

Stalemate

He had a charcoal Zorro-like mask tied around his face, the contrast to his pale porcelain skin strikingly noticeable. As he stepped onto the glossy marble floor of the ballroom, he winced as the plastic fibre cord of the mask dug into his scalp. He held his head high and glided through the sea of dancers. Walking straight into the spotlight, his gaze was transfixed on the woman stood in front of him, a woman with lustrous red hair falling to her waist. The vibrancy of the colour teamed with her scarlet dress made her the most stunning on the dance floor.

She turned, following the path of a couple twirling past, and locked eyes with him, giving him a calculating look. Before he knew what he was doing, he found himself with his arms around her waist and they were dancing into the night.

He wondered how this luck had come to him, why the Gods had chosen him, *him* of all people, for this woman. Gosh, she was beautiful! *She* wondered if he had any trace of affluence. He certainly looked the type; middle-aged, with a receding hairline and a superior look that sent shivers down her spine. Well, boy was he in for a surprise tonight, she smirked to herself.

She sent him a glowing look, while her heart twisted with cold malice. She gestured to the corridor on their right and sent him a look, saying plainly, 'Let's go'. She held his hand and led him along with her. She pushed him out into the alley, the street lamps from the main road sending a dim glow across his back.

His veins pulsed with an unknown energy sending adrenaline rushing round his body, leaving no space for anything else. He couldn't think, he couldn't feel, he couldn't function, his attention enraptured by this vision from heaven stood in front of him, smiling coyly. She tilted her head to one side, and studied him. He pulled her to him and said one word against her lips, 'Come'.

Hailing a cab took but seconds, and the journey to his apartment was filled with a silence of anticipation. The bright lights from other vehicles flew past and the gigantic sky-scrappers, made the taxi feel like a toy car, small and insignificant in a world of confusion.

He led her to the building, and then through the lift and to his door. He pushed her into his bedroom and made his way to the en-suite bathroom. She flicked her hair back and glanced round the room critically. The king-size bed in the middle of the room was covered in a black satin bed sheet. The bed-side lamp gave the room a boudoir-ish feeling. She rolled her evening dress just above her knee and drew the pistol from inside her left garter. With a silencer already attached, she took up her position in front of the bathroom door, the barrel aimed at the position where his heart would be. She was ready.

A minute passed, then two. She heard the toilet flush and her back stiffened ever-so slightly. Then the handle turned and the door began to swing open. She smiled. His blood wouldn't even stain her dress.

In the bathroom, he removed his jacket and undid his shirt buttons. He breathed in deeply. This was going to be a night to remember.

As the door completed its half-turn, she faced him, gun in hand. The two of them stood, one in bedroom, one in bathroom, amazed as they registered each other's guns pointed at them. Stalemate.