

## SHRAPNEL

1

“Fragments of a bomb. Pieces of metal timed to burst, fragments of a..” Chelsey repeats in a desensitized tone while delicately taking off her panties before stepping into the shower. She gazes at the swirl of blood slurping down the drain. Chelsey sobs behind the translucent glass as it fogs up.

It’s morning, the phone rings, “Paul, my badge is gone.”

“I’ve got it.” Paul snaps.

“What! I’ve got a doctor’s appointment, gotta go!”

“You will need surgery immediately Ms. Artis” Doctor Degare insists.

“Dammit!” Chelsey flops back on the hospital bed.

It’s a week after Chelsey’s surgery. She is recuperating in her third floor walk-up apartment in the Lower East Side watching the flick Sabrina and laughing at how William Holden fairs with his butt injury. She is also howling at how much pain the laughing is causing her.

“Ahhhhh, that psychotic bitch! She was trying to blast us all!” Chelsey writes down on a coffee stained legal pad so she can break the habit of talking to herself. “Antisocial behavior in politics and corporations is to be expected, but in the FBI, dangerous!”

Chelsey simultaneously points with the remote to turn off the flick and blurts out again, “psychotic bitch!”

Chelsey looks at her watch, ignores her doctor’s orders and grabs her attache case. Double bolts the heavy purple door behind her. Hustles with a wobble down to the subway and passes the Asian Charm spa and says to herself, “Those stupid women putting themselves in danger and

perpetuating never to be treated or paid equally and to be forever at the mercy of a male predator.”

Chelsey reaches the train ramp and realizes she is still talking to herself because the subway commuters are staring at her in annoyance. She puts her hand in her overcoat pocket and finds a croissant. She quickly takes her hand out of her pocket.

Chelsey arrives at the corner cafe on 7th street and 2nd avenue. Plops her cushion down on the chair and waits for Paul. She is scrawling wildly all over the coffee stained legal pad. Suddenly, Paul’s hand covers her hand.

“My God, I barely recognized you Paul!”

“ You like my beard Chelse?”

“No.”

“ You feel better?”

“No, I didn’t realize I had to use muscles from all over just to speak!”

“Okay Chelse, listen, Captain Sparks is calling it a freak accident.”

“Accident? No! Freak? Yes!”

“Here is your badge. Now, what was lodged in you?”

“Thank you. A pull tab of a zipper!”

“Chelse, it could have been much worse...and we don’t know if it was Devon who detonated the test bomb.”

“Devon is your new sleep over gal?”

“No chance.”

“Pauly wanna a cracker!”

“No Chelse, I’m not being duped.”

“You are out of your element with Devon. You are too much of a cracker to predict her exotically neurotic sensibilities.”

“Sensibilities? She’s as antisocial as a grenade!” said Paul with a glint of fear in his eye.

“I know! She took my badge Mr. Revere and passed right through into the test lab.”

“I love when you start calling me historical figures.”

“Paul, this is no midnight ride out of the woods. That zipper head could of lodged in my eye, in my lung, in my…”

“I know, where did it get lodged by the way?”

Chelsey shows Paul her cushion.

“Ouch, okay, so finally you can thank your glorious padded ass.”

“I bought a hammock with a portal! Get that smirk off your face and arrest Devon! I would do it myself but I’ve been sucked into a black hole!”

“I can’t. Sparks won’t let me.”

“What are you saying Paul?”

“We have no proof Chelse.”

“Find it!”

Chelsey steamed up, stands up, grabs her pillow and puts under her arm and vanishes. Paul watches Chelsey limp out. He stays and sips his last bit of Italian soda and later finds himself just below Chelsey’s window and hears harp music.

Chelsey is floating in a hammock with a hole for her rump to protrude through. She begins to reminisce about when she first met Paul at their FBI convocation. She recalls catching her first glimpse of Paul right away because of his Robin Hood qualities she liked. She also recalls that his hand was rubbing Susan's posterior in a circular motion and that she was not able to see Susan's face to get a read.

Chelsey struggles to get out of the hammock and cannot get enough traction. She grabs her back scratcher and pulls her phone towards her across the floor.

"Ignatius?"

"Chelsey is that you?"

"Yup! I need a favor."

"Oh crap!"

"Hurry!"

"Oh Crap!"

"Ignatius, your vocabulary needs broadening."

"Yes, Chelsey what do you need."

"Not on the phone!" Chelsey hangs up.

Ignatius is a heavy set bearded man with a jolly stride. He arrives at Chelsey's apartment.

"Finally!"

"It took me 10 minutes!"

"Too long Iggy! Now shut up and get me up and out of this trap!" Iggy lifts Chelsey with ease.

"Paul may be working against us."

“Pauly no way! I just saw him at the yarn store across the street.”

