

JUSTICE FOR ALL

by

RADCLYfFE



2009

PROLOGUE

Tell me again, Vincent, how it is that in six months I've lost a third of my income."

Before the visibly sweating man standing in front of his desk could reply, Kratos Zamora swiveled his leather desk chair to face the floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows. His office on the twenty-fifth floor of the high-rise he owned in Center City commanded a view from downtown Philadelphia across the Delaware River into southern New Jersey. The panorama was book-ended by the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to the north and the Walt Whitman to the south. The Port of Philadelphia stretched off to his right and, as the silent seconds passed, he contemplated a cargo ship lumbering up to the pier loaded with twenty-by-forty-foot containers stacked ten high. Some of those carried his legitimate products, and others should have carried his far more lucrative merchandise. And there was his problem.

Squinting slightly in the late afternoon sun, he continued in a conversational tone as if reading from a grocery list. "Seventy-five percent of the online entertainment revenues and over half of the escort service's have dried up. And now," he paused to spin back around, "you're telling me our direct line to City Hall has disappeared. Did I hear that right?"

"Not exactly disappeared," the big man in the ill-fitting suit answered diffidently. "More like...dead."

Kratos winced inwardly, because even though his offices were routinely swept for surveillance devices at the start of every eight-hour shift, he still avoided discussing business indoors. He'd rather take his chances outside where traffic noise and physical obstacles made long-

range audio surveillance problematic. However, most of his men had grown up in a different era and were slow to retrain. He had inherited the business from his father only five years before, at the age of thirty-two, even though his older brother Gregor was the first son. Gregor had his talents, but they tended to be of the physical variety. Kratos had earned his MBA at Wharton and their father, in a break with tradition, had named him heir to Zamora Enterprises. Surprisingly, Gregor hadn't objected and now served as Kratos's security chief. Many people assumed Gregor headed the family and Kratos was content to let the fallacy go unchallenged. There were advantages to being seen as a legitimate businessman. In fact, he considered himself a modern entrepreneur, even if on occasion he employed methods that were never covered in his curriculum at the University of Pennsylvania. A flexible approach was necessary in order to secure his goals.

"You didn't answer my original question," he prodded gently. He knew the answer, of course, but in lieu of killing the messenger, he would merely make him suffer. Crossing his knees and casually flicking a nonexistent wrinkle out of the leg of his charcoal gray blended-silk trousers, he regarded Vincent Costa with a bland expression.

Vincent, one of his more trusted captains, folded his hands over his crotch and stared into space. "There's this new unit...the High Profile—"

"Yes, I'm aware of it." Kratos glanced at the single sheet of paper in the center of his desk.

A list of names and nothing else was typed down the left-hand side: Detective Lieut. Rebecca Frye, Detective First William Watts, Detective Third Dellon Mitchell, JT Sloan, and Jason McBride. The High Profile Crimes Unit. An odd assortment of local law enforcement and civilian consultants first formed to break an Internet pornography ring that used underage models. That online entertainment operation just happened to be neatly folded into one of Zamora Enterprise's subsidiary corporations, and its loss had been costly. Only days ago, this crime unit had intercepted a delivery of young girls destined to become stars in high-demand pornography films as well as call girls for an exclusive escort service also run by Zamora Enterprises.

"What I don't understand is how they've managed to do in a few months what an entire police force hasn't been capable of in two decades."

“I don’t know, boss.”

“Guess, Vincent.” Kratos needed men like Vincent, men who were close to the street, far closer to the blood and the grime than he had ever been. While he was welcome at \$10,000-a-plate benefit dinners and luncheoned frequently with the mayor, he had never personally pulled the trigger on an enemy. He’d never walked the mean streets except as a boy under his father’s protection. He wasn’t bothered by the fact there were things his men could do better than he, as long as he was certain that they never knew it.

“It’s the computers,” Vincent said, blinking as a trickle of sweat settled in the corner of his eye.

Interested, Kratos sat forward and clasped his hands in the center of his desk on top of the offending list. The sunlight glinted off the heavy gold signet ring he wore on the small finger of his right hand. The edge of his pristine white cuff covered a portion of the list, so all he could see was the name Rebecca. “What do you mean?”

