

A Stabbing for Sadie

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Chapter One

Late Point of Attack

The next morning I wake up on the smooth tile floor in the kitchen. Even though the sun is coming up, it is cool to the touch, just like I remember. And just like I remember, it hurts. It hurts to lay on the floor all night—it hurts to hit the floor so hard. It hurts to know how much anyone wants me there, sprawled out on the hard kitchen floor. It hurt because Tiamata made it that way. But not today...not this day.

My hands are sticky; and as I look down I can see dark, molten something splashed on the sunshine yellow tile. Deep, sticky and maroon, I think it should seep into the cracks in the pattern but it doesn't. Then I am reminded of what the tall man in the blue work suit said years and years ago when he put in the floor.

“Linoleum One Piece we call it. It doesn't come in little squares like the old tile did. It'll be easy for your mommy to clean.”

“My mommy doesn't clean the floors, I do.” I said to him. He looked at me almost like he didn't believe me. I smiled my sweet smile at him, and he smiled back.

Tiamata, huge and angry, loomed in the doorway. I knew It wouldn't attack while the tile man was here. It never attacked while anyone else was here. It was clever that way...clever and deceitful. That's why no one ever came to help us.

“Sadie,” It said, laughing slightly...almost the way a person would, “Don’t bother the nice man while he’s trying to work.”

“Oh, she’s fine ma’am. She’s not bothering—“

But I was already down the stairs and out of sight. I spent the day in the basement, telling Pydely the Spider I’d take him with me if the tall man in the blue work suit ever let me come to live at his house. Snidely and Pydely were the two house spiders who lived in our basement. They were nice to talk to.

I was sure there were no Tiamatas at the tile man’s house; I could tell by the way he smiled, like everything was safe and okay where he lived. I thought maybe if I could make him smile again he’d want to take me to live at his house...didn’t every house need a little girl after all?

Years later I would realize that I’d spend most of my life trying to find some nice man to take me home with him; some nice man whose house didn’t have any Tiamatas. It devastated me to realize what a huge cliché I had become.

Later, Tiamata did attack; slamming me down on the hard new tile that was still covered with dirt and dust from the workmen. It was then I knew that my sweet smile had done me no good. The tall man in the blue work suit had gone home without me.

“Tell a total stranger I don’t clean this house! You think anyone else ANYWHERE would ever put up with a stupid little asshole like you running around?”

Did It know? Could It tell that I wanted to leave with the tile man? It seemed to know everything. Again and again my head hit the floor, Tiamata crushing my chest as it straddled itself above me. “Never tell ANYONE what goes on in this house!” Then, eventually: darkness.

My head hurt today. Today would be a shaky day. I could already tell that without even having to stand up. More and more these days, my hands got shaky. Sometimes they'd shake all the way up to my eyes. That's why I had to stop driving the car—if I got shaky behind the wheel I could actually kill someone. It's a freaky thing about driving, one minute you're listening to the radio and thinking about sex, and the next, you're causing a crash that ends up with a complete stranger impaled on their steering column. And you can't see it coming...and there's nothing you can do. Just imagine, idiots rubber necking at the blood and carnage, pretending like they care, when they really don't care about anything but the chance to see free gore. Then, later there'd be one of those tacky displays with flowers teddy bears, pictures and letters by the side of the road to mark yet another terrible thing that I did. The cross without the grave. Every time you drive by, you see it. That's the sort of thing that makes people hate you. Why did they use flowers anyway? Who ever decided that the same gesture men on TV use to apologize to their fictitious girlfriends should be used to mark the occasion of death? Mad girlfriend: flowers. Birthday: flowers. Death: flowers. And if flowers mark death, why in the world do they send them to people in hospitals, who are trying to get better? That's what I mean...none of it makes any sense.

I feel kind of shaky and queasy today. I have that sick feeling you get in the bottom middle of your stomach like when you know something bad is going to happen. I feel sweaty and heavy and tired, like the effort of lifting myself off the ground is too much work. I shouldn't feel tired though; after all, I just woke up. I certainly didn't want to hang around here all day. It seems like there are a lot of people here.

Footsteps sound behind me, and I realize there are lights coming in the window. I can barely see them blinking against the faded yellow paint around the window over the sink. Blue, pink, blue, pink, it's like someone is having a rave party in the driveway. But that doesn't make any sense. There would be music, and kids, and it wouldn't be taking place in the driveway at my parent's house. There are many things I could say about my parents; but for now let's just say that they are the last people you'd ever see at a rave party. More footsteps, then more still. Why are there so many people here? Men, it sounds like, walking all around and talking quietly. I try to sit up to see who is there, but a sharp pain goes through me and I pause for a minute. I try to brace myself with my left hand, but it slips in something slippery on the floor and I fall back again with a hard thump.

"My God. Miss...MISS! Are you alright?" an older man in a grey suit and tie is walking toward me, fast. "Don't. Don't try to move, we have an ambulance on the way." He looked worried. And when I looked at his open jacket, I saw the black and silver handle of a gun poke out.

An ambulance? Surely it's not as serious as all that. I think I'm bleeding maybe, but still...I can't be paying an ambulance; I got a bill for that once before, it was crazy. Over six hundred dollars just to drive me downtown. I could have taken a limousine for that much; and the driver wouldn't have asked me stupid questions the whole way there.

The man in the suit kneeled down next to me. He seemed very like a gentleman. He pulled my shirt up slightly to expose a small slice. He asks me if I can hear him, and then tells me not to stand up.

