

KILL AND RUN

A THORNY ROSE MYSTERY

BY
LAUREN CARR

KILL AND RUN

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Designed by Acorn Book Services

Publication Managed by Acorn Book Services
www.acornbookservices.com
acornbookservices@gmail.com
304-995-1295

Cover designed by Todd Aune
Spokane, Washington
www.projetoonline.com
Cover Photo: LukaTBD@www.fotolia.com

ISBN-10: 0692477152
ISBN-13: 978-0692477151

Published in the United States of America

PROLOGUE

Thirteen Years Ago

Friday, January 24: 10:25 pm

Pennsylvania Turnpike—Roadside Stop West of Pittsburgh

“Man, it’s colder than a witch’s tit.” Pennsylvania trooper Reese Phillips shivered while bringing the steaming hot, freshly-brewed coffee to his lips.

With a grin that stretched across his face, Officer Nicholas Gates asked, “Where do you come up with phrases like that, Phillips? Do you make them up?”

The middle-aged officer looked the young trooper up and down. With the fresh face of a college heart-throb, Nick Gates was little more than a rookie.

“Don’t tell me you never heard that one, Gates,” Officer Phillips grumbled. “You’re killing me.”

Chuckling, the two men made their way to the cashier to pay for their coffees.

“Half hour more and I’ll be checking out to go home and climb into bed with Rufus.” Officer Phillips shot a wicked glance over his shoulder at his trainee. “Wipe that

grin off your face, Gates. My hound dog may not be as pretty as your sweet bride, but he doesn't complain when I snore either."

"Neither does Cameron," Officer Gates replied.

"She's never heard my snoring."

"I'm referring to mine," the young officer laughed.

"She will. They all do." Officer Phillips handed the cashier a five dollar bill. "This one's on me, Gates. Next will be your turn."

Officer Gates slipped his money back into his wallet and picked up the coffee he had set down on the counter in order to pay. "Hey, Phillips, do you still have that contact with the FBI?"

Officer Phillips had to think a moment while they strolled toward the door that led out into the sub-zero temperature. "Do you mean Hatfield? He used to be with the Pennsylvania state police and then joined the FBI."

"He works in Quantico now, right?"

Bracing themselves for the blast of icy air, they pushed open the doors and stepped outside.

"Yes," Officer Phillips said, "Why? You looking to move on already?"

"I was wondering if he'd be able to look through their national database for a missing person."

Too cold to continue talking, the two men ran in opposite directions for their cruisers.

"I'll have his number for you tomorrow," Phillips yelled above the howling wind.

With a wave of his hand to acknowledge that he heard him, Officer Gates climbed into his cruiser. On the other side of the parking lot, Officer Phillips spotted a sedan speeding past the rest stop at top speed. Before the older man could react, Officer Gates turned on his flashing lights and gave chase.

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“Yeah,” Officer Phillips sighed while enjoying the warmth of his hot coffee in the comfort of his patrol car. “Leave it to the young ones.”

A pair of headlights bathed the compartment of his patrol car with its high beams. A black truck followed Gates’ cruiser out onto the turnpike.



Officer Nicholas Gates checked the time on the dashboard clock while calling in to dispatch the description and tag numbers of the speeding sedan. Ten twenty-eight in the evening. Another half hour and he’d be heading home to curl up in a warm bed with the love of his life.

A recent graduate of the police academy, Cameron was on her way to joining the state police. They were the perfect pair. Life was grand.

Bracing himself against the cold wind and the speeding cars on the turnpike, Nick opened the door and stepped out of the cruiser. Keeping a close eye on the sedan, he approached the driver’s side window. The young woman behind the steering wheel had the window down and was waiting for him. As he approached, he could hear muffled sobs.

He shone his flashlight into the darkened car. “Your license and registration please.” The flashlight beam caught the tears in her eyes. “Are you okay, ma’am?”

“No.” She handed her driver’s license and registration to him. “My father is going to kill me.”

“I’m sure it’s not that bad.” Nick checked over the documentation. She was sixteen years old. “I clocked you at thirteen miles over the speed limit.”

“Because my curfew is eleven o’clock. I was out at the mall by the airport with my friends. Now, not only am I going to miss curfew, but I’m going to have my first speeding ticket, too.” She hiccupped.

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She could have been faking. She could have been using her pretty face to charm him out of a speeding ticket. She probably was. Nick considered how long it would take to write up the ticket. It was freezing and he really wanted to get home.

