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Chaos and Kay-Awes

By

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10,804 Words

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## I: The Writer

I sat alone in the coffee house. My laptop glowed in front of me, its white screen contrasting harshly in the dim light of the shop. An un-sipped fancy sugary expensive professionally concocted coffee slowly evaporated next to the silently humming device. This was my life.

Everything was as it should be. I had my drink, okay, and my laptop was running off a fresh install of the operating system, the word processing program running, and waiting. The inspirational caffeine was sitting, ready to make my story come alive, excite the brain cells into expelling the creativity they held dear.

Writers block, a swift kick in the nuts.

There were times when I could pound at the keys for hours, quietly sipping my coffee, ignoring the numerous patrons of this particular Columbian bean shack. My masterwork spilling from my mind to the digital page, hours gone, lost in a sea of whispered conversations and orders ready.

I needed a new character, someone who was unlike me, someone who could write!

You see, my book was a planned trilogy, a masterwork of fiction. I had a premise, a plot. I had my three acts planned out, some really good cliffhangers to make the following book

a must-buy. There was a love interest, a best friend. I had planned flashbacks and hidden meaning. It was all carefully orchestrated.

I had a twenty page outline. The hero does this, he does that. This is the McGuffin and here is what it means. All of this was ready for primetime. I even had an ending, no, a good ending. The one thing that didn't fit, the one thing that I needed real inspiration for was the main character. The person I'd get to know over the next several days, weeks, maybe months.

I needed a main character, and as I sat in the bustling coffee house, one stepped in the door.

## II: The Girl

She was beautiful. Well, now I'm a writer, so there should be more language to that effect, but it's the only way I know how to express it. There are hundreds of beauties in the world, perhaps thousands, but my particular palate is only quenched by a unique breed; the strong, classic, doe-eyed, athletic and clueless variety. I'm a "hopeless romantic" if you need a label, and I suppose I believe that there is someone out there for everyone, a so-called "perfect match".

I watched her from my seat in the corner. It was a dark

corner, a place where nobody could sneak up behind me and whisper idiotic questions into my ear. People felt it necessary to bother me in the midst of the writing process, and oddly enough, it was usually when I was on a roll. A real page turner section of the story; the part that when it's 12am and you need to get up for work the next morning at 6am, you still read until the end of the chapter. And sometimes peek at the next.

Now, I know coffee house writing is cliché. Everyone with a laptop has tried it, to varying success. I find it intriguing that most people want you to bother them. Give them a chance to stop writing and start talking. "Oh yes, this is the book I'm writing, it's got zombies and pirates and everything else that's moderately popular and I want to try and cash in." Original writing is a difficult thing to attempt, and even harder to succeed at. How many works have I published? Move along please, I'm busy.

Coffee house writing is useful to the writer who has trouble with his or her characters. Creating a living, breathing being is a difficult thing to do. How many flaws do I give him, how smart is he, does he have a twin brother who was separated at birth and has a really cool scar? All is valuable information, and all is important to your story. Too much of anything can mean death to you and your profound

sociological statements. I like to study people's reactions in line for coffee.

Right now there was the patient guy: the guy who was ordering for himself, or perhaps his family in the car. He had a baseball cap on, bill side forward, and was wearing a sweatshirt. His eyes darted from the menu above the counter to the barista behind it; every now and then, he'd pull his cell phone out of his pocket, press a button, squint, and put it back. This guy's name was Dave, and I decided he needed time away from the screaming kids and the nagging wife. I think he'd snap if he didn't get his morning caffeine rush. A nice scalding whipped monster that quelled the beast inside of him. An internal struggle better left in his own head, then scattered in the wastes of his life. No, he wasn't who I needed.

Behind Dave was the second most common person to be found in a coffee house: The impatient guy. This guy didn't leave his cell phone in his pants; he gripped it in his sweaty palm, checking it every 5 to 10 seconds, never realizing that the more you looked, the slower time slunk by. He had a frazzled look to him, a well manicured look. His hair was messy, a look that no doubt took more patience and restraint to create than he showed right now. Carefully ruffled clothes, and jeans with several well placed accidental rips. His feet never stopped

moving. They tapped and jittered, and he nudged closer to patient guy just as often as he checked his phone. His name was Alexander, but I'm sure his friends called him Lex, or Anders, or maybe, just maybe: Ander-mans. He probably needed his daily dose of legal drug to make it through another shame walk home. Who had he been with the night before? I'm sure he couldn't remember.

This leads me to the third person in this very intimate line of mine: The main character; the one who was going on a journey with me for weeks on end. She would be whatever I wanted her to be. Wear whatever I supplied her. Do all of the horribly delightful things I have in store for her. Her name was...

### III: The Hunter

Daphne woke up. It was a strange morning that she couldn't remember falling asleep into. Her eyes opened to an unfamiliar setting, a room with pale light filtered through dirty blinds. The bed was cold, a single sheet covered her naked body. She tilted her head to look for a clock, a natural movement. There, on the bedside nightstand was a digital clock, its red numbers blinking a mournful 12:00 at her. With every flash, it apologized. Her nose sprang to life and made

her aware of the stink in the room. It was a shameful smell, a smell of cigarettes and regret. She turned her head back into the pillow and inhaled. She smelled a soft scent of strawberry and mango, a very familiar smell, a comforting smell. Her ears came into focus; there was a rattling in a nearby room, a shuffling and scooting sound. Adrenaline burst through her body, this was not familiar.

Daphne was moderately sure this was her room. However, the fuzziness of her past twenty-four hours and the unfamiliar sounds and smells made her fight or flight instincts kick in. She sprang out of the bed, catching a glimpse of herself in a mirror and darted to the closet. She pulled on a pair of jeans and a hooded sweatshirt and was crouched over running shoes when she heard him speak.

"Hey darlin', did you have a nice nap? I know I did. Man, you can cut a rug, where did you learn moves like that?" He was shirtless, his own jeans hanging from his waist, unbuttoned. He was drying his hair with a pink towel.

"Yeah, I'm um, I'm sorry, what was your name again?" Daphne continued tying her shoes, concentrating on keeping her fingers from shaking. Adrenaline was coursing through her veins. Fight or flight, fight or flight, her pulse pounded in her ears.

"Oh come on, you didn't have that much to drink, did



you?" The man crossed the room and tossed the wet pink towel on the bed. Daphne tensed.

