

Last Girl Dancing – Chapter 3

By Holly Lisle

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After her odd exit, Hank wasn't sure what to expect, but Jess was right on time arriving at the dojo that evening. She got out of her car, and he shook his head at her idea of dressing for a night of sleaze. She was wearing a denim shirt with the tails out, and a short denim skirt, and high, high heels that would put her right at eye level with him. Her hair was loose, and it fell in neat lines to her shoulders. She had nowhere near enough makeup on.

Except for the shoes, she failed spectacularly to look trashy. The makeup would have to be half an inch thicker, the skirt four inches shorter, and the denim shirt a whole lot more unbuttoned to get her to that point.

She looked good, though. She had great legs. Long, muscled, tight, sleek, tapered. He'd always been an ass man, and he was deeply appreciative of good tits – but he could get behind a great set of legs, too. He considered himself well-rounded that way.

" Good evening, Mr. Kamian. Are you going to say anything, or are you going to glare at me?" she asked.

" Um... could we drop the 'Mr. Kamian, Detective Brubaker' thing? I wasn't glaring, I swear," he said, embarrassed that he'd been staring, and at the same time relieved that she'd misinterpreted it. "You look very nice. Though the denim shirt isn't really club wear," he added.

" Club wear doesn't offer a lot of places to hide a weapon," she said. "And... yes. Call me Jess."

" Hank," he said. "And thanks." He sighed. "I'm sorry about... whatever I said this morning--"

She cut him off with a wave of her hand. "I'm sorry I let it bother me. I didn't have a great time in school, and right around that time, I ended up walking away from something I'd spent my whole life to that point thinking I wanted. I don't like to dwell on it, and I don't like to talk about it."

" Then I won't bring up your educational experiences again."

He wouldn't either. Not directly, anyway. But he was for damned sure going to find out what she had going on inside her head.

She said, "Thanks." He noticed that she was studying his outfit. He'd gone with tan slacks, loafers, and a dressy shirt that he'd had to go out and buy for the occasion. He told himself he wanted to look like a typical strip-club customer, but he'd known even as he'd thought it that it wasn't true. He could have gone into any of the clubs on his list for the night wearing a scruffy shirt and jeans, and as long as he paid, they'd have let him through the door.

He was dressing up because of her.

" We ought to go in my car," he said.

" You don't like my ride?"

She had a '69 Pontiac Trans Am, original paint – white with blue stripes – that was in good shape, and he was tempted to drool all over her ride, even if it could have used a good bath and some fixing up.

" Good car," he said. "But you don't get to drive us to strip clubs."

She laughed, conceding the point, and strolled around to the passenger side of his car, a nondescript older Nissan that

he'd hung onto because it was reliable and he hadn't been trying to impress anyone. He went to open the door for her, and noticed that she walked like she'd been born wearing five-inch heels. He didn't get it. In his experience, only women who spent a lot of time in heels that high could walk in them gracefully, and also in his experience, very few detectives traipsed around in stilettos.

More mystery, more proof that something was going on with her that she'd kept secret from everyone who worked with her. And maybe even from herself.

That smooth high-heeled saunter did fascinating things to her ass, though.

It was going to be a long night.

He drove her one block from his dojo to the first place on Jim's recommended list, a dive currently named Kat's Place. Hank paid the cover to the bouncer, who took the money while trying to look down Jess's shirt.

Inside, they bought the requisite drinks and carried them to a table along the side wall facing the door. The inside of the place was typical for the area; dark, grimy, loud. The girl onstage at the moment was about three quarters of the way through the first dance of her set – she still had on a mini-skirt and a G-string, but nothing else. She was one of the ones who thought she could strut around the runway, wiggle her ass a little, and flip her hair a lot, and men would go wild for her. Hank sized her up in about two seconds and dismissed her, noticing that most of the customers had done the same. He and Jess engaged in a brief, almost wordless struggle over who got the chair facing the door. "I'm armed," Jess finally whispered in his ear, and he conceded the strategic seat.

They bought their required second round of drinks from a dancer working the room. And Hank watched Jess studying the dancer on the stage. "She sucks," Jess said after a minute.

" She might," Hank said. "She sure as hell isn't earning a living wage with her dancing."

Jess made a face at him. "Any idea how often this place gets raided?"

" This is the fourth club in here in the last two years. The previous three were shut down for violations. They're lovely neighbors."