Nick handed the documentation to her. "Tonight's your lucky night."

Her mouth dropped open. "Really?"

"I'm letting you off with a warning. You need to slow down. Better to get home late and safe than to not get home at all," he said. "Do you understand?"

She nodded her head vigorously. "Oh," she gushed, "you are the sweetest cop I ever met. I could kiss you!"

The last thing she saw was his brilliant smile filling his handsome face seconds before the black truck speeding down the turnpike swerved off the road to plow down Officer Nicholas Gates.

CHAPTER ONE

Present Day

Rock Springs Boulevard, Chester, West Virginia

His hands felt warm on her flesh. His breath was hot and heavy on her neck. Arching her back to press her body against his, Cameron prayed that this moment, this instant, the euphoria of being so connected to the man she loved could be frozen in time so that it would last forever.

Her breathing quickened and deepened. Her head spinning with ecstasy, she dug her fingers into his flesh. Tightening his grip around her waist, he pulled her hips ever closer into him. “Come with me, babe!” he breathed in a husky voice into her hair.

Breathless, all she could do was hold on tight. Their bodies rose and fell in sync. Lovingly rubbing his back—still hot with passion—Cameron recalled how they had been in sync since the first instant they met.

Exhausted, he collapsed onto her.

“I love you,” she whispered into his ear.

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Rising up, he gazed into her face. “Love you, too, babe.”

The moonlight shining through the glass doors leading out onto the verandah shone on his blond hair. A wide grin filled his boyish face.

Cameron felt as if the breath had been sucked out of her body with one glance into his brown eyes.

Nick! No! But you're dead! Unable to form the words—her mouth hung open.

Fear filling every fiber of her being, she glanced across the bed to where Joshua, her husband was sound asleep.

No, this isn't happening! Unable to speak, she tried to push him away.

He grasped her by the arms and held her still. His eyes met hers. Even in the dark, she could see them clearly. They weren't filled with malevolence or hurt or even betrayal at her moving on to a new life with another man.

Insistence. Conviction. That was what she saw.

“You're not finished with me yet, babe.”

“No!” Cameron sprang up straight in the bed.

With a screech, Irving, her twenty-five pound Maine Coon cat leapt from the bed where he had been curled up against his mistress's legs to the dresser where he growled at the sudden interruption to his sleep.

Joshua Thornton sat up an instant after her. “Cam!” He grabbed her arm.

Thinking she was still trapped in the nightmare with her late husband, she swung around to fight off the ghost with a slap to the face.

Seeing her hysteria, Joshua ducked in time so the slap flew over his head. “Cam! It's me! Josh!” He tried to reach for her but she was out of the bed. “Wake up!”

His voice broke through her terror.

Heaving deep breaths, she gazed at her husband of a year, reaching out for her. The dim light of the bedroom caught

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on his silver hair falling in layered waves to his neck and his closely trimmed auburn beard and mustache. She could see the blue hue of his eyes pleading for her to wake up.

“Josh,” she said in a hushed voice.

With a sigh of relief, he held out his hand to her. “That’s right, darling. Come back to bed.”

She welcomed the warmth of his touch when he grasped her fingers. When she climbed back into the bed, he enveloped her against his firm chest and caressed her head. She welcomed the sound of his heart beating against her ear.

“Want to tell me about your dream?” he asked into her hair.

“No.” She rubbed her face against his bare chest. “Promise me that nothing bad will ever happen to you—that things will always be like they are now—at this moment.”

Joshua tightened his arms around her. He took a whiff of her cinnamon colored hair. “You know I can’t promise that.”

“Lie to me.” She brushed his chest with her fingertips. “Isn’t that the first thing they teach you in law school?”

“You’re rotten.”

They chuckled together in the darkness, then fell back into silence.

“Promise me, Josh,” she whispered.

“I promise that I won’t let anything bad happen to me,” he said, “Things will never change between us. They will always be like they are right now—this very second.”

With a deep sigh, she drifted off to sleep.

Seeing that things had calmed down, Irving leapt back onto the bed and proceeded to knead the covers to remake his bed before beginning the arduous process of smoothing his long hair back into place. Joshua thought, not for the first time, how much Irving’s markings resembled a skunk.

“Who invited you?” Joshua asked the cat in a whisper.

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“Sshh,” Cameron replied, clinging to him tighter. In an effort to be as close to him as possible, she wrapped her legs around his.

