

CHAPTER ONE

Antechamber of Hell

He woke to the sound of a dying scream. He knew that he'd been taken prisoner and didn't outwardly react. He slowly took stock of his body. He was in a seated position, legs spread apart. His buttocks were on a firm surface, but his legs were in some sort of trough, leaving him uncomfortably vulnerable. His arms were resting on padded armrests. His torso was held in place by straps across his chest, just under his armpits. There were more straps across his biceps, wrists, thighs and ankles. He wasn't going anywhere.

The room he was in sounded cavernous, but it was well heated. He was grateful for this fact since he was completely naked. He'd been told what to expect, but the reality of it was worse than anything he'd imagined. For one thing, he wasn't supposed to have been taken. What had happened to his backup?

Once again, a scream rent the air. This was bad, very bad.

Joshua Whitfield was an FBI agent. He'd been chosen for this assignment as he roughly resembled the man who had received threats. On the surface, it had seemed simple enough. He was impersonating a businessman with an eye for the ladies. However, this guy was a predator and a scumbag who didn't take no for an answer. Far be it for him to refuse an assignment, but protecting a rapist was not to his liking. Oh, it wasn't brutal rape. It was the subtle kind: the kind where you could lose your job or not get that promotion unless you put out, subtle enough that the meaning was clear without so many words.

It was a common enough scenario where a woman had to put her career or livelihood before her dignity. Some women had objected and started their own little payback club. The men were kidnapped and raped. When he'd first heard the details of the case, Joshua had trouble understanding how this could happen. The method used was simple when explained: hook a man up to a Viagra I.V., strap him down, and let a bunch of sadistic, angry women take turns riding him. Some of the men had required amputation of their shafts after they'd been released. No woman had been identified as the men were often in shock from their experience.

He'd interviewed some of the women who had been coerced into sex with their employers, looking for a lead. As an FBI agent, he believed the men deserved punishment for their actions. Deep down, where no one could see, he thought payback was warranted. These men thought themselves above the law; they thought they could take whatever they wanted. They needed to understand the concept of vulnerability. But this...

Joshua dreaded what was going to happen unless his team found him. His clothes had sported several GPS tracking devices. Hopefully, this backup was nearby. He decided that it was time for him to take a look around. He slowly opened his eyes, just a thin slit, just enough to discern what was directly in front of him. He was ready to close his eyes again. Three women were standing there, examining him from head to toe. More specifically, they were staring at his engorged shaft. It wasn't throbbing yet, so he assumed that the Viagra overdose hadn't kicked in yet.

His head was pulled up abruptly by a woman who used his hair as a handle. He was slapped across the face. Hard.

"Wake up, Sleeping Beauty. It's time for you to find out what we have in store for you," said a raspy voice. Then came what could only be described as cackling. He cautiously opened his eyes and then quickly shut them again.

"What's the matter, Pretty Boy? Afraid of what you see?"

Joshua opened his eyes wide when he felt a hand grabbing his testicles and squeezing, hard enough to make him pay attention. He looked down when he felt the hand move up, fist his shaft and stroke him a few times. He thought he was going to throw up. As his body spasmed, his tormentor backed away.

He swallowed hard and managed to keep it down. He might need it later if vomit was enough to make these creatures back off. 'Creatures' was the only word that could adequately describe them. The woman who'd been touching him was built like a linebacker gone to seed. She had to weigh in at three hundred pounds. He estimated that she was about five feet ten inches, with lots of muscles and lots of hair. Hell, he

thought, she probably has a heavier mustache than I do. She had long dark hair which covered one of her pendulous breasts. Her nose had been broken a couple of times and her eyebrows were so heavy that it looked as though a couple of caterpillars had set up housekeeping on her face. Her lips were fleshy and when she smiled gruesomely, he could see that some of her teeth were missing. All in all, she looked like your worst inbred redneck nightmare.

"I can't wait to ride that post between your legs, lover boy. My friends and I will make sure you're not lonely during your visit," she said before reaching for him again. He was sure he was going to vomit if she touched him intimately again.

She was stopped before she could fondle him again.

"Enough, this one is mine and mine alone," said the newcomer in a clear melodious voice. He looked over and thought an angel had come to rescue him from this antechamber to hell.

Unlike the other women he could see, she was still dressed. She wore grey leather pants, low-heeled boots, and a black tank top that hugged her body like a glove. Her deep red wine-colored hair was pulled back into a braid that hung down her back. Her eyes were a true cornflower blue, which were looking him over with interest. He was relieved by her intervention until she reached for him and pet him as though he was a dog.

