

KILLIAN'S MASTERPIECE



JILL SHANNON



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

CHAPTER 1



“*W*hat the fuck do you mean, ‘it’s all gone?’” Anthony Santoro screamed at the man standing in front of him. “You had one fucking job to do—watch the shipment get loaded into the truck. Did you watch it?” The man’s head nodded in agreement. “Then you drove it here, correct?” Again, an affirmative head nod. “No stops along the way?” Anthony’s voice laced with sarcasm; another head nod. Anthony was now standing behind him. Grabbing a hand full of hair, he yanked the man’s head back, spit hitting his face as Anthony growled each word, “Then where is my fucking delivery?”

“I swear to God, boss, it was there. You saw the crates. How was I supposed to know the stuff wasn’t what it was supposed to be?” The man sobbed, “I did just what you told me to do.”

“Who else was there?” Santoro moved back to his seat behind his desk.

“The guy running the forklift, a security guard, and some dock hand.” Sitting a little straighter in his own chair, the man answered the question.

“Where was the captain?”

“I didn’t see the captain.”

Santoro turned his head to the right. “Find out where that motherfucker is and bring him to me. Now!” he shouted.

The man in the chair began to rise. “Not you, asshole. Sit down, we are not finished here.” Turning to his left, he ordered, “Bring her to me. Now!” Santoro watched as the men he instructed moved to do his bidding, leaving the man in the chair. “Tell me again, from the time you parked your ass at the dock till you put the truck in park. Everything.” He got up from his chair, moving to the bar under the window, pouring two glasses of scotch. Walking back to the man in the chair, he handed him a glass, then walked back to the window. Raising the glass to his mouth, he said, “Begin.”

“Well, I left my house at eleven o’clock, stopped for gas and coffee. I got to the dock right on time. The security guard escorted me right to the pier; he told me to wait in the truck. He needed to do something with the surveillance. I watched him go into a shack. When he came out, he flagged me to where the shipment was waiting. I backed the truck up; the forklift guy loaded all the crates. They closed and locked the back door, banged twice on the side, and I left. I drove straight here. No stops along the way. I swear, boss.”

“Did it ever occur to you to get out of the truck to see what they were loading?” Santoro questioned from his position by the windows.

“No, boss. They seemed to know what they were doing, so I followed their lead. The security guard didn’t seem to want me to get out. So, I stayed in the truck. I knew that whatever I was getting for you wasn’t any of my business, either. Figured if I stayed in the truck, I made everyone happy.” The man put a half smile on his face trying to make light of the situation he was in.

Anthony Santoro turned from the window. The sleeves

from his white button-down shirt were rolled to his elbows and it was opened wide at the collar. His creased black slacks brushed the tops of his black Armani wingtips. The Don for the Santoro family stood at six-foot. Although nearing his late seventies, he still held the physique of a forty-year-old. His penetrating black eyes held years of knowledge. The one feature on the man that showed his age was his full head of salt and pepper hair. Raising the glass to his mouth, he finished the scotch. "So, in your estimation, you are not responsible for the loss of my shipment; you were just following direction. Correct?" The underline of anger could be heard as Anthony asked his question.

"Well? Technically, yes." The man gave him another half-smile. Putting the glass to his lips, he threw his head back, drinking its contents. "Whew, that is mighty smooth scotch. What's the name of it?" He was asking to bring Santoro's focus to something other than himself.

"You must really think I'm an imbecile. You volunteered for this job. Everything that she has gathered for the past three years is gone, you fucking piece of shit." He turned towards the door and yelled, "Rocco?" Within seconds, a huge man entered the door frame. "Take this piece of shit downstairs. Keep him alive until I tell you otherwise."

The man in the chair threw himself on the floor at his feet, saying, "I swear. I had nothing to do with this. I was just trying to get your attention, to move up in the ranks. God, please, sir, you have to believe me." Pleading on his knees, he went on. "On my mother's grave, I didn't do anything wrong."

"Have no fear; as long as I can recover my property, I will let you live. Until then, Rocco will teach you what it means to disappoint me." With that said, he turned his attention back to the windows.

Rocco dragged the man from the room kicking and

screaming, past a raven-haired beauty as she came down the stairs, followed by the man sent to get her.

Anthony looked up when she walked in the room. "Close the doors as you leave, Dante." Walking to meet her in the center of the room, he took both her hands and brought them to his lips. "You look lovely, my dear, all set for your vacation?"

