**ONE**

**SHE HAD THE SHOT.** It was lined up. She just needed to wait for the fog to clear. And it was going to clear in a moment. She could read the swirls of it, how it breathed and parted. New York City fog was lazy, like cigarette smoke.

A small vibration in her right ear. She clenched her jaw and waited. The fog didn’t clear. Her ear vibrated again. She sighed and whispered, “Phone ID.” A holo-projection beamed out from her earpiece, displaying a small screen in the corner of her vision. She glanced at it, and as she did the fog swirled open for less than a heartbeat, then closed like a lover’s kiss. She ground her teeth. *Caroline Khan*, read the display. “Answer,” she told the phone.

“I’m working,” Simone said softly. She was on a rooftop, four stories above her targets, and they were in a boat below her, but she was careful—voices could carry out here.

“I sent you a present,” Caroline said, her low voice smug. “You’re going to want to thank me.”

“You just made me miss my shot,” Simone said, “so let’s call it even.”

“No,” Caroline responded without a hint of guilt, “it’s not my fault you don’t turn your phone off while stalking.” “Stalking is what people do for fun,” Simone said. “Following a cheating husband to get photos of him with his special friend

is business.” “Don’t try to convince me it isn’t fun for you, too.” Simone rolled her eyes and squatted down, letting the camera

hang low in her arm. She leaned against the railing enclosing the roof. “Why am I going to owe you?” Simone asked. “I sent some business your way. Attractive business.” “The business, or the client?”

“The client is attractive, the business is lucrative and easy.” “Is this going to be a long conversation?” “Maybe,” Caroline said after a moment. “But only because I’ll

be laughing a lot.” “Can I call you later, then?” “Just meet me at Undertow when you’ve got the money shot.

Call if you still don’t have it by eleven.” “Will do,” Simone said, rising back up and trying to point her

camera in what she thought was the right direction. “Later.” Simone touched the earpiece to turn it off. The fog rolled out for a moment, and the boat below her became perfectly clear. It was a floating restaurant, permanently moored, with a large, open deck made of wood, covered with tables and chairs. Fancy, too: white linens, low lighting, and waiters in tuxes. The couple she was looking for was sitting in a corner, far from the entry bridge. He, Simone knew, was Henry St. Michel, whose wife had hired Simone to tail him. She was a blonde and definitely not Henry’s wife. Most

cheating spouses cheated with blondes. She snapped a photo, her camera silently capturing Henry and

The Blonde. The fog rolled back in, blocking her view. Simone looked at the photo she had just taken. They were sitting across a round table from each other. The Blonde’s back was to Simone, but Henry was fairly clear in the shot. He didn’t have a romantic expression; he had a nervous one. Simone zoomed on the camera’s display, taking a closer look at Henry. He was in his fifties, pudgy, balding, goatee, glasses. In the photo, his brow was furrowed into a stack of skittish creases. Simone aimed her camera again and waited for the fog to clear. When it did, she held down the release, taking about a dozen more shots before the fog closed around her. The images in her camera did not become any more romantic. They showed Henry taking an envelope out of his jacket and passing it across the table to The Blonde. She slipped it into her purse without looking inside. Then the waiter came over and took their order.

Simone rubbed at the back of her neck. Ms. St. Michel had only suspected an affair when she hired Simone. Her exact request was to find out what her husband was up to. From the look of it, it wasn’t an affair, but it was still suspicious. Even if the envelope was just cash, no one used cash anymore unless they had to, and passing it across the table in an unmarked envelope didn’t exactly make it seem aboveboard.

Simone squatted down and leaned on the rail again. She needed a shot of The Blonde’s face, but she couldn’t get it from this angle. She pressed a button, and the camera shrank down to the size of a business card, which she slipped into her trenchcoat sleeve. Then she stood and walked to the stairs at the other end of the roof, glancing out briefly before heading down.

She was on the roof of a twenty-four-story building, so the ocean lay four stories down, churning just below the twenty-first floor. The fog was thick, but she could hear the waves lapping at the other buildings around her, and the worn wooden bridges that connected them to one another and to the permanently moored boats that made up New York City. New York, city of bridges and boats. The green light of algae generators pulsed through the fog here and there, giving the view an eerie glow and, through it, the silhouette of the skyline bursting from the sea. It wasn’t the iconic skyline of the past—just the top, with wide plains of ocean between crumbling towers, and large boats floating low on the horizon, like a steel archipelago. Waves left streaks of yellowed foam like a sea chart against the buildings and boats. Everything smelled and tasted of salt.

Simone walked down to the twenty-first floor and stepped onto a bridge via a large window that had been converted into a door. Most of the city’s bridges clung to the buildings, wrapped around their exterior walls and branching off into “streets” that connected nearby buildings or boats. Sometimes the bridges were nice, well kept, wide enough for many people. Sometimes, they were like the bridge Simone was walking on now—creaking wood planks hovering over a hungrily lapping ocean. The banisters were splintery, so Simone didn’t touch them. Waves splashed at her ankles, but she had grown up here. She was used to it.

