



Chapter Thirty: **Point Black Range**

We both watched her go silently. When the door closed behind her, I turned my attention back to the fragile young woman standing a few feet away from me. Swallowing my fear, I knew she was my only hope. "Bree," I whispered her name as sweetly as possible. "Oh, my god. You're alive. I am- I am so very happy you are. I- It's been my greatest wish to meet you," I said in a rush. She refused to meet my eyes, hers glued to the concrete floor. She was going to pretend she didn't hear me. "I've wanted to thank you for so long." I forced a smile. My lips were trembling. "You don't know how much you've given me. The past year and a half of my life have all been thanks to you. All my happiness and success. I've read everything I could find on you. You sound like such an amazing person. Your mother would be so thrilled to know you're alive. It's all she ever wanted. She never stopped fighting for you." Her head snapped up in surprise at the mention of her mom.

That was it.

“She loved you so much.” Tears dripped from my eyes, blurring my vision. “She was such a sweet woman. I’ve never met someone so strong. I hope I can be as good a parent as she was. Please. Please, give me a chance to be,” I pleaded. “I didn’t do anything on purpose. I promise. I’m sorry.”

“No. Mistress-”

“She isn’t your master!” I stopped her quickly. I spoke firmly. “You are not a slave. You’re a grown, intelligent woman. You don’t have to listen to anything she says.”

“I can’t,” she whispered, torn. She was shaking. “I have to, or they’ll hurt me.” That was clear from every scar on her skin. They covered her arms like stripes. Some were fresher than others. They tortured this poor girl into doing whatever they desired.

Frantically, I shook my head. “Together, we can stop her from hurting you ever again. All you have to do is cut my hands loose. I’ll do the rest. Please. We can walk out of here free. And they’ll never harm you again.”

Bree sucked in a deep breath. “Master said no one loves me, but them. No one cares,” she hissed angrily, her tiny fist curled into her side.

“He lied. No,” I promised. “She searched every day. She loved you.”

“It doesn’t matter. She’s gone. No one cares about me now. Only my mistress.” She scratched at her elbows, and I noticed the needle marks in her skin. Jasper had been wrong. She wasn’t drunk but drugged.

Shaking my head, I looked up towards the ceiling. I wasn’t sure how to convince her. I searched for the right words. “I do! I care. And my husband has been searching for you for so long. His partner too! They all care about you, and they want you to come home and be happy.” I heard stomping up the metal stairs. Our time alone was coming to an end, and my chances of survival were getting slimmer by the moment. “Bree.” She didn’t look at me. “Bree, please. You have the power to choose. She doesn’t care about you. She’s a monster, but you’re not.”

Her glazed over eyes stared into mine. She was so broken. “You don’t know what I’ve done.”

“I don’t care what you’ve done. It’s not your fault. You didn’t want to do this. Everyone will forgive you. I forgive you,” I breathed as the door opened. “It’s okay,” I mouthed as the DA came running back in. She was a victim, just like I was.

“The cops are fucking here already,” she snarled viciously as she ran towards us. “You said we weren’t followed.” She pistol-whipped her with the revolver as hard as she could. It sent her to the knees on the floor. “You fucking idiot. Now we have to rush.” She turned to look at me. “I guess we’ll go with Plan B.” She put down the gun to select a blade. “Lucky you. You get to die like a King.”

She picked up a long, thin knife off the table. Gripping it in her fist, she lifted it above her head and aimed it directly at the side of my neck. Closing my eyes, I braced myself for it to come. I thought about how much I loved my husband and the son I would never meet. Tears streamed down my face, but I wouldn’t make a noise. I didn’t want her to enjoy this any more than she already was. My only solace was knowing that she wasn’t going to be free much longer, either. If I were truly lucky, Jasper would get to me before I bled out.

But the strike never came. Instead, there was a gunshot. Warm, sticky blood sprayed all over me. I gasped in shock. My eyes opened just in time to see the lawyer sink to the floor on her knees before ever so gently slumping to the side. It wasn’t as dramatic as television made it look. The weapon she was holding slipped onto the ground beside her.

