

The letter had been short and to the point. It had called Jane Mallory by a name she hadn't heard in years and, more to the point, hadn't shared with anyone during the intervening time. Jane had to be at a certain place, at a certain time, alone, or else her daughter would pay for it. Just to make the point, the letter had also included a photograph of Mary at recess in school.

Jane had taken to time to send someone – her position had its privileges – to verify on Mary's safety and get her out of the area for the moment, and notify her superiors as to the situation. It had taken some fierce arguing with those superiors for Jane to make her point that she wouldn't endanger her child by wearing a wire or bringing backup. Whoever had made that contact knew Jane was a nova, knew about her past and therefore, would probably be smart enough to determine if Jane had followed the orders as given.

The meeting place was an unoccupied office building in London's suburbs - one of those projects built during the economic boom of the late 'teens. Boomtime over, the building now languished for a lack of tenants who cared to pay for its lavish, overpriced amenities.

It makes a change from parking garages at night, Jane thought. She took the stairs to the basement – a barren, echoing maintenance area with the ideal – insufficient - light for clandestine meetings, and waited.

It was a short wait. Within a minute of her arrival, a door leading elsewhere into the bowels of the building opened and a long-familiar figure emerged.

He hadn't changed much in the intervening years. His hair was now a dark brown, rather than a dirty blonde, and it was too dark to see if time had lined his face, but the brash swagger and hard eyes were unchanged.

"Don't run." He said, flatly. "Don't even *move*."

Jane considered her options - limited as they were - whilst Seeker closed the space between them.

"I thought they'd taken you, too, but I figured out otherwise, once I got away." His tone was almost conversational, but Jane sensed the anger behind his words. "You sold me out."

Nine years later, Jane's revenge on Seeker for his atrocious behavior during a shared mission was finally coming back on her. She felt strangely calm, even as she realized that she was letting shock take charge when she should be listening to her survival instincts.

"I don't like you, Seeker, never did. I was offered an awful lot of money for what happened-“ that was true, “so I took the opportunity. You seem to have weathered it well enough.”

"No thanks to you.”

Seeker glared at her, letting the silence draw out.

"Are you going to kill me?" Jane wanted to run, but that photograph of Mary kept her in place.

He scowled at that. "If I wanted you dead, you'd be dead.”

Jane had to agree with that. If Seeker's intentions were homicidal, she wouldn't have known what hit her – although she didn't like to admit that, even to herself.

“So, what do you want?” He had to have some reason for wanting to meet in person, beyond simply letting her know that he was on the streets again. He could have done that without the risks of an in-person meeting.

Seeker ignored the question. “I see you’ve gone legit. New name - *Janet* is kinda boring, don’t you think? New face – I like it better than the other one - shiny new family.” Seeker smiled without warmth. “Yeah, white picket fence and a government job being one of the good guys. Do they even know what you used to do?”

Is this about blackmail? “You mean the Janissaries? Yes.” It was only the UK’s desperate need for seasoned novas that enabled them to overlook that dark chapter in her history.

“Does the cop, your husband, know?”

“Yes.”

Seeker looked disappointed at that. *Maybe it was about blackmail, and I’ve just sunk the scheme.* The thought didn’t alleviate any of Jane’s anxiety.

“He doesn’t look like much, that husband of yours.” Seeker waited for a reaction and, getting none, continued. “But I suppose that fits with your new bland little life, doesn’t it? None of the excitement of the old days, huh?”

“I don’t miss them all that much. Can you get to the point?”

Seeker raised a hand to hit her, and then laughed as she flinched. “Manners, Widow.” He let his hand fall back to his side. Jane bit back her instinctive response and waited.

“You remember the second time we met?” he said, abruptly. “That time I proved that I could take what you dish out?” Jane nodded. “Remember what we talked about?” Jane’s uneasiness increased, and she nodded again.

“Did you think about it, afterwards?”

“I tried not to.”

“Which means you did.”

Jane didn’t like the triumphant expression on Seeker’s face. “Yes.”

“I did, too. Does he hold you down?” Seeker asked suddenly.

Jane blushed and felt like a fool for doing so.

“Does he? Come on. You can tell me.”

The urge to attack Seeker – to punch and tear – warred with the simultaneous desire to flee and the necessity of staying. “No.” she whispered.

“No, *what?*”

“No, he doesn’t hold me down.” Her face burned.

“Did you ever think about me... holding you down?”

“No,” she felt nauseous.