“It’s not like the old days, you know? Used to be cops were out on the streets, listening to the chatter and squeezing their snitches to find out what was going on. Hell, now they can follow you with that little chip thing in your cell phone. They don’t even have to get out of their car.”

“Are you saying our electronic security is a problem?”

Vincent lowered his gaze to meet Kratos’s. “Couldn’t hurt beefing it up, but that’s not gonna stop them. They fingered our inside man at City Hall pretty fast, and they pulled in all the midlevel porn distributors by tracking them through their computers. They’re good, boss.”

“We’ve got some muscle in that area too,” Kratos said, thinking of the leggy redhead who had set up the spyware that had ultimately given him access to confidential records at City Hall and One Police Plaza. She was good, very good. But one of the first things he’d learned from his father was never to go into a fight with only one plan of attack. “What happens if we break up this unit?”

“Buys us time. Maybe permanently.” Vincent’s eyes glinted. “You want me to arrange some accidents?”

Kratos sighed, bothered less by the indiscreet question than the option itself. Assassination was not his preferred approach, not because it concerned him to neutralize his adversaries, but because murder was usually sloppy and always drew unwanted attention. He’d been opposed

to eliminating the undercover officers who'd gotten close to exposing the kiddie porn operation but had finally consented in order to assuage his new Russian business partners. The compromise seemed necessary to gain a greater percentage of the profits, but as a result, he and *his* businesses were coming under far more scrutiny than the Russians. He didn't want to invite even more.

"Perhaps there's another way," he said, recalling another of his father's lessons. Where there was an obstacle, there was usually an opportunity also. "After all, we need a new representative at One Police Plaza."

"Turn one of those cops?" Vincent laughed, then quickly smothered his smile. "From what I hear, they're all a bunch of Boy Scouts."

Kratos leaned back and tapped the list with one finger. Five people—three women, two men. "Find me the weak link."

"I heard some of them are queers."

"If you heard it, then it's common knowledge and blackmail would be pointless. No," Kratos mused. "It won't be greed that provides the lever we need, and it won't be power. It won't even be fear of death." He smiled, enjoying the challenge. "It will be love."

"Boss?" Vincent frowned.

"Bring me everything you can find about their families."

CHAPTER ONE

Rebecca Frye studied her face in the mirror over the tiny sink in her hospital room's bathroom. The harsh institutional light mercilessly highlighted the purple-and-green bruise that extended from her left temple down her cheek to the angle of her jaw. Her upper eyelid was so swollen she could barely make out the ice blue rim of her iris. At least the blood in her hair was gone. She'd finally gotten a shower after two days of insisting to the nurses that she was perfectly capable of standing upright. Actually, the first time she'd tried to get out of bed, the room or her head—or possibly both—had spun so badly she'd nearly vomited. Thank Christ Catherine hadn't been there to witness the episode.

Rebecca wasn't bothered by the mess the gunshot had made of her face. To her way of thinking, if she was standing up and able to see the damage, she was way ahead of the game. What bothered her was that every time her lover, Dr. Catherine Rawlings, looked at her, she would be reminded how close Rebecca had come to being a casualty. Catherine tried to hide her worry and her fear, but the shadows flickering just below the surface of her green eyes gave her away. For Rebecca, the pain of being shot was nothing compared to the pain of knowing Catherine was suffering because of her.

She opened and closed her jaw carefully. Stiff and sore, but in working order. For a few seconds she contemplated trying to cover the bruises with makeup, but that would only call more attention to the injury. And no attempt at camouflage was going to diminish the reality

of what had happened. She turned away from the mirror, flicked off the overhead lights, and padded barefoot back into her room.

Catherine stood by the windows, her arms folded beneath her breasts, her back to Rebecca. She wore a sage green silk suit, the slim skirt coming to just above her knees, the jacket cinched at the waist. Her auburn hair fell in waves to her shoulders, and for the first time, Rebecca noticed the silver at her temples. She was elegant and beautiful and tender and wise. She was also strong and intuitive. She was all the things that Rebecca was not, and Rebecca could still not understand what it was Catherine needed from her.

She stopped by the end of the bed, feeling disadvantaged in nothing more than a hospital gown and a pair of gym shorts. “Aren’t you supposed to be in clinic?”