"No, no, it's just-" Daphne looked around the floor for a weapon. She saw a handbag next to a pair of stiletto heels and a crumpled dress. In one quick moment she grabbed the purse (her purse?) and one heel, brandishing it like a hunter would a knife, swung around and kicked the man in the stomach. He fell backwards, shock on his face as he hit a small bookshelf and twisted his body in a feeble attempt to land on his feet. His head slammed into the wall and his feet gave out.

"Wha- Judy, why did you jus-" His eyes were wide, but Daphne could see that all he saw was stars.

Daphne jumped on the man, her knees on his arms, pinning him. She held the stiletto to his throat. "Who are you, what is your name?"

"I jus- look the club is- my name is Alex. Remember Alex?"

"Is this your house Alex?"

"No, it's- is it your house? Why did you kick-"

"Who are you?" Daphne dug the heel into Alex's neck. She knew where to press, but not why. Alex's eyes started to droop.

"I'm just, you know. Information. I had a name, remember? You needed a name? Get off and-" Daphne didn't move. She

pressed the heel deeper and scanned the room. It looked familiar, but familiar in the sense that Daphne thought she dreamt of it once. Everything was where she thought it should be, but she had a broken connection here.

"Tell me now or I'll puncture your fuckin' neck. Whose house is this?" Daphne was close to Alex's face, she could smell his freshly brushed teeth. She could still taste the night in her own mouth.

"It's your place, you crazy cunt" Alex squeezed these words around the four inch heel and immediately regretted them. Daphne stretched her neck back, and Alex had time to recall the previous night, on the dance floor when he stroked that neck, nuzzled it, and ultimately suckled it.

"Good night Alex." Daphne slammed her head down and knocked Alex out cold.

#### IV: The Apartment

Daphne took the next few minutes to survey the apartment. She was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor somewhere, and her memory, while not whole, was coming back in short bursts. Alex was someone she needed to deal with, get information from. She rolled him over, and fished into his back pants pocket. She pulled out

his wallet, and started flipping through the old receipts and business cards. Tucked in deep was a small folded wax paper. Daphne licked her finger and dragged it across the inside; a white powder briefly coated her finger, and then dissolved. The back of the paper had a phone number and a time scrawled on it. Daphne put the paper on the bed and started to look around for rope to finish dealing with Alex.

The apartment was sparsely furnished, utilitarian. There was a worn couch, a TV, bookshelves coated in dust and an empty dog bed. The kitchen was bare except for coffee supplies and cans of dog food. She looked in the pantry and found a small piece of rope, a dented Zippo lighter and .45 caliber bullets among other sundry supplies. None of these things registered to Daphne as odd. She looked around the kitchen and started a pot of coffee; tied the wrists of the unconscious Alex, and took a shower.

The hot water helped her fuzzy head a little more. The previous night had a work like feel to it. The bar she had been at was a regular hangout with worn leather seats and smoke stained walls, but she was there on business, not pleasure. The band had been loud, her ears rang in the silence of the room. She stepped over Alex and retrieved the dress. It was red and revealing. There was a rip near the zipper, a drunken attempt to get the goods. She checked her body and

found a series of bruises and scrapes; nothing serious, in fact, nothing that surprised her. She had a thin scar that wrapped from her lower stomach along her side towards her mid-back. Car accident, she thought, that was from the Deckard job. Memories sprang back to life. The car wreck, she had been after a man who skipped his court date. He had a large bond with the business, her business. Holy shit, she thought, I'm a bounty hunter.

#### V: The Writer's Muse

The coffee shop died its usual slow death. The creative flow of a business only lives as long as it's clientele. This place was tapped and it was time to graze to another source of inspiration. I saved my work, happy that the bounty hunter had sprung to life in such fashion. The girl had long since left with her low fat blueberry muffin and non-fat sissy drink. Bullshit coffee equals bullshit girl. She may have been the girl of my dreams, but girls like that only happened when you woke from the nightmare. I folded up my laptop, the monster quenched, and headed out.

I know my car is shitty, and yeah, I'm reminded on a daily basis as new dings, scrapes and scratches appear. It was some mid-nineties popular commuter dream. I had seen other, I

don't know, versions of this car zipping around town, its exhaust louder than the engine, its paint louder than the 80's. It doesn't matter, and people don't care anymore than I do. I had parked the dirt-gray car a little crooked in its space. Okay, it was all fucked up, but I don't know, I guess I hadn't thought of it earlier that morning. The first thing that caught my eye was the word "ASSHOLE!" scraped in the dust on the back window. The next thing was the boot shaped dent in my door.

I reached my arm through the slit in the opaque plastic that covered the rear passenger window and unlocked the driver's door. It opened and dropped an inch with its usual strained creak. I needed some fuel before the writing could continue, and I made the nearest fast-food joint the next stop on this Mecca.

I'm only telling you this part because it seems important. You know, little things become bigger things, butterfly effect, whatever. I went to the drive-thru and they took fucking forever. The first window had a zit-faced high school nobody confuse my order and the second window was even more fucked up; three minutes and no food was ready. How goddamn long does it take to deep fry compressed and battered chicken? So, I had to pull up around the parking lot and wait another five minutes.

Oh wow, you must be thinking, an eight minute wait must be really hard for fried chicken. No, that's bullshit.

Fast-food. FAST FUCKING FOOD. Goddamn. So anyway, doesn't seem like much, right? Well it was and it wasn't.

## VI: The Car, The Dog, The Junkie

Daphne remembered who she was. She was a bondsman, she gave a second chance to people who needed it. And when these people spit in her face, she hunted them down. She pulled on a pair of more comfortable jeans, and loose scuffed shoes. She rummaged around her closet for a shirt. They were all black, but defined by the images or slogans upon them. She pulled out one that she had picked up in a tattoo shop a few years back. There was a worn white skull and crossbones across her breast, with the words INKED TO THE BONES in cursive underneath. She pulled on a green faded jacket and pulled the hood over her head, it was a foggy morning or afternoon, she wasn't sure, her clock still blinked at her. She dumped the contents of last night's purse into her shoulder bag, included the wax paper, Zippo and grabbed a can of dog food from the kitchen; poured herself a travel mug of thick black coffee and headed out.

Her car was parked across the street and reflected the

grey sky in its windows. Her first baby, rebuilt from its former racing glory, a 1968 Fire-Orange Camero. Eyes glinted in the faint sun from the back-seat. Daphne unlocked the car and was greeted by her partner.

