

RAGE

J Carrell Jones

First several chapters preview

Provided by Mythical Legends Publishing

“Icarus’ Flight”

Mary, the flight attendant, smiled as she walked passed me. Like the others, she was slim with dark hair. She had a natural way about herself and smiled easily. Earlier, she had brought me a gin and tonic with peanuts. We made small talk until she mentioned her sister served in Iraq - the first invasion. We had something in common and an instant bond formed. She worked the aisles and every now and then she made her way to my side. Eye contact was always intense. We smiled, with both of us licking our lips. She'd shift her gaze and would move on. Our little game together.

Then . . . he walked by. I first saw him at the ticket gate. He looked normal enough, but there was something off about him. He was handsome, tall, toned. Grunge seemed to be his choice in clothing. Today, it seemed more so. I watched him when he handed his passport to the ticket agent. They chatted, she even laughed. So, why was I put on edge? His eyes. They were . . . not right. He had been high on something and was just starting to come off it. I would have guessed meth. He was probably starting to tweak. So, when he walked by me I took notice. He stepped into an unoccupied lavatory. The pilot had just turned off the fasten seatbelt sign several minutes ago and the cabin stirred to life. Mary walked by and asked if I needed anything. I

said, “Yes . . .”

She smiled and said, “Absolutely.” She came in close and whispered, “Once midway over the Atlantic things will be very quiet.” She then stood up, “Another gin and tonic?”

I returned the smile. “Yes, please. Thank you.”

She got an order from the guy next to me. When she left, he leaned over to me and whispered, “Lucky you.”

I laughed, “She makes a great gin and tonic.”

He laughed too. He started to say something when . . . it happened.

We heard a roar behind us. It was extreme and primal. Grunge yelled, “I got to get out!” He was naked and his face was scrunched up demonically. A woman turned to move out of his way. He grabbed her hair and pulled hard toward him. His teeth bit deep into her scalp. She screamed as he broke bone. Another passenger punched him in the face. Grunge released the woman and fell back. He got up and pounced on the man. Teeth sank into his neck and blood squirted everywhere. I undid my seatbelt and jumped out into the aisle. I spotted a laptop and grabbed it. I remembered saying, “May I” as I lifted the laptop over my head and came down hard on Grunge’s skull. He yelled louder, dropped the man and came after me. I kicked him in the chest hard enough to break brick. He brushed the kick off and back handed me. The laptop took most of the force. He ran over me and headed for the cockpit. A flight

attendant tried to stop him. He raged harder, hit her in the shoulder. She screamed as her collarbone snapped. He crashed into the door roaring. The door held for several moments, then caved in. Someone yelled, "What the . . . get out!"

I stepped back out into the aisle and headed toward Grunge. I could see him swinging at the pilot and co-pilot. Then . . .the pilot pulled out a gun and fired three shots into Grunge's chest. He raged more. Someone screamed and the plane banked sharply. The navigator swung and hit him in the head. Grunge swung back hard and I heard a deep sounding crack. Another shot and Grunge came out dragging the navigator. His body was limp. I was about to hit Grunge in the head again when the air marshal appeared. He ran up to Grunge, jabbed a small stun gun in his neck and sparked the device. Grunge tossed the navigator aside. He swung and connected with the Marshal's right arm. The stun gun released, hit the side wall. Grunge punched the marshal in the jaw, breaking it. The marshal spit a dozen teeth out and reached for something in his jacket pocket. Grunge kicked him in the chest. The marshal fell back, but true to his training he had his gun out with his left hand and double tapped. Grunge stopped cold as both bullets hit him between the eyes.

I reached the marshal and he fainted. "Flight attendant!" I snapped. One came up and cradled

the marshal's head between her legs. I got up and stared at a lifeless Grunge. Blood soaked the carpet from the gaping wound at the back of his head. The plane banked sharply again, dropped some, then leveled out. I ran to the cockpit. Blood was nearly everywhere. An unconscious captain had deep scratch marks over his face. I could tell his right eye was a lost cause. The co-pilot was slouched over the wheel, his left shoulder dislocated and the right forearm broken. I yelled, "We need some help in here! Is there anyone with medical training?" Mary appeared with several people including a middle-aged woman and two younger men.