"I'm okay," I tell him, and hold out my hands so he can help me up. In my right hand is the big knife from Dad's cutlery rack. The one we got him for his 51st birthday. That was the party where they made the wrong ice cream

cake. It should have been chocolate with chocolate chip ice cream, but actually it was chocolate with mint chocolate chip. Dad didn't care; in fact, he said the cake was really good. But that didn't stop the screaming, plates flying, and swearing all through Dad's party. No one got to feel happy at all that day. And no one said anything about it. Just for a stupid cake.

The man in the suit looked at me kind of strange. Then I realized that my hands were bloody. Not a bit of blood like from a paper cut, it literally looked like I'd been finger painting in blood. But that was stupid, no one would do that—it's not like I'm Charlie Manson's long lost daughter or something. Heh heh heh, not anymore, at least.

"Why don't you set the knife down, Miss?" He sounded really tense all of a sudden, scared even. He reminded me of that cop on TV with the sexy young partner. You know that one who was also the dad in that 80's movie with all the slutty dancing in it? That guy. It was rather perceptive on my part, because he actually did turn out to be a cop. As I expected, he helped me up very like a gentleman. Standing up, I felt sick and dizzy still.

When I went to wash my hands, which were really filthy, he turned all mean on me. He even took out his handcuffs for some reason.

"You're under arrest," He said in a totally official tone," for the murders of—"

Murders? That sounds serious. I giggled to myself when he said that. It sounded just like TV. Next thing, he'd probably make some wise-ass comment that's totally inappropriate, you know how they do? Like you're watching and you're thinking "What the hell are they doing making snide remarks when there's a person lying dead right next to them?" And nobody is offended at the wisecrack remarks and general lack of humility before death. After they do that, they get all serious about trying to bust whoever did the murder, when really

they don't care at all. I mean, what the hell kind of person behaves that way? Anyway, The Gentleman Cop seems rather pleased to have found himself a "murder", for whatever that's worth.

I didn't even get to wash my hands before they put me in the car; the mess is going to get all over the place. I thought that was kind of stupid since they're the ones that are going to have to clean it up. It's hard to wash blood out of pretty much anything, unless you have some kind of oxygen-based cleaner. I saw those on TV; where that bearded guy is yelling and pouring red wine on stuff. They look excellent.

They made me have to have my hands behind my back. If I'd felt cleaner or prettier, I'd have smiled my sweet smile at them. Men were often delighted by my sweet smile. The handcuffs hurt to have on, but I think they might have put them on me too tight. As the Gentleman Cop was holding my head so I didn't bump it (which was really nice of him, I thought); another guy, this one much younger, came out of the house. I wondered how many people were in there, and thought that it was kind of rude of them not to introduce themselves. I did grow up in that house after all.

"We gotta rush a bus on the other vic, he's still breathing." Said the young cop. He was ugly in a high school bully sort of way—the kind of guy you'd think would only be a security guard, not a real cop. Why did he want a bus? Surely, getting more cops here to help out would take less time than walking to catch the freaking city bus...

"Who, the husband?" asked Gentleman Cop.

"Yeah," replied the Ugly Cop in a silky sort of voice. "Looks like we got us a witness."

"Y'hear that?" he asked, leaning toward the back seat with what I took to be kind of an attitude "you left one alive."

“Of course I left him alive!” I told him, “He’s my DAD. What kind of a person do you think I am anyway?” he stared at me a moment, then shut the car door, leaving me to count the diamond shapes in the grate that separates the front and back seats in the police car. I guess that’s so I don’t reach through and club one of them. Ha, that would be hilarious. He's not really my Dad, but that's not any of these people's business.

I saw that Mrs. McMurtry had come outside with her youngest boy to see what was going on. I used to baby-sit the McMurtry boys when I was in high school. There were three of them eventually...clever, rambunctious boys who didn’t ever just want to sit and watch TV. This one had just been born back then, and I was afraid to pick him up. You have to be really careful picking up babies because their heads are too heavy for their necks. If you don’t hold their little noggins just right the weight of the head can snap the neck. Plus babies are really easy to suffocate, not that I would do that or anything. They say you can just set a pillow on them and they’ll just stop breathing without you having to do anything else. One minute, you’re watching a baby, and the next, it isn’t breathing anymore.

When babies are born, they have big soft parts in their heads, like spaces in their skull so their brain can get bigger as they learn more stuff and grow up and everything. Not Casey’s though. My brother didn’t have a space in his head when he was born. They had to put one in at the hospital. I remember he had bandages on his head for a long time. But they were gone in time for him to go to school. I think they were, weren't they? I guess it’s a bit fuzzy now. It was so sad seeing him with a big bandage on his head and everyone asking “What’s wrong with that poor little boy?” And I told them, “Nothing. The doctor fixed him and he’s all better.” Besides, it’s rude to ask people what is wrong with them. Most people don’t really care anyway, they only ask so

they have more to dish when they tell other people about the poor, piteous boy they saw with the big bandage on his head. I do remember feeling happy once my brother was well, and happy to finally have a sister. When the doctors ask me if I have any happy memories of childhood that is usually what I say. Casey was “all better” now, the doctor had said so, and I told that to everyone who asked. But that’s because I was too little to know any better. We never really got better, none of us did.

The youngest McMurtry boy walked by and waved to me on his way to the same high school I had gone to when he was born. He looked so tall and grown up in his blue letter jacket with red sleeves in colored leather. I wanted to wave back, but it was probably best that my bloody hands were still cuffed tightly behind my back. Mrs. McMurtry caught my eye, and I smiled at her. I hope she saw me. I wouldn’t want her to think I was ignoring her, I mean...how rude! Shaking her head slowly, maybe even sadly, Mrs. McMurtry went back inside.