“Awes! Oh, good-boy!” A large mixed breed dog bounded from the backseat to the front and out of the open door. Daphne leaned down and scratched his face. “No more guard duty. Sorry boy didn’t think it’d take this long.” He gave her a sloppy forgiving kiss with his tongue and then pulled away to the nearest grassy patch. Daphne reached into the back seat and pulled out a dish with dry food still rattling around in it. He liked the canned stuff better.

Daphne rolled down the driver’s window, tossed her bag onto the passenger seat and closed the door. She popped open the trunk, tossed the remaining dog food into and gutter, but away the dish and prepped for work. She strapped on her holsters, a worn leather belt that hung low on her hips. The holsters were hidden in the small of her back, and stayed empty until she was on a job, but the low-slung leather made her feel at home, none the less. She pulled out a pair of padded gloves, sunglasses, a cell phone with bluetooth earpiece and an iPod. She put on the gloves and earpiece and whistled two short bursts. Awes sped around the front of the car and bounded into the open window to the back seat. Daphne

clipped the phone on to her belt and got into the car, connected the iPod to the spliced radio and clicked it on. She started the car as Awes poked his head between the seats and nosed the shoulder bag. Daphne shifted into gear and took off, Awes dropping to the backseat, his aged knowledge of her driving telling him to hold on.

Daphne sipped her coffee, shifted her car and shuffled her iPod. It was an intricate dance on any morning and her still foggy head didn't help. Memories flickered past her vision like yellow lights; she drove faster. Her earpiece beeped at her and she clicked it on.

"Yeah, Daphne here, hurry up, I got coffee cooling and I love this goddamn song." Daphne played her finger across the iPod, it's volume shrinking below the wind and road noise.

"Ms. Kay, did you get the name? Mr. Walter called and wants to know-"

"No, I didn't get it. Fucker drugged me last night, weeks of working on him down the drain. Anyway, he's all tied up back home. Send Gomez over to see if he can get the info, yeah? I'm done playing nice." Alex was still unconscious when she left. "I have a phone number though, may be a dead end, I don't know. You ever been Ruffied? Is that shit illegal or what?"

"I'll look into it"



"Anything else?" Daphne sipped and shifted.

"Yes mam, there's something you should know."

"Spill it" Daphne punched the gas to beat a red light.

"Mr. Wilde needs a pick-up."

"Fuck my ass Jean, are you serious? Goddamn it. Fuck!"

Daphne turned a corner, her tires squealed and Awes slid from one end of the back seat to the other. He poked his head between Daphne's head and her open window and sniffed the crisp air.

"Sorry Ms. Kay, just thought you'd want to know as soon as possible. He sounded, um, desperate."

"Shit. Okay, I'll pick him up and head in. Anything else, or are you going to let me drive in peace?"

"That's all Ms. Kay."

"Gah, that fucker stinks." Daphne clicked her earpiece and turned the music back up. She changed lanes and stopped in a left turn pocket. Awes poked the shoulder bag again. Daphne grabbed the scruff of his neck and playfully tugged it around. Awes looked at her and licked his lips.

"Soon baby, we gotta pick up that fucking piece of shit first." She said this in a sweet cooing voice and Awes twisted his head to the side, curious. "That's right, the strung out fuck-junkie needs a lift. You wanna chew on his nuts baby?" Awes poked her leg with his wet nose and whined. Daphne

thought he'd like to take a bite o' junkie.

It took Daphne half of her usual morning playlist to get to the bus stop outside of the homeless shelter. There was a tall skinny man sitting on the concrete bench, his arms were wrapped around his midsection in an unnatural manner. He was wearing a thin coat and track pants. Daphne stopped the car, reached over and popped the passenger car door open. She grabbed her bag, pulled the canned dog food out and threw the bag in the backseat. She put the can between her legs and motioned for the skinny man to join her.

The man didn't appear to notice her at first, but when she honked her horn and yelled at him, he smiled a crisp white smile. He shivered in his own sweat, shambled over to her car and Awes growled.

"Common Daph, the dog's gonna bite me again. Why you gotta bring the mutt?" The skinny man held his hand as if it were in pain and didn't get into the car.

"Sam, get in the fucking car." Daphne didn't look at him.

"Not with that mongrel-" He pointed at Awes, who barked sharply and drooled. His eyes were locked on the skinny man.

"See, he's gonna bite, rabies or some shit."

"Get in the fucking car."

"Now you listen to me-"

"Godamn it Sam, get in the motherfucking car or he will

bite you, and I won't explain to the paramedics that you were being a prick, I'll explain how you were being violent and the dog was defending. Like last time, you asshole." Sam used his shirt to wipe the sweat from his face. Daphne looked at Awes and spoke softly. Awes laid on the backseat, but kept his eyes fixed on Sam. He continued to drool.

"If he bites-" Sam's voice was patronizing. Daphne revved the engine and the car squealed forward ten feet. "Hey! I called you because I need help, and I can help you so-" The car slammed to a halt.

"Sam, you prick" Daphne whispered to herself. She shut off the engine, got out of the car and slammed the door shut. Awes followed her through the open window. He stayed next to her.

"Just because you need a fix doesn't mean it'll fix you." She yelled at him. Either get in the car and deal with the fucking dog, or deal with me."

"How's your head?"

"What did you say?"

"Word gets around Daph, especially on the street. Word is, you're easy to take out. Word is, it could have been last night." Sam smiled his eerily white smile.

Daphne launched herself at Sam Wilde and took him down. He was a junkie in need of a fix and wasn't much trouble. Awes

barked around them, drool flinging into the air.

"Ow, ow, jeez, ah!" Daphne held Sam in a headlock, limiting the blood flow to his head.

"Awes! Bag!" Awes raced back to the car and bounded back out with her shoulder bag in his jaws. He dropped it near her feet and continued to bark. Daphne leaned towards Sam and whispered in to his ear, "Always the hard way, eh brother?"

"I'm not your brother-"

"Shut up Sam," Daphne continued to whisper, "you make a move and Awes goes for the balls, yeah?"

"Okay, okay."

Daphne shifted her weight and Sam was tackled to the concrete sidewalk. His lungs emptied and he wrapped his lanky arms around his midsection again, coughing. Awes stood over him and drooled on his chest.

"Awes, Protect." Awes' eyes shifted from Sam to Daphne and back to Sam. He laid his large body on Sam's midsection and panted. Daphne rummaged in her pack and brought out a pair of white zip ties. She grabbed Sam's wrists and zipped them together.

"Awes, Car." Awes stood up and ran to the car and jumped into the driver side window. "Okay Sam, get in the car, it's too early for this shit."

"It's after 2."

"Shut the fuck up, I have a gag."