"This one coerced my sister and I'm going to make sure he understands the meaning of vulnerability. When I'm through with him, he'll never again rape a woman: he won't have anything left to work with."

The linebacker looked disgruntled: she'd lost her prey. She turned her beady little eyes on the newcomer: "Who are you? I've never seen you before. Plus, why are you still dressed? What's going on?"

Alyssa turned her head slowly and looked her opponent up and down as though she were examining a new and disgusting species of worm.

"I just arrived. I was stuck in traffic. As to whom I am, do you think that anyone can just walk up off the street? You think that this is a popular nightclub?" she sneered. "I'm going to call the boss after I make sure that this piece of excrement understands his place in the grand scheme of things."

She then turned and reached out and grabbed Joshua's sack in her hand. She started to apply pressure. Strangely, it really wasn't much. He'd felt more constriction in a tight pair of jeans. He looked up into the woman's eyes.

Scream and pass out, he heard in his mind.

He felt the pressure increase and decided that, whatever was going on, complying with the mysterious mental command was a good idea. He screamed and tried to double over as though his balls were really being crushed. He then let his head drop, pretending to have passed out. He had to use willpower not to smile when he heard the mental voice again: *ham actor.*

The voice in his head had to be the woman. He tried to project to her. He'd never been able to reach anyone other than his twin sister, but obviously, the woman was on a wavelength he could hear.

Are you FBI? he sent and waited.

"Good start, I think," he heard the woman say to the three witches. "I'm definitely going to take my time with this one. Keep an eye on him. I'm going to make that call and get out of these clothes. I'll be back soon enough."

Joshua tried to reach the woman again: *Are you going for backup?* Again, there was no answer.

Alyssa had heard Joshua both times, but she was too busy trying to figure out a way out not just for this man but also for herself. This was a perilous situation. She'd thought that she knew what she was getting herself into. She'd been wrong. Going for backup? That was a good idea, but Joshua wouldn't survive the wait. She needed to get him out now. She lightly scanned the mind of a passing woman and obtained the directions to the washroom. Once there, she pulled out a disposable cell phone and called the number foremost in Joshua's mind.

"Yes?"

"Joshua Whitfield is in Chicago. Use the phone to pinpoint the location," she whispered. She then put the phone on mute and placed it at the bottom of the paper towel waste bin after making sure it still had reception. That took care of getting law enforcement here to rescue the remaining men. Now she needed a plan to save Joshua, and she needed it soon. She did some reconnaissance and found the main electrical supply room. Perfect. She studied the layout and decided that a small fire was the best option. It would trigger the sprinkler system and turn out lights leaving only the emergency lights. She set up the components and lit them. It would take a few minutes for the fire to reach the sensors, enough time for her to get back to Joshua.

She'd only been gone a short time, but it was enough for the women to have hooked up an I.V. Joshua had 'woken' and was demanding to know what was in the I.V.

"Viagra," was the horrifying answer. "We wouldn't want you to fade on us at a critical time."

Alyssa also heard the answer and knew she had to work fast.

"Good," she said as she nudged the large woman aside. "I can get started." She stepped up to Joshua and began to fondle him, caressing his body, her hands working their way down to his swollen shaft. Joshua was now in definite pain. He began to squirm, trying to ease the pressure.

Just hang in there for a few more minutes. I'll get you out. Trust me, Alyssa whispered in his mind.

Joshua knew better than to look at her with hope, so he closed his eyes and endured. Over the throbbing pressure in his groin, he could feel her hands on his skin. She stroked and caressed. She fondled and petted. She circled him and ran her hands down his back and into the crack of his buttocks. This went on for what seemed like hours but, in reality, was only minutes.

The fire Alyssa had set finally reached the sensors: the sprinklers activated, and the lights turned off. She twirled and kicked the smaller of the two sycophants in the solar plexus. When her opponent bent over, she hit her temple. One down, one to go. The other woman came at her, her hands curled into claws. Alyssa made quick work of her as well. The linebacker had been holding back. She lowered her head and charged

Alyssa. She dodged and used the woman's momentum to direct her into a column. The woman hit head first. She groaned and dropped.

Alyssa hurried back to Joshua. She carefully removed the I.V. and then released the catch on all the restraints. Joshua groaned when he tried to stand.

"Can you walk at all? We need to get out quickly."

