

# A snippet from yesterday's work, and today's start count

By Holly Lisle

Start count for the day – 23,138. Ready to get going. Have to deal with the body, and with the cops, and with the very unhappy killer.

And to give you a tiny glimpse at what's going on, here's a tiny clip from yesterday's work. It's a little rough, but I like the energy of it. I hope you'll find it interesting ...

*Phoebe picked up the phone, hoping Alan was calling her. But as she picked it up, she remembered that she hadn't yet given Alan her phone number.*

*She said, "Hello?"*

*Michael's voice, silky and self-congratulatory, said, "Don't hang up, Phoebe. I found a friend of yours. He was really lovely."*

*She clenched a fist – she'd hooked up a tape recorder – but she'd connected it to her psychic hotline phone, because that was the one he'd called on twice. Damn him! She started to hang up the phone in spite of what he'd said, because just hearing the sound of his voice again made her palms sweaty and her hands shake. Her gut twisted so hard and sharp she thought she would throw up. She closed her eyes tightly against the wave of dizziness and nausea, and held on.*

*"Good girl," he said, the way he had always said it when he forced her to do something she didn't want to do.*

*"What did you do, Michael?" she whispered.*

He laughed, and it was the laugh that lived in her nightmares. The laugh she'd never put behind her. "First, let's set a few ground rules. No police – police would be bad for me. And right now, sweetheart, anything that's bad for me is going to be worse for you. No outside help. Lose your little boyfriend, too – or I'll do terrible things to him, and make you watch."

"I don't have a boyfriend," Phoebe said. But she knew who Michael meant, and was horrified – first, that Michael had been watching her so closely, so recently, and so unnoticed; and second, that when Michael said boyfriend, her mind supplied a picture of Alan's face to go with the word.

"Don't play games. I'm not anywhere near as patient as I used to be." At that, Phoebe swallowed, feeling the dryness in her mouth and knowing that this was what she had been waiting for all along. Some part of her had known that her suffering wasn't over when she smashed Michael's head against the floor.

"I've left a little present for you, and you're going to go pick it up. All by yourself, little darlin'."

"I'm not going anywhere."

"You have other friends," he said. "You won't if you don't do exactly as I tell you."

He gave her directions to a local park. Told her she was to go by herself, that she was to find the playground – and that if she didn't want to be responsible for a lot of traumatized children, she ought to do it quickly.

And then, with a soft laugh that turned her blood to ice, he hung up.

Reserved