He hit her, then, a slap to the face that made her ears ring. “Don’t lie, sweetie.” He smiled, as if sharing a compliment. “So you *did* think about it. Fantasy or nightmare?”

“Nightmare,” that wasn’t difficult to admit, at least.

“Aw, gee, you weren’t turned on by it, not even a little?”

Jane’s breath caught in her throat, and she felt dizzy for a moment. Seeker’s expression became malicious. “Maybe just a bit, huh?”

“That’s what made it a nightmare,” she muttered.

“Ooh, cheap shot! Very cheap. But it’s the truth, so I guess I won’t hit you again.”

“Why are you here?” *If not to kill me, or beat the hell out of me?*

“Living in mystery sucks, doesn’t it, Janet?”

Jane frowned. She didn’t like Seeker using her name, even if it was just the latest in a series of pseudonyms.

“But I’m not one to draw things out. Immediate satisfaction, that’s me. I hate waiting. It’s a lucky thing I caught your scent the other day.”

So that’s how he found me. Sheer coincidence. Lovely. “Yeah, your lucky day.”

Seeker’s smile widened. “No, *today* is my lucky day. Yours too, love. How are you feeling?”

Jane blinked in surprise at that. “What?”

“How are you feeling, right now?”

“Uh,” Jane stumbled for words at this new tack. “Worried, angry, a little sick. Dizzy.” She realized. There was something else, too, something that didn’t feel quite right...

“Dizzy, huh? That always seems to happen.”

“What?”

“Just taking notes for myself. You see, pumpkin, time has brought change,” Jane decided she disliked being called *pumpkin*, *love* and *sweetie* by this man almost as much as she disliked him using her name. “And I’ve picked up a few new tricks.”

“Really?” Jane wondered how bad things were about to get.

“Really. For instance, darlin’, I’ve learned that I can use pheromones almost as well as I can smell them.”

“Oh?”

“Nothing too complicated, although it can make a donnybrook a hell of a lot more fun when you know everyone there hates your guts – even if they don’t know why. Hate. Fear. Know what else I can make you feel?”

Jane shook her head, trying to ignore the host of suggestions that came to mind.

“Oh, go on, Janet, I bet you can guess if you try.” He brushed a hand across her breasts and laughed outright at Jane’s surprised half-step away from him.

“Oh no,” she babbled as she realized what Seeker intended. “Oh no, this isn’t going to happen.”

“Yes it is, doll.”

“I *hate* you.” She insisted. “I don’t care how good you smell.”

“Aw, come on, sweetie. I’m trying to make things a bit easier for you.” He grabbed her arm, and the strength of his grip belied any argument. “Which is more than you’ve ever done for me.”

Jane realized the cause of her nausea. It wasn’t just fear for her safety, or disgust at Seeker’s behavior, but the growing awareness that Seeker *did* smell good and she was rapidly losing control of her reactions.

“I hate you.” She had to remind herself of that as her heart pounded. Fear or something else? She couldn’t tell any more.

“I hate you too, doll, but this is going to be so much better than killing you. I’m going to hold you down and you-” he pulled her close and licked her neck, “are going to love every minute of it.”

“No!” She shook her head and tried to get away – unsuccessfully. She felt weak and stupid.

“Don’t be that way, darlin’. I could always go visit your little girl, instead.”

That froze Jane to the spot. "I'd do it, too," he assured her. "You know I would."
Jane began to shake. "Leave her alone."

"Glad to, sugar, just as soon as I get what I came here for..."

An hour later, Jane picked her clothes up off the ground and tried not to think about what had happened.

"That was pretty good, Widow. *Very* impressive tongue trick." Seeker was nothing if not a sadist. "But next time I call, wear something sexier."

Jane reluctantly pulled her eyes off the floor and stared at Seeker. "Next time?"

"Of *course* there's going to be a next time," Seeker gloated. "You don't think I'm done, yet? Not a chance, sweetie. I suffered for years because of you. You've got a whole lot of payback coming."

Jane just wanted to get out. "Fine. Whatever you say."

"That's more like it, darling. Better get a shower before you go home. You don't want to meet hubby dearest smelling like a whorehouse."

Jane ignored him as she tucked in her shirt. Finally, she said, "You stay away from my family, Seeker. You want to keep dishing this out, so be it. But stay away from my family."

"Aw, you're so noble." Seeker laughed. "You'll take what I dish out because you *like* it, but if it makes you feel better to say otherwise... I'll call you soon, lover. And don't try to run away, otherwise I'll get *really* angry. Now get going."

Jane managed to avoid vomiting until she got outside and found Mark waiting for her.