“I’m playing hooky.” Catherine turned from the window, her gaze going immediately to the bruise. She quickly smiled, but not fast enough to cover her flinch of distress. “It’s good to see you out of bed.”

“I’m clean, too.”

“Even better.” Catherine crossed to Rebecca and kissed her on the cheek. “How are you feeling?”

“Not bad. I don’t suppose you know when I’m getting out of here?”

“As a matter of fact, I do.” Catherine tried to keep her tone light. “Since I expected that would be your first question, I made some calls on my way over.”

She appraised the damage to Rebecca’s face. Even though she knew, rationally, that Rebecca would heal, she couldn’t prevent the sinking feeling she got in the pit of her stomach at the sight of the injury. The bullet had glanced off Rebecca’s skull just above her temple. The impact had been enough to flay open her scalp and give her a hairline fracture, but the neurosurgeons assured Catherine once the concussion resolved there would be no permanent damage. Still, it was impossible to erase the image of Rebecca lying so still and pale on a stretcher, her blond hair matted with congealing blood. Catherine tried to tell herself it was because Rebecca was so skilled, so good at what she did, that she’d managed to avoid serious injury. If she pondered the possibility that it was only luck that had kept the bullet from striking Rebecca a half-inch lower or a half an inch farther to the right and killing her

instantly, she'd never be able to sleep again when Rebecca was out on the streets. Luck was far too fickle a lady to be the guardian of her lover's life.

"Ali said she'll stop by as soon as she's finished in the OR, and if you promise to behave, she'll let you go."

"I'll promise her anything she wants," Rebecca said.

Catherine raised an eyebrow. "It's a good thing I trust Ali Torveau, then."

"You can trust me." Rebecca slipped her arm around Catherine's waist and kissed her. When she felt Catherine's resistance, she loosened her hold and eased back. She looked away, fearing what she might see in Catherine's eyes. "I should get dressed."

"Let me get your clothes."

"I can do it." Rebecca walked to the tall narrow closet next to the door. "I know you have patients waiting."

"I want to drive you home."

"That's okay," Rebecca said briskly. "I'll call one of the team."

She opened the closet. A shirt and clean pair of jeans hung on hooks where Catherine had placed them when she'd brought them from home. They weren't officially living together, but they might as well be. Rebecca still had her small, spare apartment above a mom-and-pop grocery store in South Philadelphia, but she spent almost every night in Catherine's Victorian near University Hospital where Catherine was the assistant chief of psychiatry. They'd been talking about living together, but that was before the shooting—the second time Rebecca had been shot in the line of duty since she and Catherine had been together. She wouldn't be surprised if Catherine wanted to reconsider. Every other woman Rebecca had ever been with had eventually decided that the demands and risks of her job were too much to deal with.

"You should get back to work," she told Catherine without turning around.

A pair of hands slid over her shoulders and Catherine leaned ever so gently against her back. With her mouth very close to Rebecca's ear, she whispered, "I'm not going anywhere and you can't chase me away."

"Is that what you think I'm doing?" Rebecca stared into the closet. She hadn't realized she was cold until the heat of Catherine's body

warmed her. She never realized what she needed until Catherine gave it to her without being asked. She covered one of Catherine's hands. "I'm sorry."

"Turn around."

Slowly, Rebecca turned.

Catherine's heart clenched at the fear she glimpsed on her lover's face. Rebecca was the bravest, strongest woman she'd ever known, and she couldn't bear to think that anything she had said or done might have put that look in Rebecca's eyes. "Do you love me?"

"More than my life," Rebecca whispered.

Catherine laced her arms around Rebecca's neck. "As long as that's true, I'll be right here."

Rebecca clasped Catherine's waist and kissed her again, and this time nothing stood between them. Immediately, her heart felt lighter. Catherine was a few inches shorter than her own six feet, and she loved the way Catherine's body fit against hers. Holding her, knowing Catherine was hers, was like shining a light in the dark places in her soul. "I love you."

"That's all I need, Rebecca." Catherine feathered her fingers through Rebecca's sleek, fair hair. "It's really so simple."

Rebecca leaned her forehead against Catherine's. "Why can't I understand that?"