As if in response to him, Irving turned around to aim his rear in Joshua’s direction before hitching his butt with his long black and white tail up high in the air and laying down on Cameron’s side of the bed.

Joshua read it as a feline version of mooning him.

No respect.



The Mall on Washington, DC: Sunrise

The Nation’s Capital doesn’t wait for the sun. In the early hours, shortly before the moon relinquished the day to the sun, hordes of commuters were already migrating into and around the city in cars, SUVs, carpool vans, and buses.

Underground, the metro subway trains were packed with sleepy-eyed passengers quietly gearing up for their day. Trying to catch one more minute of solitude, the fares on the blue line abruptly woke up and moved out of the way when a muscle-bound, bald man in camouflaged pants crashed through the connecting door and plowed through passengers blocking his path down the middle of the train. With very little space to escape, some passengers grumbled and cursed until the door slid open again.

A young man with dark hair dressed in black slacks and a black t-shirt that hugged his lean, firm muscles hurdled a row of briefcases. Strapped around his hips was a gun holster packing a Sig Sauer DAK pistol. “Stop! Federal Agent!”

“Smithsonian Station,” the speaker overhead announced.

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Seemingly more interested in getting to work than stopping a suspected felon, the passengers stood up and moved to the doors—blocking the agent's pursuit of his quarry.

Craning his neck and dodging the passengers in his way, he searched the faces and forms moving between him and the end of the car where he saw the shiny top of a bald head waiting at the exit.

"Stop!" the young man screamed. "You're under arrest." In seconds, the doors would open to allow his target to escape out into the station packed with commuters. Unable to make it down the center aisle, he attempted to climb over the seats in a vain effort to capture him before the doors opened.

The train screeched to a halt.

The agent grabbed the overhead hand rail to catch himself. When his feet, encased in combat boots, slipped, he dropped into a seat filled with an overweight woman, who didn't welcome his company.

"How rude!" She shoved him to the floor before whacking him with her heavy purse.

The doors flew open.

Even while he was carried away by the mob out the doors, the agent didn't lose sight of the bald man. When the subway train doors slammed shut, their eyes met out on the platform. The two men stood forty feet from each other with the sea of commuters swarming around them.

With a cocky grin, the bald-headed man winked at his pursuer before whirling around and racing up the escalator—shoving people out of his way to make it to the top.

"Halt! You're under arrest!" the young man in black was right on his heels. At the top of the stairs, the bald man yanked a crate of fresh newspapers over to send that day's news scattering down the escalator. Some of the pages caught in the wind created by the speeding trains to fly like paper airplanes through the metro stop.

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At a dead run, the suspect in camouflage pants took off across the grass in the direction of the Museum of Natural History.

His pursuer easily hurdled the stacks of newspapers. Keeping his target in sight, he sprinted across the grass until they hit the tree-lined street where the bald man disappeared behind a bus. Crossing the street, the young man caught a glimpse of his target ducking into an alley-way behind the museum—half a block away.

“Got you, you cretin!” Pumping his legs as hard as he could, he ran for the alley. Stopping at the corner, he extracted his gun from the holster.

Ready to fire, he turned the corner to see the bald-man waiting halfway down the length of the alley. The culprit was not alone. He shielded his body with a shrieking woman clad from head to toe in a burka. As he pressed the barrel of his gun against her temple, the woman hysterically babbled in a foreign language.

Though he could not understand the words, the young man understood the tone. She was pleading for him to not let her die.

“Put down the gun!” His gun aimed at his target, the young man moved steadily toward them.

“One step closer and I’ll kill her!”

“And then I’ll kill you. The only way this is going to end well is if you let her go. Then we can talk about this.”

“No talk,” he replied. “All you westerners do is lie.”

“So you want to kill us infidels,” the slender young man said. “I get that. But she’s one of yours, why take her with you?”

“She’s just a worthless woman,” the bald-headed man said with a sneer. “I really don’t care if she lives or dies.” He chuckled. “But you care—because you’re weak just like all you infidels.”

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With only her eyes visible, the woman shrieked and babbled.

“Throw down your gun or she dies!”

Releasing his grip on the gun, the young man tossed the gun to the ground.

The bald man laughed. “Kick it to me.”

Holding both of his hands up, the young man shrugged his shoulders and kicked the gun to him.

The bald man took his eyes off the agent in black to see where the gun landed. In that instant, when he had dropped his guard a hair, the young man pounced.

Doing a shoulder-roll to drop below the gunman's line of fire, the young man burst to his feet directly in front of the gunman. Grabbing the weapon, he jerked it away from the woman's head. The gunman, too stunned to react, could only blink at the surprise attack.