Moving in to kiss both of his cheeks, she whispered, "Don't blow smoke up my ass, old man. I heard you all the way to my room. There's not a shot in Hell you're letting me take a vacation, but this one is going to cost you big time." She leaned back with a broad smile on her flawless face. Moving around Anthony, she walked to the bar. Pouring herself a drink, she turned her attention back to him as he sat down behind the desk. How many times had Rachel been summoned to this room? She remembered the first time, standing in the double door entry. His desk had seemed so far away sitting central in the room, a fire had been burning in the fireplace off to the right side, a wall of books covered the other. The long red velvet curtains had been closed, allowing the fire to light the room. Everything had seemed so scary. Now, when she was summoned, she held more power, so the room held no intimidation to her anymore. She knew, this time, she would be able to request anything, and he would have to grant it, that is if he truly wanted his shipment back. Sitting in the chair the man had vacated, she stretched one long leather encased leg across the other. The red tips of her long dark hair flowed over her ample chest. Drink poised in her hand, a grin on her face, she said, "So, old man, you lost your shipment, huh?" She put the glass to her red painted lips, drinking, leaving a perfect lip residue in its wake. Leaning forward, both feet in her stiletto boots hit the floor. She placed her elbows on her knees, cradling her drink between her two hands. Focusing

her mocha brown eyes on his, she said, "What the fuck happened?"

"Watch your tone, little lady. Don or father, either one, I deserve your respect."

"I'm sorry, Father. What happened?" she asked, taking the angry edge out of her voice, but it still held a sarcastic undertone. "If I had wrapped them in Christmas packaging with bows, I couldn't have made this any easier. Everything was put on the ship. I watched it myself."

"Apparently, sometime in between you leaving it on the ship and dumb ass going to get it, everything was fucking stolen."

Rachel clucked, "It's kind of ironic, you saying it was stolen from you." She finished her drink, placing the glass on the table next to her. "What do you want me to do?" She relaxed back in the chair.

"I sent Vito to get the captain. That scum bag disappeared; he was supposed to be there for the pick-up. They should be here any moment, and we should have some answers."

As he finished his statement, a commotion was heard in the foyer. The doors to Anthony's office were flung open as a bloody man was tossed onto the floor. "Well, well, Captain Humphrey. I hope I didn't interrupt your homecoming, but you seem to have misplaced the shipment I placed in your capable hands. Can you explain that?" Anthony had risen from his chair and walked around his desk. Rachel, as well, rose to look upon the captain lying on the floor. Anthony looked to where Vito was standing, directing his next question to him, "Where did you find him?"

"He checked into some ratty motel. Wasn't even smart enough to use a fake name. Dip shit," Vito said as he walked to the bar.

Anthony walked to where the captain lay on the floor. The

tips of Anthony's shoes were grazing his fingers. "So, now, Captain, would you like to tell me how twenty million dollars' worth of specially crafted, cushioned, sealed crates disappeared from your cargo hold? Oh, and not just one, but all forty-five of them!" Anthony was leaning over him yelling. "Did you know they were replaced and that is why you were going into hiding?"

Rachel had retrieved a bottle of water from the small refrigerator, placing it on the floor next to the captain, then she stood next to him. "Captain, did you know what was in the crates you transported for us?" She moved back to lean on the chair, watching as the captain got to his knees and guzzled the water down.

When he was finished, he looked up at Anthony, one of his eyes already closing, and pleaded, "I swear on my mother, I had no idea what I was transporting. I had no clue they had been replaced. When I got to port, Larry, the security guard, told me that, as an added bonus, there was a woman waiting for me at the motel Vito found me in. So, I went. Everything was perfect until your muscle over there interrupted everything. Told the chick to leave and then started beating the hell out of me. That's all I know." Tears were leaking down his cheeks as he kneeled on the floor.

Anthony looked at Rachel. "What do you think? Is he telling the truth? Because if he is telling the truth, then, my lovely daughter, the burden falls to you. You were the last one to see them before they shipped. You knew how they would be sealed and crated. So, tell me, Rachel, who do I believe?"

"You have to be fucking kidding me?" Rachel stood, her five-foot-seven-inch height enhanced by her four-inch stiletto heels. Hands on her hips facing her father, she said, "For the past three years, I have scoured, hunted, and searched for every piece on that fucking list for you. Are you really

standing there questioning my loyalty?" She emphasized her question by pointing her finger at herself.