The woman said, "I'm a GP."

The two guys were both med students. One in his first year, the second graduating soon.

We eased the captain out of his chair and into the aisle. Grunge had been dragged out of the way by some of the passengers. The co-pilot refused to leave.

I pulled out my ID and said, "United Nation's Agent Bechard," and sat in the Pilot's seat.

The co-pilot said, "I can't leave my post. I have to land this thing."

I replied, "How? One dislocated shoulder and a broken arm."

He winced in pain and said, "Then sit there and help me fly this bird."

I nodded and buckled myself in.

One of the med students secured the co-pilot's arm to his side. Before that, he discovered broken

ribs. He set the broken arm before splinting it. The co-pilot said, "My bag. Over there. I have ibuprofen in there."

Mary had a cup of water already in hand. The med student, Patrick, held the bottle. He gave the co-pilot eight 200 mg tablets.

The co-pilot washed them down with the water. After a few moments he said, "Damn maniac! What the devil was he on?"

I shrugged. "I thought he was coming off a meth high before take-off, but this rage is nothing like a tweak."

He winced and straightened himself up. He checked the instrumentation and fumbled to put the headset on. Mary helped.

I put the captain's on.

Mary had a sorrowful expression. I looked her way and gave a lopsided smile. Her features softened. She said, "Ms. Bechard . . ."

"Please call me Karen . . ."

"Karen, can I get you anything? Coffee, tea . . ."

I let the pause linger some seconds, smiled and said, "Coffee would be great."

She smiled my way, turned, saw the blot of blood, frowned and headed toward the back. From my vantage point I could see most of business class was empty of live passengers. It was now the morgue. Grunge and two other bodies were seated with blankets over them. One flight attendant was standing nearby crying.

The co-pilot communicated to LaGuardia that we

had a situation. He looked beaten. Figuratively and literally.

I was staring ahead when the co-pilot asked, "Miss, Karen, right?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Call me Martin."

"Okay, Martin. How are you feeling?"

"Like shit. Bastard."

I nodded.

"I ain't never seen anything like this. Hold . . ."

LaGuardia Tower gave Martin a frequency and heading.

He responded, "LaGuardia, Delta zero-niner-zero-niner, starting turn in a few. How's traffic?"

"Delta 0909, traffic has been diverted. The sky is yours. Move to 220."

He placed his hand over the mike, "Karen, that softkey off-center . . ."

I hovered my finger over the display screen.

He nodded, "Yeah, that one. Press."

I did.

"Turn that knob over there to 220." He puckered his lips to a knob.

"Piney, huh?"

He chuckled. "Yeah, thirteen years now."

I turned the knob until 220 displayed on my front screen.

He reached over with his splinted right arm and pressed several buttons.

The plane turned on its own.

He spoke in his mike again. "LaGuardia 220."

LaGuardia answered and gave him several more questions. He answered. Finished and sat back.

Mary entered with a tray. A coffee pot, cup, sugar, cream, and pastry were on it.

I said, "One sugar no cream, please," and took a pastry.

"We have a few minutes before landing . . ." Martin paused a long time and finally said, "I'm not sure I'll make it. I feel really bad."

"Of course you'll make it," I hoped.

"You're gonna have to land this plane. I'm feeling really, really bad. I might pass out on you."

"Mary," I said, "Get the doctor."

A moment later our GP showed up. She looked into the co-pilot's eyes and said, "He hit you in the head pretty hard didn't he?"

The co-pilot nodded. "I just want . . ." He never finished. He slumped into the doctor's arms. She called to the med students. They carried him out.

I thought, 'Well, uck. We're doomed.'

Mary stood there for a moment. Tears welled up in her eyes. Without me asking she slipped into the co-pilot's seat. This one has got to be a keeper I thought. Her bottom lip quivered as she buckled in and placed the headset on. She gave me a weak smile.