Spinning on his heels, the man in black shoved the woman out of the way before wresting the weapon out of the gunman's grip and twisted the now-empty hand behind the bald man's back. He gave a quick kick to the back of the gunman's knee before bringing his own knee up to press into the assailant's spine.

Shocked by the impact, the gunman fell forward. Keeping his knee in contact with the gunman's spine, the young man locked the gunman's arm firmly behind his back.

It happened so fast that the gunman was face down in the alley before he knew what was happening.

“You're under arrest!” the agent announced to his captive. Over his shoulder, he called to the woman. “Are you okay?”

The hostage's answer started with the click of a gun.

Before he could react, the young man in black felt a barrage of bullets hit him in the back. He collapsed on top of his target.

“Get off of me, Thornton.” Pushing the agent over onto his back, the bald man, Major Marshall Ford climbed up onto his knees.

“Damn,” Thornton breathed.

“Lieutenant Murphy Thornton, what did you do wrong?” the deep voice of Major Seth Monroe came from the other side of the alley.

Rubbing the wet red paint that now soaked the back of his shirt to make it cling to him, Murphy groaned while climbing up to his feet. “I dropped my guard towards the hostage. I assumed she was an innocent bystander.”

“You didn’t even look closely enough at her to see that she was a *he*,” Major Monroe said with a laugh.

When the major stepped aside, Murphy saw that the hostage had dropped the burka to reveal that he was in reality a slightly built young man who appeared to be of Middle-Eastern descent. Murphy recognized him from seeing him in the corridors at the Pentagon. Unlike Murphy, Major Monroe, and Major Marshall Ford, he was most certainly a civilian.

“You know Farsi?” Murphy asked him.

“Tawkeel Said was born in Iraq,” Major Monroe said. “He’s fluent in practically every language in the Middle East. Tawkeel, this is Lieutenant Murphy Thornton.”

Moving his semi-automatic rifle, configured to carry paint balls instead of real bullets, to his other hand, Tawkeel offered his hand for Murphy to shake. “I think we met.”

With a quizzical expression, Murphy shook his hand. “No, I don’t think so. I’ve seen you around the Pentagon. State Department?”

“CIA.” Tawkeel helped pull him to his feet. “I could have sworn we met someplace before. I’m sorry I had to shoot you in the back.”

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“Did you have to fire so many shots?” Murphy felt the pain from the paintballs seeping down his back to his underwear. He tried to loosen his shirt from his back. “That close? I’m going to have welts on my back for days.”

“Better for you to remember not to let your guard down,” Major Monroe said.

“The whole purpose of this training exercise is to learn,” Tawkeel said. “If I was an extremist, I would have unloaded the whole clip and then doused your body in gasoline and set you on fire.”

Murphy recognized the cold hard glare in Tawkeel’s eyes. He was talking from first-hand experience.

“Tawkeel’s father was a contractor who worked behind the scenes to help the American military during the Gulf War,” the major explained.

“And he was in Iraq?” Murphy turned to Tawkeel. “Your father was one brave man. If he had been caught helping us, he would have been killed on the spot.”

“Tawkeel’s family formed friendships with some of the Americans and eventually converted to Christianity,” the major said.

“Which sealed our family’s fate for execution,” Tawkeel said. “My mother’s parents poisoned her during a family dinner. My father begged her not to visit them, but she insisted—she trusted them. As soon as he found out that she was dead, Father hurried my brothers and sisters and me out of our home with only the clothes on our backs. We hid in caves in the desert for two days and nights until some of Father’s American friends in the military were able to slip into the country and get us out one step ahead of the death squad hunting for us. I was only eight years old, but I still remember everything about that like it was yesterday. Those Americans, three men and two women, risked their lives to

save us.” With a slight bow, he concluded, “For that, I am eternally grateful to this country.”

“The operation was done off the grid,” Major Monroe whispered to Murphy. “After being brought to the United States, Tawkeel’s father helped to bring down Saddam Hussein. Tawkeel himself has been immensely valuable to the CIA, not to mention our team, in gathering intel from inside the country. Knowing the languages and customs and how they operate, he’s managed to give us a leg up in our operations.”

“I’m glad you’re on our side.” Murphy accepted Tawkeel’s offer of a towel to wipe off the red paint from his clothes and back.

