Kimmy woke to Monkey’s yapping and to her wrists secured off a chair by fluffy restraints that, while comfortable, worked quite well at keeping her bound. Water dripped down the walls into puddles on the concrete floor and a single naked bulb dangled from a low ceiling. She squinted against the light searching into the shadows for the noise and spotted her dog in a crate on the far side of the room.

To her left was a familiar outline and the blank face of a man who refused to look at her. To him she said, "I would've thought a guy like you could afford nicer digs,"

"You know, it's not just about presentation Remember what they say about location."

"Well, you got a shitty location, too."

"Yeah, but look who's got who where they want them."

"Whom."

"What?"

"Never mind."

Monkey barked in agreement.

He pulled out a pellet gun. "Now what did we say about that?"

"What?"

"Talking to the dog,” he said.

Monkey whined and circled the cage.

Kimmy said, "Mason, what's going on?"

He answered with a pellet shot that bounced off the dog’s butt.

Monkey and Kimmy yelped.

Mason set the gun back down and said, "You ask a lot of questions."

Kimmy glared at him. “You’re an asshole.”

“Could be worse,” he said. “Could be a liar. Then you wouldn’t know what to expect, wouldn’t be able to trust me. That would suck, huh?”

Kimmy kept quiet. Mason stood. He took several steps in her direction and stopped where she could see his face. “Why’d you do it?” he said. “Why’d you lead me on all that time? I thought we had…”

She cut him off. “It’s my job.”

“What, lying to people? Saying shit to make things go your way?”

She played back over the evening, the way he’d brushed against her at the table and had placed his hand on top of hers, how she’d leaned into him disguising disgust with adoration, and he, in turn, had guided her fingers along an intricate map of social impacts. She was sick of letting minor atrocities slide but the net he wove had to be big enough to catch him, and catch him good.

Not everything had been a lie.

Her interest in his plans had been one hundred percent genuine, but she kept that to herself.

“You’re a bad guy,” she said. “Someone’s got to stop you.”

Mason snorted and moved back into the shadows. “I gotta put food on the table, kids through college. Plus, I wanna do work I feel proud of, you know? Not just something I can do - something I like doing. And, you know, I like what I do.”

“But you don’t have to do this,” she said.

“Do what?”

“You know, kill me.”

He looked back as if he didn’t quite get it, and then he grinned. The grin turned to laugher, heaving laughter that gave way to wheezing. He found his way to a wall. He looked winded, dizzy.

He said, “Shit you’re funny, girl. Almost made me pass out, goddammit.” She was hopeful now, or was she just confused? She didn't know.

His grin faded.

“I wish I could just kill you,” he said. “I wish it was that simple.”