I smiled back and switched on the mike. "LaGuardia, this is Delta zero-niner-zero-niner. United Nation Agent Karen Bechard speaking. We have a situation."

Mary looked over at me with mixed emotions -

surprise, shock, disbelief, and relief.

The tower answered, "Delta zero-niner-zero-niner, what's the situation?"

"co-pilot is out. I'm sitting pilot seat and Flight Attendant Mary . . ." I placed my hand over the mike.

She replied, "Hernandez."

". . . Hernandez in co-pilot seat. Delta zero-niner-zero-niner out."

There was a long pause. Then, "Delta zero-niner-zero-niner, we see you holding course. Do you have flight experience?"

I answered, "Some. Apache copter, Huey, twin turbine four passengers, glider."

"All planes, this is LaGuardia tower, secure for emergency landing. Delta 0909 can you locate the Captain's radio tuning control? Underneath and left of the engine throttles. Turn to frequency 121.65."

I found the control and made the change. Mary did the same thing on her side.

"Tower, both pilot and co-pilot radios are at frequency 121.65."

"Ms. Bechard, you're moving away from us. We have to turn you around."

"Tower, call me Karen. I'm ready. Instruct away."

"Okay Karen, we need to first run through a few things. The altimeter is just left of center."

I replied, "It's the bottom of the three gauges. Airspeed is center."

"Correct. What is your speed?"

I said, "270 knots per second."

There was a pause. "Okay, we need to slow you

down a bit. But first I need you to start making an approach for landing. I read you at 25,000 feet. We need you at 10,000 and aimed back at us.”

I looked over to Mary. She was studying the controls. The flight manual was in her lap and opened. She was power reading.

One of the other flight attendants came into the cabin. “Anything I can do?”

Mary said, “Hey, Liz. I’d love a drink but coffee would be best. Can you warm up Karen’s coffee, please?”

Liz stood there for a while, not knowing what to say or do. Mary noticed, looked up, and said, “Liz, no worries. Karen has some flight experience and LaGuardia is walking us through the basics now. We’ll be safe on the ground soon.”

Liz touched Mary on the shoulder. I think she wanted to give her a hug, but left instead with my cup.

I closed the mike and said, “Mary?”

She looked up and over to me.

“Dinner then my place?”

She smiled and moved a bunch of hair behind her ear. “Any restaurant?”

Tower was talking in my ear. I mouthed, “of course,” and focused what Tower had to say. Mary and I worked together. We ran down the descent checklist quickly and started working on approach. Tower had us turned around and minutes within the airport. The weather turned from nice to crappy all in an hour.

Tower said, "Karen, you got wind at south east . . ." He paused.

Wind. Great. Even experienced pilots can find it challenging.

I replied, "And I thought this was supposed to be a tough landing."

Mary hit the fasten seatbelt sign and toggled the cabin intercom on. "Ladies and gentlemen. We are starting our approach now. Please take your seats and fasten your seat belts. If you haven't done so, please place your tray tables in their upright position. Make sure all loose items are stowed properly. Flight attendants, please secure cabin for landing." She toggled the intercom off and let out a long breath.

"Delta 0909 is ready for instructions," I said. "Talk us through."

Tower said we were going to do a sideslip. The runway was still dry so that was one less thing to worry about.

We started our descent.

Mary toggled intercom. "Prepare for descent."

We gave each other one last look. I took a deep breath and pulled back on the throttle. Mary dropped the landing gear and I moved the flaps to 25. The plane descended smoothly. I could make out 22 at the front of the runway. Tower instructed me to adjust rudder and ailerons. I pulled further back on the throttle, further dropping our speed. I've landed turboprops in crosswinds but doing so in such a huge craft so high off the ground made for a different experience. To my right I saw the centerline