"I just mean, wow, you really got dosed last night, didn't you?"

Daphne reached into her pack, and pulled out an oiled rag, and shoved it into Sam's mouth. He immediately gagged and she ripped the rag back out.

"You crazy bitch, try to poison me-"

"SAM, SHUT THE FUCK UP AND GET IN THE CAR!" Daphne yelled into Sam's face and threw him in the direction of her car. He regained his balance, didn't say anything, and awkwardly got in.

## VII: The Rut

The whole fast food thing ruined my day. A little bit of bullshit goes a long way. The usually intoxicating grease smell of chicken fingers and curly fries was soured by the un-fast food experience. I contemplated complaining to the management, but I don't think yelling at a high school dropout will improve artistic abilities.

I drove home, deciding that I needed some rest, some relaxation and maybe some Ritalin. Yeah, I know, it's for neurotic kids right? Well, it helps calm my mind, let me focus on things and I needed to get the bounty hunter moving. I had

my outline with me and perused it while eating my food.

I introduced her as I predicted. A little sexy and a little dangerous; I got her partner introduced. A little weird writing about a dog, I've never owned one. Maybe I need more Animal Planet research or something, give him more personality. And then there's Sam Wilde. That character I wasn't expecting. I usually strictly adhere to my outlines, it's the only way to get things done; a solid foundation to my massive structure of fiction. The introduction of an unplanned character was an unpleasant crack, but nothing a 'backspace' key couldn't handle. The main problem was that I enjoyed him. He was expected to my character, but unexpected to me. I had no idea who this guy was, but he was already deeply engrained into my character.

Now I had a choice, erase this guy from existence or deal with him, and if I was going to keep him, then I needed to rewrite my outline, include him in the intertwined mystery. Something held me back, I didn't want to include him, and I needed him to be unknown to be real. Maybe it's the fried chicken or maybe it's the Ritalin, but I was going to try something new.

## VIII: The Client and the Cross

Sam was quiet the rest of the ride in. The usual half hour commute had turned into an hour and a half fiasco of wrangling junkies and lunch-time traffic. Daphne pulled into the parking lot with her usual flair; burnt rubber seemed to follow her like cheap perfume. She switched off her car and her Bluetooth beeped at her.

"Yeah, it's Daphne."

"Hey Daph, I've been trying to reach you, got here like, an hour ago. Where'd you put this guy?" It was Gomez.

"Fucking bullshit traffic, had to take the long way, bad reception," Daphne glared at Sam, "He's in the kitchen, doesn't take an hour to find that." Sam slumped miserably in the passenger seat.

"Naw, he's gone then. Your door was unlocked, doesn't look like he left a note."

"Fuck. How'd he get out?" Sam looked up at Daphne when she said this. He watched her carefully.

"No idea, the ropes weren't cut though. Someone shoved them in your pantry in a nasty knotted pile. You need anything from here?"

Daphne sighed "No, just lock up. Nothing looks out of place?" She noticed Sam watching her. She gave him the finger.

"Just a bunch of dusty crap all over. Don't you ever clean?"

"Fuck off Gomez. Hey, you'll never guess who I have with me."

"Who?"

"Mr. Wilde." Daphne kept her finger trained on him.

"Oh, that must be a treat."

"You know it. Try not to clean anything, see you in a few."

She exited the vehicle with Awes and opened Sam's door. The ride in had been long enough to let the sun surface out of the morning fog. Sam squinted in the daylight and held out his wrists. Daphne pulled out a hidden knife and cut the plastic.

"Thanks Daph, I just wanted to say that I appreciate-"

"What do you have for me Sam?" Daphne asked this as she walked into her building, the "Kay-Awes Bonds" sign flickering in the sunlight. She squinted at it and the sun.

"Ruffies guy, he's a regular, yeah? He knows who you're looking for. You were close, too close. He never would have given you that name, knew you must have been after it. So, yeah, I saw him last night, early. I was hanging at, you know, the uh, street, you know-"

"That house which deals in illicit recreation materials?"

"Heh, yeah fancy way to put it, but, yeah. I needed a fix, and was just hanging out, you know? Well he comes in and I recognize him, he's always there. Speed I think, his weapon



of choice. Well, he wanted Rohypnol, he said that, said the scientific name or whatever. So I listened in, I was curious, yeah?"

Daphne nodded to Sam to enter the building and keep talking. Awes dashed in front of them both as they entered the building. He ran past reception, where Jean Davies sat, her fingers flying across the keyboard of her computer. She nodded at them and handed a stack of folders and papers to Daphne.

"Thanks Jean, the sign is on. Get me fifty from petty too. What time is it?"

"Sorry mam, it's 1:37" Jean got up from her station as Daphne and Sam walked past.

"So, anyway he says he wants ruffies and the guys are bullshitting and he says it's for some chick he's been dating for a few weeks named Judy Nash. Well who the fuck is Judy Nash I think, and then he describes her, well, you. Actually, his description was shitty, but he described your car real good." Sam stuck close to Daphne who walked by closed office doors into the small kitchen. Awes sat in a dog bed near an empty bowl and panted. Daphne pulled the dog food can out of her bag and opened it with a can opener. She dumped the wet food into the bowl and Awes buried his face.

"Thanks for your concern. When was this?" Daphne walked out of the room back towards her office.

"I dunno, like a week ago? Anyway, he says 'oh that's not her real name, Escobar says it's something else, some flower sounding name or whatever.'"

Daphne stopped and poked Sam in the chest, stopping his forward momentum. "Bullshit"

"No, no shit, I told you I had something for you. Escobar."

"Escobar. Fuck. Thanks for taking your sweet time in telling me." Why does Escobar know who I am? Daphne thought to herself.

Daphne thought back to the meeting with her client, Mr. Wilson. He was nervous, asking her to be secretive. He wanted someone found and if there wasn't bond, it usually wasn't her problem. But, she knew people, had connections and he'd paid a lot of money in advance; almost too much money. He wanted her to find someone; someone who he said was his nephew. Daphne asked about friends and family, but Wilson was quiet and brushed her off when she asked questions, he didn't seem to know anything concrete about Jim Cross. All he would tell her was that he was some strung out kid that he needed to find. It was suspicious, but Daphne hadn't gotten a weird vibe from him, it was more concerned than creepy. Mr. Wilson would soon be Councilman Wilson and then, Mayor Wilson. He was a popular public figure, his law firm did more pro bono work than it

probably should have.