"You will, darling. You—"

The hall door swung open at the same time as a sharp rap sounded, and a brunette in surgical scrubs breezed into the room. Ali Torveau, Rebecca's trauma surgeon and a good friend to them both, planted her fists on her slim hips and regarded them quizzically.

"Why is it every time I have a cop for a patient I end up finding her in a clinch with some good-looking woman before I even have a chance to sign the discharge papers?"

Catherine slipped out of Rebecca's arms. "This is not a clinch. Clinching is for teenagers. What you witnessed is an embrace."

"Uh-huh. Looked a lot like a clinch to me." Ali pointed toward the bed. "Rebecca—in bed."

"I feel fine," Rebecca protested.

"Down," Ali repeated with just a hint of a growl.

"Okay. Okay." Rebecca stretched out on the narrow bed. As soon

as she did she noticed that her headache dialed down a notch or two. She decided to keep that information to herself.

“Any double vision?” Ali flicked the beam of a penlight back and forth between Rebecca’s eyes.

“No.”

“Headache?”

“No.”

“Let’s try that one again. Headache?”

Out of the corner of her eye, Rebecca could see Catherine’s concerned expression. “Mild. Nothing worse than a bad hangover.”

Ali swung her stethoscope from around her neck, hooked it in her ears, and pressed the bell to Rebecca’s chest. “Take a deep breath. Again. One more time.” Then she straightened and slung the stethoscope over her shoulder. “Fortunately the x-rays don’t show any evidence of sternal or rib fractures. I don’t expect you’ll have the same kind of pulmonary problems you had after the chest wound.”

The last thing Rebecca wanted was Ali reminding Catherine of another brush with death. “Look, this was nothing. I was wearing a vest and it did its job. I got caught with a glancing round. The ER guys should’ve sent me home with a couple of stitches.”

“We all know what happened, darling,” Catherine said quietly. “And we all know what could have happened. Let’s just—”

Another knock sounded and a slightly overweight, gray-haired man in a brown suit that was shiny at the knees lumbered in. He took in the group and quickly looked at the ceiling. “Is everything covered? I hope not.”

“You should be so lucky.” Rebecca had never been so happy to see her partner, William Watts. She hadn’t wanted to work with the sometimes crude, reputedly over-the-hill detective after her longtime partner had been executed along with another undercover cop just less than a year before. But her captain had insisted and it hadn’t taken her long to realize that Watts was no burned-out cop putting in time until his pension. He was astute, hardworking in his own laid-back way, and most importantly to Rebecca, completely trustworthy.

Watts grinned, his blue eyes twinkling in his heavysset, ruddy face. “I always thought those little hospital johnnies were a turn-on. Better view from the back, though.”

“Jesus,” Rebecca muttered. “Get out of here so I can get dressed.”

“Getting sprung, huh, Loo?”

“Yes, and you’re my ride.”

“Sure thing. I’ll be outside.” He nodded to Catherine and Ali as he headed out the door. “Ladies.”

“I can drive you home, darling.” Catherine glanced at Ali. “If you’re going to let her go?”

Ali stood back from the bed. “Your CT scan shows a small hematoma just below that hairline fracture in the left temporal area. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time it resolves over the course of a few weeks. Every once in a blue moon we see delayed bleeding, usually from a vein tearing during excessive exercise or something else popping because of severe hypertension. What that means is you need to take it easy. No driving for two weeks. No workouts, no jogging, and no vigorous sex.”

“Got it,” Rebecca said through gritted teeth.

“There’s an even smaller chance, maybe one in five thousand, that this hematoma could resolve with a small area of scarring. Scarring in the brain equals a focus of irritation, and we sometimes see seizures. If you notice weakness, numbness, olfactory disturbances, memory loss, tremors, I need to know about it immediately.”

“What about prophylactic Dilantin?” Catherine asked.

Rebecca’s stomach tightened at the slight quiver in Catherine’s voice. She hated this—she just wanted it over, fast.

Ali shook her head. “The risk is smaller that she’ll have problems than the potential complications of taking the drug. I’d rather just wait and watch.” She fixed Rebecca with a piercing stare. “If I have your word that you’ll follow instructions.”

Rebecca reached for Catherine’s hand. “You have it.”