of the runway. In front of me was Flushing Bay. I could see the 678 backing up. Then the plane tilted. Tower instructed me to drop my left wing down a bit. I did and nearly touched ground. I jerked back and the plane tilted crazily to the right. Tower calmly said don't power steer. Imagine you have an egg sitting on top of the steering wheel and try not to drop it. I turned in and the plane adjusted. The runway came up fast and just before the wheels touched Tower said re-adjust and point the nose centerline. I felt the rear tires contact ground first. As instructed, I dropped the nose down and felt the hard hit of the tires. Mary set the spoilers to up. I engaged thrust reverse. I watched the speed go from 150 knots to 80 knots to 50. I hit the brakes and thought screw the taxi. This plane is stopping now. Some seconds later our 747 came to rest. Mary quickly went through turning everything off. I found the APU Gen 1 and Gen 2 switches. We had power. In the background, I heard applause. I was happy to have dodged this bullet and not made a debris path. Mary and I unbuckled. I stepped out and couldn't believe what I saw. In the moment Grunge had knocked me down and ran to the cockpit he ripped several seats to shreds. One armrest was bent out at an odd angle. What was disturbing was the blood splatters. On the windows, the floor, and the seats. The first three rows of business had been vacated. I told Mary I had to go and make a report. She said she would, hopefully, be at the Airport Hilton. We touched hands briefly and I took the nearest emergency exit slide. Mary stayed

to help evacuate the plane. I made a mental note: Karen, keep this one happy and talk to Vadnez about making her an agent.

“Having Issues”

Vadnez sat behind a rather large oak desk. His monitor was off-centered and a picture of his wife and kids to its right. The desk was polished clean. Neat stacks of reports were to the left of the monitor. He had three pencils of the same length next to the reports. The man was so fastidious I wondered if his wife and kids wondered how hard it would be to hide the body. He was reading my report. After turning a few more papers he looked up. “Ms. Bechard, you really should use more active sentences.”

I nodded and waited.

He closed the folder. “Interesting. The local coroner thinks he was on A-PPV.”

I whispered, “bath salt.”

Vadnez said, “You may not know this, but A-PPV’s street name is bath salt.” He looked at me.

That was my cue. “Oh really? I hadn’t known.”

“Ms. Bechard, research, research, research. How you are one of my most efficient and effective agents is beyond me.”

I said, “Luck and karma. I kiss lots of babies and puppies.”

He stared at me for a long while.

I stared back. No one can out stare me. Not even Vadnez. He’s tried many times - and failed just as many times.

He cleared his throat and broke the stare.

Ha! I win again, I thought and forced myself not to smile.

“This problem is becoming an international issue.”

I nodded.

He grabbed the top folder and handed it to me. “Your new assignment.”

On the cover was a picture of a female scientist. She looked pretty and wore wire rim round lens glasses. Her hair was light brown, her skin was sun deprived pale. She looked 30something. I looked up.

“Dr. Dorothy Reanders, super genius. IQ well over 200. Her first PhD was at 15.” He paused.

I could still put a bullet through her head and she’d be dead. Being a Wyle E. Coyote did not impress me. She was probably an arrogant bitch who would whine and moan if things didn’t go her way. I just replied, “Oh, really?”

Vadnez smiled. He figured he had my attention. Such an easy study. “I would like you to interview her.”

“Does she know she is on our radar?”

“She is not a suspect, Ms. Bechard. Ms. Hill is on another assignment. Otherwise she would be doing the interview.”

I nodded. Katherine “Kitty” Hill was cool. I liked her. She was good at pulling info from folks. “Reanders is not a suspect.”

He nodded. “We just need information on a growing problem. She is an expert on drug influenced behavior. This particular bath salt may be a new

variant. Dr. Reanders can help us confirm this.”

I nodded.

“She is also on retainer to the UN.”

Ah, the point. We retained her for her brains and I’m not supposed to piss her off. But, I thought, then don’t send me. Pissing people off is what I do best.

“Understood, sir.”

Vadnez smiled. He liked it when I said ‘sir.’

I collected my things and left. It was this side of 1:00 pm and I was hungry. The Unicef House Cafeteria was still open. They had a new turkey sandwich on the menu and I was dying to try it. The pictures on the menu looked good and Chef Schembeck and staff would never uck up a sandwich. After getting the sandwich I found an empty booth and sat. I allowed myself several delicious bites before I opened Reanders’ folder.