“You’re lucky,” the silver haired major turned his attention to Murphy. “You got shot up with paint. Seven weeks ago, three marines got cut in half by a machine gun when they dropped their guard around who they thought was a harmless woman in a burka. *He* was really an ISIS soldier.”

“Understood, sir,” Murphy replied. “Won’t happen again, sir.” He pulled his shirt off over his head to clean up the paint dripping down his back.

“Better not.” Taking the towel from him, the major directed him to turn around while he wiped down his back. “You’re too valuable to the Phantoms to lose due to a newbie mistake.” With a glance up and down the alley, he ordered Tawkeel and Major Ford, “We need to get this cleaned up before the tourists start nosing around. I’ll be contacting you about the next training mission.”

Cleaned up as much as possible for the time being, Murphy put his shirt back on and picked up the gun he had dropped. He was wiping the dirt from the alley off it. Before holstering his weapon, he felt the major’s hand clasp his shoulder.

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“That was a very impressive move you made with the shoulder roll to catch Ford off guard,” the major said in a low voice. “I had read in your file that you know gymnastics, but I’ve never seen an agent who put it to use in the field.”

“Just a little something extra that I like to keep in my arsenal, sir,” Murphy said.

“That and your sixth-degree black belt in mixed martial arts.” The major looked the young navy officer up and down.

Two years out of the Naval Academy, Lieutenant Murphy Thornton was still green in many ways. For him, youth was not only an advantage, but also a disadvantage. While he still had a lot to learn, he had a fire in his belly when it came to pride in serving his country—a fire that had gone out for many people in Washington—including some at the very top ranks of government. What Murphy lacked in age and experience, he more than made up for in a quick wit, integrity, skill, natural talent, and passion to protect his country and her people. That was what put Lieutenant Murphy Thornton on track to becoming one of the Phantoms’ top agents.

Aware of the morning sun rising in the sky, Murphy waited patiently for Major Monroe, the ranking officer and leader of the nighttime training exercise, to dismiss him. Instead of doing so, the marine officer asked, “How are things going at your current assignment as military liaison with criminal investigations, Lieutenant?”

“Fine, sir,” Murphy replied, before adding, “Anxious to get back out in the field, sir. I know that’s not your decision, but if you can pass that onto my CO, I would greatly appreciate it.”

The older man furrowed his silver eyebrows. “But you just got married ... how long ago?”

Murphy said. “Celebrated our four month anniversary last week, sir. We moved into our new house that same weekend.”

“I heard,” the major said. “National Harbor.”

“Brownstown with a view of the Washington Monument from our rooftop.”

“I’d expect you to want to be home with your lovely young bride every night.” One of the major’s eyebrows arched.

“I do,” Murphy said with a sigh.

“Is anything wrong, Lieutenant?”

“No, sir,” Murphy said while shifting from one foot to the other. “I guess . . . I’m just not meant to be cooped up behind a desk, sir.”

“Like father, like son,” the major grumbled. “Well, no need to worry. With your talent and abilities, you won’t be cooped up for long. Just be patient.”

“I will, sir.” Murphy cast a glance to his cell phone to check the time. “If I may, sir, I need to go home to clean up and check into the office. We have a ten o’clock briefing and my supervisor in criminal investigations doesn’t like it when I’m late.”

“You did tell her that you were in training this morning, didn’t you?”

“Yes, sir.” Murphy gritted his teeth in order to not reveal his supervisor’s reaction to that news.

For a long moment, the two men held each other’s gaze. The set of the young man’s firm jaw seemed to say what he did not want to express in words. “You are excused then, Lieutenant.”



The sunny spring day, with the breeze off the Potomac River, tempted Murphy to take the day off to spend lazing along the river bank across the street from their new home with his “lovely bride” as the major had referred to her.

Murphy would be the last to argue with that assessment.

With her lush raven hair and violet eyes, Jessica Faraday was every man’s fantasy—most of all his. Four months earlier,

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Murphy was ready to propose thirty seconds after meeting the daughter of multi-millionaire Mac Faraday. Less than forty-eight hours later, she was his wife.

Some days, Murphy didn't feel like his feet had touched ground yet—except when he was sitting behind his desk in the Pentagon where he had been assigned as the military liaison to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

It was true, if his CO sent him back out into the field for an assignment, it would mean time away from Jessica. But there were some days when he looked out the window and ached to escape—especially when his supervisor was eyeballing him with her beady, dark eyes.

