. The shrinking process gave her the toned appearance of an athlete, although he knew she had already been that way before shrinking. She hovered more than a foot above the base, where her badge stood, displayed for the world. Finished, the figure stood back and admired his handiwork.

"You are really quite magnificent my dear." He said admiringly. He reached into an alcove and removed a small vial. Pouring it over the amber, he waited for it to dry. "Now, let us see if this works the way I have planned." He touched the base.

The face swirled for a moment, before one of the facets began to shine. Looking deeper, he watched a very young Cassie smiling at her first birthday party. Another facet showed her nervously waiting on her bed as her first love pulled off his shirt and showered kisses on her face. A third showed her and her family standing near the academy sign; she was dressed in the uniform of the beat officer. A smile twitched at his lips. Her whole life was

displayed here, open for his perusal. *Excellent. Now, all I have to do is apply it to the rest of my statues.*

He picked her up thoughtfully. *This Colson, she won't give up, I suspect until she has found you, my beauty.* He stared at the clear stone, at the face of Cassie. His mind ran through possible scenarios before smiling. This would be his first true challenge to his power. It might mean giving up one piece of his expanding collection, but it would be worth it to have a true adversary to torment. Yes. This could be great fun indeed. A low laugh filled the chamber and grew into a rich, hearty sound. It took him a moment to realize it was him. Cassie would join him if she could, he knew. Oh yes, great fun indeed.