She had a dozen scholarly awards, inventions, and commendations - all before age twenty. She’s on the Presidential Science Advisory Council and has consulted for NASA and ESA. With each page on Reanders the feeling of ‘cold clinical time bomb’ increased. Dr. Dorothy Reanders, super-genius: cold, calculating, sociopath. In her youth, her inventions were about saving and enhancing the quality of human life. At 16 years old, she focused on enhancing personal comfort. At eighteen it was about self-indulging. At twenty she focused on building her fortune. She made billions from the stock market and gave not one penny to any charitable organization. She voted Independent,

rejected all monotheist religions. I couldn't tell if she was spiritual, just not right-winged, or completely alt-right. She had no close personal friends and rarely socialized. She declined most international speaking invitations. I should have admired her, but I didn't. Pity? Concern? Fear? Maybe all of the above. I've met folks with a third her IQ quite dangerous. What would I do if she turned out to be a bad guy? I closed the folder and finished my sandwich. I had a date with a spooky-genius. Time for my A-game.

I reached Dr. Reanders' office by five. Some eye-candy was at the receptionist desk. He looked up.

"May I help you?"

Total gay. He was beefcake and tall, dark eyes with a 5 o'clock shadow. Nice lips and straight short cut black hair. Such a waste. I'd love to have road driven him to exhaustion. I smiled. "Yes, please. Karen Bechard, UN Agent. Here to see Dr. Reanders."

He looked over to a clipboard. "Oh yes. Right here." The Doctor said to hold your appointment off a bit if you came early. She's on a call to a governor right now.

A governor. I gave him a slight smile and glided my eyes over what I could see of him.

"Would you like some coffee while you wait? Water maybe?"

I said, "Coffee would be nice, thank you. No cream, one pack of Splenda if you have any."

He got up and I watched him as he walked past and down a short hall. His arms were huge and well

defined. The brachii on both arms were thick and snaked nicely down the biceps' length. I would very much be his bottom.

"Here you go Miss Bechard. I added some cookies."

I took the coffee and cookies. "Thank you . . .?"

"Guy."

"You certainly are, Guy."

He laughed and smiled sweetly. On him it looked good. Please tell me you're bi, I raunchily thought.

He sat down and started tapping away on his keyboard. Every now and then he would laugh. It would start out slow, like he was looking at something dirty and didn't want anyone to know, then it would increase in volume and intensity. He was a man who loved to laugh and laughed often.

I looked around the office. It was pleasing to the eyes. Several huge paintings adorned the walls. Reanders was into African and Islander motif. On that I agreed. I could like her about one thing at least. A few minutes later, Guy's phone rang.

"Guy, speaking . . . she is . . . yes . . . yes . . . very much so . . ." He casually looked over my way.

I acted like I didn't notice.

He continued, "No . . . not at the moment . . . okay . . ." He started tapping on his keyboard. "You got it? . . . five minutes. . . okay." He hung up. And tapped away again on his keyboard. A minute later I heard his dirty little laugh. A minute after that he looked over to me. "Dr. Reanders will be down in a few minutes to see you."

I nodded and said, "Facebook?"

He laughed and said, "How'd you know?"

I smiled back, "I'd be doing it too if I wasn't here."

He leaned forward, "Did you see the one about giving a shit?"

I laughed, "That was a good one."

A few seconds later the door opened. Reanders stood in the doorway pissed. I made a mental note: very possessive about her's. She was dressed in a long white lab coat. Underneath that was a grey pantsuit. Her blouse was white. Her hair was pulled back in a bun and she wore the same metal round rim glasses I saw in the photo. She stared hard and frowned.

I stood up and reach my hand out. "Dr. Reanders, I am Karen Bechard, UN Agent."

She stared at my hand for a moment, then looked at Guy. He moved his face behind his monitor. I kept my hand out, daring her not to accept it.

Nearly a minute went by before she slightly grabbed it and shook once. I wasn't sure if that was a battle won for me or for her.

"Miss Bechard, my time is limited. How long will this take?"

"As long as it takes."