After turning off National Harbor Boulevard, Murphy eased his motorcycle into the townhouse development and rolled it down the hill to where their end unit brownstone rested along a grassy area in the corner. They were a short walk across a footbridge from the Potomac River.

As soon as he came into view of the two-car garage, Murphy pressed the button on the remote to open the door. Without stopping, he coasted the motorcycle into the garage and turned to park it next to his black SUV, a shiny GMC Yukon that Jessica had given him for a wedding present. Jessica's purple Ferrari took up the second car space.

After taking off his motorcycle helmet, Murphy opened the door leading into the recreation room to find Spencer, Jessica's sheltie, a blue merle, waiting on the other side. Murphy called her Candi, which annoyed Jessica—especially when the dog answered to Candi, while refusing to respond to the name Jessica had given her—Spencer.

Her blue eyes wide, the year-old dog was squirming with excitement. Her fluffy blue tail wagged so hard that it looked like it was going to fly off her butt. Placing his finger to his lips, Murphy gestured for her to remain silent before

bending over to pat her on the head. Pawing the floor, Spencer looked like she was about to burst with joy.

Finally, Murphy held out his arms. Squirring with delight, Spencer leapt up into his arms to lick his face. “Is your mother still in bed?” he whispered to her. Spencer stopped licking to look into his face. Her blue eyes were filled with question.

After setting the dog down, Murphy sat on the arm of the sofa bed—still filled with half-unpacked moving boxes—to take off his boots and socks. “Where’s your mommy?”

Spencer’s ears perked up, though the very tops remained flopped over. She cocked her head at him.

“Mommy?”

When she uttered the start of a yap, he shook his head while making a shushing noise. “Take me to Mommy.”

Spencer raced around the assortment of moving boxes that littered the recreation room before running up the stairs. While following her up the stairs to the living room, Murphy pulled his shirt off over his head.

On the main level, instead of taking the next set of stairs to the third floor, Spencer first detoured across the living room. Sailing from one side of a faded, overstuffed chair to the other, the dog hit the floor, made a U-turn back to the stairs, and bounded up to the master suite on the floor above.

Curled up in the overstuffed chair, Newman, Murphy’s forty-five pound black and white mongrel—who resembled a cross between a Bassett hound and a half dozen other breeds—lifted his head at the sudden interruption to his morning nap. Upon seeing Murphy, he let out a deep sigh and tapped the television remote with his front paw.

On his way up to the next level, Murphy heard the television station switch from the Cartoon Network to a cable news channel.

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The third level contained two bedrooms. One was the guest bedroom, behind a closed door on the left. The door at the end of the small hallway on the right was ajar.

Squirming with excitement, Spencer silently waited outside the door for Murphy to catch up.

Peering through the crack of the door, Murphy saw that she was sound asleep. She had promised to remain awake all night—waiting for his return.

Knew she couldn't do it.

Patting his thigh with his hand, Murphy gestured for Spencer to heel when he pressed open the door to ease through. Gazing up at him with adoration, the sheltie entered the room in step with him.

At the foot of the bed, Spencer raised her front paws as if to jump up onto the bed. Murphy held up his hand in a stop signal. With a stern expression, he gestured at the window seat that looked out toward the river.

Spencer's ears fell back in disappointment, Murphy bent over to pat her on the head and scratch her ears. His touch alone was enough to restore her happiness. With a bounce in her step, she jumped up onto the cushioned seat and laid down.

Murphy snuck over to his side of the bed. In silence, he watched his bride's chest rise and fall with each breath. Her long, dark eyelashes brushed across the top of her cheeks, which were flushed from the warmth generated by the comforter.

How he missed her during their nights apart.

He unbuttoned his black pants and eased the zipper down. Careful to suppress the rustle of the material against his skin, he slid his pants down over his thighs before allowing them to pool at his feet. Slipping his underwear down over his hips to join his pants on the floor, he stepped out of his clothes and slid under the covers.

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The heat of her body beckoned him to slide across the king-sized bed to press his firm body against hers. Placing his hand on her bare hip, he gently kissed her shoulder.

Without opening her eyes, she said “My husband is going to be home any minute.”

“Guess this means it’ll have to be a quickie.” He brushed her hair back to expose an ear. After kissing it, he whispered, “That’s okay. I’ve got a ten o’clock meeting anyway.”

With a wicked grin, she rolled over to pin him down by the shoulders. Under the covers, she pressed one of her thighs against his erection. Arching an eyebrow over one of her sensuous violet eyes, Jessica said, “I don’t do quickies.”