Daphne figured it'd be an easy gig. Alex was supposed to be the key to Cross' drug contact, she'd lean on the dealer a little and find where the little shit was hiding. But Escobar wasn't a dealer. Escobar was the Jefe.

"Yeah, so when I heard that, I didn't think I'd see you after last night. We kinda thought you'd, you know, disappear. Alex has a sort, I dunno, reputation? That's why I called, curious if you were still around. I didn't think you'd show up." Sam smiled again. Daphne sighed and headed to her office.

"Jeez Sam, there's a chance that I'll be raped and murdered and you just wait and see what happens? I knew there was a reason I fucking despised you."

"But you're fine, yeah? I figure you'd had a plan or-"

"Why does Escobar care about Cross?" Daphne cut off the junkie's excuses and put the paperwork in her arms in a stack on her desk. Awes walked in, licking his lips, and laid down next to her desk on a pile of filthy blankets, facing Sam.

"I don't want to know little Daph-o-dil." Sam sat in an empty chair and wrapped his arms around himself again. He shivered and licked his lips. Daphne pulled a ring of keys out of her bag and opened a safe next to her desk. She pulled out two .45 caliber automatic pistols. The pair of MK23's had once belonged to her father. They were hers now. She put two

12-round clips into a pouch on her belt, and lifted the receiver on her phone to dial reception.

"Daph, I know that's good info, right? Right? Know you have a good lead, right? I mean, I could really use some help, yeah?" Sam's lips stayed dry.

Daphne pushed several buttons on the phone and in frustration sighed and dropped the phone back on the receiver and yelled, "JEAN, GET ME COUNTY!"

Immediately, her phone beeped, "Yes Ms. Kay."

"Sam," Daphne said, "What else do you know?"

"Nothing, I swear, it was just a right place right time thing, I swear."

"Bullshit. Get out."

"No, no. That's it I swear. It was like, last Tuesday, you can go there, you can ask. Listen," Sam leaned forward, conspiratorially, "that's the last time I had a fix. I need more. I need it. Please." He sounded desperate.

"Alright hang a sec." Daphne locked the safe, gave Awes the "stay" command and went to the front desk. She came back a second later and handed Sam a wrinkled fifty dollar bill.

"Here, keep your eyes open and your mouth shut. Get the fuck outta my face."

"Yeah, uh, thanks Daph, I'll see you around." Sam got up and left her office. Daphne's phone beeped twice, "County on

line one."

"Thanks Jean." Daphne lifted the receiver, "Hey, Albert, how are you? Yeah, yeah got him last week. No, ha! Yeah, he paid, no he's clean. What? Oh good, good. Listen, what do you know about Escobar?"

## IX: The Ruined Plan

Goddamn motherfucking imagination. I can't believe I ruined it, all the careful planning, all the nights working on that useless outline. One stray character was all it took to ruin the entire fucking plot. The little wax paper thing was supposed to be a little clue, bring her further into a world of deceit and fucking danger. Sam fucking Wilde.

What, you think I'm taking this too far? Why not just change it you may be thinking. I can't now. It's like a train wreck, a gunshot wound or walking in on your mother having sex with the milkman, you can't un-see it. Even if I started over, I created him, and he'll always be there at the periphery.

Let me back up, I re-read today's writing and realized that the plot was spoiled. Not totally fucked, it just wasn't a book anymore. The wax paper plot thread was dead, Sam told me/us about Escobar, something Daphne wasn't supposed to find out about until three-quarters of the way through the book. I

skipped over the undercover drug dealer search, the car chase, amnesia, her partner getting shot, the flashback with her dad, Gomez and Alex becoming lovers. Shit, it was all gone.

Now this is what I mean about small things becoming too big. I have to re-think my sequel strategy; this was no longer a novel sized story. I needed to go back to the coffee shop and re-imagine myself a plot fix. This world was too easy for Daphne, she needed struggle and drama. She was sliding towards the answers too quick, without any danger. I needed a new plan, a new direction, and some way to end this story.

A week from my original protagonist search and the coffee shop is hopping again. The Colombian grindings smell sweet at my usual table. Whipped imagination topped the caffeine demon that whispered into my head. I opened the laptop and started the machine that could end the world I created. I needed to fix my world and the big quiet of consumer paradise would give me the inspiration I needed to finish things; closure before closing time.

I watched the people around me, but it wasn't a new character I needed. I needed a theme, a narrative, something to cut loose the stray plot threads and knot them together permanently. Daphne had a direction to go in, a person to go after. Wilde had ruined the detective work, but the gritty rescue was still needed. Cross was hidden, Escobar wanted him

and Wilson needed him. Daphne needed to find Cross. Well she has already been paid, so she could skip out. That's hardly an ending, is it?

#### X: The New Plan

Daphne prepped for Cross' rescue. Escobar was bad. He was a drug kingpin, and the worst part was, everyone knew it. He had protection, body guards, the works. He was holding a junkie kid, and Daphne didn't know why. She tried contacting Wilson, but all he would tell her is that he wanted Cross back, and didn't know where he was. Daphne considered telling him about Escobar, but she didn't want him to panic, or call the police.

It took the rest of the day to question her contact in the county office, find a business of Escobar's that would be a suitable hideout. Escobar had a legit business, a vegetable packing plant, in the industrial part of town. Daphne called another contact, who confirmed that he did all sorts of business from there, legitimate and otherwise. She needed Gomez, her second driver and apprentice bondsman to back her up. Early the next morning, he drove behind her in an unmarked white van.

The plan was to pose as maintenance inspectors from the

city, poke around, take pictures and survey the building. After they had a layout, and a few contacts, they could plan a rescue and escape route for Cross. Awes stayed behind in her car, but Daphne left the windows down, just in case.

Daphne and Gomez talked to the plant manager, produced some faked documentation and followed the manager on a tour of the plant. There were several rooms with loud machinery; everything was wet with water and bacterial disinfectant. Daphne took pictures and made mental notes of the entryways and exits. There seemed to be an unordinary amount of workers sweeping and cleaning in one of the noisiest rooms. Some of these people eyed Daphne. She just smiled and turned away.

"Excuse me miss, where did you say you were from again?" This wasn't the plant manager, but a man in a suit, his large frame impressive. Daphne smiled and pretended she couldn't hear him over the din of the machinery. Another man was talking to Gomez and the plant manager looked uneasy.

"Miss, Miss! Come with me!" The large man shouted in her ear and grabbed Daphne's arm, causing her to almost lose her grip on her camera.