" The 'new owner, new name' scam, huh?"

Hank nodded.

Like the majority of Atlanta's strip clubs, Kat's Place featured complete nudity. Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walking" blared out of the speakers, the girl on stage stopped wriggling and started walking, and Hank and Jess stared at each other in disbelief. "Theme music," Hank muttered. "Notice the shiny latex boots. Notice the walking."

While Nancy sang, the wriggle queen stomped up and down the runway, stripping to skin like she was undressing at the doctor's office. She grabbed her breasts a few times and flipped her hair. Ground her ass against the pole. Walked some more.

Jess muttered "pathetic" at the same instant that some drunk up toward the stage bellowed, "Flash me the poop-chute, baby."

And the dancer turned her back on the audience, spread her legs wide, gripped her ass cheeks, and bent over.

Hank suffered a brief flashback to medical examinations in the Army.

" Jee-zus," Jess muttered.

" Like I said, I don't do strip clubs. But I'm told this is the worst one that's conveniently close. Jim suggested this

place and three others as covering the gamut of what's available in this town, and put them in order from worst to best. We'll never have to leave Cheshire Bridge Road, and we'll get to see the full range of what's out there. From the wild days of my youth, however, I don't think you'll find that the best one is any classier overall."

" No?"

" No. What you have here is a room full of testosterone with nowhere to go, being played for money by women who wouldn't give one of these assholes the time of day outside of these doors. Doesn't bring out the best behavior in anyone."

Nancy and the boots finished to almost no notice, to be replaced by a skinny girl with enormous fake tits and about as much enthusiasm as the first dancer. Better taste in music, though. Metallica's "The Memory Remains." For that, at least, Hank could forgive her.

And then Jess said, "Aw, shit."

He followed the direction of her gaze and saw the girl who had been on stage was now strolling between tables, still wearing the boots, wearing a thong and a nearly-see-through robe. The girl was flipping her hair at a customer, who said something completely drowned out by the pounding beat of the music. And the man shoved money into the thong, and the girl leaned close and pulled open the neck of her robe, and the man licked her nipple. The girl laughed and stood up, and the customer did, too, and she led him by the hand toward the very, very dark corner where Jess and Hank sat.

Hank glanced over at Jess.

" What's wrong?"

She wrinkled her nose in disgust. "If we stay, we're going to watch laws being broken in a depressingly grimy fashion. I

have no intention of breaking cover, this isn't my gig anyway, and to be honest with you, I'd rather pass."

" Yeah," Hank said, glancing over as the couple got situated. "Watching strangers having bad sex isn't my idea of an evening's fun, either. Let's go."

#

Jess followed Hank through three different strip clubs after Kat's Place. The clubs had a lot of surface differences – as they moved up Hank's list, they found places with better lighting, friendly waitresses hustling drinks with winks and flirty little laughs, and dancers who had real talent. The clubs that looked like they were staying legal and weren't merely fronts for prostitution had more real dancers and fewer butt-wrigglers, and Jess found herself studying the dancers' styles and their moves, and being impressed by the best of them. The pole work, when done well, was as athletic as any of the things she'd done in ballet. One dancer flipped upside-down on the pole and held her body in place, completely inverted, while she did a split in the air, and finished it off with a little leg swing that spun her around the pole upside down.

The good dancers made eye contact with the customers. Smiled. Looked like they were having fun, whether they were or not. They spent as much time doing floor work as they did on the pole. Jess wondered how many of them were students paying their way through college, or single mothers supporting kids at home.

Some of the dancers engaged in far more physical contact with the customers than any city permit would approve. And some were cheerful beauties who chatted with customers, and stopped to talk, and did no-touch lap dances, but managed to hold the line.

The customers in the better places – the ones operating within

the law – seemed to pay more attention to the rules, though Jess could see that it was basically the dancers who were left to enforce them. The customers looked and they yelled, they drank, they bought drinks for the dancers and lap dances from them, sometimes they applauded. They still called out crude suggestions to the dancers.

Even in the fancier clubs, though, Jess caught glimpses of the occasional girl taking money to be touched. Or kissed. In one club, the floor managers walked the main room with laser pointers, flashing them on dancers and customers caught in compromising acts. The little red dots served as a warning to everyone: Yes, we're watching; yes, we're counting; three and you're out. Occasionally a customer would go too far and get talked to by a floor manager in a bad suit who invariably looked like he worked for the Mob.