She stared me in the eyes and I nearly blinked first. Guy coughed and Reanders broke the stare first. "Yes?"

"You have another appointment in 30 minutes. Mr. Chen from ZenTech."

Reanders nodded. "Follow me into the small

conference room.” She turned and walked to the far end on the office and entered a small room. I saw a small table at the center of four chairs. She took one while I took the opposite.

“Thank you for the inter . . . “

“Can we get on with this?” She said.

I paused and counted to 10 in my head. “You had a chance to read the preliminary toxicology report?”

She yawned., “Yeah, all standard stuff.”

I waited for more. “And?”

She looked bored. “And what?”

“I’d like a little more than ‘standard stuff’ please.”

She sized me up. “Was it your father or mother?”

“Pardon?”

“Which one was black?”

Now that was from left field. “What does that have to . . . “

“It was your father. I see Asian, too. Philippines or Polynesian. That would be your mother . . . “

“Dr. Reanders, please, can we stick . . . “

She slammed her hand down hard on the table and yelled, “Don’t interrupt me when I’m talking.”

That took me by surprise.

She continued, “The male subject had a cocktail of ingredients in his blood. A-PPV, cannabis, caffeine . . . most interesting this.” She paused and thought for a few seconds. “He had been drinking the night before. Couldn’t tell what, but it was at least 40 proof. Then he smoked marijuana followed by bath salts. meth came later. He was probably coming off a meth high before take-off . . .”

“He had . . .”

“What did I say about . . .”

“I was there! I was on that flight!”

She reflected and changed her demeanor.

“Really? How did he act just before?”

“What?”

“It’s a simple question. It doesn’t require much thought. You were a witness. I want to know his behavior moments before he raged.”

I was so mad I wanted to slap her. I was right. Very arrogant bitch hijacking my interview.

She studied my face and smiled. “Miss Bechard, the UN is asking me for help. Why are you hampering my willingness to help?”

That was like cold water to my face. She leaned back and smirked. That started to piss me off even more. All of five minutes she managed to control the interview. She jerked my emotions with surgical precision and that bothered me. So, I decided to play along and supply her with lots of rope. I leaned back as if I were defeated. “His eyes were off.”

She cocked her head. “That is hardly scientific. More precise please.”

“Dilated pupils, watery eyes, dull expression, but he was very conversational. Not agitated.”

She thought about that. “And he wasn’t aggressive until after the plane took off?”

I nodded. “He went into the lavatory. A few minutes after that he raged. I don’t know if he removed his clothes before or after he came out. I heard him roar . . .”

“Roar?”

“Yeah, roared.”

“Was he hypersexual?”

“What?”

“Pay attention, please. Did he try and rape anyone?”

“No, just completely and totally angry. He first bit into a woman’s skull and cracked bone. One of the passengers gave him a pretty good hit to the head. He brushed it off and broke his neck with a punch.”

A long moment she closed her eyes. Minutes went by, then, “It’s the . . . what else?”

“He withstood a 1,000,000 volt stun to the neck and several shots in the torso. The bullets to the brain stopped him.”

“It’s a variant.”

I just looked at her.

“It’s a variant of the A-PPV substance. The meth and cannabis negated each other - interesting. I’ll have to think about that one, but the rage was not from him coming off the meth. I noticed an increased level of islet beta-cells. The subject’s glucose levels, before death, topped 600. His pancreas and liver went into overdrive. Fascinating . . . his liver was secreting large amounts of glucose and the pancreas was pumping large amounts of insulin. That probably drove his core temperature up. There were high levels of epinephrine in his bloodstream. That makes sense. What I find disturbing is his testosterone levels were normal. Someone with that much rage should have elevated levels. I would

have to check for monoamine oxidase deficiency. I didn't see a report on metal levels, but I would bet the subject had low levels of zinc in his brain. Copper level would probably be high . . ."

I pretty much followed her. I let her ramble a few more minutes, but I got what I came for. She talked as if she were comparing what happened to what she thought should have happened. "Can this happen again?" I interrupted.

