

When it started, Harper Flynn had a fifth of vodka in her hand, six shot glasses lined up on the bar in front of her, and a stinging cut on her arm from a broken beer bottle. Music rained through the refurbished warehouse, a sheet of noise. Harper poured the martini into a chilled glass. Down the crowded bar, a banker waved his empty highball glass and a twenty. She nodded. Macallan, neat, with a Stella back—she'd get to him. She'd get to them all. Eleven P.M. and she was halfway through her shift.

She slid the martini glass toward the man in the suit. "Fourteen-fifty."

He frowned and shouted over the band. "For an ounce of vodka and an olive?"

She smiled. "For turning you into James Bond." *And for not spitting in it.*

The dance floor was a swerving mass of spangled people. On the walls, flat screens projected glossy music videos. In booths and at tables along the balcony, cooler customers leaned back, holding court over bottles of Bollinger. The stage lights skewed the space between white glare and murky corners. The warehouse windows were milky with moonlight, pierced by occasional Los Angeles headlights.

The suit stroked the stem of the martini glass. "I'll pay four bucks."

"Fourteen-fifty," Harper said, still smiling, but both hands on the bar now.

She wore a black cotton blouse, sleeves rolled to the elbows, and black jeans he couldn't see, because he was too busy trying to Jedi mind-trick her buttons open. Next to him, a woman leaned back, laughing, hand to her chest.

From the crowd, Drew appeared behind the suit. Eyes on Harper, shoulders square, as though he was lining up to head-butt the man.

Drew leaned toward the guy's ear. "How's your drink?"

The man looked up at him, several inches. Noticed the black shirt, the chilly eyes, the cornerback's body.

Harper said, "His drink's about to be paid for."

Maybe half a second the guy held on, wanting to yank her chain again. Then he slapped fifteen bucks on the bar and skulked off.

Drew smiled. "He thought I was your boss."

That smile was wicked, and overtly pleased.

"Never," she said. "Not even when we play dress-up later on."

He didn't work there. He only worked his way under her skin, into her thoughts, her days, her nights. Now he was laughing. She nodded at the far end of the bar and walked down. He followed.

He slid her employee swipe card into her hand. "Thanks."

She clipped the card to her belt, quietly, her back turned to the club's CCTV camera. "What's it like outside?"

"Zoo. Line around the block, Security's wandering guys and carding teenage girls."

"But they're still letting people in?"

He raised his eyebrows. The walls seemed to bulge under the press of the crowd. Fire limit was twelve hundred. That many seemed to be clamoring for drinks.

Harper said, "Your sister's not out there, is she?"

He laughed. "Piper might be able to fake her way past security, but she knows you're working. You're scarier than any bouncer."

"That's my motto. Now buy a drink. And tip me big."

Drew had borrowed her swipe card so he could avoid the hassle of security at the front entrance when he came back in. He eyed the bottles arrayed behind her.

She added, “And no, you may not challenge me to mix the worst drink possible. I will not serve you an Antifreeze. Or a Brain Tumor.”

“An Old-Fashioned,” he said.

She wiped her hands on her apron. “Bourbon or rye?”

“What’s the most old-fashioned?”

She set a glass on the bar. “You stir it for eighteen minutes to muddle the drink.” She dropped in a sugar cube, added Angostura bitters and water, and stirred with a spoon. “That’s how Al Capone demanded it.”

She filled the glass with Wild Turkey, shoveled in ice cubes, and nudged the glass at him.

The band hit a final chord. Definitely Arson was the hot ticket that had drawn this whooping crowd to the Valley on a Saturday night. In a booth near the stage, a glass broke. A woman squealed. An ice bucket tipped over.

One of the other bartenders, Sanita, said, “High roller. Vegas millionaire, I heard.”

Harper glanced at the booth. Everything seemed brilliant and shadowed.

Across the dance floor, at the main entrance, a man came up the stairs. He stopped in the doorway. Hands at his sides, jacket open. For a second, he struck Harper as a gunslinger, readying himself to draw, waiting for an opponent to rise up from the swirl in front of him. A woman came in the door beside him, a blonde, same urgency, same eyes.

The band launched into a new song. Down the bar, a man whistled and shouted, “Cuervo.”

At the door, the harsh-eyed man and woman surveyed the room in slow tandem, like twin Terminators. Drew leaned on the bar, rattling the ice in his glass. Harper took the Cuervo Gold from the shelf.

The first sound was a muffled pop. The man and woman with the gunslinger eyes turned toward the high roller’s booth. Harper’s skin prickled.

A second report hammered beneath the drumbeat. It was unmistakable, a noise she knew from the firing range and a thousand TV shows, a sound it seemed she had been expecting all her life: gunfire.

## 2

Aiden Garrison turned at the noise. “Shots fired.”

From the doorway, he scanned the club. With its heaving swirl of dancers and the thunder of the band, it might as well have been a riot. Beside him, Erika Sorenstam drew her weapon. The stage lights flashed against her blond hair and the badge hooked on her belt.

“Where?” she said.

People continued dancing, arms upraised. It was a jungle, swaying as though under the force of the beat, and he couldn’t see the snakes.

Across the club, the man in the booth by the stage—heavyset, young, and sweating into his two-thousand-dollar suit—pointed at the crowd. Arliss Bale, Vegas hotshot, known meth wholesaler. His bodyguards rose and stormed into the crowd.

“They’re going for Bale.” Garrison shouldered his way onto the dance floor. His weapon was already in his hands.

Beneath the crash of cymbals, a third shot reached his ears. So did the first scream.

The scream barely cut through the blare of the singer and guitars. Harper’s palms went clammy. Drew turned toward the sound.

In the booth by the stage, bodyguards lunged to their feet. They dragged Mr. High Roller from his seat. Another shot echoed.

Harper shouted, "Gunshots. Everybody get down."

The band kept playing. The crowd kept dancing. Then screams came like a rock slide, pebbles at first, rolling, escalating, until noise and fear cut through the center of the floor, an avalanche. The music dribbled to a stop.

"Go," Harper shouted. "Get out. *Now.*"

Without music, the screams took over. The customers at the bar scattered. People spilled out in all directions, frantic, eyes round. The booth near the stage had emptied, bodyguards rushing into the crowd, Mr. Big on his knees, reaching into his suit jacket for a weapon or his valet parking ticket, something to transport him out of there.

On the dance floor, a woman tripped and fell. Three feet from Harper, Sanita swiped her card to lock out the register. She was punching the screen when the shot hit her in the chest.

She keeled back against the bottles behind her, and dropped.

"Sanita," Harper cried.

Drew leaned across the bar and grabbed Harper's hand. "This way."

Harper resisted. "Sanita's hurt."

Sanita sat, legs splayed, hand pressed to her chest. She stared astonished at the blood seeping between her fingers.

Two people dived across the bar and rolled to the floor, taking cover. Drew pulled on Harper's arm. Behind him, a man huffed as if he'd been hit with a sledgehammer. Blood erupted from his shoulder.

People were stampeding, hands out, some looking back. For a moment, the dance floor cleared and gave Harper a clean view of the room.

A man in a hoodie, wearing gloves and a gas mask, was advancing toward the high roller's bodyguards, arm extended, firing a pistol. He seemed unhurried.

Drew tightened his grip on her arm. "Come on."

The gunshot took him high in the back and knocked him against the bar.