New York, though technically still part of the United States, had long begun to consider itself its own country, hundreds of miles from the Chicago coastline and the conservative, religious mainland. The Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial had been airlifted to Salt Lake City, but no one tried moving New York. All the other drowned cities, like DC and Boston, were graveyards now—spires and flat tops of buildings tilting out unevenly from under the water like old headstones. Not New York. Though some older buildings had been worn away by the waves, others, retrofitted and laminated in that technological wonder Glassteel, stayed where they were as the ocean rose, closing off the bottom floors as they filled with water. There were newer buildings, too, designed to withstand the water, and decommissioned boats clever entrepreneurs had bought and moored around the city. There were a million New Yorkers left, and they were stubborn. They built the bridges themselves, and everyone bought personal algae generators and desalination filters for their apartments, stringing them out the windows into the sea. They reassembled their city. They stayed.

Simone walked the bridges that took her to the boat-restaurant’s entrance, a well-preserved metal ramp that connected the bridge to the deck of the ship. The bridge here was wider and had a few lamps rising up and over it, like old street lamps, but with tubes that went down into the ocean to small algae generators that pulled the bright green stuff up and converted it to electricity. The railings were high enough, and solid metal, so the waves seldom splashed on the bridge in calm weather. A taxi-boat stand bobbed just down the bridge. This was a nice area. Well kept.

Strands of violin music came from the boat. Simone stood on the bridge, lit a cigarette, and waited. It was an early dinner, only six thirty, but the sky was darkening, and the fog was at its thickest. Maybe they chose the time because of the fog, Simone thought. The cigarette tasted dry and acidic in her mouth. It wasn’t her preferred brand. If she had them, she smoked the old-fashioned ones that killed slowly, but those were hard to find, so she had settled for the noncancerous ones that cleared out your sinuses, left your teeth whiter, and were just as addictive as real nicotine.

Simone settled in to wait. Waiting was a large part of being a private detective. She smoked two cigarettes and wondered what the envelope Henry had handed The Blonde contained. He wasn’t a big deal, as far as she knew. Not in politics. Just an export-import guy. His wife had the money. She was from the European Union, the part that was still dry thanks to the dikes, not the part that was all gondolas and canals. They had met when he was traveling, and decided to settle in New York because she loved the ocean. Not that there wasn’t a lot of ocean everywhere else. He ran the business with a partner, mostly bringing stuff out of mainland America as it became illegal (banned books, birth control, “scandalous” art) and sold it in Canada or the EU. Simone couldn’t think of anything he could have come across that would require shady dealings outside the office—maybe looted art from before the flood, but that stuff was sold pretty openly in the city. It could be smuggling, but with the amount of money his wife seemed to have, he didn’t need to.

They came down the ramp a little after seven. Not a long dinner. Not the sort of dinner where a couple gazed into one another’s eyes over crème brulée and sighed. They weren’t holding hands as they came down the ramp, either. Simone flicked her cigarette into the ocean and pretended to study the menu posted next to the restaurant’s ramp. Henry and The Blonde walked down the bridge and stopped at the taxi-boat stand. Henry nodded an awkward-looking goodbye and got into a waiting yellow boat. The Blonde waved goodbye after him. Simone watched The Blonde walk farther down the bridge and wondered whom to follow. She still hadn’t gotten a good shot of The Blonde, and her instincts told her Henry was on his way home, so she walked down the bridge, trailing The Blonde, her shoulders hunched, head down slightly. The Blonde turned onto one of the main bridges—huge things, reinforced, with suspension lines holding them up. Always crowded. Sometimes you might even see an old gas-powered car on one of them. Simone followed The Blonde, picking out details of her through the fog. She was petite, wearing a blue jacket and knee-length skirt. Her hair hung pin-straight to just above her shoulders, as if afraid to make contact, and it swayed when she walked. When she turned, it covered her profile. Simone couldn’t get a good look at her face.

The Blonde didn’t look like a New Yorker. Her boots were tall, and waterproof, but they had heels. Her dress was short enough to move in, but tight. And if she were a major player in the city, Simone would have known her face already. Simone guessed they were headed for a hotel, probably the Four Seasons. It was down this street and off another—and The Blonde looked like she could afford it. She pulled her camera out of her sleeve, turning it on without the zoom, so it stayed small. The Four Seasons was in front of them, the white-painted steps up to its marble terrace built right onto the bridge. The doors had originally been the wide glass doors from a suite to a balcony, and they hadn’t been changed much— except now the glass was tinted for privacy. They shone black in the fog, a doorman standing in front of them like a dark mast. He nodded at The Blonde, who nodded back and then turned as if aware of someone following her. Simone tilted her head down to hide her face but raised the camera and took as many photos as she could. The Blonde’s eyes scanned the horizon but didn’t seem to find Simone. She turned back around and went inside. Simone eyed the doorman, wondering if he would tell her who The Blonde was, but he had the look of an old dog about him, the kind who would stay loyal even if bribed, if only out of sheer laziness. Simone turned away. It was enough for one night. She’d call Ms. St. Michel and find out if she knew The Blonde.

Simone looked at the photos she had just taken. She was a blonde who could refreeze the ice caps—one of those pretty but cold, ageless faces that could be twenty-one or forty. Long bangs, a stylish haircut if Simone could judge by advertisements. She rubbed the back of her neck where it had started to ache and put the camera back in her sleeve. Then she took off down the street, walking to the bar to find out what sort of attractive client or job Caroline had found for her.