She scowled intensively, "What did I tell you about inter . . ."

I did it again, "Can this happen again. Yes or no?"

Her cheeks turned red and she snatched the folder I was holding. She angrily waved it in my face and yelled, "Haven't you been paying attention! Of course this can happen again. It's a variant. A manufactured drug! My goodness! How stupid can you be. A variant like this can tip the scale . . ." She stopped and placed the folder back on the table. She did not apologize for taking it in the first place.

Now it was my turn. She reached the edge but pulled herself back. I was going to bring her forward again and watch the fall. "Top or bottom?"

"What?"

"Please pay attention, top or bottom?"

"What kind of question is th . . ."

"You like it from behind don't you."

The light bulb came on and she realized what I was talking about. "That is none of your . . ."

"It's a simple question. Yes or no? You like it from behind. You don't swallow, but you rub it on your

face.”

She tried to slap me. I easily caught her hand and squeezed.

“Stop it. That hurts.”

“You are a silly arrogant bitch. You have issues . . .”

“How dare . . .”

I squeezed tighter and she nearly cried. “I think you have something to do with this variant.”

I watched her face closely and caught her first expression - guilt.

She recovered quickly but not fast enough. She yanked her hand away. “Don’t come in here goose-stepping. I’m an American citizen. You’ve no authority over me and I resent your pathetic attempt at bullying. Get the fuck out of my office, chick!”

Suddenly, the door opened and Guy stepped in. “Dr. Reanders is everything okay?”

Dr. Reanders tried to stare me down. I was ready this time and had the upper hand. I could kick her ass and she knew it. She broke first, in front of Guy, and that had to hurt.

She hissed, “Get out of my office before I call the po . . .”

“And what? No jurisdiction over me. For someone smart, you’re pretty dumb.”

She turned full red.

I stepped toward her and she backed away. The expression on her face was totally priceless. She stormed out of the conference room and out into the main hallway. Doors slammed as she went

further into her domain. Guy looked at me and sweetly smiled.

He said, "She can be such a bitch sometimes. Looks like it'll be high drama around here, but it was worth seeing it." And he did that dirty little laugh of his.

I took the crushed folder and walked out. It only took me a minute to reach my car. I fed the auto-parking meter my credit card and paid for the time I had parked. Just as I turned on to the main street my cell phone rang - my unlisted cell phone. The caller id was blank, which I didn't think possible. I let it ring a few times and answered.

"You've made me very angry you cunt." The call ended.

I thought the voice sounded like Reanders. A minute later my cell rang again. The caller id read, "Arrogant Bitch".

I answered, "Dr. Reanders?"

"I am very upset with you."

I looked at the phone for a second then placed it back to my ear. "And I'm supposed to what?"

"Is your real name Karen Bechard? Or is it Paula Haggard? Or Linda Holt?"

I could play that game too. "Dorothy . . ."

"You are not allowed to call me by my first name, mutt."

Mutt? Now she was getting personal. "Hang up now and I'll forget you called me names."

"Mutt, you crossed the line . . ."

"You know you are talking to a UN representative

...”

“I’m talking to nothing. You invade my space and bully me. . . .”

I ended the call and dialed Vadnez. This just got out of hand. The phone rang once then dropped. I pulled over and dug out my “official” mobile. It rang once and dropped. The signal was at full strength for both phones. Just them both phones rang. I answered one.

“You’ve embarrassed me and that is unforgivable. . . .”

I yelled, “You’re a nut job!”

There was a long pause, then, “the streetlight in front of you is green. It’ll change from green to yellow to green again.”

I looked up and saw the light she was talking about. It indeed did change from green to yellow back to green. The realization I was in over my head was starting to sink in. Karen I told myself, ‘you pissed off a spooky-genius. Be afraid.’

I could tell she was speaking with clenched teeth, “I . . . am . . . going . . . to . . . teach . . . you . . . a . . . lesson . . . you . . . fuckin . . . mutt! Never mess with me. Never!”