The entire back of her head was gone. I could see her brain damaged beyond repair. Bits of it were missing, and I realized some of it was on my clothes. Her eyes were open, but there was nothing behind them anymore. The shot had been from point-blank range, almost pressed to her skull.

Slowly, I looked at Bree. She was holding Jasper’s engraved six-shooter in her trembling hand. Staring at the lifeless body on the floor, she was ready for her to get up. To fight back and hurt her again. But everything was still except for the smoke that curled from the barrel in the too-bright lamplight.

She was crying, and her chest was heaving in an attempt to catch her breath. Slowly, our gazes met. We stared at each other for a second.

“Thank you,” I whimpered.

Peering at the gun, she licked her cracked lips and put it on the table as carefully as she could. She picked up one of the smallest of the sharp implements. First, she cut my legs free before moving behind me to do my wrists. When I was loose, I turned in my spot to hug her as tightly as I could. The tiny knife clattered to the floor as she embraced me back. It didn’t matter that we were both covered in gore.

“I’m so sorry. I didn’t want to,” she sobbed.

Rocking us, I stroked the back of her neck. "It's okay. We'll be alright. It's all over now. They're all gone." I kissed the top of her head. "You saved me. My hero. Thank you," I repeated the words over and over again.

"I'm going to go to prison. I did so many bad things," she wailed as her blunt nails tried to find purchase in the back of my shirt. "I didn't want to," she reiterated. "They hurt me so much." She looked at the body on the floor. "I killed the mistress. Oh, god."

I shook my head instantly. "You won't. I promise. I will do everything I can to make sure you get all the help you need. Jasper will make sure you won't," I said as I pulled back to look into her face. She refused to meet my eyes again. I touched her cheek. "My husband is going to be so happy to meet you." I stroked it with my thumb and smiled. "Let's go outside. My friend is probably out there. He's one of the best FBI agents in the country. He won't let anything bad happen to you anymore."

Nervously, she stared at my face before nodding. Together we stood. She was almost too weak, her knees wobbling. I was feeling the same, but I needed to get outside. With one more look back at the corpse, we went through the door. I realized we made a bloody trail right to it. It dripped from our clothes, and it was even in my hair. One of my sleeves appeared especially soaked. It was on the side closest to where she was standing.

The trip down seemed so slow. It wasn't until we got to the second floor that I could see out of one of the dirty windows. There were so many cars outside. I smiled slightly to myself. I didn't know how they got there so quickly, but I was grateful they had.

Then I heard their shouting. "Movement! We've got movement in the building!"

"Everyone stands down until I give the command," Sam's voice echoed over the crowd. It was coming through their radios. It floated on the wind. "I need visuals on all floors! I need to know where that shot came from."

When I got to the front door, we pushed the heavy metal bar to let us out into the daylight. The cars were all at least fifty feet back, dozens of officers in a variety of uniforms standing in different positions. Some of them had big guns and were in SWAT gear. They were getting ready to storm the building. Jasper was in the middle of them in a bulletproof vest, arguing frantically with someone as he cried. Sam was at his side, speaking quickly. All of them turned to look at us at once.

And the world stood still for a moment.

We just kept walking. There was nothing else to do. We had to move forward.

My husband flew towards us. No one else had time to react before he did. He was moving so fast it almost toppled me over when he got to me. His arms curled around me so tight it hurt. I wanted them tighter.

"I thought you were dead. We heard gunfire." His hand twisted into my curls so he could bring my mouth to his. It was so furious. It reminded me of our kiss in the hospital when he got shot. I was just limp against him, letting him take me. I needed it.

When he pulled away, he was weeping so hard his knees buckled. He sank down in front of me, his hands still on my shoulders. Jasper pressed his face into my belly, sobbing with relief. I wasn't even sure he had noticed the blood yet.

"We're fine," I promised softly, smiling a little. Gently, I brushed my fingers through his hair to get his attention. "Honey, this is Bree." He looked up in surprise, his jaw dropped to his chest. The world started to move around us. Sam was the second to get to us. She pushed herself closer to me, and I took her hand again. "She saved us."