“You did?”

“Yeah, I know his Mom likes to knit so...”

“You see, I may be right, he’s watching me!”

“Chelsey, calm down or your wound will split open.”

“That’s not the only thing that’s going to split open! So now everyone knows where my wound is!” Iggy cracks a timid smile.

“Iggy, I need you to find out why Sparks has not arrested Devon. Have you seen her?”

“No one knows yet where she is. But we got her scent.”

“Mr. Iggy blood hound, we are not on a fox hunt.”

“Yes Mum.”

“Iggy, this is serious. Devon is dangerous.”

“I know she is! Devon is the she-devil incarnate.” Iggy removes his glasses to clean them.

“She stole my badge, got into the test lab and pulled the fucking pin! Ouch, shit!” Chelsey holds her ass. Iggy pours himself a bourbon.

“She’s a home wrecker. She broke my home Chelsey.”

“Iggy, what do you mean?”

“Daisy left me. Devon planted evidence in my house and wedged herself between us and the infection began. Daisy was so susceptible to Devon’s manipulative prowess.”

“Go on.”

“Actually, Devon’s childhood...pretty hellish. Her family tried to sell her and then she became a prisoner of war. Other stuff at the camp too, but I can’t even repeat without feeling nausea.” Iggy holds his stomach.

“Iggy, what about me! I barely made it out of my office alive! My face smashed against the wall and the bomb exploded. Bang! Right in my ass!”

“So sorry Chelsey, Captain Sparks claims a faulty detonator.”

Chelsey turns away to cool her fuse and forgets and sits on the couch. “Ouch! Shit! Is that what he is calling a blast wave like that!” Chelsey waddles over to the hammock and plops back in.

“Sparks has closed the case Chelsey.”

“Closed! Have they gone mad! Devon has evidence on Sparks for something! Somehow she has made a muss in the boys club. Most likely, sexual misconduct and maybe Paul too.”

“Sexual misconduct?” Iggy asks.

“Sparks didn’t expect Devon to turn out to be Matahari with a side dish of Aileen Wuornos.”

“Holy Crap!”

“Your vocabulary is expanding Iggy.”

“Sparks may have provoked Devon. This is still a male dominated society!”

“Is it? It never feels that way to me. Daisy ruled my world.”

“Iggy, I just love you, you’re such a romantic. I will personally talk to Daisy once this is over.

Devon is dangerous because she has no heart left, no respect for anyone, not even herself. I tried to talk to her several times but no way was she going to open up to me. Plus, her voice is so

shrill it strips the marrow out of my bones. She takes what she wants as if it's her own personal buffet. But why kill me? Unless she wants Paul."

"She took my Daisy." Ignatius starts to snuffle.

"Iggy, Iggy, Iggy, you can't do this now."

Ignatius sadly looks out the window and sees Paul coming up to Chelsey's flat.

"Chelsey, Paul is coming up."

"What!...Let him in."

"Oh crap!"

"Relax Iggy."

Five, ten, fifteen, twenty minutes go by and no Paul.

"Iggy, find Paul, check the roof, sometimes he goes up there to smoke!"

"He needs to quit!"

"Go!"

Ignatius' size does not forfeit his grace. He is a small elephant with ballet slippers. He glides out of the apartment.

Chelsey nervously swings in her hammock with one foot on the floor to get the most leverage to swing high enough to see out the window. She gets a glimpse of Devon coming out of the Yarn Shoppe. Chelsey tries desperately to get out of the hammock.

"IIIGGGGGYYYYYYYYY!" Chelsey begins talking to herself again and reaches the legal pad and hears someone calling to her.

“Chelsey, Chelsey!” Chelsey knows that voice anywhere. She sees blood from her wound dripping on the carpet. She pauses and then with force rolls over and hits the floor face first. She writes down on the legal pad, “Come on up Devon.” Then she throws the pad out the window. Waits to hear it land.

“Chelsey, Chelsey.” Devon persists. Chelsey drags herself towards her phone when suddenly Iggy pops in. He sets Chelsey’s legal pad on the dining table.

“Chelsey, you’re bleeding, oh crap!”

“Hey that’s my legal pad. Where is Paul? Get me some gauze in the bathroom cabinet.”

“Oh crap!”

“Chelsey, I cannot stop the bleeding!”

“Call an ambulance!”

Iggy gets up towards the land line and a bullet ricochets off the wall.

He dives for the floor and crashes into Chelsey, she screams, “Ahhhhhhhhh!”

“Oh Crap Chelsey, I’m so sorry.”

“Iggy, quiet, are you hurt?”

“No Chelsey.”

“Iggy we need to crawl into the bedroom now and get my magnum. That psycho was calling to me from the street!” They both slide along the carpet. Chelsey’s blood is streaking her cream colored carpet. Iggy is growling under his breath. Finally, bullets cease. They are both laying on the ground motionless in total silence.