"I'll crawl if I have to," Joshua responded firmly.

Alyssa put her arm around Joshua's waist and led him to the exit. Not the one the women were streaming towards, but the one she'd found and used to enter this hellhole.

A blast of cold air greeted them when Alyssa opened the door. "Stay here. I'll get the car," Alyssa instructed. Before she could step outside, Joshua grabbed her arm.

"You're not leaving me here, not for a second. We go together."

Alyssa looked into his eyes. Joshua was in pain, and she realized that he didn't want to stay here, in the doorway to the torture chamber.

"Okay. I'm parked between those two garbage containers. Let's go."

Joshua moved. There was snow falling, and it was getting heavier. It wasn't far. He could do this. He had to do this. They reached the car, and Alyssa opened the trunk first. She wrapped a blanket around Joshua before opening the passenger door to settle him inside. He thought that she was fussing instead of leaving.

"You can't look naked, riding around in February. I don't want us to be stopped by a nosy cop before we can get you some help."

Joshua nodded. She was right. She reached inside the car, opened the blanket to expose his groin and dumped a large handful of snow on his throbbing shaft. He yelped and then groaned as the numbing effect took hold.

"More. Give me more," he begged hoarsely.

Alyssa kept packing on the snow until it made a large mound. Joshua encased himself in the cold. It felt good. She reached over him and buckled his seat belt. His hands were busy. She flipped the blanket back over him, closed the door and raced around to the driver's seat. She got in and started the engine. She reached for her own seatbelt and looked at her passenger.

"I'll get you some help in a few minutes."

She put the car in gear and drove away slowly. She could hear the sirens getting closer, and she didn't want to attract attention to herself or her passenger by speeding. Alyssa watched in her rearview mirror for a while, checking to see if they were being followed. After a few blocks of turning randomly, she was reasonably sure they'd made it out without being noticed. She turned to her passenger, who by now was noticeably shivering.

Joshua had his hands wrapped around the snow cone that covered his erection. He'd hoped that the cold would help. Unfortunately, his shaft was just as engorged as before the cold treatment. At least, it wasn't painful, just cold, very cold.

He tried to distract himself by getting his bearings. He looked out the windows. There was a storm coming in over the lake. Lake?

"Where are we?" he asked as he turned his head to his rescuer.

"Lake Shore Drive," Alyssa answered. At his blank look, she added: "Chicago."

"Chicago? I was in Houston. This means that this group is national." He fell back against the headrest. He moaned when the car went over a bump. It has jarred his body and focused the pain in his groin. Again.

Alyssa looked over at Joshua sympathetically. "Try to hang on. We're almost there."

Joshua looked over and realized that she hadn't been making fun of the fact that he was 'hanging on' to his snow cone. He settled back and tried to put his feet into the blast of hot air coming from the heater. He'd never been so cold.

After a few minutes, the car slowed and Joshua opened his eyes. Thank God. Medical help at last. But his rescuer hadn't taken him to a hospital: they were in an upscale residential neighborhood.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked cautiously. "I thought we were going to a hospital."

"I said I was going to get you some help," Alyssa explained as she pushed the remote to open the garage door. She drove in and closed the door, locking them in. She turned in her seat and looked him in the eye.

"Joshua, your body is so full of drugs that any attempt to drain the blood from your penis will be futile. It will only fill with blood again. They would have to drain most of the blood from your body before your blood pressure would drop enough to allow your penis to become flaccid. The only option the doctors would have to save your life would be immediate amputation, and you know it."

Joshua turned white at the thought. He could still feel this shaft throbbing and realized that her analysis of the situation was probably correct. Tears came to his eyes and he swallowed hard.

"So now what? Why did you bring me here?" he asked despairingly.

"Come with me," was the only answer. Alyssa got out of the car and moved towards the door to the house.

Joshua just stared at the closing door for a moment and decided he had nothing to lose. He unwrapped the blanket and, moving slowly, got out of the car. Once he stood, the snow fell off, and he got a good look at his shaft. It was purple: it should have been white, considering that it had been wrapped in snow for the last twenty minutes. He fisted himself and held his shaft close to his body. He walked slowly to the door, taking care not to jolt himself. The numbing cold was wearing off, and it hurt to move. He entered the house and wondered why he trusted this woman. True, she'd rescued him but she could've brought him here for her own nefarious reasons.

Alyssa was waiting for Joshua when he came through the door. "You're going to be okay. All of you will be okay," she added reassuringly. "Come with me."