The last place Hank took Jess to was Gazelles, upscale and elegant on the surface, with gorgeous furniture inside, chandeliers, paintings on the walls, a painfully expensive cover charge, and a massive man in a tuxedo showing them into the Entertainment Lounge.

They took seats away from the stages, and as best they could with the interruptions of loud music and nearly-naked women dropping by to see if they needed anything, Jess and Hank followed Jim's request that they get to know each other. They made small talk that avoided any discussion of Jess's work or Hank's reason for being asked to consult. They talked about the dojo instead, the last books they'd read, physical fitness. When Hank discovered that Jess shared his passion for staying in shape, they got into a discussion of martial arts, dance and its value to combat-type situations, and training techniques... and they forgot for a while that they didn't want to like each other, and that they were sitting in a strip club getting background for undercover work.

Finally, though, Jess remembered that the city was paying for

her and Hank to experience sleaze Atlanta-style, and she returned her attention to the club. And Gazelles proved that Hank's assertion about no strip club being classy was true. In Gazelles, the featured dancers came out in evening gowns that suggested Bob Mackie's career direction after he quit designing for Cher, and took them off in surprising and creative ways. They put on a good show. In between sets, waitresses brought drinks and chatted with customers, and flirted and giggled and suggested to the men sitting with dancers that maybe they'd like to buy the girls drinks. Dancers, dressed in robes or partial costumes, also chatted up the customers, sat at tables with some of them, did table dances for some of them – dancing not on tables but on the floor in front of the chairs of the customers. However, Jess noted that from time to time a dancer would disappear with a patron into a private room.

Even for those who stayed in the main room and followed the rules, it was the same old game. Booze to numb the customers and make them pliable, the illusion of sex to get them to loosen their wallets, and likely more than the illusion if the price was right and the girl was willing. A steady flow of cash in one direction, a pretense of interest and caring and the lure of sex in the other. No amount of lacquered furniture and oil paintings could pretty that up.

" You look miserable," Hank said, taking her hand, and Jess nearly jumped out of her skin. Pulled her hand away. Because she had been thinking of Ginny. Because this had been Ginny's life. Not for long. Just long enough for the damage to be done.

" I hate this," Jess said. "It's all... pretense. And people using each other."

Hank gave her an unreadable look. "Some people only want pretense. Only want to use. Or be used. If you try to give them something real, they run away." He was staring into her

eyes. "That... that isn't you, though."

"No," she said. She yawned, and glanced at her watch. "Good God, Hank. It's four in the morning. I've been up all day."

He said, "Me, too. I wasn't watching the time." He shook his head. "Company got too interesting."

"It did." Jess smiled a little, realizing that Hank had been surrounded by enormous bare breasts all night and he'd given them cursory glances and then returned his attention to her. He had been interesting to talk to. He seemed like a good, solid man. Someone worthwhile, though neither he nor she had crept anywhere near a personal conversation. He gave off a good feel, though – and Jess couldn't see anyone who'd been sharp enough to be a Ranger being a waste of skin.

So what the hell was Hank doing shilling psychic crap at Jim?

#

Hank watched Jess drive out of the parking lot. Watched until her taillights vanished from view. When he was sure she was gone, he let himself into the dojo, locked it back up, then trudged up the back stairs to his place. Alone. He was very conscious, for the first time in a long time, of being alone.

Of getting undressed alone. Of getting into bed alone.

Jess had been good company. Smart, funny, open, blunt, occasionally crude. She was gorgeous, but she was unconscious enough of her own beauty that he could forget about it too. Could treat her like a friend, a colleague, someone who wasn't an object.

And then he'd suddenly realized that he was swapping war stories with the most beautiful woman he'd ever spent time with, and all of a sudden he'd lose track of what he was saying, and catch himself watching her drink or laugh or smile.

He wanted to take her to bed, of course. That was a given. He was male, she was female – and a particularly good example of the gender to his way of thinking – and they were both warm and breathing. He'd been celibate for a very long time. So of course he wanted to get her naked.

But lying there in the dark, staring at the ceiling, he was mostly seeing her laughing, hearing her voice as she leaned over and murmured shocking comments about the dancers and the customers in his ear. He found himself smiling at her observations about the people around them. Loving the way she appreciated his own tales of life as a martial arts instructor, and later, when he felt more comfortable with her, about life as an Army Ranger. She'd had her own good stories, too. She'd been tested by fire. She was tougher than she looked.