"What am I supposed to think? Your reward for a job well done would have been retirement." Anthony had turned his body, so he was now facing his daughter. "As much as it would have pained me to let you go, Vito would have been devastated. Isn't that right, Vito?"

"That's right, Mr. Santoro," Vito chimed in, a smug smile on his face.

Chills ran over Rachel's body. There was nothing physically wrong with Vito. In fact, the man was gorgeous. Tall, dark hair, piercing blue eyes, his shoulders filled the jacket he was wearing without padding, and even with her heels on, he still towered over her. However, the psyche of the man was something totally different. This was a man who liked to hurt people. It didn't matter who they were—man, woman, child, animal—if Vito was told to take care of it, he did. He enjoyed inflicting pain, and he didn't hide it. From the time she had started to develop, she had been threatened with being given to Vito. Her father knew how much she feared that happening, so she was always available when her father needed her special talent. This was supposed to have been her last job; he had promised. "I completed my end of the bargain. I made sure everything was there. Do you think I would have been stupid enough to come back here and pack if I had stolen your shipment?"

"The bargain is not complete till I have what was promised to me. I don't care how you do it, but you get it all back."

Rachel resigned herself to the fact that, until her father had his precious shipment, she wasn't going anywhere. "Okay, Father, I'll get your fucking shipment back, but when I do, besides a retirement party, you are going to give me anything I ask you for. No questions! Deal?"

“Deal,” Santoro replied.

“I’m not kidding, Father. Anything I ask for.”

“As long as it is within my ability to give to you, I will. Does that make you feel better?”

“Yes,” was all she said before she turned to Vito. “Did you question the security guard?”

“Nope, Mr. Santoro only asked me to bring the captain.”

“I’ll start there. What are you going to do to him?” Rachel questioned her father about the captain.

“You have two weeks, girl. Find my property, and you have my word, your retirement and anything you ask for will be yours.”

“What happens if I don’t complete my task in that time?” She knew the answer before she asked it.

“All bets are off the table, then whoever brings it to me will receive their reward,” Anthony said, looking at Vito, a silent promise given to him.

She looked to Vito before he could wipe the pleased look off his face. “I’ll need everything at my disposal. Car, money, identity, and credentials. I’m going to get changed; have everything ready for me when I get back.” Rachel started walking towards the door. As she got there, she paused and turned to her father. “Once this is done, so am I.” She spun on her heels and walked out the door.

Vito walked up to Anthony. “Do you think she will find them in time?”

“I believe my daughter has the right incentive to complete the task. Whether she does it in the two-week time limit, we will just have to wait and see.”

“What do you want me to do with him?” Vito toed the captain, still on the floor.

“Until I know he had nothing to do with it, he can sit with

the other asshole downstairs. Keep them alive until I know for sure.”

The captain tried to plead his case one more time, “I swear, Don Santoro, I would never do anything to cross the family. On my mother.”

“We will see, Captain. We will see,” was all he heard as Vito dragged him from the room.



RACHEL CAME BACK DOWNSTAIRS, dropping her packed duffle bag on the floor. She had changed into combat boots and carried a heavy leather jacket; her hair was now pulled high in a ponytail that hung down her back. She walked back into her father's office, standing in front of his desk. “Where is the captain? I would like to ask him a few questions before I leave.”

“Vito can take you to him,” Anthony's monotone voice answered.

“So, we are clear on the terms, Father.” She waited for him to rock back, resting his elbows on the arms of the chair. Lacing his fingers together, he brought his index fingers together on his bottom lip. With a nod of his head, she proceeded, “I find your shipment in two weeks and I get to retire and any single thing I request. Correct?”

“You find my property in two weeks and, yes, my dear, you can retire. As per the request, if it is within my power to give it to you, you have my word as your father, but more importantly, as your Don, it will be yours.”

Rachel got a little smile on her face before she told him, “Thank you, sir. Do you have the things I requested?”

Vito tossed an envelope on the desk in front of her. “We

included a tracker in your phone. Make sure you have it on you at all times.”