"Hey! Let go man! This isn't even my camera!" Daphne shoved the man back, who wasn't expecting the force of her push. His polished shoes slipped on the wet concrete and he fell backwards, landing on his butt. The other suited man saw



this and grabbed Gomez by his shirt, pulled out a gun and smacked him in the temple. Gomez crumpled to the wet concrete floor. Daphne kicked the man she had unintentionally felled, the man's glasses cracking and flying from his face. His nose bloody, he pulled out his own gun and pointed at Daphne. She was crouched, ready for another kick, but the firearm changed things. She put her arms up in submission. The man with the bloody nose took her camera and dropped it, his polished boot crunching down on it.

Daphne tensed her body and eyed his gun. There were three moves she could execute that would disarm him, but, as she scanned the room, she saw more suited men enter the room and decided against it. It was healthier for her to wait for a clearer opportunity. The man with the bloodied nose swung at her with this beefy arm, but Daphne sidestepped him, her arms still up. The man almost fell again; angry he grabbed her by the throat and swung the butt of the gun at her ribs. Daphne heard a crack and the wind left her. She buckled, her knees hitting the concrete hard. She looked up at the suited man one last time before the world went black.

## XI: The Complication

The coffee shop was busy, too busy. It was that time of

day that everyone realized if they didn't get their daily caffeine injection, their world would slowly melt into a mire, like a toddler's jar of playdough.

I was typing away, lost in my created world when I was interrupted. I knew I would be, it was expected. I was on a roll, the words spewing forth from my dancing fingers and what did I hear in my ear but an idiotic question.

"Are you writing a book?"

Let me explain: it was an off day for me, I couldn't get into the shop at my regular time, so, like all bad days, it just keeps going downhill. My usual muse-corner was taken by three teenage girls, whispering around their frappe-whatever and giggling about who-cares-what. It was a shame; the corner was something I was looking forward to. So, anyway, I ordered my sleep poison and took a table in the middle of the shop. I usually do my creating in a corner and when that isn't available, I take any seat where my back is against a wall. I don't want people leaning over my shoulder, you see, and of course, on a bad day like this, what happens? No wall space.

"Are you writing a book?"

The voice comes over my shoulder. I don't turn around, just stop typing and say, "yeah, looks that way." and I figure that's like, a clue. Leave me the fuck alone, I want to write in peace.

"Oh wow, can I read some?"

"What? No it's not done yet, I need to edit and re-edit. I need to finish it, you know? There's like, I dunno, more stuff to be said about, well, about what I'm writing about." I was losing concentration and patience.

"Please? I write a little myself and maybe we could, you know, edit each other's work or something." At this I turned and looked at Daphne.

Okay, not Daphne, but the same girl I had been looking at the day I was looking for my character. She was sitting at a table behind me, and had twisted her body to peek over my shoulder. She had an open laptop and a muffin in front of her.

"You, I know you, you're-"

"Do you know me? I don't think so, I mean, I've seen you before. You're usually in that corner, but you know, you look so standoffish."

"Yeah, I - I'm sorry, what's your name?" I hope, I pleaded and sold my soul. That part of me that believed in magic believed that her name was the one I chose for her.

"Denise." She reached out with her perfectly manicured hand to shake mine. I shook it and looked in her eyes. I was full of disappointed perfection.

"Nice to meet you, um, yeah you can read what I've got. It's just, you know, not finished."

Now that was probably the stupidest thing I could have done. Why you ask? Because an artist doesn't believe his work is done. Ever. Not even when the pages have been printed, the paint dried or the sculpture fired. Taking someone's advice, advice that I knew was forthcoming, was a mistake. How could I call it my work if another person stuck their nose in?

I sat and sipped my coffee, nervously waiting for her to finish. It only took about twenty minutes, because, as you know, Sam fucked it up.

"It's good, interesting. I like the characters; it's difficult to write strong women. And that Sam character, he's interesting, right? What do you have planned for him? Is he really her brother?"

I couldn't believe it. The one thing that had ruined my work, and Daphne, er, Denise liked it.

"Well, no not really, but you know, there is more to him, I guess. He's kind of, well, just a side character. I don't think he'll pop up again." I mentally kicked myself and dug the hole deeper.

"Huh, okay, well do you want to read mine? It's not long, kinda like yours." She handed me her laptop. I read her story, some love story thing. I didn't really like it.

"Wow, yeah that's pretty, um, good. I'm sorry, I have to go now, but, can I have your number or email or something, I'd

like to contact you again, get more feedback."

"Sure!" She pulled a scrap of paper from her purse. I imagined she had two .45 pistols hidden inside. She wrote a series of numbers and letters. "There's my email and my cell. We can meet up here sometime, how does that sound?"

"Sounds great," I said as I saved my work and packed up my laptop, "See you around." That was the easiest phone number I had ever gotten. I'm going to have to let people read my work more often.

## XII: The Turncoat

Daphne could taste blood. Her eyes were blindfolded, and her hands and feet were bound to a chair. Her ribs hurt. One felt fractured. Ears rung, but not loud enough to drown out yelps; screams that reached for her from behind the door to what sounded like a cell. She hoped it wasn't Awes. In frustration, she twitched her body, trying to loosen the binding ropes.

The door slammed open and Daphne could hear the steady pulse of machinery. The wailing had stopped. Daphne concentrated on listening to footsteps. One person stood in front of her, another behind her and a third closed the door and leaned against it. She could smell the spiced aroma of

cigarettes mixed with the musty dampness of the cell. Someone blew smoke in her face and she coughed.

"Who are you?" Daphne's voice sounded strained to her own ears.

"I work for Wilson, like you." His voice sounded like he was smiling.

"Then why don't you untie me and make friends?" Daphne pointed her face towards the man in front of her, the man talking to her. He had a jittery, high pitched voice.

"No, we need information first. Why do you want Cross?"

"Same reason as you, untie me, I'll tell you."

"No, no, I don't think so. Not after what you did. You stay here and tell me a story." Daphne heard a lighter's dry snap. More smoke blew in her face.

"Once upon a time three little pigs built houses and fucking died of wolf poisoning. The end. Untie me, fuckwad." Daphne spat, but heard her projectile strike the floor.

"You are a piece of work. I'm trying to help you here. The boss wants Ernesto to cut you. I say no. I say no boss, she has a pretty face and is going to need it, okay? She's going to need it after I break her FUCKING LEGS, WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT CROSS?!" Daphne felt the back of a hand across her face. It stung.