“Good enough. I’ll leave prescriptions for you at the nurses’ station. You can pick them up on your way out. I want to see you next week in clinic.” Ali started toward the door, then looked over her shoulder. “I’m glad you’re okay. Keep the rest of your people that way too.”

“I plan to,” Rebecca said.



Watts was slouched against the wall next to the door when Rebecca and Catherine walked out.

“You really should go downstairs in a wheelchair,” Catherine murmured.

Watts grinned and Rebecca shot him a look. “By the time someone finds one, I could be relaxing in the car. You did park out front in the fire lane, didn’t you, Watts?”

“Right at the curb, Loo.”

“Good enough. Let’s go.”

Catherine sighed. “I can’t fight you both.” Then she stepped closer to the big detective. “I’m counting on you to look after her, William.”

The smirk disappeared from Watts’s face and he straightened, warmth replacing the usual sarcastic gleam in his eyes. “Yes ma’am. I’ll do that.”

“Move it, Watts,” Rebecca grumbled. The last thing she needed was babysitting. She kissed Catherine’s cheek. “I’ll see you later. Don’t worry.”

Catherine brushed her fingertips over Rebecca’s uninjured cheek. “Get some rest.”

“I won’t do anything strenuous. Promise.”

The three rode down in the elevator together and then parted in front of the hospital as Catherine hurried off to the medical arts building down the block. Rebecca eased into the front seat of the department-issue Crown Vic and was instantly at home. The interior smelled of smoke from Watts’s cigarettes, grease from the McDonald’s containers on the floor in the backseat, and the unmistakable scent of dozens of bodies. For the first time in days she felt like herself.

Watts settled his belly behind the wheel and pulled out into traffic. “Your place or the doc’s?”

“Neither. Let’s head to the office.”

“I don’t want to get my balls in a vise here, Loo. You’re supposed to be taking it easy.”

“No one said I couldn’t sit in a chair and talk.” Rebecca leaned her head back and closed her eyes. “Assemble the troops.”

“I ought to be wearing a cup,” Watts muttered. “My balls are aching already.”

“Shut up, Watts.” Rebecca smiled to herself when she heard his happy chuckle.



JT Sloan took the call at just after 2:00 p.m. Watts's message to meet at the unofficial headquarters of the HPCU in her private office building was a welcome reprieve to a life prison sentence. She'd just spent the last five hours working with two detectives who, along with her, made up the fledgling Electronic Surveillance Unit at the Philadelphia Police Department. In a moment of pure insanity, she'd signed on as the civilian consultant to help set up the unit and train the newly assigned detectives whose knowledge of cybersleuthing began with being able to turn on a computer and ended with signing on to the Internet for their e-mail. Fortunately, they made up for their lack of knowledge with eagerness. Still, there was a limit to how long she could rein in her temper, not one of her talents.

"Gotta run, fellas," she said, clipping her phone back to her belt. "Go ahead and start the downloads from the archives."

Lloyd Elliott, a sandy-haired, boyish-looking detective who was the reverse of Sloan's black haired, blue-eyed good looks, straightened up in his chair in alarm. "Without you? What if—"

Sloan waved a hand and headed for the door. "There's nothing you can do I can't fix. Have fun."

Hearing their grumbles as she made her escape, she laughed. There was a lot to be said for being her own boss. On her way to her Porsche, she made another call.

"Michael Lassiter's office," a smooth, sophisticated voice answered.

"It's Sloan. Is she around?"

"Of course, Ms. Sloan. I'll get her."

"Just Sloan," Sloan said automatically. She wasn't sure why her partner's executive assistant couldn't get that straight.

While she waited, she put the top down on the Carrera and took a deep breath of the cool autumn air. The sun was bright, but it lacked heat. She should probably get her leather jacket out of the trunk, because she'd feel the chill in just her usual white T-shirt and blue jeans, but she didn't bother. She wasn't going far and she liked the freedom of the air blowing against her skin. She'd spent three days behind bars once and

that was enough to make her hate any kind of confinement for the rest of her life. She pushed the thought away. All that was behind her.

“Sloan?”

“Hi, baby.”

“This is a nice surprise,” Michael Lassiter said.