She pulled the items she had requested out and inspected them. When she got to the phone, she powered it up. The smile on her face could not hide the venom in her eyes as she trained them on Vito. Holding the phone up so he could see the face of it, tilting her head to the right, she let it slide through her fingers, dropping it to the floor. Before Vito could lean down to pick it up, she stomped the heel of her boot down on it. “If I want you to know where I am, I will tell you. I have no idea what or who I will be dealing with. The last thing I need is to get busted for having an amateur piece of shit surveillance device in my phone.” Turning to her father again, she added, “One more thing, or the deal is off.” Her father darted his eyes to Vito, knowing what she was about to say. With another nod from him, she told him, “No one from the organization is to move on this in any way till my time is up.” He blinked his eyes in resignation. Once she had his word, she turned back to Vito. Pointing her finger at him, the undertone of anger could be heard in her voice, “Stay the fuck away from me and let me do my job. Unless you’re worried I’ll succeed. Oh, and, Vito, you should be very worried, because I will find what was stolen and bring it back, and when I do...” She looked to her father. “I will bid this place a fond adieu and go live on an island someplace where they don’t have extradition laws.” She walked behind the desk and kneeled before her father, bowing her head. When his hand with the family signet ring was placed before her, she kissed it. Standing back up, she leaned in and kissed him on the cheek. “I love you, Father. I will be in touch.”

“You have never failed me, Rachel; I expect nothing less this time. If at the end of the two weeks, you have not found my property, all bets are off. I will send Vito with a few of the

boys. They will find you, and when they do, they will make sure my property is returned, with or without your help. Understand, girl?"

"Understood. Now where is the captain?" She turned toward the exit, walking away from him.

"Vito will take you, and Rachel..." She paused, turning her head to him. "I love you, too, daughter. Be safe." Then he positioned himself in front of the papers on his desk, and with that, she was dismissed.

She followed Vito down two flights of stairs, arriving in front of a long hallway with doors on either side. Vito walked to the third door on the right, and, turning the key, he opened the door. She moved forward to enter the cell but was stopped by Vito's extended arm. "When you fail at this job, I will be waiting to clean up the mess, and when I do, your father will have to grant me my single request." If the look in someone's eyes could kill another, Vito would be in a pool of blood at her feet. "Bambina, you know as well as I do, we belong together. We will run this family when your father is gone."

Before another word was uttered from his mouth, Rachel had a ten-inch knife edged to his throat. "Say one more word about my father not being here and I will gladly slide this blade home. Now, get the fuck out of my way."

Vito lowered his arm and fixed a smug look on his handsome face. "Time will tell, Rachel; all things will be clear very soon. See you in two weeks." He backed away from her and proceeded to the stairs without a backward glance.

Rachel expelled the breath she held in her lungs. Sometimes, she was too brave for herself. Replacing the knife to its holder, she walked into the cell, finding the captain resting against the far wall. She allowed her eyes to adjust to the dim lighting. "Captain, I have some questions for you. How you

answer them will determine if you walk out of here or if you are carried out. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Okay, now tell me everything you didn't tell my father." A look of guilt passed across his face, but still, he stayed quiet. She continued. "Captain, I want you to tell me what happened after the crates were loaded into the hull. What did you do after that?"

His one good eye found hers from his lowered position, his throat sounded dry as he spoke. "We left port as scheduled. The weather was bad, and I made the decision to go around it, rather than risk losing whatever was in the hull as well as the ship. My first mate and I charted the course, and I left to have something to eat, leaving him in charge. I'm embarrassed to say, I do not remember anything after that until the next morning. I woke up in my rack with a slight headache. When I asked my first mate what had happened, he explained that I had started to fall asleep while I was eating so he had some crewmembers transfer me to my cabin and left me there. The rest of the trip went off without any further incidents. That's all I know. I had no idea that anything had happened. Everything looked the same."

"The name of the first mate, what is it?"

"Frank Moore."

"Was he a regular on your crew? Was there anyone new to the crew just for this trip?"

She could see the captain thinking. "Yeah, there were a few new crewmembers. A few of the regular crew got the flu and couldn't sail, so I picked up five new guys down on the dock. But Frank, he was a regular. He's been sailing with me for over a year now." He paused and looked at her, his right cheek swelling up from the beating Vito had given him. "I swear,

miss; I didn't have anything to do with the missing cargo. I don't want to die. I have a wife and two kids."

"Then, Captain, why did you go to the motel instead of home?" Rachel watched the captain's face.