“Iggy?”



“Chelsey?”

“I think my butt stopped bleeding.”

“Are you sure?”

“Paul is out there right Iggy?”

“He better walk through that door!”

“Iggy, isn’t that my yellow legal pad? I threw that out the window.”

“Paul gave it to me to give to you Chelsey. He saw what you wrote, wasn’t to happy with that.”

“Is that right! Where is he?”

Chelsey points her magnum in Iggy’s nose as he’s laying next to her. He breathes out his mouth with little sips of breath.

“Crap Chelsey, we have to stop meeting like this.”

“Iggy, I’m serious. You’re not telling me something! Where is Paul? Is he hurt?”

“Ok, Ok, take the piece out of my nose so I can tell you.” Chelsey removes the gun out of Iggy’s nose.

“Devon is trying to kill Paul. She thought he would be here with you.”

“Why would she think he would be here with me Iggy?”

“Chelsey, for an investigator you can be clueless. Paul is always keeping an eye on you.”

“He’s stalking me?”

“No Chelsey, he’s mad about you.” Iggy blushes. Chelsey is trying to make sense of what Iggy just told her.

”Did you even call for the damn ambulance Ignatius?”

“Paul did.”

Paul barges in, “Your ambulance is here Chelse.” Paul face is red with fear.

“Chelsey was bleeding, all day!” Iggy’s face is a blur from tears and snot.

“Dry your face man.” Paul hands him a handkerchief that has the name Devon on the edge in pink. Chelsey sees it and stares at Paul.

Two EMT’s come in with a stretcher and gently strap Chelsey in.

“Hurry up you guys! Get her to the hospital. Check for infection right away!” Paul exclaims to the EMT’s with fire in his voice. They take Chelsey out.

Iggy’s voice rises lightly from the debris of the previous storm and says, “Chelsey is never going to talk to you again.”

“Why Iggy?”

“First, you did not arrest Devon!”

“Devon is in handcuffs right now. New York’s finest got her when she blasted at us all with a 460 Magnum. We pursued her into the Yarn Shoppe. Devon knew we had her, so she makes a run for the street and starts calling to Chelsey to come to the window. I sniped her. Shot her in the foot.”

“Pauly, does Chelsey know that Devon has been arrested?”

“No, I didn’t want to detain her. I wanted that wound taken care of immediately. Shrapnel festers.”

“Pauly! Chelsey got out her magnum stuck it up my nostril. She thought you were plotting against us!” Iggy drinks some more bourbon.

“You shouldn’t drink so much.”

“Yeah Pauly, you should give up smoking. I hear it’s dangerous.”

“Listen Iggy, we can’t prove that Devon detonated the pipe bomb. This is why I hesitated to explain it to Chelsey.”

“Oh crap, Pauly!”

“But Devon will be locked up for quite some sometime. Hopefully, get some real help.”

“Hey Pauly, did you have a thing for her?”

“Hell no Ignatius! She had an air of mystery about her, but...”

“Uh-uh.”

“Listen Iggy, Captain Sparks sparked this whole ordeal by sexually assaulting Devon. She had to much previous damage. There was nothing consensual about it.”

“Sparks, that slime ball. Pauly, how is Chelsey supposed to get what she deserves, her assailants confession.”

“I know Iggy. But Devon was trying to kill Sparks and instead Chelse stayed overtime. The one night Chelse could get some rest, where is she? In harms way!”

“Hey Pauly, then why did Devon want to kill you?”

“I wouldn’t help her get Sparks. Plus, there are no tapes, no proof of the assault.”

“Is that all Devon wanted from you Pauly?” Iggy asks with a twinkle.

“I’m going to the hospital to make sure Chelse is ok.”

Iggy with his deeply refined growl says, “Wait Pauly, you know that Chelsey is Ms. hawk eye?”

“I do.”

“She saw the handkerchief”. Iggy hands Paul the snotty hanky back to him.

“No thanks Iggy, you can keep that.”

“Pauly check out the handkerchief monogram.”

Paul looks at the soggy hanky and sees Devon’s first name on the edge in pink. Paul rushes out.

Iggy says out loud. “Hey Pauly, when are you going to marry Chelse?”

“Ah, yes, faint hearts never won fair lady!”

Iggy sits in the hammock and his rump smacks the blood stained carpet. He takes out his phone and scrolls down to Daisy’s number and pauses. He says to himself, “Devon almost lodged herself between those two love birds with her handkerchief.” He sees Chelsey’s yellow coffee stained legal pad on the floor and begins writing.

“Captain Sparks won’t get punished for his crime? No criminal investigation? Ah yes, but like shrapnel, sexual assault leaves fragments behind...”

END