Sloan got a little rush just hearing her speak. Michael not only had a kind of Lauren Bacall beauty, she had the voice to go with it. “I’m headed back to the office. Rebecca is out of the hospital.”

“That’s wonderful news.”

“How are you feeling?” Sloan asked. Michael had been injured herself not long before and was still only working half days at Innova, the design corporation she headed.

“I’m fine.”

“No migraines?” Sloan started the engine and let it idle while she talked.

“Really, sweetheart. A little tired, maybe, but I’m all right.”

“Don’t overdo, okay?”

“I promise. I’ll see you at home in a little while.”

“I might still be in the office when you arrive,” Sloan said. The cyberinvestigation company she’d founded with another ex-federal agent, Jason McBride, after she’d been falsely arrested and dismissed from her Justice position, occupied the third floor of a renovated warehouse in Old City. She’d been sharing her loft apartment on the floor above with Michael for the last two years. “Call me when you get home.”

“Sloan,” Michael chided softly. “You know very well if you’re involved in something I won’t be able to drag you upstairs.”

Laughing, Sloan gunned the Porsche across the lot and out onto the Benjamin Franklin Parkway heading east. “Baby, I want to see you. And being dragged away sounds like fun.”

“Oh, I’m sure I can think of other fun things too.”

“Can’t wait. See you soon.”

Michael said good-bye and Sloan hung up, just barely managing not to ask again if Michael was sure she was all right. She had argued against her going back to her job so soon, but she understood the need to work. Until she’d fallen in love with Michael, all she’d had was work. Even now, when the hunt was on, the chase consumed her. Sometimes

she couldn't tell the difference between being the hunter and the hunted and all she could do was keep running through the complex labyrinth of cyberspace until she won or dropped. Only Michael had ever been able to call her back.



"Tell them no," Sandy Sullivan mumbled, wrapping her slim arm around Dellon Mitchell's narrow waist and tethering her with a leg across the thighs.

"Work, babe," Dell whispered, trying unsuccessfully to extricate herself from Sandy's grip. Not that she really wanted to go anywhere. Sandy might be half her size, but she was curvy in all the right places and her skin was so smooth Dell could lose himself for hours just running her fingertips over every inch. Not that she could really last for hours without doing more than just touch her, but it *felt* that way sometimes. The only thing in the world that could get her out of bed with Sandy was a call to arms. The only thing she loved as much as Sandy was being a cop. She was the youngest member of the High Profile Crimes Unit and awakened daily hardly able to believe she was part of the team. She'd do anything to prove herself. "I gotta go, babe."

"Screw that, Dell. It's your day off." Sandy propped her head on her elbow, her short blond hair spiky and her eyes even sharper. "Even cops and whores get a day off."

"You're not a whore. You were never a whore."

Sandy rolled her eyes. "Okay. Even classy streetwalkers like myself get a break once in a while."

"I had a day off. Well, most of the day. And you kept me busy." Dell pushed up against the pillows, brushing strands of dark hair back from her face. Sandy automatically curled up against her chest and Dell stroked her hair. "The lieutenant's out of the hospital."

Sandy stopped playing with Dell's nipple, thank God, and sat up facing Dell. "Frye's okay?"

"I guess so, or they wouldn't have let her out. I told you I would have taken you to visit her." Dell wasn't crazy about the fact that Sandy was her lieutenant's confidential informant. In fact, she hated the risk Sandy took every time she went out on the street to gather intel. It only bugged her some that Sandy was a little bit in love with Rebecca Frye.

She trusted the lieutenant. She trusted Sandy. It's just that she couldn't imagine measuring up to the lieutenant in anybody's eyes. Frye was not only good-looking, she was an awesome cop. Dell thought if she turned out to be half as brave and smart at her job as the lieutenant, she'd be satisfied.

"She had enough people hanging around her," Sandy said dismissively. She ran her finger down the center of Dell's thigh, smiling when Dell twitched as if an electric current had shot through her. "Sure you have to go?"

Dell grabbed Sandy's hand. "You know I gotta. And yeah, I'm gonna be thinking about what I'm missing the whole time."

Sandy kissed her, rubbing her breasts lightly over Dell's. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." Dell grabbed her and flipped her onto her back. Then she settled her hips between Sandy's legs and gently bit down on her neck. She could spare ten minutes.