"By us taking the other route around the weather, it brought us into port hours earlier than expected." He paused, gathering his thoughts. "I'm not proud of it, but I was told as a bonus there was a woman waiting for me at the motel. I figured everything was taken care of and I could leave. I don't know how it could have disappeared; we made no stops. Like I said, we arrived earlier than scheduled."

"Well, Captain, I'm going to find out what happened, and when I do, I pray to God above you haven't lied to me. Enjoy your cell till I return." Closing the door, she locked the cell with the key Vito had left in it. Rachel looked through the slot in the door and said to him, "If it's any consolation, Captain, I do believe you." She then turned and walked to the stairs, hanging the key on the wall before she left.

She made a stop in the computer room and had Vinny pull up anything he could find on Frank Moore and Larry Wilson. She took the basic information and told him she would be in touch for the rest. Walking back to the foyer to get her stuff, she passed Vito standing outside her father's office.

"I'll see you in two weeks, bambina," he said as he ran his tongue around his mouth.

Rachel's only acknowledgement to him was to flip him off, the red color of her nail polish flashing in the light. She shoved her arms through the sleeves of the leather jacket. After checking for the hardware she had placed in the concealed pocket, she picked up the duffel bag and made her way to the awaiting flat black Range Rover Sport. Tossing her bag in the back seat, she input Frank Moore's address in the GPS, and she

was on her way. *Another two weeks of this shit, that's all*, she kept repeating to herself as she drove down the long driveway away from her father's recently built Myrtle Beach mansion.

Rachel then drove to the Greyhound bus depot. Renting one of the lockers, she placed her phone, laptop, and tablet in it. When she got back into the Range Rover, she disengaged the GPS. Stopping at the local electronics store, she repurchased each item, adding a burner phone as well.

With traffic being light on her late-night drive, she made the two-and-a-half-hour drive to the docks in two hours. Doing a quick inventory of the hull and questioning a few of Captain Humphrey's regular crewmembers, she found out that the new members of the crew had magically disappeared. She also confirmed what the captain had said. They told her he had gotten sick and spent the first night in his rack. The weather had been bad, but once the captain had changed the course, it was smooth sailing. Besides that, nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

After making the drive to Frank Moore's suburban home, she now sat across the street watching the house. The laptop open on the passenger seat showed the going salary for a first mate averaged sixty-thousand a year. Rachel looked at the classic Mustang sitting in the driveway, as well as the brand new one sitting next to it. Her first thought was, *well, maybe his wife has a really good job*. But she knew better.

Rachel had just shut her laptop down and was getting ready to find a hotel for the night when she saw a light go on inside the first mate's living room window. Frank would have been home hours ago, fast asleep in his bed. So, who was creeping around his house at this hour? Her interest aroused, she started to leave the Range Rover. She paused when she saw the outside light flip on over the front entrance. At the same time, a black and orange Ford pick-up pulled into the

driveway. Rachel couldn't see the occupants of the truck with the blacked-out windows, but she did watch as the back door opened and a very tall man emerged. As he approached the entrance, the front door swung open. Rachel assumed from the description she received of the first mate, she was looking at Frank Moore. But as quickly as the door opened, it closed just as fast. The large man returned to the truck, he got in, and they were gone. She had just witnessed a payoff, one way or the other. She had two options—stay here and question Frank, who she knew to her bones was going to lie to her, or follow the money and see where it led. Rachel started the engine and killed the lights, keeping her distance back, using their tail lights as a guide. When they hit the highway, she turned on her lights and tailed them back up the South Carolina coast to Hog Island. Rachel had dropped back further than she would have liked, but with the sun rising, she didn't have a choice. They had turned off the highway and traveled along some back dark roads to a compound. A guard shack sat in front of a chain link gate leading up a paved driveway; above that a sign read Celtic Demons. She continued past, moving at a normal speed as not to draw attention. Imprinting everything she saw to memory, she found a hotel in the next town over. Once she had checked in and showered, she pulled out her laptop and burner phone, putting Celtic Demons into the search engine. As the phone connected to her father, a picture of a leather jacket popped up. The green zoot suit hat sat atop a shadowed skull, a four-leaf clover perched out the top. The high green collar of the jacket hid most of the neck area, but it led her vision right to a straight jaw, teeth clamped together holding a pipe with smoke swirls looming above. The upper rocker read Celtic, the lower Demons. Before her father could say hello, she said, "Tell me about the Celtic Demons."