Damn! I thought. Am I supposed to fear for my life now? This turned unreal. I thought for a few minutes and decided to go back to Reanders’ office. At one traffic stop the light turned from red to green back immediately to red. She was letting me know I was being watched. I tried calling Vadnez again. It rang once then dropped. Then I had a lucky

break. I remembered a payphone on the corner of Amsterdam and W 133rd St. It was just on the W 133rd side of City Gourmet Deli & Grocery, a corner store and not too far from me. I drove without signaling, caught traffic and opted to park. I'd deal with the ticket later.

I walked about a quarter mile when I realized Reanders had tapped into the remote camera throughout the city. It was my luck that NYC hadn't installed many remotes on this end. I suppose she could find some business and home security cams and tap into them, but NYC is big.

After thirty minutes of walking I reached the phone. It was in good condition. I dialed our hotline. I exhaled when I got a second and third ring. Cortez picked up.

"Cortez speaking."

"Agent KB031174. I got a sitch."

A few seconds later, "Vadnez thought you would call in. What's the scale."

Bastard I thought. He suspected Reanders all this time. "Off the chart. Mobiles out. Hey, is Kitty on assignment?"

"Vadnez gave her the rest of the week off. Anything imminent?"

"Only at me. I'm requesting watch over rogue. Legal taps if possible. And variant confirmed. Rogue could be the original."

"Will relay. KB, good flying, sucky landing."

"Hey, I'm here talkin' to ya. What more is needed?"

“Point. BTW. More reports like the plane.”

My blood went cold. “No shit?”

“Yes shit. Twelve in the last hour. Nothing like Miami. All on the ground.”

“Noted. Out.” I hung the phone up. I flagged down a cab and made my way back to Reanders’ office.

Guy was still at his desk. He looked up, “Miss Bechard. Reanders is currently in a meeting. She said you would return and to give you this folder.”

It was thick, probably fifty pages. I took it and sat on the couch - in front of a fresh cup of coffee and cookies. I gave Guy a look.

He shrugged, “She can be scary accurate most times.”

I nodded and opened the folder to the first page. It was a copy of my birth certificate. The second page was a fake death certificate. It had today’s date on it. The subsequent pages were a collection of photos of me from youth to now. She had various documents on me as well. Kindergarten to college to my army days to working at the UN. Everything. My life in a folder. I felt violated and that pissed me off. Reanders, super-genius, pushed the wrong buttons. I was not pissed. I was livid. She thought to have me fear for my safety. She tried to intimidate me. The stupid bitch. How dare she invade and expose me so raw. I must have been scary looking.

Guy was on the phone. He said a few words and hung up. I turned on him so fast he barely stifled a shriek.

I was at his desk before he knew it. “Office.

Where. Now!”

Guy was pale and had the deer in the headlights look. “Two doors down. It’s the right one.”

I stormed out the office and stumped my way to the second door. Reanders, super-genius, made a mistake. She miscalculated and now reckoning day was upon her. Reanders, super-genius. Wrong. Reanders, super-fool, super-idiot, super-dumbass, super-gonna-get-her-ass-kicked was more like it. I made it to the door and stopped. I wasn’t so out of control that I would barge right in. That would have been dumb on my part. So far Reanders had been one step ahead. I looked around the hallway and spotted two corner cameras. Both were pointed at me. I came off my rage and my adrenaline level dropped. I turned the knob and the door opened smoothly. I let it open wide before I stepped in. A second door was about ten feet away. The floor leading up to the door was polished wood. A sofa was on the right side of the room. It looked well used. An oak desk was on the other side. It had a huge screen monitor on top. There were lots of books stacked at various heights around the desk.

I had some choices to make: Open the other door, leave, or investigate. I chose to investigate. I looked around and couldn’t find any obvious signs of cameras. I spotted a book by one of the sofa legs. The cover looked familiar. As I picked up the book I realized the sofa was not for sleeping when working late at night. I delightfully thought maybe Guy was bi. The book definitely looked well read. There

were various thick crease spots along the spine that indicated most read areas. I opened the book to one of the areas. And giggled. I was right. Readers liked it from behind. The book was the Kama-Sutra Illustrated.