Swallowing back his tears, he stared at her. Snot dripped from his nose. "Thank you. Thank you so much." He peered at me and slowly slid his grip down my arm to my left hand. Then he looked at his palm. It was covered in blood. "You're bleeding," he whispered.

I gazed at it. My shirt was ripped, and blood was pumping from an open gash. I could see the muscle. I wasn't feeling anything but numb. "Oh, would you look at that? Huh. I didn't even notice."

"Medics are right here, kiddo," Sam promised, then yelled at someone to get over there. He came around to Bree slowly. He stooped a little to make himself smaller. "Hey, sweetie. I'm Special Agent Uley, and we have been looking for you for a very long time. It's so nice to meet you finally. I never thought I'd get the honor," he said charmingly. It made her smile genuinely, just for a brief moment. She was still terrified, though.

People pushed us towards ambulances. I stopped them. "There's a dead body on the fourth floor. She was about to kill me, and Bree had to stop her." I reached for my friend. "Nothing can happen to her. I promised. We need to help her. Please."

"Of course," he cooed to me in a gentle voice. Everyone was worried about me going into shock. "You get on the gurney, and we'll take care of this. Y'all are safe now."

They tried to separate us, but I didn't want to let go of Bree's hand. "Sam, stay with her, please. Promise to protect her," I pleaded with him. He nodded quickly in agreement. I gazed into her eyes and prayed she believed me. "He's one of the best men I know and the godfather of my baby," I swore. "He'll make sure everything is okay, and I'll come to find you again as

soon as I can. I swear. I owe you my life," I babbled as I began to sob. We hugged once more. "Thank you."

The ride was brief, and people fluttered loudly around me the entire time. Jasper was still crying silently, trying to ignore it as he watched from the corner he was wedged in. I smiled at him in an attempt to reassure him.

My bloody clothes were cut away from my arm. It was only a graze, a part of the bullet coming apart and ripping through my skin. After they cleaned it up, they stitched it back together. It took twenty altogether.

"What did she do to you?" Jasper questioned softly. It was the first words he had spoken since he was on his knees.

"Just smacked me a couple of times. But I'm fine. She was a little bitch," I grumbled. "I head-butted her, though. I'm lucky I don't have a concussion," I rambled. "Probably shouldn't do that twice in twenty-four hours."

He didn't believe me in the least.

A nurse came in with the fetal monitor machine. Wordlessly, I lifted my gown. I knew how it worked, and I was ready to make sure he was okay in there. They strapped them in place and left us in peace for thirty minutes to let them work. The baby's heartbeat was so powerful, like music to my ears.

Smiling, I leaned my head back against the pillow. "I love that sound so much."

"Me too," he agreed, taking my hand as he sat on the edge of the uncomfortable hospital chair. We gazed at each other for a long minute as we listened. "Is it terrible I wish I could crawl into that bed with you and hold you?"

"Why can't you?" I questioned. I rolled, so I was on my side and patted the space behind me. There was more than enough room if he squeezed in.

As carefully as he could, he moved in behind. He was so worried about hurting me, but there was nothing he could do to harm me. Pressing against him, I wrapped myself in his warmth and comfort. "My brave girl," he whispered in my ear.

We laid silently for a few moments. I put his palm on my heart, closing my eyes. The event replayed in my mind, even if I didn't want it to. "How did you find us so fast?" I blurted out. The whole ordeal took less than two hours, and it was barely ten in the morning.

"Your cell phone."

It dawned on me then that he hadn't replaced my cracked screen because it bothered me, and the tracing software wasn't for when I lost it. He just didn't want me to worry about the possibility of kidnapping, but, of course, he had. I had been more concerned about the direct attacks. We were both right to be troubled by the terrible possibilities. But he had to consider every way they could harm us. There were so many scenarios that it was impossible to think of them all. Also, it explained why he was in such a hurry to retrieve it from the car the day before. It was probably in my purse in the van, still at the crime scene.

Breaking my heart, it was too much to think about.

But all that mattered was that it was over. And they would never hurt anyone else ever again.