"Asshole." Daphne didn't have a plan. Things had gone

horribly wrong. A simple infiltration snatch and grab has gotten her captured. She had walked into warehouses, mansions, even apartment complexes with a similar plan and it had always ended the same - with her capturing the bad guy and everyone being happy. Now she was tied to a chair, her face probably bleeding, and the man in front of her not only sounded creepily familiar, he was obviously lying to her and she didn't know to what end. "Hey man, I'm just the cavalry. I get things done is all. Where's my partner?"

"Ah yes, Freddy Gomez. He's been taken care of." The smile in his voice showed through again.

"The fuck does that mean?" An ice shard pierced Daphne's heart.

"What do you think it means Daf-o-dil?" The man laughed. There was only one person who she let call her that. It couldn't be, not that junkie fuck. Why would he be here, working for Escobar?

"I swear to fuck, if that's you Sam, I'm going to ram my arm down your throat and rip out your colon."

"Oh come on now, did you really think you could just walk in here and take Cross?"

"Why the fuck would you help me?"

"Well, Escobar is a tricky man to follow, even trickier when you fuck with his family. Alex isn't just a date-rapist,

he's Escobar's nephew or cousin or something. And you fucked him up pretty good, concussion I think. Who do you think was the first person he called after he escaped? And who do you think Escobar called next? So, I was sent out to give you the clue, the answer to your unasked question. I had to work fast, ran all the way to that bus stop, I couldn't stop sweating. You need Cross, you go through Escobar. And when you poke your head above the ground, I get to shoot it."

Daphne heard a gun cock next to her ear. "Come on Sam, I don't believe you work for Escobar. What, does he give you free fixes or something? I told you to get off that shit, and now what? It's worth murder?"

"Shut the fuck up bitch!" Sam screamed in Daphne's ear. She had touched a nerve. Her eyes exploded in bright pain as Sam tore off her blindfold. She was being held in a storeroom. There were the obligatory wet concrete floors, but there were also shelves full of chemicals and tools. The suited man she had kicked, Ernesto, was leaning against the door, a tissue shoved up one nostril. He smiled at her and continued sharpening a knife with a whetstone. Sam stood in front of her, a snub-nosed revolver pointed at her face. His skinny arms were shaking and a thin string of drool fell from the corner of his mouth.

"Why don't you put the gun down and untie me. I can help



you, really, I can. What do you need?"

"Need? What do I need? I need you die is what I need. You and your fucking dog and Escobar and the whole fucking world." Sam started pacing the room, the arm holding the gun dropped to his side and his other hand rubbed the inside of his arm. Daphne thought she might be getting through to him. She tried a softer approach.

"Sam, look, I know its hard okay? I remember those days, yeah, the urges, the yearning, the un-control of it all, and feeling like you have no choice." Daphne thought back and shuddered at her own memories, thoughts she vowed to forget. "I'm here now Sam, and I'm telling you: If you get me out of here, I'll get you out of here."

Sam stopped and looked at her. "You'd do that? Why?"

"Sam, stop fucking around and do it." Ernesto had stepped up to Sam's side, "If you don't, I do. That's what Jefe said."

"No, no! She's mine, she's-"

"Come on Sam don't do this, I-"

"Shut up! Get out of my head! There's nothing-"

The door to the room opened, hitting Ernesto in the back of the head, sending him to the ground. His knife skittered on the floor towards Daphne's feet. Awes bounded in the room and jumped on Sam; knocking him down, his jaws clenched around Sam's neck. Gomez stepped into the room, and pointed one of

Daphne's .45s above her head. Daphne had forgotten about the third set of footsteps.

"Don't move fucknuts! Untie her, now!" Gomez's face was bloody, his shirt was sliced in 5 different places, all soaked in blood.

"Awes! No-kill!" Daphne shouted. Awes looked at her, his eyes pleading, Sam's body convulsed in fear. "Sam, I swear to God, you drop the fucking gun right now, or he's going to do it. Drop it, NOW!" Sam shook his arm and the gun clattered. Gomez picked it up. Daphne's arms became free. She shook off the ropes, grabbed the knife on the floor, and cut the bindings on her feet. She stood and picked up the snub-nosed revolver. The man that had been behind her was the other suited man, a look in his eyes said the pay wasn't worth it. He put his hands behind his head and kneeled on the ground. Gomez handed Daphne her pack. She pulled out her holsters and her other .45. She strapped them on and traded Gomez the snub and the knife.

"Awes! Come." The dog dropped Sam's neck, leaving red welts where his teeth had been and slobber everywhere else.

"Are you okay?" Gomez asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Broken rib I think. What happened to you?"

"Ernesto tried to get information out of me."

"Where, from your chest?"

"Yeah, the fastest way to man's heart. Anyway, he fucked up, didn't tie me up tight enough, left to watch you get killed. I sneaked out, called Awes, got your pack. Cross is here, you know. We still getting him?"

Daphne handed Gomez bandages from her pack and knelt over Sam, his eyes were distant and he was crying softly. "Yeah, we'll get the job done. He'll be expecting us, I think." Sam looked at her and mouthed I'm sorry. Daphne used zip-ties from her bag to tie Sam's and the other men's wrists together. She took their wallets and put them in her pack. "Are you good to go?"

"Yeah, cuts aren't deep. I pulled the fire alarm, the place has cleared out. There's an office on the second story, my guess is that Escobar is up there, surrounded by goons. Or maybe he fled the fire, I don't know."

"One way to find out. Awes! Come!"

### XIII: El Jefe

Seems like a pretty good place to stop, right? Originally this is the end of the first book. Well, after dealing with Sam's shenanigans via Denise, I figure I should at least give you some closure. Enjoy.

As they walked, Daphne checked the clips in her belt and nodded to Gomez. He had Ernesto's knife in a scabbard on his belt, and held the snub in the right hand, a bottle of mace in his left. They didn't have time to re-supply. Awes padded at Daphne's feet.

"Okay, we go up the stairs and through the door at the same time. Awes barks, causes some momentary confusion, we start aiming at heads. Hopefully Cross isn't tied up or unconscious or anything. We grab him and get out."

"Fucking junkie is probably getting high. What's his deal anyway? Why are we risking this much to get him?"

"\$20,000"

"And my cut is?"

"Usual percentage, plus hospital bills."

"Okay, I can swing that."

"Thought so, let's go."

The plant was devoid of life. Daphne had been kept in a store room and Gomez had been held across the hallway. They checked his room but didn't see anyone. The fire alarm blared in the distance, but there was no water falling from the ceiling like Daphne had expected.