And if, as he replayed the evening in his mind, her clothes kept mysteriously disappearing, if he found himself wishing she was in bed beside him – that he was holding her, kissing her, running his hands over her breasts and hips, feeling her legs wrapped tight around his waist, driving into her while she thrashed and screamed – that didn't mean anything.

Did not mean anything at all.

He wasn't going to get involved. Not now, not ever. It wasn't worth it, he didn't need it, he had his mission and the mission was enough.

#

Jess woke to the alarm going off at noon, sighed, and rolled out of bed. She had to be back at HSCU by three to get all the paperwork done for her cover identity, and to be fitted for her wire. And before she went in, she had a fair amount of uncomfortable, awkward shaving to do, a process she did not anticipate with any pleasure. The problem with the shaving was that all of it had to be done in places where sharp things

didn't belong, and she chanced surgically altering those places in the process.

On Jim's advice, she had a halter top and a pair of Daisy Dukes in a bag along with makeup, hairspray, and other things she'd need to transform herself from Jess into a credible exotic dancer. She threw in the stiletto heels she'd worn the night before because they helped her feel the part. Undercover work was all about being someone else, and good undercover cops could become someone else with little more than posture, movement, and attitude. Jess, knowing that her life could depend on how convincing she was, wanted to practice the stripper character for Jim and Charlie to make sure she would be able to carry it off.

She wore as few clothes as possible because Jim had told her Bill the Tech Guy was going to be in there to set her up with a wire. It wouldn't be the wire she was going to use, though. It would be the wire that they would put together to keep Captain Booker happy and off everyone's case – the one a waitress could wear under the skimpy Goldcastle wait-staff costume. Not the one a stripper could wear while dressed in nothing but a G-string and shoes. Jim promised her Bill already had that one finished.

She dragged into HSCU on time, weary but game, carrying her goody bag.

Charlie was dummying up her undercover ID – driver's license blank, permit to serve drinks, permit to perform in a strip club, a couple of other goodies.

Jim noted her bleariness, and said "Late night?"

" Four AM. We closed the place down. Guess I'll have to get used to those hours." She waved the brown paper bag in front of him and said, "I've got my stuff here. Didn't want to drive to work dressed like this, though."

" Good plan. Go get changed. Do whatever you're going to do to look the part. Charlie's setting up for you over there," he pointed to the south-east corner of the big room, behind one of the two lines of cubicles. "There's a bathroom back there for you to change in, and we'll keep the traffic down to Charlie, me, Bill – and you."

Jess sighed. "I appreciate it. I'm going to have to go public with this look – and less – but I'd rather not do it today."

" I understand."

In the bathroom, she shed her jacket, holster and gun, blouse, bra, work shoes, skirt, hose and underwear. She put the badge on top of the pile of clothes and shivered. She felt more naked without the badge and the gun than she did without the clothes. She thought she could have strolled around in a thong with no problem if she had her badge clipped to one side of it and was wearing her shoulder holster.

She sighed, and slipped into the shorts, the tube top, and the stiletto heels, put on heavy eye makeup and dark lipstick, and, after studying the sleek lines of her hair, teased it out into a fuller, wilder look and sprayed it in place. She probably ought to get extensions. Longer, tousled hair would better fit the part she intended to play.

She finished, put her other clothes, sidearm and badge into the bag, put the makeup on top, and then stood staring at the door that led out to HSCU.

She swallowed, feeling her pulse pick up. God, she'd forgotten all about stage fright. She was about to be wearing a whole lot less than she was at that moment and strolling between tables full of drinking, rowdy men. She was going to be unarmed. She was going to be playing a part that was her deepest personal nightmare.

And she had to look like she was having the time of her life.

Best start trying on the act right then.

She took a deep breath, pasted a bright smile on her face, and got ready to open the door. Stood there, frozen, willing herself to move forward. And sagged against the plaster wall, her hand suspended inches above the knob and the smile washing from her face into an expression of despair. With the cool plaster against her skin, she closed her eyes. This was too hard. She was thirty-four, for godssake, and pretending to be part of a business that would have preferred everyone to be twenty-one, and look eighteen. She had a good body and it was in shape. She had a good enough face. But she wasn't twenty-one, and no one was ever going to mistake her for eighteen.