She led him to a large bedroom. She started to take off her clothes. Joshua was getting a bad feeling.

"Look, lady," he began.

"Alyssa. My name is Alyssa," she clarified. "I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself sooner. It's been a busy night," she said as she continued to undress.

“Okay. Alyssa. I don’t know what you think you’re going to do, but I can assure you, sex is not an option right now.”

Alyssa straightened from having removed her boots. She looked him over and smiled gently: “Don’t worry. Your virtue is safe with me.”

Joshua watched her until she was completely nude. She walked into the bathroom. When he didn’t follow, she returned and took his free hand.

“Come with me,” she said and led him to the large shower stall. “Come with me,” she repeated and led him to the large shower stall. It was practically a room unto itself. It measured about nine feet by twelve feet, with multiple shower heads on two facing walls.

She headed for the far wall: the only wall without any hardware. She placed her hand on this wall. She looked at Joshua: “Close your eyes and walk towards the wall.” Joshua was skeptical and somewhat fearful. He was at this woman’s mercy and didn’t like the feeling, at all.

“Please. Trust me. Just close your eyes and step forward.”

Joshua wasn’t ready to go so far as to close his eyes completely. He left them slightly open, just the merest slit. He was good at this, and anyone would think his eyes were tightly closed. He felt Alyssa tug on his hand, and he dutifully stepped forward. She pulled again, and he stepped forward again. All he could see was ‘white’, the white of the shower tiles. He wondered what this was about when he felt the air quality change. He opened his eyes and was stunned into speechlessness. He wasn’t in a bathroom anymore,

standing in sunshine at the top of a hill. Alyssa had let go of his hand and was rushing forward to meet a group of men who were rapidly approaching.

She was engulfed in the embrace of one of the men.

“Welcome home. It has been a long time.” He released her, and they all walked over to where Joshua was standing with his shaft still fisted in his hand. He felt shame. The situation was not his fault, but he still felt his face grow hot. All the men were staring at him, at it, with sympathy. It was as though they knew what had happened to him.

One of the men gently placed his hand on Joshua’s shoulder: “You can let go now. We’ll be able to help you.”

Joshua turned to the voice and slowly fell into the darkness of oblivion.

Alyssa watched as Joshua was carried away. He would be well cared for. She hadn’t had time to complete her final mission, but on this side of the barrier, there was plenty of time. She’d take a few weeks before returning to Chicago. She dressed quickly and thanked the men who had answered her emergency call. She told her father she’d be at home if anyone needed to speak with her.

“We’ll wait a few days before descending on you. I know you need time to readjust,” he offered simply.

Alyssa reached up on tiptoes to kiss her father’s cheek. She was grateful he understood. She turned and walked over to one of the waiting kourou birds. They resembled long-legged dodo birds and were the riding animals of choice. She took the reins and swung herself up onto the back of the crouching animal. The bird stood up,

and she was now sitting six feet off the ground. She guided the creature away from the village, towards her home. She was gone so much of the time that she didn't think it was fair for them to stare at an empty house.

Even though she was tired, she enjoyed the ride. Coming home in daylight was a rare treat. She wove her way through the trees, taking deep breaths. She wanted to get the stench of Earth out of her system. There was no petrochemical industry here, and the air was clean and fresh. When she reached her home, she could see that nothing had changed: it was just as she had left it three months and seven years ago. Three months spent on Earth, seven years passing on Chimera.

She directed the kourou to crouch so that she could dismount. She looped the reins over the bird's back and told it to go home. It would return to the stables on its own. When she turned back, she just stared: she was home. In her personal chronological time, it had only been three months, but with the time slip, she'd been gone for over seven years. Alyssa was glad that no one had worked on her home. It made her return easier. She walked through the archway, across the courtyard and up the steps to her front door. She paused to rub her hand across the carvings on the door. The double front doors were a gift from her father. They were made of dark wood, polished to a high gloss, and carved to depict a woodland scene. He'd told her that there were exactly one hundred different animals on the door. She still hadn't found them all. She smiled at that thought and pushed the door open. The interior of the house was cool and still. She took a deep breath and could feel the serenity of her home seep into her. Alyssa scented her

mother's perfume and knew that she'd come to prepare the house for her. She was grateful for her thoughtfulness.

Alyssa walked up the stairs to the second level, her hand caressing the banister. She turned right at the top of the stairs and slowly walked down the hall to her bedroom. She crossed over the bed and literally fell onto it. She was asleep in moments.