They made their way around dormant machinery, large pipes rising to the ceiling and snaking their way around the huge

main room. Conveyor belts had been stopped, carrots laying glistening on one, chopped celery on another. The air smelled like soap and garden salad.

Daphne took point, Aves at her feet. She found an evacuation chart and saw that through the processing rooms was a changing area, and then the offices. The offices appeared to be two stories, the map showing a symbol for stairs. The group made their way through the processing room. The changing area had immaculate white tile and a hazard suit hanging in the corner. Lockers were open, belongings taken in haste in fear of the fire alarm. Daphne counted minutes. According to Gomez, the alarm was pulled 4 minutes ago. That was fine, they still had 3 or 4 minutes before the sirens were heard. They might be able to pull it off.

The offices were equally deserted. They quickly checked the cubicles and made their way to the stairs. 2 minutes left.

Halfway up the stairs they could hear talking. Daphne used a set of rudimentary hand signals with Gomez. He checked the safety on the snub, and Daphne reached to the small of her back and pulled out the dual .45s.

The top of the stairs opened onto a small landing. On one wall was an opening to a conference room, which had a presentation running on a large screen. The room was empty of people, but there was a mess of binders, books and paperwork

left behind. There was a flashing fire warning light in the corner of the room. The other wall had a set of double doors, and voices were coming from them. Daphne nodded to Gomez and leaned down and whispered to Awes.

"Awes." He looked at her, his eyes intent and his ears adjusting, listening to everything. Daphne pointed at the door. "Bark. No-Kill."

The dog whined, licked his lips and shifted his weight impatiently. Daphne smiled and made a sign to Gomez. They crept to the door. Daphne counted down and kicked in the door.

Escobar sat behind a large wooden desk. He jumped and reached for a drawer as Awes rushed into the room and started barking. There was a couch on one side of his office, a skinny teenager laid on it, his arm tied close to the shoulder with a rubber tube. He was passed out. Standing near the teenager was a short man holding a leather bag. He was well dressed and had a series of pagers and cell phones on his belt. He looked expensive.

Awes barked at the well dressed man, being the closest person to him. Daphne trained her guns on Escobar, who froze. Gomez pointed the mace at the well dressed man and told him to drop the bag.

"Escobar! Stop, don't move. We're taking Cross."

"Well, well. If it isn't the ex-junkie come back to claim

one of her own. Did you pull my fire alarm or was it your cut up friend there?" Escobar looked from Daphne to Gomez, then in disgust at Awes. He shook his head, "It doesn't matter." Escobar smiled at Daphne and relaxed into his leather chair. He put his hands behind his head and put his feet on the desk. "Now, Judy or Daphne or whoever the fuck you are, why don't you tell me-"

Daphne shot the man in his foot. Blood sprayed back into Escobar's face, his expression shocked.

"MY FOOT! YOU CRAZY BITCH!" Escobar screamed and pulled his feet away from the desk so quickly that he fell back on the floor. He curled his body so that he could hold his ankle.

"You a doctor?" Daphne kept one gun pointed at Escobar and trained the other on the well dressed man.

"Yes, my name is-"

"Shut it, is Cross alive?"

"Yes."

"And you can repair feet?"

"I'm not prepared for-" Daphne cocked the gun pointed at the doctor. "Yes, I can make him comfortable."

"Good. Awes, quiet, come." Awes stopped barking at the doctor and retreated to Daphne's feet. In the distance, sirens began to wail. "Alright Gomez, can you carry Cross?"

"Do I look like a pack mule?"

"Don't make me shoot you, Gomez."

"Yeah, I got him, keep your pants on." Gomez walked over to the passed out teenager. He hefted the boy over his shoulder. Daphne walked behind the desk where the doctor had taken off Escobar's shoes and was bandaging one of El Jefe's feet. The single bullet had gone through one foot and grazed the other. Escobar had opened the desk drawer and was drinking from a bottle of Scotch, a small pistol in his shaking hand.

"Get away from me you cunt. Shoot me, I'll fucking kill you." Escobar tried to raise the gun, but his strength was leaving him. The doctor reached over and gently pulled the gun from his hands. Escobar took another sip from the bottle and stared at Daphne.

"Why'd you want him so bad?" Daphne kept her guns trained on Escobar.

"Who? Cross? Eh, just blackmail." Escobar waved his hand as if being shot and questioned was akin to shooing a fly away. "Wilson thinks he's the mayor already. So I took his undercover lover and drugged him up. You know, to keep him quiet. A lost lover can make you do crazy things. But really, why did you need to shoot my foot?"

"Alex."

"Oh yeah. Heh. Sorry about that. He's a good kid you know, just likes the uppers, you know?"



"No, I don't."

"Bah, he gets in everyone's way. Maybe you should shoot his foot too."

"Escobar, I don't have beef with you. I take Cross, you limp for a while and we don't ever see each other again."

"Why should I listen to you?" Escobar took another gulp from his Scotch and coughed.

"Because, you still have another foot. Awes. Neck. No-Kill." Awes leapt past the doctor and wrapped his jaws around Escobar's neck. "And because when you fuck with me, you fuck with my partner." Escobar's eyes bulged in surprise and rage.

The doctor glared at Daphne, "This is not sanitary, infection-"

"Don't worry doc." Daphne cut him off "I think he's got enough meds. Awes. Release. Come." Awes left Escobar with the same welts and drool he left Sam. Daphne holstered her guns and reached into her bag. She pulled out a doggie treat and tossed it to Awes. He caught it in mid air and stared at Escobar as he chewed.

"See you around, Jefe." Daphne turned and nodded at Gomez, who was still holding Cross. Outside, the sirens wailed and Daphne imagined the confusion awaiting the firemen at being called for a fire and instead treating a junkie.

"You're dead, you know that?" Escobar had heaved himself up from behind the desk. The doctor was standing impatiently nearby, also looking at Daphne.

Daphne didn't turn around, she walked behind Gomez. Awes stopped and turned around. He growled a deep menacing growl at Escobar and stared at him.

"Get your crazy fucking mutt out of here!"

"Awes. Come." Daphne still didn't turn around. Her line of work was already dangerous and she had just made an enemy for life. She knew this wasn't the end, but it was the end of her day. Being drugged, betrayed, knocked unconscious and threatened was as much as she could handle in one twenty-four hour period.

Daphne rode back to her office with her music loud and with Awes sticking his head out of her window. The wind ruffled his hair and bits of spittle ran out of his panting jaws.

As always, tomorrow was another day.

The End.

10-02-2009