And then, with her eyes closed, she could feel Ginny inside her head. Confident. Certain. Ginny would have known what to do. Ginny had done this, and had succeeded at it. And in a way, Jess was doing this for Ginny.

Senior talent show, three days before Halloween. Jess and Ginny holding their breath, ready to bound out onto the stage the moment they were announced.

A blue spotlight illuminated the center of the dark stage.

"And now, Ginny and Jess Brubaker, with Ghost in the Mirror," the show's producer, Mr. Hamblich, announced.

The first dark notes from Mozart's Requiem shivered and skittered through the air. The girls had choreographed the dance themselves. They would be telling, in three minutes, the story of a girl being haunted by her own ghost. Jess was the ghost, wearing a tattered, shroud-like version of Ginny's white, diaphanous dress. Their mother had made the costumes – she'd been inspired.

Jess and Ginny were doing pointe work simply because they could. They were in top form, they were ready.

This dance, presented some months later, would win both girls openings in the dance schools of their choice.

However, in the eyes of the teenaged boys who made up half of the audience in their high school auditorium, identical twin sisters in skimpy costumes and tights who not only mirrored each other's movements – but who at one point held hands and stared into each other's eyes – looked a lot more like the lesbian porn of their fantasies than the horror of a young woman coming face to face with her own mortality. Jess and Ginny's dance had been wildly popular. But for all the wrong reasons.

For the rest of the year, an unending stream of wishful males would be offering them money to watch "the next time you do it." Would be inviting the two of them to parties, but "only if you come together. Come. Get it?"

When Jess was ready to stay home and hide, humiliated, Ginny encouraged her to hold her head up and keep going. Thanks to Ginny, both of them made it to school every day, smiled politely at their tormentors, and graduated just like the girls who hadn't accidentally stimulated an unending stream of idiot boys' lesbian twin sister fantasies.

#

So Jess caught her breath.

I can do this, she told herself. I can do this better than anyone else could. I can do this because those dead girls need me. Because this isn't about me at all. It's about them, and about the job. The mission. About getting it done.

And the smile went back on her face, and this time her hand made it all the way to the doorknob and opened it, and she put on a dancer strut that came out of nowhere. She swung out into the room of waiting men and did a little twirl like the one she'd seen one of the good dancers do on the runway the night

before.

She heard the intakes of breath. From Charlie, "Omigawd." A low whistle from Jim.

Yes, she thought. I can do this.

And she came to rest facing her audience, and found Hank there with Charlie and Jim and Bill. Hank's eyes met hers, and she could see pain in there, coming from somewhere she couldn't go.

Inside she yelled at him, This isn't me. This isn't me. This is the job!

But she kept on smiling, and kept her strut, and did a little bow before walking over to get her picture taken. And pretended the wary, suspicious look on Hank's face didn't matter. Because this was the mission. And if she broke when her heart fell out of her chest onto the floor, when she wanted for reasons unknown to go over to a man she'd barely met and explain herself, she would not be able to trust herself to stay in character when the situation inside Goldcastle got uncomfortable, when she wanted to arrest someone rather than to smile and wink and move out of reach.

Jim looked at her and nodded. "I knew you were the right one for this, Gracie," he said. "I don't know how I knew it. But you have layers." He shook his head, and laughed ruefully. "Whole lotta goddamned layers."

"All of which are in that brown paper bag in the bathroom." She shivered, shedding her stripper persona at last. "And which of you bastards turned the air conditioning up? God, it's cold in here."

The men around her saw the change, saw her shaking off the stranger's skin and becoming a cop again, and she could see them relax. Charlie laughed, Bill snickered. For a moment

there, she had been alien to them, and they'd been tongue-tied, not sure how to react. But when she became one of them again, even in her outlandish get-up, they could become themselves, too.

Charlie said, "We wanted you to be all... perky for your picture."

"You're supposed to take a picture of my face, dumbass," she said, laughing, not missing his meaning. Her nipples felt like rocks under that tube top – they had to be visible from space. She didn't know of any men who missed the presence of visible nipples beneath clothing. Men were wired that way, and she'd learned not to take it personally.

Charlie got the pictures. Bill brought in the wire and fit her with one that lay beneath her right breast and itched like hell. He bitched at Jim for a while about the low output with the technology they had, and how they were going to need to have a lot of signal boosters hidden around the club. He and Jim agreed that they would have Hank place transmitter boosters around the inside of Goldcastle. Bill thought maybe the guys who'd been co-opted from Vice could place the boosters, but in the end they were not HSCU, and they were an unwilling part of the investigation, and Bill and Jim and Charlie agreed that "their Gracie" was their secret weapon. That she was strictly need-to-know. The Vice guys didn't need to know.

Jim vouched for Hank, who had experience placing hidden things. "Army Rangers," Jim said in a soft voice, and Bill did that little spine-straightening thing men did when in the presence of someone who had earned respect without question. Yes. Hank was their guy, too, even if he was not officially one of them.

Jess felt the same way. And she kept trying to fit her natural reactions to him into her well-earned loathing for psychics.

It wasn't working. There were pieces of Hank that didn't fit.

When the photos were done and the wire was fitted and she was back in work clothes again, with her hair brushed out and the goop off her face, she got her assignment for the next day, which was to get a job at Goldcastle. Hank talked to Jim while Charlie put the finishing touches on Jess's ID kit; Charlie told her that for routine things Hank, in his role as her contact, would act as a go-between. He told her of two neutral places that she could meet with either him or Jim if she had to have a face-to-face.

" I've duped everything in your wallet that you might need. Credit card and bank card will work up to one-hundred dollars in case you have a situation. Don't use them unless you have to – you'll have to pay us back out of our discretionary fund for anything that you use on those. Jim came up with your new name – he said he wanted to keep it simple. And your story is that your brother has non-lymphatic Hodgkin's and no insurance and you need a legal way to make a lot of money fast, which is why you want the job now. Further, you worked as a house dancer up north in Fayetteville, North Carolina. You danced in two clubs near Fort Bragg – both of these went under years ago, so you won't have to worry any unfortunate employers failing to remember you. You... ah... hung up your G-string after one year of dancing, and retired until this came up."

Jess nodded. "That'll work." She looked from Jim to Charlie. "But what if they don't hire me?"

" We'll worry about that then."

" All right," Jess said. No point second-guessing things that she couldn't control. Her job was to give Goldcastle every reason to want her.

" You are undercover from this point on out. Go home, get changed, memorize your new name and your story, fill in whatever details you'll need to keep it consistent. I put

together a short list of cheap rental places – you should get one so that you can go home again once you're done with this. You have enough cash in there for the first month's rent at any of these places. Some of them, you get a discount if you rent by the month."

" Real high-class places, huh?"

Jim smiled. "If you live in a real high-class place, why do you have to work in a strip club to help your brother out?"

Jess nodded.

Jim said, "Speaking of your character. You're in character any time you're outside your own doors. Your badge stays home, and if you carry, make sure it's your backup weapon and not your police issue. And for God's sake, stay away from anyone who could make you. At this point, our serial killer could be anyone, and where Goldcastle is concerned, that anyone covers a very wide scope." He frowned. "Got a neighbor who can feed your cats or goldfish or whatever you have there?"

" It's not a problem."

Jim said, "Here are a list of places that rent by the day, week or month. Look them over, pick one. But get into your place today. Move before you interview with Goldcastle." And then he told her, "Don't break cover at any time, for any reason. We are, at this point, without any solid theory regarding the identity of the killers, or killer, and until we have something, the field of possibles is huge. The Goldcastle employees are the usual sorts, but the clientele consists of senators and sheiks and actors and sports celebrities and old, rich men. Lotta foreigners, fair amount of Eurotrash. And middle- and upper-middle-class locals, too. If you catch the attention of the killers, we have no idea what sort of resources they'll bring to bear to get to you. We have every reason to believe they have good resources, though – that these are not broke losers operating out of their mothers'

basements.”

” Got it,” Jess said.

” Not much chance Goldcastle will get raided while you’re there – Vice wants to get back in with its drugs, prostitution, and gambling investigation once we get our work done, and they want to keep everyone quiet and happy until then. However, shit happens. You get swept in a raid, Hank’ll get you out,” Charlie said.

” And if Hank gets swept, too?” Jess asked.

” We’ve already taken care of that.”

Which meant either that Hank had fake cop ID for this gig – which Jess found hard to believe – or that he had something else under the table as his get-out-of-jail-free card.

She was okay with that. In spite of the shaky footing of her part in this, her people were behind her. She felt very solid right then.

Of course, the weight of her Beretta and her badge at her hip didn’t hurt, either. It would be a little tougher to feel solid when she was unarmed and wearing a G-string and nothing else.

Where to buy

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